

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 1920**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY, 1920.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Marce*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock p.m.

### SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—TENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

(*Mr. Smith, Mackay, in the chair.*)

Question—That £27,177 be granted for "Department of Agriculture and Stock—Chief Office"—stated.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): When the sitting closed last night I was just explaining the reasons for the increased vote this year. I was saying that there were substantial increases to practically all the officers, as prescribed by the classification of general officers by Mr. Story. Hon. members will notice that the amount is less a deduction of £2,000 for work performed by officers in the head office for various trust funds. The amount is made up as follows:—Diseases in Stock and Diseases in Plants Act, £1,350; Sugar Experiment Stations Act, £50; Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act, £600. The item of wages, travelling expenses, etc., shows a reduction of £250.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): This is the greatest department, or one of the greatest departments, of the State. The success of the whole State depends upon production, and production depends upon its nursing by the Agricultural Department. We have quite a number of experts in the various branches of our rural pursuits—men who have been trained and acquired a great knowledge in all that pertains to the information necessary to father an increase in our general production. Probably the greatest factor towards

bringing about success in that direction is the practical and theoretical training in agriculture of our young men, and our young women too. It is for us to say whether the Agricultural Department is fully alive to that fact, and to say whether what it is doing in that direction is sufficient. Our Agricultural College has been established for a number of years.

Mr. KIRWAN: You were a student of that college?

Mr. CORSER: Yes, and I stand to the credit of that institution. (Laughter.) But it was not at that time administered by the present Government. The Stock Department of Queensland should be a very big factor, and one that we should encourage in every way, considering the big part it plays in our industries. We know that our cattle industry depends upon the export of our beef, to a great extent, and our sheep industry depends upon the export of our mutton as well as the future development of woollen factories in Australia. So it is to be hoped that the department, sooner or later, will play a far greater part in the affairs of Queensland than at present. We know that Queensland covers a great area and has varied climates, and we want very great experience to enable us to use the varied soils and climates to the greatest advantage. We are not dealing with one small country, with one soil, and one climate. Therefore, our Agricultural Chemist's Department should be used to the greatest extent, and should be available to persons in every part of the State, so that the true values of the soils and the influence of the climatic conditions should be made known gratis to all those who wish to make their living from the land.

One of the greatest functions of the department is no doubt assistance in research work. Particularly might this be said in respect to resistance to disease in stock. If we had more encouragement in these times among the gentlemen who are at the head of the various branches, I think we could do much to save our stock along that line, and so save to the people of Queensland millions of money as the years go by. We know that we are losing every year a tremendous amount of stock through ignorance of the means of dealing with diseases. Certain branches of the department go in for the preparation of vaccine to prevent disease, but not to any very great extent does the people's confidence rest in the use of such vaccines. Something might be done to stimulate the confidence of people in the department, and I would be at all times willing to assist such steps in the interest of the State.

The activities of the department might also be employed along the lines of the extermination of pests, and I think we might easily wake up some of the branches in this respect. If the entomologist and vegetable pathologist's office is to be run in the same way as at present, there will not be much chance of getting very much of a move on. The greatest encouragement should be given to those who are investigating cane diseases and fruit diseases and all other diseases that are causing such havoc in our rural industries. Even in a good season quantities of fruit are lost to the producer owing to the fact that Queensland, unfortunately, is harbouring too many pests in every section of our agricultural and stock industries.

Another direction in which greater consideration might be given is preparation for drought. I do not know that the Department of Agriculture has done anything very great in this direction in the past. We know that they are contemplating the extension of the system of supplying silos, but I do not know whether the greater primary assistance is being given to the individual to enable him to secure water on his holding. I do not know that it would not be a matter that the Agricultural Department could well handle in the interests of the farmers, particularly now that there must be some inspection in connection with those who make application for assistance under the regulations to the Co-operative Agricultural Production and Advances to Farmers Act, 1914 to 1919. I do not know that the department could not just as well handle the question of providing water to individuals without going in for any very great irrigation scheme. The prevention of disease, conservation of fodder, and the providing of water are three great things that should be tackled by the Department of Agriculture and Stock to a far greater degree than has ever been attempted by the department under any Government in the State up to the present time. In the past, on every occasion I have had the opportunity of speaking on this vote, I have not spared the department in the criticisms that I thought due, not probably because of any fault on the part of the officials of the department, but probably we are to blame because of the small amount we appropriate towards the expenses of the department. We must realise that there is a very small amount appropriated. No doubt, there is an increase this year, but that increase is probably necessary owing to the administration of the various Acts.

Mr. PETERSON: I would like to see the vote four times as large.

Mr. CORSER: I would like to see a very great increase in the amount voted, in the hope that the department would take chief place amongst the departments of the State, as it would then be able to fulfil all that is expected of it. I will always support any increase in the vote for this department when necessary.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: And then charge the Government with extravagance.

Mr. CORSER: It is not extravagance to do anything that will increase production. I do not think it extravagance to do something towards investigating diseases in our plant and stock life in Queensland or towards making the life of the man in the bush a happy one; or towards making possible an earlier return for the work he does. Such expenditure could not be considered wasteful, as it would be advantageous to the city and country dweller alike. We must remember that what is the producers' gain is no man's loss. The calling is not popular enough in Queensland. In some countries, particularly in Victoria, the rural population enjoy far better conditions than in this State.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Then why do they come up here?

Mr. CORSER: The Victorian rural people are being crushed out. Victoria is not in the happy position occupied by Queensland, which holds a huge amount of cheap land. Victorian lands are well filled and very expensive. We are not advocating extensive areas of very expensive lands here, but what I do say is that we should encourage our rural

*Mr. Corser.]*

industries and make the calling more popular than it is at the present time. Whatever we can do in that direction should be done. We should be careful, too, that the development of our industries is not hampered by the introduction of imitations. I really see a serious danger in margarine being consumed in Australia to the great detriment of our dairying industry. We know that the dairying industry is responsible for all the new settlements throughout the State. If we had not the great co-operative system that we have established in Queensland we could not have got along in the way we have; we could not have established as we have done a real solid dairying industry. I hope the Minister will take whatever steps are essential to protect the dairying industry against the margarine manufacturers. I know there are many places where margarine is being eaten in place of butter, even in this community to-day. I notice under the regulations that have been framed to enable people to secure advances under the Co-operative Agricultural Production and Advances to Farmers Act that there are some matters that do not go towards promoting encouragement to the people who want advances. Under the form for security for advances I notice that the security that is desired is an unknown factor. I notice that under the Act the Minister can accept even a letter or a statement as sufficient security; but, unfortunately, the regulations as drawn up are more cast-iron like, and no payment of the whole or any portion of the advance shall be made by the Minister until due security therefor has been given to the satisfaction of the Governor in Council in the case of a company, or to the satisfaction of the Minister in the case of a farmer, dairy farmer, or sheep farmer, as the case may be; and no security shall be deemed due security unless it includes also the progeny of any stock secured on an advance under the Act. That is not a very lenient provision. Or—

“By way of lien on wool; or by way of lien on crops of all kinds.”

Then, in connection with the branding of live stock, the regulations provide—

“All pigs, sheep, or dairy cattle purchased by means of any advance under these Acts, together with the progeny of the same during the continuance of the security, shall be marked by the borrower—”

I do not know that that is essential. A man cannot trade as he should be able to trade. It is essential to trade in stock as opportunity offers. They can ask the Minister whether they may sell or not.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:** The Minister's permission will not be withheld so long as the security is safe.

**MR. CORSER:** With a fluctuating market the Minister may not always consider it safe in a certain district, whereas those living in another area may know that it was safe. I do not think the regulations are free enough to enable the best to be got out of the deal. No stock can be taken on agistment in connection with a property on which is running a certain number of cattle secured for money borrowed under this Act, so I do not know that the regulations as drawn up are in keeping with the spirit of the Act. I think the Act is more lenient than the regulations, and I fear that it will not be of the advantage that I sincerely hope it will be. If there is anything that should be done by the

[*Mr. Corser.*]

Agricultural Department, it is to give encouragement to those who have had a bad time through the drought. I was hopeful that a million or so from Loan Funds would have been made available to assist those farmers who have lost their stock, whether it be cattle, sheep, or horses, and to assist people to find water, and also to provide assistance to men to improve their farms by increasing their areas of grass lands by scrub felling, and to increase the supply of water in all directions. I was hoping that an amount of money would be available for these purposes, as well as for the conservation of fodder.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's second portion of time had expired.

**MR. O'SULLIVAN (Kennedy):** I would like to call the Minister's attention to the need of establishing an agricultural college in the North, where we have country suitable for the growing of tropical crops. More than half the area of Queensland is within the tropics, and to do justice to the North and Centre we should have an agricultural college devoted purely to tropical research and the growing of tropical crops. Take cotton, for instance. Cotton can be grown in the North very successfully. In my electorate some years ago cotton was grown in the Southern Cross district, and if we went in more for the growing of tropical products it would be to the benefit of Queensland and would help to populate the North.

**MR. CORSER:** What about the Kamerunga State Farm at Cairns? Could they not put students there?

**MR. O'SULLIVAN:** That is where they grow coffee. Cotton can be grown south of Cairns, and grown successfully right along the belt from Ravenswood Junction almost to Hughenden, and it would be a good thing if the Government were to demonstrate to the people the profits accruing from cotton-growing. As we know, cotton has increased very much in price of late, and we in Queensland should reap some of the benefits to be derived from the high price of cotton. I hope the Government will take that into consideration and go in for demonstration plots around Charters Towers and in the Kennedy district. Mining has gone down there, and we want to keep the population in the North, and to do that the people want every encouragement from the Government. The Government should demonstrate what are the most profitable crops to grow in the North. Population has not increased in the North owing to the fact that they have not gone in for agriculture. There is too much of dragging people into the cities in the Southern portion of the State, and the population of the North is not increasing as it should owing to the want of proper protection and owing to the people not growing those crops which the country is fitted to grow. Tobacco could be grown

[4 p.m.] in the North, too. It has been growing in the Bowen electorate for years, and there are parts of the Kennedy electorate which could be devoted to it. When the tobacco expert was up there, some fourteen or fifteen years ago, he demonstrated that there was soil there which could grow a certain class of tobacco profitably. Then there is the sisal hemp industry.

**MR. GUNN:** You don't hang anybody now; you don't want hemp.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: To hear hon. members opposite anyone would think that the Darling Downs was the hub of the universe, and that there was nothing outside it. We have beautiful country in the North which would grow nearly everything. There is no doubt a lot of our tropical country will be growing wheat on the dry farming principle in the future.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Too expensive.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Country which can grow beautiful grass like that up there will grow wheat, with a proper way of looking after it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There is a difference in the expense in growing wheat and growing grass.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: It does not take as much to-day to grow a bushel of wheat as it did years ago. Under present conditions you can garner a bushel of wheat for something like 6½d. a bushel, whereas fifty years ago it cost 3s. or 4s. One man can do more work to-day than half a dozen men could do then.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You have had no experience. Go and try it.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: The hon. gentleman has been asleep. He goes along in the same old way his grandfather went. We have modern machinery to make it possible to cheapen production. We can go in for growing oranges and fruits like that in the North. Round about Broughton there are some of the best oranges which are grown in Queensland. These things require to be made public so that people can know what they are doing, and how to proceed in order to supply the markets of the northern townships and cities. I hope the Minister will see his way clear to do as I have asked. I advocated the establishment of agricultural plots in different parts of the North years ago when we were in opposition. I impressed upon the Agricultural Department then the need for it. We need it just as much now, and I am sure the sympathetic Minister we have now in office will do all he can in that direction.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): The hon. member remarked how cheaply wheat could be garnered. I might inform him that one of these machines he talks about costs £150 for a start. The hon. member seems to think these things are very easy. They are, until you try them. Men like the hon. member, who deery capital and want to burst the whole thing up, will put us back to the days of Adam. Yet they talk about garnering grain by the latest machinery, when they are deerying capital all the time. I am rather surprised at the small increase in this vote. As the hon. member for Burnett said, this should be one of our most important departments. I am not blaming this Government any more than past Governments. The Agricultural Department has been neglected under past Governments for many years. Agriculture has not taken the place it ought in Queensland. There is an increase of only £11,000. I would like to know if the officers of that department received the same consideration as have officers of other departments. Take the Chief Inspector of Stock. I see a very small increase is down for him. I am quite sure it does not make up for the increased cost of living. It is not more than about

5 per cent. or 6 per cent., and the cost of living has gone up between 60 per cent. and 70 per cent. We want to treat these officers fairly. The security of any nation lies in the land.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Any country which does not build its foundations upon the land is building in the air, and is bound to come down. One thing I most certainly object to is that in the early years, when there was a small expenditure, certain special taxes were put upon the man on the land to meet the extra expenses under the Brands Act and other things. Those special taxes, at the present time, amount to something like £46,000 or £50,000.

Mr. COLLINS: What taxes are they?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They will be found under the Special Trust Funds at page 114. The amount last year was £51,695, and this year it is £46,390. I maintain that the whole of this special taxation should be merged into the Agricultural Department, and put on the general taxation. When we have a factory inspector in the cities his expenses are not charged to the industries to which they are due. There is only the calling of the agriculturist which has to pay for the whole of the services to the other people of the State, and then be singled out separately to stand the whole of the expense of the administration of anything connected with agriculture. We were told that if we had a land tax all these small taxes would be merged into the general revenue. But every one of those still remains on the primary producers, and they are still on the increase, excepting in the case of last year, when there was some special reason for a reduction. The unique position of the primary producer calls for special consideration. He has to produce in the highest market, under the greatest expense, and he has to sell his products in the cheapest free trade markets of the world. We are producing double the amount of stuff the people of Australia can consume. We have to export it to a free trade market. The people in California have a market of 100,000,000 people, and they are in a very different position. We have to import a lot of our implements and wearing apparel, under a very high tariff. That is one of the difficulties with which the agricultural industry has to contend. I want now to refer to something which especially interests Queensland, and of which I do not think sufficient notice has been taken. That is the work of the department in abolishing the cattle ticks. We know that cattle cannot fatten if they are tick infested. As for dairying, we know perfectly well that if they have any ticks they will take at least 25 per cent., if not 50 per cent., of the milk. We know that the cattle will die very quickly when a dry season comes on if they are tick infested. I am one of those who have not the slightest doubt that the cattle tick can be driven from Queensland if we go the right way about it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I know a number of experiments have been carried out in the Helidon district, in the Drayton electorate. But there are certain people who believe it is necessary to retain a few ticks on their cattle. Some of them believe that if they

*Mr. Bebbington.]*

clean the tick right out—there are many people in Queensland who believe it—if an outbreak of tick fever comes, the losses will be very much heavier than they would be if a few ticks were retained.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: So they will.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I am quite sure there is no difficulty in abolishing the tick from Queensland in six months if the people will dip regularly every twenty-one days. In 1916 a committee of experts estimated that from tick fever alone Queensland had suffered up to that date in monetary loss at least £7,000,000. When Queensland lost £7,000,000 worth of cattle up to 1916, it shows the importance of the subject and the necessity for driving the tick out as far as we possibly can. There is only one way to do it. You have to quarantine the area you are going to clean up. If you are going to allow tick-infested cattle to be driven through an area you are going to clean up you will never get it clean. That has been the experience where it has been tried. I maintain that if you quarantine an area and allow no cattle to enter that area, except those which are clean, and enforce dipping in the area, in six months you will have the area clean. That has been the experience in the Helidon district, and I want to congratulate the department and its officers on the way they cleared up that country at last. Certainly, what could have been done in six months took two or three years, because the tick-infested cattle were allowed to go into clean areas. If you are going to tinker with these things and have the inspectors humbugging people and do not quarantine the areas, then the inspectors are a worse nuisance than the ticks.

The Under Secretary's—or the Minister's—report is not pleasant reading by any means. If you take the dairying industry, you will find there are 18,000 less dairy cows in milk than the year before. There are 31,783 pigs less, four cheese factories less, and two butter factories less, and that does not spell progress at all.

Mr. BRENNAN: There is extra—

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There is nothing extra in growth or advancement in anything. It merely means stagnation.

Mr. BRENNAN: What about Southbrook?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Is Southbrook a nation?

Mr. BRENNAN: Southbrook closed two factories.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Didn't I tell the hon. gentleman there are four factories less? When the hon. member for Burnett was speaking, the hon. member for Toowoomba made some not very complimentary remark. Now, there is an old saying that they who live by labour—perhaps we should say "shall die by it." But there is another saying that they who live by the law shall die by the law. I would rather the hon. member for Burnett's position than the hon. member for Toowoomba's. That hon. gentleman would do well to stick to law and leave the matter of agriculture to those who have had experience.

Mr. BRENNAN: Not like yourself.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Yes; and I made a success of it.

Mr. BRENNAN: No, you haven't.

[Mr. Bebbington.]

Mr. BEBBINGTON: If the hon. gentleman makes as big a success at law as I have done at farming, he will not do bad. (Government interruption.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. COLLINS: You are always crying out about taxes.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I should think so. All we want is justice. Unfortunately, the number of persons engaged in production in connection with this industry is only 3.18 per cent. of the population.

Mr. COLLINS: Cultivation, not production.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Yes. Those few people may produce sufficient foodstuffs for Queensland, but we have a very large amount of money to pay in London every year for interest, and we either have to export our produce—pay in produce—or pay in gold, and if the time comes when Queensland has to send gold to London—when her exports fall so low—money is going to be far more scarce than it is. It is going to have a very big effect upon industrial matters and upon production, because the interest will be dearer. We should not float loans locally, neither should we encourage people by higher rates of interest to take up bonds in the Treasury—

Mr. COLLINS: What would you do?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Because every £1,000,000 taken up locally—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member should deal with that on the Treasury vote.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: But this has to do with the agricultural industry, and I am dealing with the difficulties of the primary producer in financing his means of production, and every £1,000,000 you float here in any way whatever, instead of bringing it here to lend to the farmer and producer, you are making that money so much scarcer. You are taking money into the Treasury that should be used for production; you are increasing the rate of interest to the producer, and instead of the producer being able to borrow money at 5 per cent. or 6 per cent., on account of the Treasury taking the money and paying 6 per cent., the producer and the man who is going in for manufacturing has to pay an extra 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. It would pay every farmer in Queensland to-day to sell out his farm and put his money into the Treasury at 6 per cent.

We have not done all that we should for the primary producer. I am going to have a deputation to wait upon the Minister for Agriculture, as soon as I can arrange it, on different matters, otherwise there are other things which I would go into. The value of the land depends upon what you can take from it, and neither this Government nor past Governments have done their duty to enable the man on the land to make the best of his products. We have had a Co-operative Production Bill, under which men are lent money at 4 per cent. That was introduced by the Denham Government; it was an excellent thing, but this Government raised the interest by 1 per cent.

Mr. BRENNAN (Toowoomba): We have heard a great deal during the session from the Opposition regarding the man on the land, and his treatment by the Labour Government, and the legislation passed by this



Government. The hon. member for Drayton, with his tongue in his cheek, refers to the fact that past Governments have done nothing for the farmer, and that neither has this Government. The fact of his associating past Governments with this Government, after the way he abused this Government during the session, only shows that he is afraid, and knows that, by comparison with the administration of past Governments, this Government shines out as the friend of the farmer.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The others left them alone; they did not rob them.

Mr. BRENNAN: We know the way this Government have been out to assist the farmer by giving him at the commencement cheap land which, after all, is the most important factor for the man on the land. They give him land at a price at which he can produce.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Give it to him at 2s. 6d. an acre.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member for Drayton says land is only worth what it is capable of producing. That is this Government's policy. The Labour Government stands for perpetual lease rental based on a value at which the land can produce. That is exactly the feeling which the hon. member for Drayton has regarding the value of the land, and yet he says that this Government has not done the best it can for the farmer. That point alone goes to show that this Government is, and has been, protecting the man on the land. The men on the land will not have to put their capital into the land, nor have a mortgage from the bank at high rates of interest. This Government gives them an opportunity—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question of land tenure does not come within the scope of this vote.

Mr. BRENNAN: I say that during the past five years the farmers in Queensland have had a pretty hard trial. We had big wheat crops on the Downs in 1915, but excessive rains caused rust, which ruined the crops. The Government are not to be blamed for that. The Labour Government has found seed wheat for the farmers, and the farmers, unfortunately, are unable to repay them. This year the Labour Government will come to the rescue as in other years.

Mr. MORGAN: When it is too late.

Mr. BRENNAN: The Government last year bought seed wheat, and offered it to the farmers at a price. Some farmers bought it at a low price—something like 5s. 6d. or 6s.—a flat rate: others would not buy it, and the Agricultural Department had something like 4,000 bags left over, and although the hon. member for Murilla says it was too late, others paid 7s. 6d. cash rather than buy from the Labour Government on liberal terms at a lower price. That only goes to show how far their minds are poisoned against this Administration.

Mr. MORGAN: Your figures are very much astray.

Mr. BRENNAN: This Government has tried its hardest to protect the farmer against the middleman. There are two or three middlemen in the Opposition who make huge profits out of farmers' produce.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: What does the Produce Agency do?

Mr. BRENNAN: The State Produce Agency is one of the best agencies in Brisbane.

The other day I was in a Darling Downs electorate, and was told that the State Produce Agency will buy anything at all—honey, rabbit skins, etc.—when the private agency will turn them down and refuse to purchase. But there is one thing we must do so as to make this agency a success: we must have accommodation for storage for the farmers' produce in Brisbane. We must be in a position to put produce into that store to save the farmers demurrage, and allow it to remain there until the market rights itself. At the present time there is a ring in the Roma Street Markets—the purchases there are controlled by the middlemen. Everybody knows that is true. So that we must, as a Government, point out to the farmer how the middleman is still getting him.

We also have trouble about bags. The middlemen are robbing the farmers with regard to bags. The farmer sells his produce at so much per cwt. or per ton, and is not allowed anything for the bags. The same system should be established with regard to bags as at present exists with regard to bottles. There is a bottle exchange which deals in one brand of bottles. We should have a system whereby no person can buy or sell a bag with a particular brand on, but the bag must be returned to the farmer, and he must be given credit for it. There should be no buying or trafficking in bags. If the Agricultural Department will take that question into consideration, it will save the farmers some thousands of pounds every year. It is a most important question, and should be looked into.

Toowoomba is regarded as the greatest centre of cereal-growing in Queensland, and therefore we should have the market reports wired every evening from Brisbane to the Toowoomba papers—not that I am in keeping with the conduct of the Toowoomba papers, but they are largely circulated amongst the farmers—so that the farmers on the Downs will know the ruling rates before they sell their produce. I think that should be done. That will give the

[4.30 p.m.] farmer on the Downs a big assistance. The hon. member for Drayton referred to the fact that there has been a falling off in cultivation, but I would point out that there has been a falling off in cultivation right throughout Australia. But that has not been caused by the administration of this Government. Everybody knows that this Government has done more for the farmer than any other Government. Everybody admits that. (Opposition dissent.) Take the advances to farmers and settlers—how many men now would have been well off if they had been able to get a few pounds when they first commenced farming?

Mr. CORSER: There is no fault to find with the Act, but the working of it is rotten.

Mr. BRENNAN: I say that that Act is going to do a great deal of good for the farmer. The hon. member for Drayton also referred to the fact that four butter factories had closed down during the year. Two of those factories, I know, have commenced operations again. I know a private individual has started, at Southbrook, a condensed milk factory, and is paying higher prices for milk than any other factory.

Mr. BAYLEY: There is no factory at Southbrook.

*Mr. Brennan.]*

Mr. BRENNAN: Well, There is a factory at Wyreema, and that is very close to Southbrook. Because I made a slight mistake in the locality, we find hon. members opposite quibbling again. Anything to smother up the actual facts. They know that cream is going from Toowoomba to Wyreema to that private factory, which is strangling two or three co-operative concerns because they offer 1d. or 2d. more for their milk. That is one of the reasons why some of the factories are closing down, and it is time the farmers were protected against themselves; and, if given an opportunity, they will do so. The Opposition are always very keen in humour when the farmer question arises. I have twenty or thirty farmers in my district who are now experimenting in the conservation of fodder. One has  $\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. as an experiment to find out the smallest amount of fodder that will ferment. The theory at the present time is that 10 tons is the smallest amount that can be conserved in fodder. That has been my idea for the last three years—to experiment in these things, because, notwithstanding the fact that I am a lawyer, I am greatly interested in the working of experiments for the benefit of the farmers. The conservation of fodder is a very serious matter. The twenty farmers who are experimenting in this matter are receiving no assistance from the Government, and I trust that when they put bigger quantities in their silos the Government will advance them something towards their labour. After all is said and done, even the conservation of fodder in small quantities is a big help to the farmer, as this will provide him against the drought. I would like to see the Minister offer some substantial prize for ensilage every year at our exhibitions. It will create interest in farming, and the reason farming has not been the success in the past is because the farmer relies too much on nature.

Mr. CORSER: Ensilage is not an experiment.

Mr. BRENNAN: I say that ensilage is an experiment. Practically nothing has been done so far in the conservation of fodder, and I am very glad to see that the Opposition are taking the matter seriously—that they will listen attentively when spoken to in a sensible manner.

Mr. MORGAN (Murilla): I am sorry that for many years the Department of Agriculture has not seen fit to increase this vote. We have been told that during the past year or two the salvation of Australia, and particularly Queensland, is production. Unfortunately, the Government is not doing what it should do to encourage production. While the value of produce has increased considerably, the amount produced has gone down to a great extent. These Estimates show only an increase of £11,000. Personally, I would not have objected if they had increased another £50,000, provided that the money had been used to give genuine encouragement to the people on the land and bring about production. There is one matter in respect of seed wheat that I will read from the report of the Director of Agriculture for the year just expired. It states—

“Every reasonable attempt was made to make the public aware of the distribution, but the results have been very disappointing in the light of the representations made that the farmers were without seed and unable to obtain it.

[Mr. Brennan.

“The following comparison of figures will illustrate the position:—

	Number of farmers who made preliminary application.	Number of farmers supplied with seed.	Quantity of seed distributed. Bushels.
1916	1,809	1,389	87,785
1919	803	448	16,794

“From these figures it will be seen that there is a considerable difference between the number who made a preliminary application and the number who, complying with the conditions, received the grain asked for. Another great difference will be noticed between the total quantity of the distributions in 1919 and the total asked for in the preliminary applications this year. As a result, the department found itself with a large quantity of good seed grain upon its hands for disposal to the best advantage; and for a quantity of graded wheat sold by auction in Toowoomba, the high value of 11s. 4d. was obtained, but the average of the sale was 9s. 3d. per bushel.

“A curious experience of this distribution, in comparison with that of former years, was the number of people who paid cash for their seed instead of accepting the terms that were offered. They numbered 248 people, leaving only 200 who received seed on terms. At the time of writing—notwithstanding that more wheat and barley had, owing to the misleading information and advice that was given to the department, to be sold to millers and others than was distributed to farmers for seed—the net loss stood at £1,229; and it may be taken that a fair proportion of this loss was caused by the heavy expenditure incurred through the seed arriving during heavy weather, and to its being stacked upon the wharf without shelter. The consequence was that several hundred bags were wetted, and the contents had to be spread, dried, and rebagged in clean bags.”

Now I want to point out the reason of this, and I am sorry that the hon. member for Toowoomba has left the Chamber.

Mr. COLLINS: Why don't you finish the paragraph? I am following you, if no one else is.

Mr. MORGAN: What is the use of finishing the paragraph when it has no relation to the subject on which I am going to speak. The Government had not this wheat ready for the farmer when it was necessary. I can give him my personal illustration in respect of that. Last May I attended the Toowoomba show. I was told by the gentleman in charge of the wheat business that wheat was available for distribution, and he showed me samples that were on view at the exhibition. The quality of the wheat was good. The price was right, although not in accordance with that quoted by the hon. member for Toowoomba. The price asked for by the Government was 8s. 3d. per bushel, not 5s. or 6s. a bushel as stated, although I will admit that it was 2s. a bushel cheaper than the seedsmen were asking for seed wheat in Toowoomba at that time. I wanted wheat, and I had only a day or two previously ordered about £23 worth of seed wheat, for which I paid 10s. 6d. a bushel. I could have obtained this wheat



from the Government at 8s. 3d., but I did not then know that the Government had it. But even if I had known they had it, it was then too late. It is ridiculous to place seed wheat in the hands of the farmers in June.

Mr. HARTLEY: I have seen wheat sown in August.

Mr. MORGAN: I have seen wheat sown in January, but it is not advisable to do it. We are talking about the average year on the Downs. From a grain point of view, wheat in Queensland should be sown from the 1st April to the end of May. Of course, we know it is possible to get a crop sometimes if wheat is sown in July—but that is extraordinary. It is a recognised fact that in Queensland the sowing of wheat should commence in April and continue until the end of May to secure the best results. If the Government were anxious to assist the farmers, they should have the wheat available when it is necessary, and in time for planting. We see that 803 applications were made for wheat, whereas only 440 applicants received it, owing to the fact that they would not wait. They were not going to miss the time when it was necessary to plant. Again, I would like to ask the Minister why the Government is doing nothing this year? No doubt a deputation will wait on the Government in May, and by that time they have the wheat ready for the farmer it will be the end of June. I understand that the South Australian Government have written to the Queensland Government asking them if they wanted seed wheat, and if they required any they would reserve it for them. But, unfortunately, the Queensland Government have decided to do nothing in that direction, although we have just come through one of the worst droughts on record, and this seed is particularly scarce. I cannot understand why the Government should not do everything in their power to assist the farmer when we are told by the Press that a fixed price of 7s. 10d. a bushel for wheat has been granted for the next crop. Look at that enormous price.

Mr. COLLINS: Look at the price of bread locally.

Mr. MORGAN: Never mind about the local price of bread. If we are going to encourage local production we must assist the farmer. If the unions applied to the Arbitration Court and they can show that wheat and bread and other products have gone up in price, they can get an increase in wages. The wage-earner always gets an increase in wages to compensate him for the rise in products. As far as the price of wheat is concerned, we have a right to get the world's parity, and the world's parity for wheat is equal to 7s. 6d. a bushel in Australia. If we get the world's parity for our wheat and other products, it may increase the cost of living, but our Arbitration Courts regulate that by continually increasing the wages of the workers.

Mr. BULCOCK: You know the worker is under a bond for twelve months when he gets an award.

Mr. MORGAN: If we get a high price for our wheat, wool, and other products in the markets of the world, we get it back in the form of gold or its equivalent, and we are able to pay greater taxation. Then, again, if the production of wheat increases by millions of bushels our railways will

become payable, and in every way we are likely to be better off owing to the fact that Australia, climatically and geographically is suited for producing the world's food supplies. We depend for our prosperity on what the soil will produce. The cities cannot exist without the country; but, unfortunately, the country people are gradually drifting into the cities. The report of the Department of Agriculture shows that there were 6,259 less people engaged in cultivation in 1915 than in 1917. That is a deplorable fact.

Mr. BULCOCK: That is not peculiar to Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: Simply because it is not peculiar to Queensland, simply because there is a disease here that is driving people off the land, are we to let matters drift? Are we not going to check that disease? Are we going to say, "Let it rip, we need not bother"? We know perfectly well that it is not only applicable to Queensland, but the fact is that people are leaving the country, and the only thing we can do is to try and encourage people to go back into the bush, and we can only do that by making conditions in the country more prosperous; by making the emoluments which a man gets in the bush greater; by being able to show those men who are prepared to come to Brisbane and join the tramways and the Police Force that there is more money to be made in the bush. Until we recognise that fact we are going to drift, drift, drift, and our country is going to go back instead of progressing as it should. Take the whole of Queensland to-day, with the exception of a few isolated spots, and what do we find? Take the vast areas in the West and Central portions of the State; do you find the progress there that you had twenty years ago? Do you not find that the country is rapidly deteriorating and going into pear and the different pests multiplying? People are not keeping their lands in the same condition to-day that they were ten or fifteen years ago. Go where you will and you find fences are not kept in repair, ringbarking is not being done, and the homesteads are falling to pieces. There is decay wherever you go.

Mr. COLLINS: Oh! cut it out.

Mr. MORGAN: It is a fact, and you cannot get out of it. And until we cease from bleeding the man on the land, as we are continually bleeding him for the sake of the city people, we are going to have this continual drift from the country. Unfortunately, the people in the bush have been the working bullocks for the people in the city, and the sooner that is stopped the better.

I want to say a word or two in regard to the bonus that is paid on fox skins. The different boards find that the £1 bonus which has to be paid for fox skins is ruinous and will soon bring about the insolvency of the boards. The time is ripe for the Minister to bring in a Bill to reduce the bonus on fox skins. The dingo at £1 is not over-valued, but fox skins at the present moment are worth anything from 15s. to £1 each, and if the skin were marked in some way, as in Victoria, and returned to the trapper, then he would get £1 or more for the skin and with a bonus of, say, 7s. 6d. from the board, he would be well remunerated. At the present time when a skin comes along it is taken charge of by the board and destroyed. They are destroying useful fur.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Wrong again.

*Mr. Morgan.]*

Mr. MORGAN: In many cases the skin is destroyed and in many cases the scalp only is taken, which is of no value. Thousands of pounds worth of good fur every year is destroyed owing to the system in operation at the present time.

I wish also to refer to the question of irrigation, and no doubt the hon. member for Bowen will be interested in this. We find that in the year 1913, according to the report, there were 11,904 acres under irrigation in Queensland, while in 1918 there were only 6,947 under irrigation. During the regime of the Labour Government the area under irrigation has decreased from 11,904 acres to 6,947 acres, and yet we are told they are out to assist irrigation. The future of Queensland depends a great deal on water conservation and irrigation, and where the conditions are suitable irrigation can be made a profitable concern. Until this is done we are not going to increase the facilities in our country districts. Money should be spent, not in thousands, but in millions, in locking the principal rivers of the State, and the Government should go in for a scheme of irrigation.

With regard to the testing of seeds by the department, I would like to point out that the seeds we have been getting during the last two or three years from the seed merchants have not been in accordance with the standard. I know the department has carried out many experiments, and I would like to know what is done with the seed that is condemned? When these seeds are found not to be up to the required germination standard provided by the Act, are they taken possession of by the department, or is the seed allowed to be distributed amongst the farmers? I know that during the war there was difficulty in obtaining seeds because a great many of our seeds were imported from Germany and other parts of the world, but the time has come when there should be more care taken to see that the seed merchants are not allowed to sell to farmers seed four years old. Some strict measures should be adopted, and a few prosecutions instituted. It is only necessary to prosecute some of these seed merchants, when the unsatisfactory state of things will be done away with. I would also like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that he is not providing money for the purchase of dairy heifers. In the other States during the drought they provided money and also bought a great number of dairy heifers, and when the drought broke they were able to distribute those heifers amongst the farmers. To-day the drought has broken in Queensland, and many farmers have any amount of feed, but no cattle. We have an Act which makes provision for granting up to £200 for the purchase of dairy cattle, but the regulations have so altered the spirit of the Act that it is not in accordance with what was intended. We were told by the Minister that if a man had received an advance from the Agricultural Bank, and the Agricultural Bank refused to advance any more owing to the fact that his liability was fully absorbed, then he could come along to the Government and obtain a loan of £200 under the Act for the purchase of dairy cattle, but what do we find? The regulation

says—

"No payment of the whole or any portion of any advance shall be made by the Minister until due security therefor has been given to the satisfaction of the

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Governor in Council in the case of a company, or to the satisfaction of the Minister in the case of a farmer, dairy farmer, or sheep farmer, as the case may be; and no security shall be deemed due security unless it includes—

By way of mortgage over any sheep, dairy cattle, or pigs, or any horse or other live stock belonging to the applicant at the date of his application, or about to be acquired by him on receipt of an advance, and the progeny thereof during the continuance of the security."

Wherever these men have their cattle and other stock mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank, they will be turned down and told that they have not the security; that already the Agricultural Bank possesses a mortgage over their stock and property. When this Bill was going through the House, we were specially told by the Minister that if a man's credit had been exhausted with the Agricultural Bank or any other bank, he could come along to the Government and borrow up to £200 for the purpose of stocking up his country, yet these regulations debar him from doing so. That regulation practically defies members of this House who were in favour of allowing a settler to obtain an advance, notwithstanding the fact that his property was already mortgaged. Then, again, the Minister can order an applicant to come to Brisbane. He must spend £7 or £8 coming 300 or 400 miles to Brisbane in order to interview the Minister. I do not know whether the department intend to give him a free pass or not, but I certainly think they should. If an applicant has to spend £7 or £8 to come to Brisbane, it will be a pretty severe interest. Then, in connection with the production of titles, the regulation provides—

"Any applicant for any advance shall, free of charge, produce, or cause to be produced to the Minister, or to any valuer to whom his application has been submitted by the Minister, or to any officer authorised by the Minister in that behalf, all deeds, instruments of title, plans, records, and other documents relating to the securities offered as aforesaid, as the Minister or such valuer or officer so authorised may require."

A man who has already got a mortgage on his property must produce his deeds before he can get an advance, and yet we were told that this Act was going to help the struggling settler. Numbers of people in my electorate have lost 75 per cent. of their stock during the drought; they have plenty of grass to-day, but they have no money, and they have been looking forward longingly for this Act to be passed. I sent them along an application form and also the pamphlet issued by the department, and when they saw it, they were greatly disappointed. If these regulations are in accordance with the views of the hon. member for Normanby, I am sure they were not the views that he expressed when the Bill was going through the House, and I feel sure that he will have something to say on the matter.

The bell indicated that the time allowed the hon. member by the Standing Orders had expired.

Mr. PETERSON (Normanby): The hon. member for Murilla laid particular stress upon the fact that we have had a decrease in the matter of production. Not one member on this side of the House has attempted

to disprove that statement, but we can put up a good case in regard to the reason for the decrease. I am not going to apologise and say there should not have been a decrease. Take the Darling Downs, for instance.

[5 p.m.] For years the farmers in that area have been attempting to grow wheat. Perhaps one year in five or six they may be successful with their crop, but invariably it is a failure. Later years have proved that more profitable returns can be made from dairying, and the result has been that the farmers on the Darling Downs, in common with those of other parts of Queensland, have determined to go in for something which will give them a quicker and better return. Travelling over the Darling Downs during the past few years one notices that instead of the farmers going in for intense cultivation, as they have done in former years, they are now going in for intense dairying.

MR. GUNN: How is it that dairying is falling off?

MR. PETERSON: The hon. member knows perfectly well that during the past two years we have had in Queensland one of the most disastrous droughts we have ever had, and the Darling Downs, as well as other districts, went through a more severe period than has been experienced at any time in past years. Surely the hon. gentleman, who comes from the land, is fair enough to admit that we cannot show increased production when we have a drought for years?

MR. GUNN: How is it that sheep and cattle have increased in number?

MR. PETERSON: Sheep and cattle have nothing to do with the question of increased production so far as it relates to the growing of crops. The seasons are so variable that the farmers do not go in extensively for crops, but are going in for dairying. As far as the Central district is concerned—and my own electorate particularly—there has been no decrease. Instead of settlement decreasing, we find that during the drought period, day after day, farms were being sold at enhanced prices on the Dawson Valley. There were people coming from all parts of Australia, and the Southern portion of Queensland, who were determined to get in that district and earn a decent living. I can give figures to prove conclusively that although there has been decreased production in Queensland, with the return of normal seasons, with the returns of cheese, butter, and other allied products, we will be able to put up a record year.

MR. ELPHINSTONE: And the return of the National Government.

MR. PETERSON: The Holman Government in New South Wales is a National Government, and we see how they treated the settlers down there in regard to the wheat; how millions of bushels of wheat were allowed to rot. No Government yet has fully realised the possibilities with regard to increased production, unfortunately. Although we criticise Governments, we have to give credit sometimes, and make some allowances. I am prepared to allow that, as far as Queensland is concerned, in the taking away of a large number of men to the war—which tended materially to decrease production—and in the continued droughts we have had, there is an answer to the contentions of hon. members opposite. Those things, however, should not deter us from trying to overcome our difficulties. Up to

the present Queensland has done practically nothing in the way of water conservation and irrigation. Hon. members have referred to that matter this afternoon. I am a keen believer in water conservation and irrigation, and I hold that the Department of Agriculture should have control of that matter. Anything having relation to agriculture should come under that department, and not be relegated to different departments. If we had various streams locked up we would be able to fight droughts in a greater measure than hitherto. I have here evidence of what can be done by water conservation and irrigation. There is a gentleman, Mr. G. Kirk, of Moonmura, in my electorate, who has gone to a great deal of expense to irrigate his orchard. While all other orchards were perishing, by means of water conservation and irrigation, he has been able to produce mangoes like these. (Exhibits two large-sized mangoes.)

MR. PETRIE: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in introducing his dinner to this House? If so, will those articles be laid on the table of the House for the benefit of other members of Parliament? (Laughter.)

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is quite in order in exhibiting those mangoes to illustrate his argument. I would suggest, however, that, as he cannot get them into "Hansard," it would be a graceful act to lay them on the table of the House, so that they can be disposed of in another way. (Renewed laughter.)

MR. PETERSON: The last time I had some examples like this they disappeared before I had finished my speech. However, I do not introduce them merely as a matter of levity, but to show what can be produced by means of water conservation and irrigation. I am convinced that if an orchardist in dry weather can produce such fruit as this, which I think will hold its own with any grown in Queensland, what can we not do by extending the principle all over Queensland? I think the time has come to leave joking alone in matters of this kind. We want to see if it is not up to us to mitigate the effects of drought. I say we can find a remedy if we are only game to tackle the matter thoroughly and enter into schemes at the earliest possible moment. There is no use saying we have not suitable streams in Queensland. Mr. Crowley states there are several good streams available for water conservation and irrigation. Unless we get to business at the earliest possible moment we will be in a worse state when the next drought comes than we were on this particular occasion.

At ten minutes past 5 o'clock p.m.,

MR. KIRWAN relieved the Chairman in the chair.

MR. PETERSON: I hope members will not have to be continually speaking of water conservation and irrigation. As a Government and as a Parliament we should enter into these schemes with a vigour which will redound to the credit, not only of the Government concerned, but also of the people of Queensland.

I would like to deal with the administration of the Co-operative Agricultural Production Act, which I call the Dairy Cattle Act. I am pleased that that measure has become law, and I am hopeful that a considerable amount of benefit will be derived

*Mr. Peterson.]*

from it. Upon perusing the regulations, I admit that the Minister has been very open and frank. Every person who intends to borrow from the department can see in black and white exactly what is expected of him. I looked forward with a great measure of gladness to the passage of that Bill, and I shall be keenly disappointed if it is not administered in the spirit in which Parliament passed it. I say that candidly, and I make no bones about it. It can cost me my seat and the refusal of endorsement. If this Act is not administered in the way we were led by the Minister to believe it would be, I will take the responsibility of criticising it. The Minister, I believe, is a gentleman who knows the trials and struggles of the producer in the early stages, and will see that the settlers get the fairest possible deal. The hon. member for Murilla, in criticising the regulations, omitted to mention that in one portion there is a provision which enables a settler who already is mortgaged up to the hilt to the Agricultural Department to arrange with the butter factory concerned to repay to the department, per medium of part of the cream cheque as security. If that is generally known amongst settlers it will overcome the difficulty as far as dairy cattle—of which the hon. member was complaining—are concerned. I think when applications come along to the Minister they will be treated on their merits. I have every reason to believe the hon. gentleman will give everyone a fair and square go.

Mr. MORGAN: What about the £200 for sheep?

Mr. PETERSON: There may be something in the hon. member's contention about sheep. I am more concerned at the present moment about getting the settlers started with their dairy herds. I am sure the Minister is just as much concerned as I am, because he realises that if the progress of the State is to be maintained we must make available immediate assistance to those people who are anxious to assist in production.

Mr. MORGAN: Regulation 13 damns the whole thing.

Mr. PETERSON: I am very thankful to the department for some time ago sending up Mr. Brooks to Rockhampton, and establishing there what is known as the Agricultural Bureau. Mr. Brooks has been of invaluable assistance to the farmers of the district. Many farmers have availed themselves of his services, and I feel sure they are reaping the benefit. I have many records of the good work performed by that gentleman, and I can assure the Committee that I have not received a single word of protest or anything of a derogatory nature regarding Mr. Brooks's efforts towards assisting these people in showing them the way to grow crops, and in matters of that particular kind. I hope the department will not withdraw him from that district, but will allow him to continue the good work he is doing there, and increase his usefulness. The Central district is going ahead by leaps and bounds. Orchards are being taken up everywhere. Pineapple growing is being gone in for intensely in various localities on the Dawson Valley. Every available piece of land has been taken up. I can say truthfully that, as far as the Normanby electorate is concerned, I am not able to get land opened fast enough for the people who are desirous of getting upon the land in order to increase production. Only the other day there was

at my house a gentleman who came from the north coast of New South Wales. He has come up to Queensland for the purpose of investing £5,000 in grazing and dairying property in Queensland—the Central district preferred.

I would like to ask the Minister if he can state whether anything has been done with regard to the Harvey fruit lure. With the hon. member for Lockyer I have been out and inspected this fruit lure, and I am convinced that, whatever may be the expert's opinion of it, that fruit lure is one of the greatest successes of its kind. Mr. Harvey demonstrated to me at his nursery that it was an entire success. I believe that if it were adopted it would be the means of saving thousands of pounds to the orchardists of Queensland.

I would like to say a word or two now with regard to the Warren State Farm, which is situated in my electorate. For many years that farm has been performing useful work. If the Minister could see his way clear to pay a visit to it at an early date he would see that Mr. Colledge, the manager, is a very competent man. There is no more painstaking or hardworking man than Mr. Colledge. When the department selected him they selected a man to whom they could entrust the management of the place. I do hope the Minister will pay a visit there, not so much to find fault, but rather to assist the manager to put the place on a better footing than at present. I also wish to put in a plea for the establishment of a training farm on the Dawson Valley, where there is a very large settlement. Warren, at present, does not serve such a large district as the Dawson Valley does. A great number of the farmers in the Dawson Valley cannot find time to go to the Warren State Farm, because it is on another line and means a considerable amount of expense.

I hope that at the end of the coming year—which has been ushered in so well by the beautiful and bounteous showers of rain—the department will have every reason to be proud of its record, and that when the next annual report is placed before Parliament it will be able to show good results, and that hon. members on the other side will have no reason to complain.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): At one time, when the agricultural industry was described as the most important in the State, there would be a smile all round the Committee, but during the past four years, since the importance of food production has been forced upon us, and the fact that unless our agricultural industries are encouraged people will go short of food, I think the Committee generally began to realise better than they previously did the place which this industry takes in our life. I find that in Queensland the agricultural, pastoral, and like industries are something like 64 per cent. of the whole of our industrial life. There is no department in the State which calls for greater initiative and greater enterprise on the part of the Ministry than the Agricultural Department. Those who can look back to the eighties will remember how the dairying industry was advanced by years through the initiative of the Minister at that time, otherwise it would have been years later before the industry attained the dimensions it has. Much can be done by the Ministerial head of this department in the way of establishing new industries. In view of

[Mr. Peterson.



the great food shortage that prevails in the thickly-populated countries of Europe—where something like 100,000,000 people are on the verge of starvation and are dependent upon overseas resources for their food—it becomes imperative upon us to do our utmost to develop our great resources. After all, we are only a handful—about 5,000,000—occupying a continent. I very much question whether we can make good our claim to a monopoly of it unless we do something for our fellow-men in the way of exporting food.

I find that in Queensland, instead of progress, there is retrogression. In the sugar industry there is a falling off of over 15,000 acres; in maize there is a falling off of 15,119 acres; potatoes, a falling off of over 4,000 acres, and so on. It has been said that the same thing is happening in other States. But it is not happening to anything like the same extent. In some of those States there has been an increase. According to the "Year Book" figures for 1917-18, there has been an increase in New South Wales of 100 acres, or thereabouts, in potatoes. In another State there has been an increase in the acreage under green fodder, and in another State an increase in the acreage under hay. In some other States, also, wheat is fairly well holding its own. The falling off in the wheat acreage in Queensland is appalling. I do not think the "Commonwealth Year Book" figures are yet complete, but I am afraid, when they are, the position will be close to disastrous. The acreage under wheat has fallen off from 127,000—in round numbers—to 21,000.

Mr. COLLINS: What are you quoting from?

Mr. SWAYNE: From the "Year Book of Australia." And that reminds me of the fruit production. We will take Bowen, which is looked upon as one of the largest fruitgrowing districts, and where there are very enterprising and up-to-date growers. From 1916 there has been a steady falling off. I am quoting from the months of April, May, June, July, and August. In 1916 there was an export of 95,000 cases. In 1919, during the season, there were only 55,968 cases exported, and in the intervening years there have been decreases.

Mr. COLLINS: Where did you get those figures from?

Mr. SWAYNE: From the department. This department is one that everyone is essentially interested in, and we should, as far as possible, discuss it with a view to improving the position, and not with a view of one party scoring from the other. Speaking from experience, I say that strikes are a very big factor in the discouragement that is taking place in regard to farming. I can conceive of no greater obstacle to the increasing of production than strikes. With regard to the pastoral branch, we know that amongst the food requirements of the world meat has a very important place, and Australia particularly looms largely as a country which should be one of the great sources of supplies in that regard. We find that, from about 1895 we have been stationary in regard to our herds, sometimes exceeding and sometimes diminishing the number we had in 1895, but we have hung about that limit ever since. In that year Australia had nearly 12,000,000 cattle. At the present time we have less than that number. As regards Queensland, in 1895 we had 6,822,401. Since then it has decreased, and now we are only just over the 5,000,000 mark.

On the other hand, our population has largely increased. It therefore looks very much as if, in the near future, Australia would hardly produce enough meat to feed her own population. The population of Australia in 1895 was 3,491,000. The population is now just over 5,000,000. In Queensland in 1895 we had, I think, 443,000 people.

Our population to-day is 700,000 people. So that it will be seen that even in Australia our population is increasing in a much greater ratio than is our stock. The only conclusion one can come to is that we must alter our methods. Speaking as one who has thought over the matter and has some practical knowledge of these things, I say we shall have to use the plough in conjunction with our pastoral occupations. The old days when we depended entirely upon natural grasses have passed. We shall have to launch out in new methods. The conservation of fodder and irrigation has been mentioned. I do not think that irrigation will ever be a very big matter in Queensland; we can greatly expand upon the present position, and, as far as any valuable crops are concerned, no doubt irrigation will be used in that connection; but, as regards feeding live stock, I think we must depend more upon the conservation of fodder that has been produced during the good years. And that opens up this feature: we can hardly expect the farmer to carry over big stocks of hay—dead capital—crops which have cost him large sums of money to produce, without some assistance from the State. In New South Wales they tackled the problem to a minor extent lately. They made advances upon fodder stored in the past. If we want to avoid the huge losses that occur from time to time owing to droughts; if we want to save our producing population from running into debt as they are compelled to do at such times, we shall have to consider some way of financing the producer in carrying over the surplus from the good seasons to the bare seasons. I think that is a matter worthy of the Minister's attention. I read recently a very interesting address delivered by the principal of the Gaitton College; and, while on this subject, I may state that it is refreshing to see Government officials going outside their own duties and concerning themselves in the big questions of the day—because this is one of the big questions of the day—how we can avert the serious ruinous losses that from time to time arise through drought. In regard to the same subject there is another method that we can deal with to increase the

[5.30 p.m.] carrying capacity. It all seems to me that we can do a lot more in the way of artificial grasses, and I think the Department of Agriculture should lead the way. I think it should carry on a thorough system of investigation and experimenting in this regard. Before I get away from the question of fodder conservation I would like to point out the necessity for a more complete system of statistics. I do not think the Department of Agriculture could tell us what amount of fodder it requires to carry us over a two years' drought or a three years' drought. If we are going to lay by a store for a bad season, we want to know what amount of fodder we would require for that season. I think it is time that we knew more about our needs than we do know; the department should do more than they are doing in that respect. I noticed the other day the remarks of the

*Mr. Swayne.]*

judge in the Arbitration Court, who stated that the statistics were not complete with regard to the sugar industry. Of course, that is another matter. Getting back to the matter of artificial grasses, anyone who has travelled overland north of Rockhampton knows what can be done in the way of cultivating those grasses. It can be seen on the North Coast line in a small way what really can be done, and what additions to our grazing capacity can be made by laying areas down with artificial grasses. It would not cost very much to clear the timber. First of all, what the department should do is to find out the best kind of artificial grass. In my district we have two very good grasses—Rhodes and *paspalum*—but a better grass than either of these two might be found. Then there is the matter of preparing the land—work should be done in this regard.

I might mention that our value of export of beef last year was over seven millions of money, the exact amount being £7,322,882. Well, if we can only add one-fifth by the adoption of such methods as I have mentioned, or even 25 per cent., you will realise what an addition there would be to the money circulating in Queensland. Surely that should not be beyond our power to increase the output by 25 per cent.! While I am speaking on new subjects that the Government might go into—and I might mention that I have urged these matters before previous Governments—there is the matter of tropical agriculture apart from sugar-growing. I am not going to speak on the sugar question just now; I will do that later on when I will have an opportunity of doing so under another vote. We know how many articles can be grown in the tropical climates that are included in our daily diet. One time in Queensland a large quantity of rice was grown; there was also a large quantity of coffee produced at one time. For some reason or other these industries have practically died right out. Talking about experimental farms, I think, myself, that we should have one in a suitable locality in the North. The one at Cairns—Kamerunga—is not in a suitable locality. Particular attention should be paid to these industries by the Government, and if it is found on our present standard of labour that they are not remunerative, the Government should go to the Commonwealth and prove that we can grow the articles, and have a protective tariff placed on them. That would enable us to successfully grow these articles in Queensland and be independent of the foreigner. The sugar industry is the only one carried on in the tropics at the present time, but there is plenty of room for other industries. If the Government would only do as I have suggested, they would find out how far these articles could be successfully grown from a commercial standpoint.

At ten minutes to 6 o'clock p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I do not intend to say very much on this vote. I do not intend to pose as an expert either in agriculture or farming, but I would like to ask one or two questions of hon. members of the Opposition. I would like them to tell me how it would be possible to relieve some of the difficulties the farmer—the man on the land—is suffering from—that is, if he is suffering from any big difficulty but the exorbitant upkeep of those who never grow

[*Mr. Swayne.*

anything, who never make anything. That is the worst thing the man on the land suffers from.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Like your State Produce Agency.

Mr. HARTLEY: I do not think the man on the land cares a snap of the finger for 90 per cent. of the members of Parliament; if you will only keep clear of him and give him a square go, he will work out his own destiny on the land. (Hear, hear!) There are some grave disabilities that the man on the land and the man who wants to go on the land and cannot get there—who is the man I am most concerned about—have to face, and all these go back to the same thing: The grabbing selfishness of the man who had the money and bought up the whole of the land in the first place. That is the biggest menace that the farmer has to face to-day.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There is plenty of cheap land in the Rockhampton district.

Mr. HARTLEY: You want the worker to toil for a pittance, to toil for you so that you can put money in the bank and drive about in your motor-cars, and such like. I think the worker has been very good to stand it so long—all this humbug and ranting hypocrisy.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Let him produce his own food.

Mr. HARTLEY: I have no hesitation in saying that 99½ per cent. of the workers of Queensland could work you blind in one hour.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They must be very much different from you then.

Mr. HARTLEY: If you want to work, I will work two hours to your one, and I will have you on your back in two hours.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. HARTLEY: What I want to point out is that one of the big disabilities of the man on the land, and more particularly the man who wants to go on the land, is the high price he has to pay for suitable land within easy access of a railway line. There are plenty of young men who are willing to take up land and who would take it up if the land was available, but it has already been grabbed by the man with money. Take all that land on the Enoggera-Terror's Creek line. I know that land has been grabbed by a big Brisbane draper, and I know that it is our fault for allowing it to go. It is an impossibility now to buy land in that particular district unless a man is prepared to pay £30 or £40 an acre for it. That is the big disadvantage—not what the Minister for Agriculture pays for seed wheat or whether he distributes in April or May or any other month. Here is another thing which I want hon. members opposite to tell me something about.

Mr. SIZER: What big Brisbane draper are you referring to?

Mr. HARTLEY: If you will go to the Lands Department you will find out for yourself. You will find that one of the biggest drapers in the Valley has that land.

Mr. SIZER: Do you know that the Government have got that land now?

Mr. HARTLEY: No, I do not know it, and I do not think they have.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You have fallen in again.



Mr. HARTLEY: My information is as recent as last week. It is the greatest humbug in the world for the hon. member for Draxton and the hon. member for Murilla to talk about the retarding of production when things like this are going on. Talk about production! Why, I noticed a glut of pine-apples in the market to-day, and buyers were practically offering anything they liked, just because there was no outlet for this crop.

Mr. SIZER: What about your State cannery?

Mr. HARTLEY: Well, the State cannery has only been going eight or ten days, and it is going as fast as it can. You cannot get any business into running order in a week. To get that plant into running order will take at least three or four weeks. I know that the shipping strike has somewhat retarded the export of fruit lately to other markets that would have been open to receive them, and this is another matter that should be looked into by the department. Why should any man take up farming land or engage in dairying pursuits at the present time when he can run cattle and get a big price for his beef?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: When he can earn more money in the cities?

Mr. HARTLEY: He comes to the cities because he cannot get away; because he cannot get land except at a big price other than a few acres of Crown lands as they are being opened; and when he does get land he cannot get on to it because of the extortionate prices charged for implements to work his land. At the commencement of the war ten-gauge wire was quoted at £10 a ton, and the other day I got a quotation and the price quoted was £47 a ton. Who is going to fence a 40-acre farm with wire at that price?

Mr. GUNN: Can't he put up a "dog-leg" fence?

Mr. HARTLEY: Cannot he get a brush fence, and allow all the paddies of his next door neighbour to come in? Why cannot the hon. member talk sense?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We have been feeding you cheap as well as paying these high prices.

Mr. HARTLEY: The hon. member would not have a hard job to feed me cheap after obtaining directors' fees from four companies. One of the loads that the man on the land has to carry is the directors of these cheese and butter factories. Where is the justification for paying £47 a ton for wire? Where is the increase in the cost of wire? It is imported from overseas, and wages in those countries have not increased by 100 per cent.

Mr. MOORE: Newcastle is making wire.

Mr. HARTLEY: Newcastle is making wire, and they are charging the same rate. You cannot buy Australian wire at less than a couple of pounds cheaper than English wire. This increase is going back to the capitalists. Is that not retarding production? If you put up the price of the implements a man must have to work his farm, is that not going to retard production? Of course, it is. Take any other line you like. Take nails. Nails have increased by 300 per cent. to 400 per cent. Then take bolts. You could buy 1 lb. of 3-inch bolts for 3d. at one time, and now you cannot buy a single bolt for less than 3d., and a small

bolt at that. These are all required on a farm. Take hand pumps or power pumps, or anything you like. Four years ago you could buy a hand pump for £2 15s., while you cannot buy a hand pump for less than £6 now, and yet they were mostly imported prior to the war. Take the ordinary long-handled shovel. I do not know that hon. members opposite are very well acquainted with that implement. I do not suppose they hurt their backs or have to make their living by working it, but they must know the price. It was 3s. 6d. before the war, and to-day you have to pay 12s. 6d. for it at any store in Brisbane. Then, hon. members opposite say, "We want to increase production"; put more men on the land to buy more shovels and more pumps and make bigger dividends for your Queen street farmers. That is what we have to get away from—the middleman.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And yet you won't let us put our produce in the free trade market of London after having to pay these prices.

Mr. HARTLEY: You can make your speech when you get up. We had a big drought raging up till the New Year, and this Government tried to get fodder from the South. What did the Queen street farmers and the Roma street farmers do? Did they say, "We will give you long credit? We will sell it to you at the lowest price?" That was easily the humane thing to do.

Mr. GUNN: What did the State Agency do?

Mr. HARTLEY: The State Agency could not get it. I notice Barnes and Co—I specify Barnes and Co., because these gentlemen are members of this House and pose as the friends of the farmer, and though I have no personal animus in specifying them, they should practise what they preach. Just before Christmas I happened to look through the market reports and I saw chaff was somewhere in the vicinity of £1 to £1 1s. a cwt. Barnes and Co. offered a big lot, and £1 2s. was the best offer, and it was passed. Why was not that chaff sold? Stock were dying and men were being ruined. Why was not that chaff sold? It was a big enough offer. I suppose it did not cost two "bob" a bag, but they did not sell it. They wanted to rake in big dividends. It is just about time this hypocrisy and humbug ceased, and the man on the land understood that his salvation lies with himself and in his own common sense. I want to make this suggestion to the Minister for Agriculture: that the solution of a good deal of the retarding of settlement lies in making the implements which the man on the land requires available to him at the cheapest possible price. And with that object in view I want him to take the matter up seriously, and ask the department to go into the question of importing tools which the man on the land requires. I do not want the Government to start an agricultural implement factory, as that will take too long, but to buy the implements in the best market and sell them to the bona fide man on the land at a slight increase on cost price. If that is done then settlement on the land will be given a big impetus, and you will stop the ceaseless grind of the man paying off a mortgage and helping to build these big buildings in Brisbane. Men are coming to Brisbane because the farms are mortgaged up to the hilt to buy implements to work the land.

*Mr. Hartley.]*

Mr. CORSER: I might say that the agricultural industry right along has suffered from the fact that implements and wire have increased in price, but on the top of all this we have continuously protested against the increased hardships in the way of taxation. When this increased taxation has been put on we never heard hon. members on the other side admitting that the farmer has had a bad time because of the increased cost of implements. As far as implements go, Mr. Ryan, when he appealed to the electors in 1915, promised the farmers that he would start an implement works. He claimed that that had been done in Western Australia, and he promised that he would immediately start an implement works in Queensland, so as to provide ploughs, binders, reapers, chaffcutters, and other machinery for the farmers, and thereby cut out these great combines that were supposed to be working to the detriment of the man on the land. Why have not the Government done that? The hon. member for Fitzroy points out how necessary it is that something should be done in order to do away with the possibility of people erecting huge buildings in Brisbane out of the profits made on these implements which are sold to the farmers. Why does not the Government fulfil its promise and manufacture the implements here? We know it was only an election cry, and they have no intention whatever of doing any such thing. As for wire, our Lands Department established a system years ago whereby wire was supplied to the farmers at cost price, and it is only during the régime of the Labour Government during the last few years that they have ceased to supply wire to the farmers at cost price. Under previous Governments wire was supplied to the farmers at £12 and £13 per mile. There was no profit made on that wire. We have heard members of the Government complain about ships coming out here from the old country without any cargo. Why did not the State Governments during that time fill these boats with iron and wire, so as to make good the shortage in these commodities? We know that wire and iron have been high in price, but the farmers have not been relieved in any direction by any action of the present Government.

With regard to the price of land, and the few people that are holding it; we must remember that only a little over 6 per cent. of the land in Queensland has been alienated, and if the Queensland Government cannot supply the farmers with sufficient land on which to make a living, then it is a matter for the Government, and not for the men with a little bit of freehold. I know that some of the best lands are still held by the Crown. Good fruit lands could be opened, and if there are too many pineapples being produced to-day, why continue the system of settling soldiers at Beerburum? Why have we flooded Beerburum with pineapple growers if hon. members opposite say there is already a glut in the market, and we should not produce any more?

Mr. COLLINS: Nobody said we should not produce more.

Mr. CORSER: That is the inference.

Mr. KIRWAN: You know the great market is in the South.

Mr. CORSER: It is no use the Government asking us for a remedy. It is for the

[Mr. Corser.

Government to solve this problem. We have pointed out for years the disabilities of the farmers when they cannot get their stuff to a market, and when they do get it to market there is generally a glut.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: In reply to the hon. member for Fitzroy, I would like to give one reason for the retarding of settlement. This is what a farmer wrote to me recently—

"I asked for an exemption, stating my income for the year ending 30th June was £167, and that my expenditure was £253."

You see the difference?

"I have lost 30 head of cows"—

Mr. COLLINS: I rise to a point of order. I ask is the hon. member reading a private letter, and if so, after having read it, will he lay it on the table of the House so that I may see the signature?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I have no objection whatever. The writer says—

"On the 4th instant I again wrote, stating that so far as I could gather I was heavily taxed, and I asked for an exemption, and stated that I had lost another fifty head of cattle."

(Sitting suspended from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.)

Mr. BEBBINGTON: This farmer's income was £167, and his expenditure £253. In one case he lost thirty head of cows, and in the other he lost fifty head. These returns were sent in to the Commissioner of Taxation, and yet he insisted on having £7 6s. 8d. out of that man.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I have no control over that.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: These are some of the reasons why people are leaving the land. Because that man did not pay, the Commissioner inflicted a penalty of 10 per cent., amounting to 14s. 8d.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Did he apply under section 46?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Commissioner insists on that money being paid.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He could have got relief.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Why do you force a man to borrow that amount of money to pay it to the Commissioner? Here is the Commissioner's letter. So that hon. members can see it, I will leave it on the table.

Mr. COLLINS: I represent what, maybe, is the most important agricultural electorate in the whole of Queensland, which produces, not one particular product, but a variety of products. Anyone who takes the time to read this valuable annual report of the Department of Agriculture and Stock will see that that statement is correct. I am sick and tired of listening to hon. members opposite, who seem to think they represent Queensland when they do not. We ought to have a map on the wall showing who does represent Queensland. This side of the House represents Queensland.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Gum trees.

Mr. COLLINS: No; people. And they are intelligent people, or I would not be in this House. (Hear, hear! and laughter.)

They are intelligent farmers—cultivators of the soil.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You are a practical farmer, are you not?

Mr. COLLINS: I told the electors of Bowen that, while I might not be able to plough a straight furrow, I knew what their requirements were. The fact that I was returned a second time shows that they recognised that. (Hear, hear!) I know something of the requirements of the man on the land, and I have championed his cause since I have been in this House. I want hon. members to turn to page 19 of the report of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, because there is there a very important paragraph dealing with the consumption of meat in this State. It reads—

"The consumption for each head of population in this State now stands at 161.21 lb. for the year, and is a considerable reduction from the total for 1911, when it reached 278.89 lb. for each individual for the year. Since 1911 there has been a steady decline in the annual consumption, but it still remains higher than probably any other country."

I am one of those who forecasted a decrease in the consumption of meat in Queensland. That decrease has been brought about by the high price of meat. In other words, we have lowered the standard of our comfort every year since 1911, and we now eat 117 lb. per head of our population less meat than we did in 1911. That is a very bad sign indeed, and has been brought about by the high cost of meat.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: And a Labour Government in office.

Mr. COLLINS: It is not the fault of the Labour Government in office. The Labour Government are doing their very best to remedy that. Goodness knows what would have happened had there not been a Labour Government in office to establish State butchers' shops. We might have come down to the level of the Italian, whose consumption per head of population, I believe, is the lowest in Europe. What would result? You talk about the fighting qualities of the native-born Australian and the people who lived in Australia! The reason why they were such good fighters was they had been fed well on good beef and mutton. There has been no decrease in our cattle; rather has there been an increase. There was a big increase from 1917 to 1918, yet we ate a lot less meat. If hon. members will turn to page 83 they will find there are 5,786,744 cattle in this State, and the total number of owners is 42,735. I heard the hon. member for Mirani say this afternoon we wanted to clear some of our scrub lands on the coast, sow artificial grasses, and place cattle on those lands after the grasses had grown. I quite agree with that. Let us examine the owners of those 5,786,744 cattle. We find that 819 own 3,421,336 of that total. In other words, 819 people own practically the means of production so far as cattle are concerned in this State. Let us examine sheep, which are mentioned in this report at page 84. The total number of sheep in 1913 was 18,220,985, and the number of owners 4,030. We find that 445 persons own 12,955,347. No wonder we have had a decline in the consumption of meat per head of our population! These 819 cattle-owners and 445 sheep-owners own the bulk of our cattle and

sheep. Queensland ought to be carrying three times the number of cattle it is carrying at the present time if the lands were put to their best use.

While on this question of putting land to its best use, I want to draw the Minister's attention to what has taken place in the Argentine. We all know that the Argentine is a great cattle country, and has become such not by reason of the natural grasses which grow there, but by the artificial grasses which were sown there, principally lucerne. I would say to the Agricultural Department that they ought to have experimental plots; they ought to go over the whole civilised world, and the part which is not civilised, and on these experimental plots plant the different grasses of the world and see if we cannot improve upon the native grasses. I believe they can be improved upon. It should be the duty of the Agricultural Department to carry out experiments with a view to making two blades of grass grow where one is growing at the present time. Most countries have had to borrow their grasses from other countries, and that is what we should do. During my journey through the Gulf country, I was struck with the wide rivers and creeks in that part of Queensland. I, myself, have experimented in a small way with what is known as Elephant grass. I believe if that grass were sown in the beds of some of those creeks and rivers, it would survive an ordinary flood, and during a dry time it would do well, with the result that the cattle which now die from drought would be saved. A few minutes ago I referred to the number of persons who own the bulk of our sheep. I believe that from the Tweed up to Cape York our coast is quite capable of supporting more sheep than there are in the western country at the present moment; because, after all, what are 18,000,000 sheep in a great State like Queensland? I do not say we should go in for Merinos. There are other sheep outside those, such as Lincolnshires, Leicestershires, Romney Marsh, and scores of others. There is a splendid work in the library dealing with the different kinds of sheep in the world. All that country could be developed, not by a few people owning 12,000,000 sheep, but by thousands, maybe tens of thousands of men settled upon the land, each having small flocks of sheep. That is what we want in this country. We do not want a few men owning the bulk of the herds and living at Woolloomooloo and St. Kilda, and other places, and squandering the wealth which is produced, as the English landlords used to do in years gone by in regard to Ireland, India, and other countries. We want to see the wealth distributed amongst the people who settle upon the soil. If there is any one measure we should be proud of, it is the Co-operative Agricultural Production Act, which makes advances for sheep, cattle, and pigs. Anyone who has gone to the trouble to look the matter up knows there are very few pigs in Australia in proportion to the number in other countries of the world. We should encourage people to go in more for pig-raising. That is what I preach in my electorate.

During the course of the debate mention was made of irrigation. If hon. gentlemen will turn their attention to page 15 of this report they will find that out of 6,947 acres irrigated in the whole of Queensland, 4,520 acres are in the Bowen electorate. That proves what I said at the commencement of my speech. Tobacco was mentioned this after-

Mr. Collins.

noon, and as I represent the second largest tobacco-producing centre in Queensland, I am going to say a word on tobacco. I would ask the Minister to consider the advisability of getting an expert to instruct the people how to grow tobacco. If the hon. member for Carnarvon looks up his figures he will find that I am correct, and that while he represents the largest tobacco-growing district, I represent the second largest so far as production of tobacco is concerned. On page 114, I find that there was 20,503 lb. of tobacco produced in Bowen and Proserpine. The hon. member for Mirani, who is always a Jeremiah, is always crying "Stinking fish" and belittling the North—

Hon. W. H. BARNES: He is always sticking up for the North.

Mr. COLLINS: He is always saying that the land is going out of cultivation and people are going off the land. In my electorate they are going on the land. Round about Bowen there was a decrease of 22 acres in the cultivation of tobacco and 2 acres of an increase at Proserpine.

Mr. MORGAN: Where?

Mr. COLLINS: In the Bowen electorate. The hon. member may laugh, but one of the world's greatest thinkers and philosophers taught me, as far back as he year '83, that the very foundation of society depends upon the cultivation of the soil. (Hear, hear!) It is no laughing matter when dealing with the men who have to cultivate the soil. This party stands for assisting them, and we are assisting them to the best of our ability.

I want to correct the hon. member for Mirani with regard to sugar. He went so far in his quotation and then came to a full stop; why, I do not know. What he said was true—that there was a decrease in cultivation. In 1917 there were 175,762 acres cultivated and 108,707 acres crushed. I want the hon. gentleman to take notice of that. In 1918 there were 160,534 acres cultivated and there were 111,572 acres crushed. There were more acres crushed in 1918 than from 1914 to 1918. I do not know why hon. members will not be honest when quoting figures. I will quote the whole of them if they desire. There is no credit in quoting figures just to try and score one against your opponent. Unfortunately the hon. member for Mirani is not here, and I do not want to make an attack upon him in his absence. In 1917 the production was 307,714 tons of sugar. In 1918 it was 189,978—a very large falling off, although there were nearly 3,000 acres more crushed; but that was owing to drought, for which we are not responsible. Surely the hon. member for Bulimba would not blame us for the drought, he would blame Providence for that. But we can provide for that by carrying out—as the member for Normanby pointed out—water conservation and irrigation. This report of the Secretary for Agriculture is a valuable one, and I shall take care that some man on the land gets it so that he can know what is being done in the State of Queensland.

I have not mentioned the fruit grown in my electorate, but hon. members opposite know it is about the third largest fruit-growing district in Queensland, notwithstanding the figures quoted by the hon. member for Mirani. He talked so low that I could not follow him as closely as I should like.

[Mr. Collins.]

If he would speak a little louder it would be far easier for me to reply to him, but I generally have to wait and read "Hansard" to know what he really did say.

I quite agree, however, that this department should receive more assistance than in the past, with a view to stimulating production. More men should go on the land, not only in Queensland, but in every country in the world. Every encouragement will be given by this Government to men who go upon the land. That is what the Agricultural Department and the Lands Department are here for—not so much to be looking after revenue, but to give assistance to men who are willing to cultivate the soil and become free and independent citizens. With all due respect to hon. members opposite, who are always pointing out how poverty-stricken he is, the man on the land is, or ought to be, the most independent man in the community. The hon. member for Drayton said this afternoon that he was a successful man on the land. The man on the land has not to go cap in hand begging leave to toil for some other man. He has always plenty of work—(Opposition laughter)—and is never out of employment. He should not swell the unemployed if he does justice to the land and cultivates and improves it.

Mr. MOORE: He has to do a jolly lot for nothing, though.

Mr. COLLINS: He is not the only man who does work for nothing. If I got gold from every duffer shaft when I was prospecting, I would be the richest man in the House to-day. I am not saying he should work for nothing. Perhaps the hon. member is willing to employ men for next to nothing.

Mr. MOORE: Oh! no.

Mr. JAMES (Logan): I would like to say a few words on the conduct of the department generally. There are various directions, I think, in which the interests of the farmers can be studied to advantage by the Government and members generally. Some have been pointed out, and we sometimes meet with absurdities. In the regulations governing the advances to dairy farmers, and so on, we find that the mortgage is held, not only over the cattle on which the advances are made, but over the progeny thereto during the continuance of the security. So that if an advancement is made against the dairy cattle, the department or the Savings Bank have the right of mortgage over the calves of the cows on which the advance is made. It would, therefore, be difficult, from a legal point of view, to find where the ownership of the calf begins on the part of the farmer, or whether the calf really belongs to the Government for the time being, and what rights the farmer has in the way of disposal or sale of that calf. That is one of the absurdities. There are many differences of opinion as to how far the Government have a right to interfere or take part in the conduct, not only of business in general, but of agriculture; and I think the Government departments are learning now that excessive interference in departments where they receive less assistance from private individuals—I think they are finding out that they had better leave such things alone and devote their attention to those functions of government which are allowable and tend to the development of the State. For instance,



scientific research and general instruction of the farmers in the technical aspects of agriculture are always desirable. We notice that the soil is rapidly being worked out in many industries—such as cane, fruitgrowing, etc.—and very little attention is being given to the proper rotation of crops. In England, where soil has been under cultivation for 1,000 years, it is richer and more fertile than ever before, and in many districts you will find soil which has been so long cultivated, very fertile, whereas the natural formation of the soil is poor. This is one direction in which the Government, I think could, with advantage, extend scientific research in particular relation to the climatic conditions and requirements of Queensland and also in the instruction of farmers. One important point raised was in connection with the disabilities which farmers suffer as a direct result of Government action, and that is the excessive number of returns that have to be made out in regard to different taxes. There are, I think, such taxes as cane price boards tax, and different other petty taxations of that sort that could well be put in with the general taxation, so that instead of a farmer paying separately and making out separate returns, the whole of this taxation, with the return, could be consolidated so that the one return and one payment could cover the lot and come out of consolidated revenue. I said that the department was really beginning to find out where the natural limits of their activities ended, but we notice in the last annual report of the Department of Agriculture, it says—

“The disclosures in the Federal Parliament concerning pools and the effect of them, added to the experience of producers and manufacturers in Queensland, would not seem to encourage further adventure into that kind of business now that the war is over and trade is returning to normal avenues.”

This is the report of the Under Secretary for Agriculture to the Minister for Agriculture, and, therefore, we can take it as the advice of the departmental head, as the result of his experience, to the political head of the department. In another place we find—

“During the early years of the war the foodstuffs that could be made available for the Imperial Government were negotiated through the Agent-General; but later all sales were assumed by the Federal Government. The prior system was much more satisfactory from a business point of view to the State and to the producers also; and now that normal conditions are returning it is to be hoped that the interference of the Commonwealth in the channels of trade will be discontinued. During the war no objection could in any way be raised, but surely now that peace has been declared the producers and merchants ought to be allowed to pursue their callings without being required to deal through an avenue that may not be satisfactory to them.”

The Under Secretary, in this report, recognises the limits of Government action and interference in the ordinary course of business, and it is probably due in some measure to the disastrous experience of the department in their excursions into the pulverising of lime, where we have an instance where State enterprise was indulged in with the laudable object of providing farmers with cheap fertiliser. I might remark that I think there

has been any amount of scope for assisting the farmer in the way of fertilisers, because for some years a large part of the meat refuse fertilisers in Queensland have been exported to Japan instead of being retained here. The Government should have tried

to assist the farmer in the market [7.30 p.m.] and used their financial resources as much as they could. According to the Auditor-General's report, a very familiar statement is that the profit and loss account, from September to December, revealed a loss of £411 17s. 6d., and showed that it cost £447 to produce 20 tons of limestone, or £15 8s. per ton after the Government's own estimate that it would cost 5s. or 6s. per ton. Subsequently, on the 30th June, 1919, the actual cost was reduced to £4 6s. 10d. per ton. We find this as the final statement—that the pulverising of lime has been discontinued, showing that the Government had found out that there is a limit in the fields of manufacture.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are producing hundreds of tons of lime for the cane-fields in my district.

Mr. JAMES: I hope you are doing it more successfully than in this small place here, and which, no doubt, the Government have tried to cover up.

Mr. CORSER: They don't like the truth.

Mr. JAMES: Mention has been made about the State canning factory. I do not know what connection that has with agriculture, but instead of that factory being ready for this pineapple season, they have only been able to cope with 1,000 cases. Why, a little co-operative factory in Stanley street, which has only capital to the extent of £5,000, has been handling the bulk of the pineapples in Brisbane without anything like the capital outlay by the Government. But they had brains behind them, and, in one instance, have secured tinplates to last them until 1921. I would like to know if the State Government have looked as far ahead as that with their tinplates.

Mr. SPENCER (Maranoa): I do not think that the Minister has heard any suggestions from members who have spoken that are going to encourage men to produce more wealth on the land. I admit, in common with everybody else, that in Queensland—in fact, Australia—more production should take place. The mainspring of production is profit, and if any production is profitable men will go on the land and produce wealth. The first thing is to consider how we are going to get men on the land.

Mr. HARTLEY: Give them half a share of what they produce. They will be satisfied with that.

Mr. SPENCER: I do not think that the present Government's action is likely to encourage production. For instance, take the unfortunate selector. Every time there is a reappraisal of rent the Government always apply for an increased rental. Some little time ago in my district there were about forty or fifty rents to be reappraised.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That is not within the scope of this vote. It comes under the Land Office Estimates.

Mr. SPENCER: I just wanted to show how it affected production. There is increased freight, increased taxation, and other things, and men will not settle down in the country and produce wealth while they have to face

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all these troubles. Then, the hon. member for Bowen quoted something with regard to cattle. He showed us that a great number of the cattle were held by large owners; but statistics show that the bulk of the cattle are held by 40,000 holders of under 500 head, and if you interfere with the value of their stock it not only hits the big man but the small man too. With regard to the cattle, I quite agree—and I think every hon. member will agree—that the smallest living area that you can get a man to settle on the better. That is a matter that the Government should find out—what is the smallest area that is possible for a man to make a living on and be successful. Everybody you meet talks about the potentialities of Queensland. There is no doubt that we have one of the finest countries in the world. Practically every acre of ground in Queensland is available for some kind of settlement, and you can produce everything that is required. We can produce English fruits, tropical fruits, wheat—in fact, everything. I am very sorry to see that there is such a small amount put down on the Agricultural Estimates.

Mr. CARTER: What do you mean by English fruits?

Mr. SPENCER: Plums, pears, and other fruits.

Mr. CARTER: They are not English fruits.

Mr. SPENCER: I am not going to discuss now whether they are English fruits or not, but I am going to say that we can grow fruit in a tropical climate, a cold climate, and a medium climate, and it is to be regretted that we have not more population to put it to the best use. With regard to the question of the raising of wheat. If wheatgrowing is a payable proposition, it is very easy to get people to produce it. Unfortunately, most of the settlers have found other avenues give better results than farming, and I know that in my district they have given up farming and are going in for dairying. This wheat farming, I think, should be a side line. Mixed farming should be encouraged. Let a man grow wheat, do a little dairying, and have a few sheep and cattle.

Mr. CARTER: You are very good at advising other people what to do.

Mr. SPENCER: I could give you some very good advice. I say that the Government should find out what is a living area that a man can carry on successfully, and help him on to that land; but if you increase his railway freights, his land tax—the most unjust tax a man was ever asked to pay—

Mr. COLLINS: Who pays it?

Mr. SPENCER: You and I pay most of it. Take, for instance, the storekeepers in Queen street.

The CHAIRMAN: Order, order!

Mr. SPENCER: I wanted to point out that the main object of the Government should be to try and encourage people to produce more wealth, and we must make the land more attractive for them. Then you will have to assist him as far as water is concerned. Look at the amount of loss that we have just suffered through the late drought. This could have been avoided if we had had a water conservation scheme. Then, I say that a large area of land should be developed and made ready for a selector to go on. Then there is the matter of seed

wheat. This year farmers, as is well known, will be very short of seed wheat, and I am sorry to say that the Government have made no provision for them at all. The hon. member for another remote district—Bowen—says that they are not growing wheat. Unfortunately, they are not. But we want to encourage them to do so. We have had magnificent rains during the last month, and the soil at the present time is in magnificent order for planting. Coming down through my district the other day, I could see people ploughing up the soil, but these men will have no seed wheat to plant. I think the Minister should make provision for the supply of seed wheat to these farmers.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: He should have made it available before this.

Mr. SPENCER: Several members say that the farmers of Queensland are behind to the extent of about £47,000, and are making a great noise about it, some of them remarking that the farmers will not pay for the wheat. I say if you give them £50,000 a year it would be a good thing to encourage them to go on the land. In my district we are paying 6d. for a 2-lb. loaf of bread. Surely there is more room for wheat. We have just passed a vote for £40,000 for the relief of unemployed, and yet a fuss is being made because the farmers cannot pay up for their seed wheat. I know several farmers in my district who would not take the wheat offered by the Government, on account of the inquisitorial questions that had to be answered in the application. I know of several farmers who tore their applications up.

Mr. KIRWAN: They ask the same questions in Victoria, under a Liberal Government.

Mr. SPENCER: Here are the conditions under which the Government of Queensland offer the wheat—

“With the security of a lien upon crops and a proportional payment from dairying returns, or other security, for the repayment of the debt that might be incurred.”

Just fancy, asking these unfortunate farmers to give a lien on their crops to pay for their wheat!

Hon. W. BERTRAM: Would they grow wheat if you gave it to them for nothing?

Mr. SPENCER: Yes, I believe they would if you gave it to them for nothing. At the Roma State Farm we have an excellent man in charge, probably the best man in Australia for the hybridising of wheat, and I want the Minister to allow the seed wheat that is there to remain in the district for the farmers. It is an acclimatised wheat, and I can assure the hon. gentleman that a number of farmers there will put in wheat if they can get the seed. At one time we used to have 60,000 acres under wheat in my district, but, unfortunately, the area under cultivation has dwindled down until now we have only about 10,000 acres of wheat.

Hon. W. BERTRAM: What is the reason for that decrease?

Mr. SPENCER: The farmers have found that it is not profitable, and they have gone in for dairying. I believe it would pay the Government to give a guarantee to the farmers that they would get a certain price for their wheat, and it would also pay them to give the farmers the wheat. I believe the

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farmers are honest enough to pay the Government back for their seed wheat if they get a crop.

Hon. W. BERTRAM: Free wheat will not solve the problem.

Mr. SPENCER: I do not think it will, but it would give a big impetus if the Government would show a little more energy in the matter of supplying these farmers with wheat. In connection with State farms, a great deal of assistance could be given to the farmers by supplying stud bulls. In Roma we have a stud bull. It is supposed to be a Durham bull, but the hon. member for Murilla saw this bull, and he said it is only a common herd bull worth about 25 guineas.

Mr. MORGAN: I would not put him in my herd at all.

Mr. SPENCER: It is just as well, where you have stud animals on these farms, to have the very best, and not the worst. They should be an example to other people. There is another thing that retards settlement to a large extent, and that is the Government deny the farmers the right to have freehold land.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That has nothing to do with this vote.

Mr. SPENCER: The other day in Brisbane there was an advertisement for men who were prepared to take on dairying on shares, and do you know that one firm had just under 200 applicants, and most of those men who applied to become share dairy farmers were men who had lost their cattle during the last drought. It was a pitiable state of affairs to see such a large number of men who, having lost their own stock, were now prepared to become share dairy farmers.

Mr. HARTLEY: If they had a freehold, I suppose they would not have lost their stock.

Mr. SPENCER: I do not know whether they had freehold or not, but we know that these men did lose their stock, and are now willing to take on dairying on shares. I have not such a great faith in irrigation as some people have. I think far better results can be obtained with the natural resources of the country if they are properly developed. If you give the farmers and settlers assistance to provide water, they will be much more successful. I do not know of any part of Australia that has been profitable under irrigation.

Mr. MORGAN: Irrigation is very profitable on the Mildura.

Mr. SPENCER: Such crops as fruits, potatoes, and sugar, perhaps, may be profitably grown with irrigation, but you cannot irrigate such things as wheat, and irrigation is not going to be the wonderful thing that some people think. The proper thing to do is to give these men a living area, and give them assistance to provide water and other things.

Mr. BULCOCK: There is one phase of agriculture that has not been dealt with during this debate, and that is the question of plantbreeding. Some very valuable data have been received from the Burbank Institute in America. Burbank has been termed the wizard of plant life, and in his general culture and hybridising he has done things that scientists a few generations ago asserted were absolutely impossible of achievement. For

instance, he has crossed the plum with the apricot. Now, we had his parallel in Australia in the late William Farrer. Mr. Farrer produced "Federation" and many other wheats which were adapted to the climate of New South Wales. He converted the western portion of New South Wales from a pastoral area into a wheatgrowing area simply because he was able to evolve types suitable for the climate of those areas. Take, as one example, "Federation." When Mr. Farrer first succeeded in fixing "Federation," the millers of the South Riverina and Victoria paid 1d. per bushel more for "Federation" wheat than they paid for other wheats, simply because it was a strong wheat as compared to the other wheats grown at the time, and it was worth a penny a bushel more for the purpose of strengthening the weaker wheats. Subsequently, Mr. Farrer was successful in producing wheats which were much stronger than "Federation," and they drove "Federation" from priority of position. Take, as an example, "Firbank" wheat, which you may sow in August in the Southern Riverina, and which you take off first. He converted weak chaff wheats into strong chaff wheats, and he made wheat a commercial proposition in Victoria and New South Wales to a greater extent than would have been possible had it not been for his work. He set to work to produce bunt proof, rust proof, and smut proof wheat, and all of them promised to be a big success. For a number of years "Florence" was a very popular wheat amongst the growers in consequence of its resistance to bunt. I take it that the reason why wheatgrowing has not succeeded in Queensland in the way we would have liked is due to the fact that we have not evolved the proper varieties of wheat. We know that plantbreeding and hybridising are essential for the production of a fixed variety suitable for the climate of any particular area. It is possible, in view of what has been done in the South by Mr. Farrer, and in view of what has been done by Burbank in America, to evolve types of wheat in Queensland which have not yet been evolved. In Arizona they have grown wheat on a 10-inch rainfall. In the Northern States of America they have two distinct varieties of wheat; they have a summer wheat and a winter wheat. There are seven basic varieties of wheat and 600 or 700 varieties evolved out of these, and we cannot say for one moment that we have exhausted the possibilities of plantbreeding in relation to wheat or anything else.

Mr. MORGAN: In the Mallee, in Victoria, they have grown wheat on an 8-inch rainfall.

Mr. BULCOCK: That is where I come from. The position is this: that if it has been demonstrated that it is possible to breed wheat suitable for southern climatic conditions, it is quite logical to suppose that such a course is possible in Queensland. When we have the right variety of wheat evolved in Queensland, then will Queensland again take her place as a wheatgrowing State. It is simply due to the fact that we have not yet been successful in evolving the right varieties of wheat that Queensland has declined as a wheatgrowing State, and it is essential that this matter should be embarked on. It takes seven years to fix a variety of wheat, and there is no guarantee of permanent fixation under ten years, and consequently the sooner we embark on this work the sooner are we going to get definite

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results. I heard the hon. member for the obscure district of Maranoa remark that there was a good deal of whatbreeding going on at Roma. I also have heard of the work of the gentleman who is in charge of the experimental station at Roma, and I have heard his work very favourably commented on. I have taken some considerable interest in plantbreeding, more especially in relation to wheat. I might state that Mr. Farrer died after breeding certain wheats, and "Bunyip," "Firbank," and some of those wheats which have since become famous in New South Wales and Victoria were subsequently fixed by a labourer, Mr. Hurst, who was working under the direction of Mr. Farrer at the Wagga agricultural experimental plot. Mr. Hurst has fully demonstrated to the New South Wales Agricultural Department that he is capable of carrying on this work of wheatbreeding, but there was a considerable lapse of time after Mr. Farrer's death before Mr. Hurst was capable of functioning in the way Mr. Farrer was functioning. I say that to indicate the necessity of training. Admittedly, we have a good man at Roma, but, nevertheless, it is desirable that someone should be trained in his particular methods of hybridising. There is a good deal of data required to ascertain whether we are progressing on right lines. From one seed of wheat I have seen wheat grow 2 feet high, and wheat grow 6 feet high. That has been brought about by selection during successive years, and it is necessary that one man should be in the confidence of the man carrying out the work, so that he would understand the whole system. The New South Wales Department of Agriculture recognise the necessity for plantbreeding, and more especially for wheatbreeding, and the "Daily Telegraph," a conservative paper published in Sydney, established a Farrer fund and a Farrer scholarship tenable for one year at the Bathurst Agricultural College or the Wagga Agricultural College. I do not suppose the "Courier" would be prepared, in the interests of citizenship, to extend the same opportunity to farmers' sons in Queensland as has been extended by the "Daily Telegraph" in New South Wales. There is another scholarship which makes provision for two years at the Sydney University for research work, and one year at the Oxford University, should the student after two years at the Sydney University demonstrate that he is suited to research work. This scholarship is known as the Farrer scholarship. Funds in remembrance of Mr. William Farrer were raised by public subscription amongst the millers and wheat-growers, and amongst those who permanently participated in the advantages accruing from Mr. Farrer's work. This scholarship is worth about £78 a year for two years,

[8 p.m.] and about £120 for the final year at Oxford. Supposing something of that nature were embarked on in Queensland, the sons of farmers or others who showed aptitude in that direction, and were trained along the lines of agricultural research, hybridisation, and plantbreeding would be obliged to place their special training at the service of the State, because there is no other outlet for such specialised training. When we remember that the cabbage we have to-day was raised from a wild annual which was growing on the chalk cliffs of Dover, and see the gap which has been bridged as a consequence of selection and breeding, we will naturally see the advan-

tages of having somebody in process of training by the State to organise plantbreeding institutions along the lines, perhaps, of the Mendel institutions to evolve those varieties which are essential for the satisfactory conduct of agricultural enterprises in Queensland. We have in Queensland the brains which are necessary for this sort of thing. The farmers, millers, and wheatgrowers of New South Wales showed a patriotic spirit as far as their State was concerned, when they founded this Farrer scholarship. Perhaps it might not be out of place that a scholarship should be founded on similar lines in Queensland, subscribed to by those who would participate in the benefits accruing from a better selection of wheat being available for growing. By contributing towards its establishment they would be doing something for their own advantage and the advantage of the State.

MR. SIZER: Probably I would not have spoken during this debate had it not been for the remarks made by the hon. member for Fitzroy this afternoon. One or two conclusions at which he arrived were certainly interesting. One was that the tremendous cost of implements was a great disadvantage met with by a man who was anxious to go on the land. I am inclined to think that implements are at an extraordinary high price at the present time. But I have in my hand a pamphlet issued in 1915 by the Labour party when they were discussing this question and appealing for the suffrages of the people. They told the electors—particularly the farming section—that if they were returned to power they would do away with the middleman dealing with agricultural implements and establish in his stead State implement works. I think that was a part of the Premier's policy. When that was mentioned to-day the Minister interjected that that would follow the State steelworks. The Government have been talking for five years about the establishment of State iron and steel works, and they have not yet determined the site. We have reason to believe that it will probably be another year before the site is determined. Mr. Brophy estimates that he will take four years at least to get these works into full operation. That will be ten years. Then we must assume it will be probably two years before the implement works can be established, so that that would make it twelve years at the lowest, or seven years from the present date, before there is any possible hope of the State implement works being established. What sort of hope is that for a man who wants to go on the land? I feel sure it will give the hon. member for Lockyer a lot of consolation when he gets home to his new farm to know that in at least seven years' time he will be able to get cheap implements from the Government. If there were an injustice—and there was one—in 1915, and it was retarding production, what have the Government been doing from that year until now, realising that fact? Then they will come down to the House and criticise those people who, they say, are "farming the farmers." By their inactivity they are farming the farmers. Another interesting point raised by the hon. member for Fitzroy was the holding of land to the detriment of those men who wanted to go on the land. He instanced cases where land was being held, presumably for speculation—and when a man wanted land he had to pay £40 an acre to a syndicate before he could get it. He maintained—

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and probably rightly—that that was retarding production. That would be all right if it were confined to one section, but we find it goes on in other walks of life, and that land is being held by men you would least expect to hold it, and we hear nothing of it. I do not believe in men holding land for speculative purposes where it is required for production. It is just as well to speak plainly. Very often, when I am travelling in a train, particularly up the North Coast line, I see land lying idle close to the line, obviously held for the purposes of speculation. I noticed, in looking over some files, that in 1916 there was an agricultural selection of 775 acres, portions 132 and 134 of the parish of Beerwah—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question before the Chamber has nothing to do with land selection.

Mr. SIZER: I am referring to this fact which was raised in debate.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member may refer to the matter in passing.

Mr. SIZER: There is one block of land of 775 acres and another of over 300 acres taken up in 1916, just before the perpetual lease system came into vogue. Both those farms will become freehold at the end of twenty-five years. They were taken up at 10s. an acre in the first case and 13s. 4d. in the second. They remain there to-day and have not been cultivated. Is it not reasonable to assume that that land is being held for speculation? I ask the hon. member for Fitzroy does he think that that land is held for speculation? Would he be surprised to hear that that land is held by the Minister for Agriculture?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Will you take it and work it if I give it to you?

Mr. SIZER: I am not saying that. If the hon. gentleman were to give it to me no doubt I would do the same thing as he is doing—sell it on the rise if I could. The Minister for Agriculture must say either that there is no harm in speculating in land and holding it with a view to a rise and keeping it out of production, or that the hon. member for Fitzroy was wrong in his contention that the holding of land is detrimental to production.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You have not accepted that challenge yet.

Mr. CORSER: I will take it for nothing.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Will you work it?

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member for Nundah that we are not dealing with the Lands Department's Estimates.

Mr. SIZER: We have to consider this question of increasing production. I am inclined to think we will have to make our method of land settlement easier than it is. The spirit of the times is that men are not prepared to do the same bullocking as the old pioneer farmers did; and I do not altogether blame them. I think the Government should consider the question of making adequate provision to meet the change of times. I believe it would pay the Government, instead of investing a large sum in State enterprises, to invest, say, £25,000,000 in clearing land and making ready-made farms in order that men can go on to those lands and, instead of waiting five or six years for a return, be able to get a return

in a comparatively short time. If it showed a loss in the initial stages, the country would benefit by leaps and bounds at the end of a very few years; if not actually in that direction, by the income tax returns as a result of the profits which would be made from that land. It would provide immediate employment for a large number of unemployed, and the country would be able to say that £25,000,000 or so sunk in that direction would bring in some adequate return.

Mr. BUTLER (*Lockyer*). I think we are fortunate in having such a sympathetic Minister as the present Minister for Agriculture. (*Hear, hear!*) I find that the Minister has offered land to the hon. member for Nundah, provided he will work it. I would like to know from the Minister, when I sit down, if that offer is open to anybody else. (*Laughter.*) It is rather amusing to notice members of the Opposition trying to impress upon the people of Brisbane that they represent the farmers. So far as I know there is only one farmer on their side, while there are at least, to my knowledge, four on this side. (*Opposition laughter.*) After the next election there probably will be many more. Regarding what the hon. member for Drayton said about a farmer losing £100 on his year's work and then having to pay £7 income tax, I do not think, if he told the truth, that he told the whole truth. Sometimes it is political expediency to tell a part, but not the whole truth. I will challenge the hon. member to prove that the facts are as he states; and, if the facts have been placed before the proper authorities and that farmer has not got a refund, I am quite prepared, with the hon. member for Drayton, to condemn the Government.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He has to pay the money, hasn't he?

Mr. BUTLER: The Opposition continually base their attacks upon the Government by stating half truths, which is worse than stating deliberate lies. Now, the hon. member has practically admitted that this man has got the money back.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He has not got it back. He has not paid it yet, but he has to pay it.

Mr. BUTLER: He admits that he can get the money back. Something has been said regarding the Harvey fruit-fly lure. I am pleased that the present Minister for Agriculture has taken this up, and I hope that the Government will eventually have the monopoly. Something has also been said—I think by the hon. member for Maranoa—about independent life being an inducement for a man to try and get on the land. Speaking personally, there is a sense of safety, especially if a man holds peculiar opinions on some subjects, such as I do. Since I have been interested in farming and have had a little more time for reading, my views are more extreme to-day than when I came to this House, and I am more keen about seeing a complete change in the social system than I ever was. I am more keen about seeing men go on the land in order to get this independence, because I believe they will then express their views and know that their wives and children will not have to suffer. I can now express my views to the full, and I know that my wife and children won't be forced to suffer by the gentlemen opposite and the party they represent, as they have done in the past. (*Hear, hear!*) And that is the reason I went on the land, because I

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am becoming more and more extreme in my views and in my hatred against the present social system.

Regarding what the hon. member for Logan said about the dairy farmer, I wondered every time I heard that hon. member speak why he left the Labour party. I have found it out now. It is because of some scheme of the Minister's by which there is a mortgage on calves. (Laughter.) I think he was justified in leaving the party.

MR. BEBBINGTON: Are you all mortgaged on that side?

MR. BUTLER: Regarding what the hon. member for Logan said about the State cannery, I would like to point out that it is a most up-to-date factory, and will be able to cope with the fruit as it comes along. For people to say it has been a failure simply shows a lamentable ignorance of the whole situation. As we know, the canneries have only been working a short time. Mr. Sparkes has been holding back so that he might get the fruit from the soldiers' settlement. The fruit is now going along and he will be able to tell anyone that the future prospects of the cannery are very, very bright. I went all over the cannery, and I think that in Mr. Sparkes we have a man who will make a success of the State cannery.

Regarding Gatton College, I would like to say that I have endeavoured, from time to time, to get some sort of reform carried out at this college. At present I do not think it returns to the State all that it might return in the way of value. I do not expect it to make a profit, but I do think that many reforms could take place there. So far as I know, the principal is very keen about his work and is a very efficient man. The hon. member for Maranoa said that the main-spring of production is profit. He should have said that the mainspring of production is the chance to exploit human labour for profit. I would just like to put him right on that. He referred to the losses of stock and said there were 200 men owning dairy farms who lost their stock through the drought and were in Brisbane trying to get it back by taking up a half share of a dairy farm. I agree with him that this is a bad thing, but throughout Australia—in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and other great cities—what of all the hundreds of unionists and industrialists who are in the same sorry plight, and do not know where their next crust is coming from?

I think the Department of Agriculture should negotiate with the Department of Public Health and see if something cannot be done for making it better for the people in the remote country districts to get better medical attention. This is a most serious matter to the average person living in the country; it is serious enough to those who live somewhat near to Brisbane. I would suggest a Government subsidy towards this.

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: Would it come out of this vote?

MR. BUTLER: I do not care what vote it comes out of. I could quote cases where men have been compelled to see a doctor, and it has taken them three days to go there and come back, and the one visit and the doctor's bill has meant an almost unendurable load of debt to the man.

[Mr. Butler.]

In spite of the fact that it is now proverbial that the farmer always has a grievance—of course he has, and a lot of genuine grievances—the average farmer is very much better off in every way than the average industrialist. All this talk by members of the Opposition about the poor farmer just struggling along, not knowing how to live, and being taxed out of existence and all that sort of thing, would lead one to think that his life is one continual round of tears and misery. But such is not the case. I think the majority of industrialists would gladly change places with the farmers if they could. See how utterly impossible it is under our absurd system at present for anyone to get on to the land. Supposing I want to take up a selection under perpetual lease. I have a very limited capital. Before I get anything granted, my capital is all eaten up—

THE CHAIRMAN: Order! The question of land tenure does not come under this vote.

MR. BUTLER: I am pointing out how difficult it is to get on to the land, and I want to lead up to the fact that the department should try to make it easier.

MR. BAYLEY: Why didn't you take leasehold?

MR. BUTLER: Because I could not afford to.

MR. CORSER: What about State Savings Bank assistance?

MR. BUTLER: If that came under this vote, I would have a lot to say about it. I think it is a good thing, and I do not mind the whole world knowing that I have had assistance from the State Savings Bank. If the hon. member is hinting at that, I might state that I deprecate altogether the bringing into these debates of anything personal, and so long as I am in this House it will never come from me. If I could get another £100 to-morrow, I would run from here to the Savings Bank to get it, because I believe I could put it to good use.

MR. CORSER: You say a man cannot get any if he has not a perpetual lease.

MR. BUTLER: I did not. The member for Nundah did the same thing in parading to the House the knowledge he had picked up about the Minister for Agriculture being the owner of two or three paltry bits of land. I want to say that if the tone of these debates is going to be lowered in this way, it is a sorry thing for this House. I know of men, friends of the Opposition, both here and in the Upper House, who are holding big tracts of country against unearned increment, and we all know it, but it is not on that fact that we

[8.30 p.m.] are going to debate; it is on the main principle of the thing.

The member for Nundah's big grievance against the Government is that the Government has done nothing. After listening to the member for Drayton making several speeches in this House, one would come to the conclusion that the Government have done wrong in certain directions. I congratulate the Minister for Agriculture upon his administration of the department, and I believe that under his administration the department will become of greater value to the man on the land and to the State.

MR. THOMPSON (Wide Bay): I think that the question of the settlement on the



land and agricultural production is one that this Committee might well give its best attention to. We have received a good deal of criticism from the Opposition in regard to land settlement, and, judging by their remarks, one would be led to believe that we were out to discourage settlement on the land generally, but I do not think that we could get any better illustration that we are making a success of land settlement and production than that mentioned by the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat—where men, evidently knowing the inside workings of this party, are satisfied that settling on the land is a good business to launch out in. They have done so, and I wish them success. For my own part, I have spent practically all my life in agriculture. I have made my living by it ever since I have been able to earn a living. I have been through the whole business, and I know the ups and downs and the handicaps that come to the man on the land. One of the greatest needs to encourage production is to ensure to the man who produces a market for his products. The question of distribution and the preservation of our surplus products must be considered, and considered in no mean way. In this great country, with such reproductive soil, in my experience, nothing discourages a man on the land more than to see a splendid crop growing and, when harvested, a market cannot be found for it. Unless something is done to preserve these crops until a market is available there can be no stability as far as this industry is concerned.

Mr. MORGAN: Strikes, too.

Mr. THOMPSON: Through my long experience it was not strikes that concerned me most. What concerned me was the handling of produce by the middlemen. That is the thing which is most discouraging to the man on the land. I know of men who work hard, day in and day out, having to trust to those who speculate in farm produce and who are making small fortunes out of the farmer. I have seen many crops rot on the farm because it was not worth while harvesting them, and I am pleased that the Government have established the State Produce Agency, which will do much to remedy that evil if the institution is managed and developed on sympathetic lines. The establishment of the State cannery works was a very good move. In certain seasons of the year we have production in fruit crops that quite outdistance the consumption, and we shall find this a very serviceable way of treating the surplus products of the farm and orchard. Another good thing is the proposed establishment of the cold stores, and this should be gone on with as quickly as possible. Many articles are produced at periods of the year when a ready market cannot be found for them, and within a few months there may be a great scarcity of that particular article and prices go up. Look at the case of potatoes recently! My own experience has shown me that in some cases it has not been worth while harvesting the crop, whereas within a few months that particular article has risen to an enormous price. If the Government will go along these lines, there is no doubt that they will encourage production. What is wanted particularly is organisation as far as handling of produce is concerned. I might again refer to the establishment of the State Produce Agency. I looked upon the establishment of this agency

as accomplishing something big as far as handling produce is concerned, but the work of that agency has not come up to the standard I have set for it. There are limitations I know, but it will have to be extended a great deal more, and its functions will have to be distributed over a wider area, otherwise it will be valueless. I am satisfied that there is ample room for development in that direction. I am looking forward to the time when the Government will step out into big lines in the directions I have indicated.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What do you mean by big lines?

Mr. THOMPSON: I mean to take the produce direct from the farmer and land it into the home of the consumer. (Hear, hear!) I want to see the expense of distribution cut down as low as possible, and I am satisfied that the only institution that can do it is the State. We have heard a lot about taxation as something that will discourage the man on the land. The member for Drayton produced a statement with regard to the imposition of the land tax in a case where hardship had been experienced. This is the second occasion on which this member has put forward a case of this sort. Members of the Committee will remember when the member for Drayton presented the other case, and I thought he would be more careful in bringing another case before the Committee after the handling he received from the Premier on the previous occasion.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is correct, and you have got it there. (Pointing to the table.)

Mr. THOMPSON: Unfortunately for the hon. member, he did not state the full facts to the Committee to-night.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I stated the case fully.

Mr. THOMPSON: Yes; but the hon. member did not read the memorandum that was sent to the farmer with regard to the case, and I intend to read it now.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Well, read it, read it.

Mr. THOMPSON: This is the memorandum written by Mr. Brennan, the Commissioner of Taxes. It is dated 28th October, 1919, and reads—

"With reference to your application for remission of land tax for the year 1919, you are advised that this will be considered on receipt of your income tax return for the year ending 31st December, 1919, which is due in this office in January next.

"When furnishing this return, let me have full particulars of any losses of stock or crops that you may have sustained during the year.

"In the meantime, the time within which the amount of land tax charged should be paid has been extended to the 31st January next without penalty."

That was the extension to the 31st January, but, unfortunately, the farmer overlooked this, and did not pay up until the 3rd February.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There were no income tax forms available.

Mr. THOMPSON: The income tax forms will be out any time now. I am quite satisfied, on the statements that have been made, that the Commissioner of Taxes will give that farmer every consideration that he deserves.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He may do; but he has to borrow the money to do it.

*Mr. Thompson.]*

Mr. THOMPSON: The hon. member for Drayton would have led this Committee to believe that the Commissioner had imposed this tax without regard to the losses sustained, whereas such is not the case.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. THOMPSON: I was just trying to reply to the hon. member for Drayton. I want to say that I am satisfied that in this case, as in other cases, every consideration will be given by the Commissioner of Taxes. (Hear, hear!) I regret very much that the hon. member for Drayton has led this Committee and the country to believe that the Government were out to impose unfair taxes against those who are producing.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Government did.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. THOMPSON: I am sorry that I am not allowed to say more on that matter under this particular vote. All I can say is that I am sure every case will receive the consideration it deserves, and no hardship will be imposed. (Hear, hear!) I hope that the Minister for Agriculture and Stock will do much to bring that office right up to date. He is a man who has had practical experience—the type of man who should occupy the position. He is a man who has ideas of his own, and is willing to pick up suggestions from whatever source they may come, and I feel satisfied that his administration will be for the good of the country. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. GUNN: I think this is one of the most important departments we have to deal with, and it appears to me that this department should be divided into two. The Department of Agriculture is quite big enough to have an Under Secretary, if not a Minister, for itself. The grazing industry is quite big enough to have an Under Secretary or a Minister for itself. The two departments are too gigantic an undertaking for one Minister. I remember very well when the Opposition sat on the Treasury benches, and every year, when these Estimates came before the House, the Labour party used to say, if only their party could get into power they would be the means of settling the people on the land. One idea was to give them cheap machinery by means of some State enterprise. Another idea was, particularly that of Mr. Hardacre's, a land tax, so that the land would be producing, so that the people would be able to get on to the land.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are dealing with the Department of Agriculture and Stock. You will have an opportunity of discussing that later on.

Mr. GUNN: I do not wish to deal with the land question, but only with the agricultural part of the question. Other hon. members have alluded to the land tax, and one of the ideas of the Labour party when they were in opposition to get land under cultivation was to put on a land tax. Well, they put on that land tax and they have been in power for five years and they have not established any cheap machinery for the farmer. They have certainly started a produce agency, and I think it is a very good thing for the private produce agents in Brisbane, because now they can say, "Look at what your State Produce Agency is doing. It is not doing any better for the farmers than the private agents." Farmers in my electorate have sent their stuff down to the State

Produce Agency, and after a time they find somebody else has come along to the State Agency, bought their produce, handed it over to private agents and made money on it. That has been repeatedly done. One object of the State Agency was to prevent dealing in produce: they were supposed to be only an agent and not a dealer, yet I find they have gone to the Southern States and purchased corn, wheat, chaff, and so on in the Southern States, and brought it up to Queensland and retailed it just the same as is done by any other produce agency, and the farmer is not a bit better off than he was before. The State Produce Agency is repeatedly bringing up train loads of stuff from the other States to compete with the farmers. We have heard a good deal about wheatgrowing in Queensland. I remember when the Labour party was in opposition they said the want of success in wheatgrowing had nothing to do with the climate: it was owing to the Tory Government; and if they got into power they would breed a different class of wheat to suit the climate, and the Darling Downs and the Maranoa would be waving fields of wheat. I said then, and I say now, that the climatic conditions of Queensland are not suitable for wheatgrowing.

Mr. WHITFORD: It is the drought.

Mr. GUNN: If you look at the rain map you will find that the antarctic rains come up through Victoria, South Australia, and a part of New South Wales, and now and again they come to Queensland and we have winter rains, and when we have winter rains in Queensland we have a wheat season. Usually, however, our rains are tropical rains, and they generally fall in January and February, and February rains are not suitable for wheatgrowing. I maintain that Queensland is never going to be the great wheatgrowing country that the Labour party expect it to be unless we breed some sort of wheat that will grow after the January and February rains. If we do that the wheat will not be grown on the Darling Downs; it will be grown up in the Northern part of Queensland, on the Barclay Tableland, where there is an ample rainfall, and where it rains only once in the year.

Mr. WHITFORD: Do you blame the Government for the rainfall?

Mr. GUNN: I wish you would shut your mouth and give us a chance. (Laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. GUNN: We are going against nature when we try to grow wheat in Southern Queensland with the present rainfall. We have plenty of rain during the year, but it falls at the wrong time, as a rule, for wheat. The Labour Government said when they got into power they were going to increase production, but results are better than theory any time, and we find that last year there was a decrease in those engaged in general farming of 2,059 males and 205 females, and in dairying there was a decrease of 1,088 males and 2,907 females, or a total of 5,259 people less were employed in general farming and dairying last year than in the year before. Evidently the Labour party did not settle many people in the farming industry last year, and these people must have drifted into the towns and cities.

Mr. WHITFORD: Did not the drought have anything to do with that?

[Mr. Thompson.]



Mr. GUNN: The drought was just as bad in the other States as here.

Mr. KIRWAN: And the figures are worse in the other States.

Mr. GUNN: The report I am quoting is twelve months old—it is from January—

Mr. WHITFORD: From January to December.

Mr. GUNN: This report was written and printed before the drought.

Mr. WHITFORD: When was that?

Mr. GUNN: Mr. Smith, I must ask your protection from that idiot. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. WHITFORD: You don't like the truth.

The CHAIRMAN: Do I understand that the hon. member for Carnarvon called another member an idiot?

Mr. GUNN: Yes, I did.

The CHAIRMAN: Then I must call upon the hon. member to withdraw that expression.

Mr. GUNN: Perhaps it is just as well to put me out and have done with it.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must recognise that the term "idiot" is quite unparliamentary. I would also like to point out to hon. members on both sides of the House that interjections at all times are disorderly. I also wish to take this opportunity of informing the Committee that many personal allusions and disorderly interjections are being made from time to time which are not likely to elevate the standard of debate in this Chamber. I think it would be better in the interests of Parliament generally if there was much less of that than there is at the present time. The hon. member for Carnarvon must recognise that the term I have asked him to withdraw is quite unparliamentary, and I hope, having regard to my request, that he will carry out my directions and withdraw the expression. I hope he will not put me in the rather painful position of having to take any further action.

Mr. GUNN: Out of regard to you, Mr. Smith, I withdraw my remarks, but I hope you will protect me for irrelevant interjections; I do not mind pertinent interjections at any time.

Mr. WHITFORD: They are pertinent.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member for Burrum to cease from interjecting and allow the hon. member to continue his speech without interruption.

Mr. GUNN: I want to point out that land has gone out of cultivation since this heaven-born Government got into power. In 1917 we had under crop 727,958 acres and in 1918 we had only 525,517 acres under crop, or a decrease of 202,441 acres. That was land under crop. Then when we came to land lying fallow, we find that in 1917 there were 85,861 acres under fallow, and in 1918 there were 279,809 acres lying fallow. That means an increase of 193,948 acres of land have gone in fallow.

Mr. WHITFORD: You must admit that that is owing to the drought.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. GUNN: The Labour party have stated that one reason why people left the land was because of want of irrigation. When they were in opposition, they used to say irrigation, irrigation every time, and if they only got into power what they would do in the matter of irrigation. Now they have got into power, and I find that in 1915 we had

11,842 acres under irrigation in Queensland. That was when we gave up power to the Labour party. In 1918 the area under irrigation had decreased to 6,847 acres, or a decrease of 4,995 acres, so that there is nothing in this irrigation cry. It seems to me that the man who owns land and who is putting it to a good use should not be subject to a land tax any more than the man who has a steam engine should have an extra tax on him. If a man with a steam engine makes a profit, he has to pay income tax, but a man with a farm, which is his machine, has to pay income tax and land tax as well. I would like to say a few words with regard to seed wheat. I was one of those who introduced a deputation to the Minister some time ago and requested that the Government should buy some of the seed wheat that was then being gathered in the Warwick district. There was not a great deal of it, but it was very good seed wheat, and we suggested to the Minister that he should purchase it and at a later period distribute it amongst the farmers. He said he would consult the Cabinet, and after a time it was decided to take no action. The consequence was that that seed wheat was sold to the millers and a great deal has been gristed and turned into flour, and now, if the farmers want seed wheat, they will have to go to the Southern States and bring it to Queensland. I am not a wheat farmer, but I am told that the seed wheat from the Southern States is not acclimatised and is not as good as the seed wheat grown in Queensland, and not only that, but the people who are gathering wheat in the Southern States are gathering it for gristing purposes, and consequently three or four classes of wheat are mixed together, and it is not at all suitable for seed wheat. It is not gathered with the idea of it being used for seed purposes. I know the Minister points to the loss last year and the year before in connection with the purchase of seed wheat. Certainly they did incur a loss of £1,229, but that is a very small loss in connection with such a big thing as seed wheat. It must be remembered that the farmer is a greater asset to the State than the wharf lumper or anybody else, and the Government are spending £40,000 a year to relieve distress. The farmer has to give a detailed account of everything he owes, and he has to give a mortgage over his property before he can get any assistance. The other man is asked no question, and his food is [9 p.m.] handed over to him. I remember one man who wanted seed wheat from the local storekeeper to whom he owed a big bill. He said: "I will make application to the Government for seed wheat." He did so, and got a terrible document, which he took to the storekeeper and said: "What about signing that?" The storekeeper looked at it, and found that the whole of his private transactions would be divulged to an inspector or to some other person. He did not want his business known, and neither did the man; and the storekeeper had to carry him on. That is the reason why so much wheat was applied for and not taken. Eight hundred and three people made application for seed wheat last year, and only 448 took it. These documents frightened away half the people who made application.

At 9 o'clock p.m.,

Mr. KIRWAN relieved the Chairman in the chair.

*Mr. Gunn.]*

Then we come to the decrease in settlement generally. We are told by the hon. member for Normanby that people were driven from the wheat industry to dairying. When we look at the figures regarding dairying, we find that last year butter declined by 6,559,115 lb., that cheese declined by 2,505,414 lb., and there was a decrease in the cows of 18,000. You must remember, too, that the beginning of the drought was worse in New South Wales than it was in Queensland. On looking up the New South Wales report, I find there was an increase in butter at the same time of 1,163,536 lb. So that the argument about the drought does not hold much water.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. BAYLEY: When we think of the harsh treatment meted out to the primary producers within the last five years, it is indeed refreshing to see the manner in which members of the Government are approaching this vote. I hope, for the good of the farmers and agriculturists generally, it is an indication that things are changing for the better. This should be the most important department in the State. When we consider that last year, and for several years, no less than 97 per cent. of the total exports from Queensland came from the pastoral and agricultural industries, it shows in a very emphatic way of what importance those industries are to the State and to Australia. Only 3 per cent. of the exports was made up from mining products and manufactures. Instead of these industries—agricultural, pastoral, and dairying—steadily employing a greater number of workers, we find for the last year or two there has been a marked decrease. Last year, according to the tables I have here, only 3.18 per cent. of the people in Queensland were engaged in agricultural pursuits. That is an extraordinary state of affairs when we consider that this is naturally a land of primary production. It shows there is something wrong with the life on the land, that it is not being made sufficiently attractive—or that life is being made very much more attractive in the towns and cities, and people prefer to live there than to go out into the country districts. Land values, too, have decreased very considerably during the past few years. Freehold land has practically no value. Time and again quite recently we have seen cases of land which a few years ago was sold at £6 to £7 an acre changing hands at prices ranging from £2 to £3 per acre. That does not spell success or prosperity.

Mr. WHITFORD: I know some people who want £100 an acre for it.

Mr. BAYLEY: I know one glaring instance where a fine property on the Downs, which a few years ago changed hands at a large sum per acre, was sold recently at £2 per acre, the owner dropping nearly £50,000 over the deal.

The state of the Committee was such at this stage that the bells had to be rung to obtain a quorum.

Mr. BAYLEY: It is a bad omen when we find such a state of affairs in a young State like Queensland. There is no inflow of settlers from the Southern States. A few years ago settlers were coming up in large numbers from the Southern States and from New Zealand. That has ceased and at the present time no land is being taken up in that direction.

[Mr. Gunn.]

A good deal has been said in regard to the assistance the Government have rendered to the man on the land. In which directions have this Government given assistance to the primary producers? It has been said that considerable assistance was given in the direction of providing seed wheat for the farmers. Last year, according to the report issued by the Department of Agriculture and Stock, very few farmers took advantage of the wheat scheme brought forward by the Government. Only 448 farmers did so. What was the reason? Because the terms laid down by the department were so stringent and harsh that farmers declined to accept the wheat on those terms. Of the 448 who did purchase wheat, more than one-half paid cash. This proves conclusively that the terms laid down by the Government were absolutely unsympathetic and uncalculated for. The farmers have very little to thank the department and the Government for. A good deal has been said, too, in regard to the Federal wheat pool. It has been said in this House time after time, and also appears in the report of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, that Queensland was delinquent from entering the Federal wheat pool. That is not correct. In 1918 Queensland was offered the opportunity of entering the Federal wheat pool, and the pool was kept open until the end of December in order that the State Government might have an opportunity of making known its wishes in this direction. But the end of the year was reached without their taking any action. The same thing occurred last year. The State Government took no action in the direction of approaching the Federal authorities with the idea of having Queensland admitted to the Federal wheat pool. I would like to have an explanation on this point from the Minister.

I see on page 3 of the Federal report reference was made to the butter pool. It says—

"Queensland manufacturers should not have been penalised to the advantage of the Southern manufacturers."

It also says—

"From another aspect the butter pool was unsatisfactory to Queensland in so far that the prices fixed did not always apply equitably as between States. Producers in the Southern States were able to sell their produce at the fixed price, while the manufacturers here had to accept that price less freight."

It is passing strange that the Government are taking up the cudgels on behalf of the primary producers in this way. What is the freight on butter from here to Sydney or Melbourne compared with the difference between the price which the producers of butter received at the hands of the State Government and that which they could have received had the Government allowed them to export their butter to the Southern States three or four years ago when the prices ranged from 180s. to 200s. per cwt.? Did not the Government force the farmers to accept 149s. in Brisbane? Yet, in their report, we find them fulminating against the Federal butter pool because the butter producers were placed at this disadvantage. Mention also is made of the Brands Department. I would like to say that, in my opinion, the system at present in vogue is not satisfactory. It leads to a great deal of confusion. It is a difficult matter in very many cases to have any proof as to who put on the last brand. It is almost impossible in very

many cases to say to whom the beast belongs. About twelve months ago I approached the Department of Agriculture and Stock and gave an outline of a system of branding which, I am sure, would be a very great improvement on the system at present in vogue. In fact, the head of the department admitted as much and said he would take steps to have that system investigated with the least possible delay. I hope he will do so. I hope that if that system is not accepted some other system will be devised whereby the stockowners will be put to very much less trouble and inconvenience, as far as the branding of cattle is concerned, than they are at the present time.

Mention has been made of the Bill recently passed, providing for advances to farmers and co-operative companies. This Bill is an excellent one, and the advances to farmers no doubt will be of great advantage to them. But I would like to point out that regulation 13 will debar a very large number of the farmers from receiving the advances they so much require. Under that regulation it is impossible for a farmer to receive an advance unless he can give some solid security to the department, and some of those men who require the help have not that security to offer. When a man has his deeds in the bank, when he has a lien on his cattle, he is not in a position to give any security such as the department requires. I take it that it is to help these men that an Act was necessary.

In regard to silo construction, I would like to congratulate the department on the attitude they have taken up in this regard. Ensilage has been made in Queensland for many years past. The hon. member for Toowoomba seems to take a keen interest in silo construction and the manufacture of ensilage, and he is on the right track, too, although, in my opinion, the half-ton silos are not going to be of very much use to the farmers. It is high time that the farmers and stockowners took more interest in the making of ensilage, either in the stack or in the silos. The concrete silos, as suggested and recommended by the department, are the finest I have seen in Australia, and I have seen many during the last twenty years. I only hope the Minister will see his way clear to give the farmers requiring silos every consideration and make it as easy as possible for them to receive the advances which they need. A great deal has been done in the Southern States so far as ensilage making is concerned. And in America they regard silos as being absolutely essential to successful working. They would no more think of farming without a silo or silos than they would think of dairying without cows, or farming without a plough; and until the farmers and stockowners here adopt some such method, they will not carry on their business as successfully as they would otherwise do.

In regard to seed testing, this department has done excellent work. We have an officer in that department who takes a keen interest in his work, and certainly for the good of the producers generally. I would like to urge upon the Government the necessity for introducing crops other than corn, wheat, and potatoes. Many years have passed since cotton-growing was first started in Queensland, and practically nothing has been done to date. We know that cotton will flourish in very many parts of Queensland. It can be successfully and profitably grown, and I would urge the Government to take steps at

an early date to place cotton-growing on a commercial basis. The whole world is at present crying out for cotton, prices are high, and if we produced cotton on a large scale in Queensland it would be a splendid thing. Coffee has also been grown for many years past and it thrives excellently in many districts, but practically none has been grown on a commercial basis. As regards castor oil, tobacco, flax, and raw miller, very little has been done. I would like to ask the Minister to take steps to try and open up fresh avenues in this direction, to get away from the old beaten track. We have experts in the department who should be able to lead the way. Ever since the department was established there seems to be a tendency to allow farmers to lead the way and, whilst I am only too pleased to admit that the department has done excellent work in many directions, if more were done on a large scale to open up other avenues of production, the department would be doing splendid work, and the money would be returned a thousand-fold.

The hon. member for Toowoomba deprecated the fact that the condensed milk factory at Wyreema was affecting injuriously cheese and butter factories in the districts. I would like to say that that company has been paying excellent prices for milk—somewhere about 1s. a gallon—and I only hope that very many other companies will come here with as much money as that company possesses and open up in other parts of Queensland. I would like to refer to the dry milk powder industry, which the hon. member for Drayton mentioned. Those who take an interest in these matters have heard a great deal about the great success which has attended the initial efforts of this industry in New Zealand and other parts of the world. I hope the Minister will take steps at an early date to make all the necessary investigations, and see if it is not possible—I know it is—to have these and kindred industries started in Queensland. It would mean a tremendous increase to the revenue of the State, and would place the producers of Queensland on a higher plane altogether.

With regard to irrigation, I notice that Mr. Crowley, an expert who possesses very wide knowledge, has recently issued a report regarding the possibilities of irrigation in Queensland, and I would urge upon the Minister the necessity for taking advantage of that report. We have splendid streams in various parts of the State where irrigation could be carried on very extensively, and I hope the Government will take steps at an early date to go in for schemes of irrigation by which the people of Queensland would be saved from the thrall of drought—so that when a drought occurs we shall have some reserve fodder to save the stock, which would benefit the people and the State as a whole. This is probably the most important matter which can engage the attention of the Minister and the Government at the present time, and I hope it will not be lost sight of.

At fifteen minutes past 9 o'clock p.m., a quorum was formed.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: In my opinion this department is the Cinderella of the departments under the Government at the present moment. For some reason or other each department has been taken in hand by some active, enterprising Minister, some innovations have been introduced and some life has

*Mr. Elphinstone.]*

been infused into them. But this department seems to go on much in the same position as it has done under past Governments. It is a pity that that is so, because those who have studied the position appreciate the fact that upon the enterprise and success of this department depends, to an enormous extent, the future welfare of the State. A great deal has been said of what the department should or should not do in its administration. But there is one particular phase of activity which I want to stress, and that was briefly touched upon by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. I refer to cotton-growing. To those who have studied the position, cotton-growing is nothing new to the State. It was tried many years ago, with more or less success, and we have gone so far as to establish a cotton mill in Ipswich, but that mill was a failure. Possibly Queensland was a little ahead of the times in attempting to establish the cotton industry in this State. But the conditions have undergone an entire change since then. Queensland is now in the forefront as regards the cotton-growing possibilities of the world. I now want to refer briefly to a summary of what transpired in the year 1906 in regard to an investigation which took place in the matter of cotton-growing in Queensland. In that year a man named H. P. Wynn was instructed to come out here and thoroughly investigate the question of cotton-growing in Queensland. He was instructed, on behalf of the British Cotton Growing Association, which association was formed years ago to encourage cotton-growing within the Empire. The object was to see what results had been obtained from different seeds which the Queensland Government had distributed to certain farmers. Mr. D. Jones, who was then apparently the Government's cotton expert—and possibly the same gentleman who is doing his best to bring to life the possibilities of cotton-growing in Queensland at present, and who is receiving, apparently, scant attention and very little support, unfortunately, in his efforts—was placed at the disposal of Mr. Wynn by the department. Mr. Wynn was so satisfied with what he saw that he bought the entire crop available at that time, and disposed of it profitably in Melbourne on his way home. On his return to England he was requested to give a full report of his visit to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, whose members embrace the British Cotton Growing Association. When he showed his Queensland samples, grown from different well-known varieties, his audience was in raptures, particularly in regard to a sample from an American seed grown near Brisbane. This sample was valued by those present at 1s. per lb., at a time when the same cotton grown in America was only valued at 4d. per lb., and this was in pre-war days. It was proved that the climate and soil of Queensland was suited to cotton-growing. Mr. Wynn returned to Queensland and explained to the department the opportunities which existed in the State for cotton-growing. Since then he has been backward and forward between England and Australia many times, and his friends at home often wonder why Queensland has not taken this matter up. It has been proved already that Queensland, with its virgin soil and suitable climate, can produce the best cotton in the world, and there is a market waiting for the output. This comment was

[Mr. Elphinstone,

made in pre-war times, when the whole future of cotton was a very different one from what it is at present. But now we know that cotton has trebled in price. What were possibilities to Queensland some fourteen years ago are now outstanding opportunities for those of us who want to push Queensland ahead.

Mr. WHITFORD: Can you tell us why it has doubled in price?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That is a phase of the matter that I probably would not be allowed to deal with. Up to a few years ago America could supply England with all the cotton that she needed for the Lancashire mills, but of late there has been [9.30 p.m.] such an enormous extension of cotton-spinning in America that already there has been a shortage. This shortage will increase rapidly within the next few years until eventually America will spin all that they can grow. The import of that coming from a man, who is a cotton spinner, clearly goes to show that America, as a cotton export country, is ceasing to exist, and Great Britain is looking for other channels, and we know how Egypt has developed in that regard because Great Britain wants her product. Here is an experienced cotton-spinner from Great Britain, who has tested the merits of Queensland as a cotton-growing centre, clearly demonstrating the value of this industry, and we are closing our eyes to its possibilities. The proposal which this gentleman put before us is—

"Your Government should vote £50,000 for cotton-growing, and spend the money on securing virgin land, and planting, increasing the area year by year. By the time the industry is becoming of some importance, I think the question of cost of labour will be settled—"

Here is one of the points that has stood in the way of Queensland up to recently—

"as natives in India and the negroes in America are waking to their importance and demanding higher wages. In the meantime, your Government could surely devise means of picking to meet competition. The pickers should be paid by results, and in this way, knowing what the cotton would sell for, a wage or bonus could be fixed that would pay handsomely."

He goes on to say—

"There is no reason why your State should not spin and weave all the cotton cloth required for this and other States of the Commonwealth. If you would like it, I could send you the Year Book of the Oldham Chamber of Commerce, which gives an idea of the magnitude of the Lancashire cotton mill. I estimate that Australia can support a great number of such mills, and, given fair and equitable conditions, capital and labour can easily be obtained. In your dry climate you would use humidifiers in the mills, as they do in India—namely, jets of steam thrown into the spinning-rooms to prevent the threads breaking as they are being drawn."

That disposes of the fallacy that cotton can only be grown in humid climates, there now being scientific means of overcoming that by humidifiers.

"Bombay and Calcutta are, as you are aware, great cotton manufacturing centres, and, in spite of the climatic disadvantages, the industry thrives in India.



The materials produced there are poor in quality, owing to the short stapled Indian cotton used. You have to ask yourself the question, why has India progressed in cotton growing and spinning, whilst nothing is being done in Australia? The answer is want of enterprise, but in the new conditions that the world is face to face with, Australia will have to play her part."

"That is my contention. Here is an opportunity that should be seized with both hands. All it needs is encouragement from the Department of Agriculture. I admit that the department is doing something to encourage the growing of cotton. It is supplying the seed free of cost, and it is finding a market for the cotton when it is picked. But we want something more than that. We want areas of land set apart, so that the growing of cotton should be carried on in a scientific manner, not in the slipshod way.

The hon. member for Bowen also referred to tobacco-growing. The secret of success in that industry is centralisation, and the same thing applies to cotton. Instead of each individual striving to establish a new industry of this description, it should be done on a community basis in one centre. The Government can much better assist in advice and direction in the planting, growing, and treatment of the crop. What better method could be adopted for returned soldiers' employment than what I suggest? The trouble in Queensland with regard to the introduction of new crops has been that the Agricultural Department has aroused the interest of the grower in matters of tobacco, sisal hemp, cotton, and so on, supplied the seed, and then left the grower to shift for himself, whereas such experiments should be centralised in a suitable area where the necessary facilities to commercialise the product can be introduced under proper scientific and financial direction. We all know that in the United States of America cotton-growing is centred in one area, with the result that all the more encouragement is given in the growth of cotton.

Mr. HARTLEY: There is negro and child labour there.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I have already dealt with that phase of the question, and whatever disadvantage Australia has been in with regard to the rate of wage is, as this report has shown, rapidly disappearing. The disadvantage of wages is not against Queensland at the present time.

Mr. COLLINS: You cannot prove that by facts.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It can be proved by facts. The report goes on to say—

"I venture to say that cotton will never again come down to pre-war prices."

I am inclined to think that that is true, and it is also true with regard to every other similar commodity, not only because of the cost of production of the raw material, but because of the cost of its conversion into apparel.

"The present high prices will easily pay for white labour picking if the cotton so picked were spun and woven on the spot, as all intermediate profits would be cut out, and I think that the quality of staple to be obtained from Australia would go a long way to permanently ensure white picking if insisted upon."

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER interjected.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: If you will read "Hansard" to-morrow you will see all of this.

"A factory, say, of 100,000 spindles and the necessary finishing and weaving plant can be installed for, say, £200,000, and this would be providing work for a large number of returned soldiers and their families.

"As regards the expert knowledge required, let me refer you to the beginning of the Japanese cotton industry. A Mr. Sato came to Oldham about 1885 and spent six months in my brother's mills."

Mr. HARTLEY: There you are again. You are up against the coloured labour.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am quite prepared to admit that years ago that was a great drawback, but the question of increased wages and a living wage is just as rife there as here and every other part of the world. The time is not far distant when the disadvantage Queensland has suffered will be eliminated.

Mr. HARTLEY: You cannot pay 10s. a day against 4d. a day.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The hon. member for Fitzroy is not up to date as regards the wages in Japan. They are shillings per day now, not fourpences.

"He then returned to Japan to manage the first mill erected there—namely, the Miye Cotton Mill at Osaka. A second Japanese, Mr. Hatori, followed him and had six months' training. Since then the Japanese have taught each other, and, as you know, the cotton industry in Japan has grown to a vast extent."

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Mr. — has invented a machine to pick cotton.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: If he has done so, he has solved a problem which nobody else has been able to do. I understand that all the pods cannot be picked from the bush at the one time, some pods maturing before others. Dealing with cotton in America, this crop is of second value of the whole of the crops in that continent. The system adopted there for the growing of cotton is what we term here the "share" system—that is, where the actual grower of the cotton works the land for the owner and derives a half profit. I submit this to the careful consideration of the department. Take, for instance, the hon. member for Bowen, who has a considerable amount of unemployed in his district who are applying to the Government for relief. If these men will only look round, within two miles from where they are camped they will find an acre of cotton growing and in full bearing. They would see that they could be well occupied in the growing of cotton. Here is the world looking for the output which we are capable of producing, and if the Department of Agriculture had only some of the vim introduced into it that was inculcated into some of the other departments, it would assume the importance that the State requires of it. It has been the "Cinderella" department. It has stopped in one place while the other departments have forced themselves ahead. It is a department that should have spent hundreds and thousands of pounds in research work, whereas it has spent practically nothing. On the other hand, I think the

Mr. Elphinstone.

farmers and others are looking to the Government to do too much. The Government is looked to to find the solution of all our difficulties, whereas, by co-operation, the farmers could overcome lots of difficulties themselves.

At ten minutes to 10 o'clock p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Some hon. members opposite have interjected remarks from time to time about my association with co-operation. Let me say that there are many failures in new countries before one arrives at success, and any man who sets out to accomplish something in this State should be complimented upon his pluck and determination in starting it rather than be criticised because he did not meet with the success he expected. We will have many tombstones on the path of progress in Queensland, and though there have been failures they should be an incentive to further effort. In this regard, I am satisfied that if the producer would only look to co-operation to solve the many difficulties which are before him, instead of relying so much on the Government to look after him and protect him in every direction, then we should have more development and more success in primary production. The hon. member for Bowen, in referring to the price of meat, complained and regretted that the price of meat in Queensland had grown to such an extent that there were many less meat eaters in Queensland than previously; or, perhaps, I should put it that the amount of meat consumed in Queensland now is much less per head than it was ten years ago. He then said that if it had not been for the State butchers' shops goodness knows what the position would have been. Let me ask him this question: Is he aware that of the 11,300 head of cattle which the State put on the market last year, only some 700 were put into consumption through the State butchers' shops? Why is it that the other 10,500 head were not sold to the people of Queensland at a price in keeping with that at which they commandeered the other man's meat? Instead of that, this Government, whose plaudits he is singing, sold these 10,500 beasts in the highest possible market and got the highest obtainable price, whereas, if they had been sincere, they would have put these 10,500 cattle into the hands of the consumers at such a price as would have permitted the consumers to buy their meat at a less price than they can get it in the ordinary butcher's shop. The insincerity of the whole thing! I am surprised at the hon. member for Bowen. He must know the whole circumstances. The hon. member for Fitzroy pleaded for the primary producer, and I quite endorse his remarks, because I have been in a similar position myself. The man who starts out to produce in these days has some tremendous hurdles to get over, particularly in regard to the prices he has to pay for the articles necessary to work his farm. We all know that is true, and the hon. member appeals to the Government to give the primary producer assistance in that direction. As has been pointed out to-night, the Government did go to the assistance of the primary producers last year in the matter of pulverised lime. Two years ago I was instrumental in offering to the Government pulverised limestone at a cost of 15s. a ton. That would be the price this year. But the Government turned that offer down. They said: "No; we can make pulverised limestone much cheaper than that. We can

turn it out at 6s. a ton." We know what a dire failure their effort was, and that instead of the pulverised limestone costing 6s. a ton it cost £15 a ton. Now, the hon. member for Fitzroy appeals to the Minister for Agriculture to assist him in his trouble. I know his troubles exist. I had occasion to buy certain implements quite recently, and the prices staggered me, but the solution of it does not rest in asking the Government to repeat the episode which took place in connection with the pulverised limestone. Another question I would point out to the hon. member for Fitzroy, and also to the hon. member for Bowen, is that there are primary producers in Bowen at this very moment who are losing hundreds and thousands of pounds because of this infernal strike.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. FRY: A city man must depend on the energies of the primary producer for his food, and that being the case, the city man is directly interested in the prosperity of the producer. The producer has had a hard time during the last few months, and his case has been one which we can readily term as deplorable. I can well understand the representatives of the farming community in this House crying out against the taxation which has been placed on the primary producers. Every city man and every member of Parliament representing a city electorate should see to it that the primary producers are encouraged in every shape and in every form. If the farmer is not producing, then the supply of foodstuffs is considerably reduced, and when the demand exceeds the supply, as has been the case in the past, then prices go up, and the purchasing power of a man's wages is going to come down. That being the case, we have to stand by the farmer and see that he gets a fair deal. Water conservation is an important factor in connection with production in this State, and I should like to see a very vigorous policy of water conservation undertaken by the Government. I want now to refer to the question of taxation which was introduced into the debate and which was to some extent set aside by the hon. member for Wide Bay. The question of taxation is a very interesting one to the man on the land, especially if he is not making anything by which he can pay the taxation. If his income is not sufficient to meet the liabilities which are upon him, then his case becomes one which is very vexing to the individual concerned. In the case that was before the House, we find that the circular which was sent out by the Land and Income Tax Department was a general circular; it was not a circular sent out for a special case. These circulars were run off by the thousand, and may be obtained by the handful at the office of the Income Tax Commissioner. There is this fact: that this man could not secure income tax forms, but he went to the trouble to write a letter setting out his case, and he shows that for the year ending 30th June, 1919, his income was £167, whereas his expenditure was £253. That shows a loss of £86 in cash. He also lost thirty head of cattle which were valued at £5 per head—that is the Commonwealth Government's valuation—making a total of £180. That shows that his total loss for the year was £266. One would assume that on these figures the man would not be charged land or income tax if the Government were going to encourage production.

[Mr. Elphinstone.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of dealing with the question of taxation on another vote.

Mr. FRY: I want to deal with the question of encouragement to the man on the land. It is not a question of taxation alone; it is the effect it is going to have on the primary producer. This man's land tax was £7 6s. 8d. and 14s. 8d. penalty tax. Will any sane man tell me that that is going to encourage that man to carry on farming? Is it going to inspire that man with any hope in the future? It is not a question of taxation; it is a question of keeping the primary producer in that frame of mind which will spur him on to greater cultivation. Greater cultivation means greater production, and with greater production comes cheaper cost of living to the man in the city, and I would be lacking in my duty were I not to stand up in this House to-night and refer to this matter, because, after all, the crux of the whole question of cheap living depends entirely upon supply meeting the demand. If the supply does not meet the demand, then prices are going to go up, and if the supply exceeds the demand, then the cost of living in the city will be cheaper. I might be permitted to refer to the question to which the hon. member for Wide Bay referred.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I called the hon. member for Wide Bay to order for dealing with that matter. The hon. member will not be in order in dealing with the income tax, as that is a matter that comes entirely within the scope of the Treasury Estimates.

Mr. FRY: I want to say, in conclusion, that anybody living in a place like Murphy's Creek, for instance, could not be expected to say anything that was not correct, and this man is complaining about the hardship under which he manages to exist, and notwithstanding those hardships, still he has not received the encouragement that he should have received. This, probably, is outside the scope of the Minister for Agriculture, but I take it that that gentleman will give [10 p.m.] it consideration, and deal with the department which is harassing the man, and see that his case is put right. After all, the case of one man may be the case of hundreds. We are crying out to put men on the land and to provide land for soldiers. Until we remove, as far as possible, the hardships which exist, we will not get the best results from farming.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumbidgee*): I think the Agricultural Department is not quite up to date. I do not think for a moment that the Minister who at present occupies the chair is at all out of date. From my dealings with that gentleman I know he is quite as up to date as anybody I have met in that position, and I think he is quite as courteous and willing to assist the primary producer. But I am very sorry to say that at the present moment the fruitgrower, whom I represent more than anybody else, is suffering from high freightage and other things. I have spoken to the Minister for Railways this evening, and he has promised to go into the matter. But at present the pineapples not being sold under contract are not worth growing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You do not blame the railways for that?

Mr. WARREN: Yes, I do. It is an unfortunate fact that through this rearrangement of prices the railways are particularly to blame. While we are quite prepared to

pay a fair thing, and I believe the industry is able to stand a fair thing, I do not believe we can grow fruit in Queensland unless we receive fair treatment.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It would cost you more to cart from Roma street markets to a shop in town, by carrier, than to send fruit or butter from Caboolture.

Mr. WARREN: The Minister should learn a little more, and I am sure he would not say that. His statement is not correct. It was correct before he put on these new charges, but he has slept since then.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The members for Windsor and Oxley agree with me in that.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WARREN: Practically nothing has been done for the fruitgrower so far. The industry is a good one. We have heard a very learned and interesting speech on wheat production and the breeding of wheat. We are behind as far as wheat is concerned, and I believe its production can be improved, as suggested, by getting a variety which is not in existence at the present time. That is all right. But we have a tremendously big industry and there is a big future before it, and nothing is being done for its improvement. When the State cannery was being built, many people thought that that was the solution. Unfortunately, it has not been the solution at all, for the simple reason that the manager of that factory cannot afford to give as much as private industry. The private firms are giving more for the fruit than the State cannery is. That should not be so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What are they giving?

Mr. WARREN: Six shillings.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The State?

Mr. WARREN: Yes, when they are compelled to. I would like to say that the manager of the State factory is not quite fair to the fruitgrower. He does not wish them to have an organisation, and he wants to break it up so that he can beat the fruitgrowers down and bleed them.

Mr. MORGAN: Oh!

Mr. WARREN: I say it is manifestly unfair. We do not object to the labour unions. We believe in unions.

Mr. WHITFORD: I do not believe you. You would break them down every time you got a chance.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. WARREN: I would like to say I do believe in unions, and I am working up one of the biggest and most energetic unions in Queensland at the present moment. I am president of the Fruitgrowers' Association, which is a union in every sense of the word. I believe that the Fruitgrowers' Association has done more for the fruitgrowers than has any organisation which ever existed. Within the last twelve months it has given the fruitgrowers over £40,000 which would not otherwise have come into their pockets. We unite to protect ourselves and to assist the industry. At the present moment we are running special trains to the South for which we guarantee the Railway Department. They take all sorts of care that if there is a shortage on the train we have to pay it; and we pay up every time. All we want is

*Mr. Winstanley.]*

that assistance from the department which will help us to build up the industry, to make it bigger and better than it has been. I am sure that, with the assistance of the Agricultural Department, there is a big future before the fruitgrowers. I think it is the duty of any Government to build this department into a bigger and a better concern than it is at the present time. I am sure the Minister who now occupies the chair agrees with me in this, as he is an agriculturist and has the desire to go in for agriculture. There should be a great deal more spent in the department than there is at the present time. It is a business proposition that there should be more done for the encouragement of primary production. What has made the dairying industry in Queensland?

Mr. WHITFORD: The Labour party?

Mr. WARREN: I am sorry to say that it has been hit very much by the drought. No man can go through the dairying districts without seeing the awfulness of the disaster, and I am perfectly convinced that every honest man with a particle of brains will admit that it is not the Labour party which has made the industry, but that it is co-operation.

Mr. WHITFORD interjected.

Mr. WARREN: I said any man with one ounce of brains: I did not say the hon. member. I say that what made one industry can make another. What we want is bigger co-operation, and I do not see why all the industries cannot go in for some form of co-operation. Probably it will extend to all industries and will solve the great industrial trouble of the present day.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Do you believe in co-operation for the consumers or only for the producers?

Mr. WARREN: I believe in co-operation extending. I believe it is the solution of all our troubles. I do not mean to say that all the agents are robbing us, but I do say that distribution, as well as production, should be in the hands of the producers. For instance, if you go out West, you will hardly be able to buy a pineapple, and yet the market is absolutely glutted. The State Produce Agency is doing absolutely nothing to remedy it. When co-operation is perfected, when we are able to control all the industry (including the distribution), I am quite sure that it will thrive. At the present time, but for the drought, the dairying industry would be on that footing. I must admit that, so far as other farming is concerned, we are behind. I do not mean to say, for instance, that the farmers can grow wheat in Queensland. I do not profess to know whether it can be done profitably or not, but I do know that in the West I have seen that wheatgrowing is going out. I say that it is a sorry thing for Queensland that it should be so, because it means that whilst our railways are not paying, there are large stretches which should be reproductive and are not.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: To-morrow you will come to me for a reduction in freight on fruit.

Mr. WARREN: If we were producing wheat in the west of Queensland as they are producing it in the west of New South Wales, the railways would pay. I can assure the hon. member that I am not always chasing

[Mr. Warren.]

after a reduction. When the rise in freights took place the fruitgrowers faced the problem, recognising that the railways were not paying, and were quite agreeable to a 30 per cent. rise, but what they were not agreeable to was a rise of 150 per cent. I am sure that with co-operation, and intelligent assistance from the Agricultural Department, there is no danger to the prosperity of Queensland.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (Quinton): We have spent a fair amount of time in discussing this vote, but I think it will be admitted that there is no department on which so much depends as the Agricultural Department. If the agricultural industries were to close up, then it is a certainty that everything else would close up too, because it is the bedrock industry on which we all have to rest. I have listened with a good deal of interest to the debate, which has certainly been informing.

Suggestions have been made as to the possibilities of cotton-growing. I listened with a good deal of interest to the hon. member for Oxley's résumé of the industry in Queensland during recent years. We are all aware that during the American war Queensland did grow cotton for some time whilst the bonus was being paid, but when America got back into the market it became a thing of the past. At the time of the visit of that gentleman from Lancashire there was a revival for a time. It seems to me, in fact, that one of the difficulties we have to contend with in getting people to take an interest in cotton-growing is the fact that on two, if not three, previous occasions attempts have ended in failure. I believe that if Queensland had made no attempt in the past, if the idea were presented now for the first time, it would be pursued with a good deal more enthusiasm than under existing conditions. I well remember that when that gentleman visited Queensland the idea was taken up with a good deal of enthusiasm on Charters Towers, and a Cotton-growers' Association was formed by the business men of the town, and quite a number of men on the land outside went in honestly and earnestly and energetically for growing cotton. It was practically admitted that the product of Charters Towers was of an exceptionally fine quality—a long-staple cotton—and there was an exceptionally good yield. It was admitted by all who saw the product that the country was exceptionally suitable, and for two or three years a fairly large quantity was grown. The difficulty that faced the people in the first place was the picking of the cotton, which seems to be one of the difficulties now practically the wide world over. Long and earnest endeavours have been made to invent a picking-machine, but I am doubtful whether up to the present anything has been put on the market that does the work anything like so well as the fingers of children or other people who have taken up the work. Then, while the price was fairly good for the first year or two, in the third year, I believe, the return was only about 3d. or 4d. per lb. for ginned cotton, at which it was practically admitted by anybody who knew anything about the business that it was impossible to make it pay. But with the price that the department is offering the proposition is an entirely different one, and whilst there may be any amount of places in Queensland where cotton would grow, I am doubtful whether there is a place more suitable or with greater facilities than Charters Towers, particularly



as it is a place which is looking for something to take the place of mining. Fruitgrowing and other things have been taken up, but the time one has to wait for a return is a bit too long for most people. Land can be got under mining tenure very cheaply, and there is an abundance of it. The surrounding conditions of life and so on are all that can be desired. I certainly think something tangible and practical can be done in that direction. I have met Mr. Jones, who, I think, is to be commended for his perseverance in this matter year after year. (Hear, hear!) He is never tired of advocating what some people call a fad and others a hobby, but I believe that, like other people, he will see some results of his labour before very long. He was in Charters Towers, and expressed the opinion that it was a place exceptionally suitable for the growth of cotton.

He stated that quite a number of other things would grow there, but that cotton would grow there to perfection. I think that if some inducement were offered at the present time, and the growing of cotton were taken up with anything like the enthusiasm it was taken up in 1907 and 1908, success would be achieved. We all know that Britain is going to have to look elsewhere for her cotton, and I am quite satisfied that it is going to be a very long time before the price of cotton goes back to the pre-war rates. The Department of Agriculture has done a great deal in the matter of distributing cotton seed free, and it is to be commended for its action in that direction, but I certainly think that in districts where people have tried and failed to grow cotton, failed through no fault of their own, if some inducement were offered by a Chamber of Commerce or some other organisation, and people would take up the culture of cotton, there would be a fair prospect of making the industry succeed. Land of fairly good quality is available at Charters Towers, there is plenty of it, and it can be obtained cheaper than in any other part of the State, so that if people can be induced to take up cotton-growing, there is a very fair prospect that they will succeed with the industry. The difference in the price of cotton to-day as compared with what it was years ago when experiments were made in cotton-growing in Queensland will make all the difference between failure and success in the enterprise. In all probability the time will come, perhaps not in the very near future, but it will come, when Queensland will not only grow its own cotton but will spin and weave its own cotton. It is a well-known fact that cotton-spinning and cotton-weaving can always be done best, as far as the quality and quantity of the cotton are concerned, in a soft, humid atmosphere such as they have in the old country. Where the spinners have to resort to steam jets, that may be very good for the material, but it is not very good for the people who have to do the work, and I am quite certain that some better means can be devised than steam jets. I am certainly of opinion that there is a splendid opening and opportunity for the growing of cotton if some encouragement and inducement are given to people to engage in the industry, and I am quite certain that the department will be quite prepared to do its share in helping any community who are prepared to take up this particular industry. I shall certainly do my level best, when I go back to Charters Towers, to see if the people who

have got the land now will not be prepared to go in for cotton-growing again, and I hope it will be found to be a success and a benefit to them, a benefit to the State, and a benefit to all concerned.

Mr. MOORE: I notice that the Dairy Instructor had a salary of £450 and that it has been increased to £485 per annum, while the instructor in cheesemaking gets only £265, and has not been granted any increase. It is an extraordinary thing that a man who is supposed to be an expert in his business, and who has to teach people how to make cheese, should only get the salary of an assistant in a good factory, and less than the salary paid to a good manager. The manager of an ordinary second-class cheese factory gets over £265 per annum at the present time, and it seems a funny thing that such a man should be expected to submit to be taught by an instructor who is paid considerably less.

Mr. COLLINS: What about dairy testing?

Mr. MOORE: Any man can learn that in half an hour, but it takes years to learn cheesemaking properly. There is one thing which I deprecate in the report of the department, and that is the attempt which is made in several places to hit at the Federal Government. We want to find out what is the best way of conducting our business in Queensland, and not to hit at the Federal Government. What is the use of the Government finding fault with somebody else when they are doing exactly the same thing themselves?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You admit they are at fault?

Mr. MOORE: No, I admit nothing of the kind. Reference is made in the report to the wheat pool, and it appears that the Government have now turned round, as they say the Federal Government refused them admission to the pool. At the same time, we find that in the report of the Agricultural Department it is stated that last year a referendum was taken by the Government as to whether the persons concerned would join the wheat pool. The Government reduced the price of wheat to 3s. 6d. a bushel.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We took from the miller the wheat he had already bought at the price he paid.

Mr. MOORE: The Government took the wheat from the miller, and sold it at the price they could get; they fixed the price of flour to return 3s. 6d. a bushel for locally grown wheat, and 8s. 6d. a bushel for Argentine wheat.

At half-past 10 o'clock p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 306, I must now leave the chair and make my report to the House.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported progress, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

#### HARBOUR BOARDS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

RETURNED FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning this Bill without amendment.

#### FIRE BRIGADES BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. PETRIE: I rise to support the Bill, because I think it is a very necessary

*Mr. Petrie.]*

measure. It is one which has been asked for by the local volunteer fire brigades and the local authorities for some time past. We must all admit that the towns of Queensland have grown so rapidly that an amendment of the Act under which fire brigades now work is urgently needed. This Bill ought, therefore, to receive serious and sympathetic consideration from both sides of the House.

The HOME SECRETARY: There are no politics in the Bill.

Mr. PETRIE: It is proposed by the Bill to repeal the existing legislation and establish new constitutions for the boards. The towns at present enjoy the protection given by permanent fire brigades, but the country towns and the suburbs of the larger cities are left to depend on volunteer brigades. I should like to say a word of praise on behalf of our volunteer fire brigades, which have always done splendid service when called upon. They have rendered their services gratuitously, and have been the means of saving much property. It is now proposed to recognise the volunteer brigades in a proper manner. Volunteer fire brigades are to be registered, and to be inspected by the chief officer of the district, and their services are now to be paid for. The powers of the chief officer are very great, but I think they are necessary to prevent fires. The chief officer may assume control of volunteer brigades at any fire, and I take it that he will use that power in a reasonable way. The clashing which has sometimes taken place between two different fire brigades will accordingly now be prevented. One important provision in the Bill is that the chief officer may send the brigades beyond their boundaries, if it is necessary, and, in that case, the different authorities are to be jointly liable to pay the expenses. Some people may take exception to that, but it is only a fair thing that they should bear a portion of the burden.

With regard to the financial part of the proposal, the Government contribute two-sevenths, the local authorities two-sevenths, and the remaining three-sevenths are to be paid by the insurance companies. I do not know that you can have a fairer basis of contribution than that. The country towns will be better looked after now, and everything will be conducted as it should be. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

#### PROPOSED COMMITTEE.

The HOME SECRETARY: I beg to move. Mr. Speaker, that you do now leave the chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Bill in detail.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: To-night? We are not ready for it.

The HOME SECRETARY: It really is a machinery measure. The same thing may happen to-morrow night. The Bill, which has been a long time in the hands of hon. members, is really a departmental Bill. The officers of the department, the fire brigade people, and the insurance companies have been in consultation, and the Bill is the result. Of course, I do not want to press the Committee stage.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I hope the hon. gentleman will not press the matter, because

[Mr. Petrie.

if it is what he says—purely a machinery Bill—the position is practically clear. It was generally understood that, after the second reading of the Bill to-night, we were going to adjourn. Some hon. members on this side who are deeply interested in the Bill accepted my assurance that the Committee stage would not be proceeded with to-night.

The HOME SECRETARY: In that case, I desire to withdraw my motion.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion be withdrawn?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Motion withdrawn accordingly.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I move—That the House do now adjourn. The business to-morrow will be the further consideration of the Estimates. After half-past 10 o'clock p.m., I think we will take the Mining Act Amendment Bill, which also is a non-contentious measure.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You do not propose going into Committee to-morrow night?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I would be glad if the hon. gentleman would do so. He will find nothing in it to disagree with.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The second reading will be debated at some length.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If so, I will fall in with the hon. gentleman's wishes.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty minutes to 11 o'clock p.m.