

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 1920

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

FRIDAY, 20 FEBRUARY, 1920.

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

QUESTIONS.

LOSSES OF SKINS ON RAILWAYS.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*), in the absence of Mr. Hodge, asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. By what firms and persons have claims been made against the Railway Department in respect of marsupial and other skins consigned with that department and lost in transit by the department between 1st May, 1918, and 31st January, 1920?

"2. What is the value of the skins affected by such claims?

"3. What steps are being taken by the department to bring to justice the offenders responsible for losses?

"4. Has any prosecution been instituted by the department in respect of such losses?

"5. What payments have been made by the department to date in respect of the claims mentioned in question No. 1?"

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

"1. Sturmfels, Limited; Wilcox, Mofflin, Limited; Dalgety and Company; New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company; Moreheads, Limited; Australian Estates and Mortgage Company; Mactaggart Brothers; Winchcombe, Carson, Limited; John Bridge and Company; Fenwick and Company.

"2. Amounts claimed by firms—£5,790.

"3. Full inquiry made and police informed.

"4. No. Sufficient evidence not forthcoming.

"5. £4,237 4s. 2d., but proceeds of sales of unclaimed consignments realised £753 15s. 1d., and reduced actual loss to £3,483 9s. 1d. Large losses of skins have also been made by the railways in other States."

APPOINTMENTS TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Miran*) asked the Premier—

"1. Why were not one or more farmers included among the fourteen appointments just made to the Legislative Council?

"2. Is it not desirable that the agricultural interests should be strongly represented in both Chambers?

"3. Is it a fact that the recent appointments include amongst their number seven officials of political or industrial organisations, three gentlemen holding positions on Labour newspapers, and two who have been defeated at Parliamentary elections during the last three years?"

The PREMIER replied—

"1 to 3. I do not hold myself obliged to answer the hon. member's question."

TARIFF AT PARLIAMENTARY REFRESHMENT-ROOMS.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*), in the absence of Mr. Moore, asked the Chief Secretary—

"Taking into consideration the large sum required from the taxpayers of Queensland to make up the loss on the Parliamentary Refreshment-rooms through charging an unprofitable price for meals, and in view of the large number of additional members appointed to the Legislative Council, will he consider the question of raising the tariff for meals so that the rooms may be self-supporting?"

The PREMIER replied—

"The matter will be considered."

STATE CANNERY AND PINEAPPLE CROP.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*), without notice, asked the Minister in charge of State Enterprises—

"1. Is the Minister aware that the summer crop of pineapples is rapidly coming to maturity, and for a few weeks the year's labour of many settlers, including soldier settlers, will be in danger of being lost or seriously reduced through loss?

"2. Is he aware that some privately owned canneries are working overtime and making efforts to deal with the position?

"3. What number of cases per week is the State cannery dealing with at present? Can that number be increased at once? Could not overtime or two shifts be worked for a few weeks?

"4. Seeing that the wholesale price is a good one, especially since a rise of 3s. per dozen took place, is not 6s. per case a low price comparatively?

"5. Will the Minister use his influence with the manager of the State can-

nery, and also private owners, to maintain a minimum price of 6s. per case, and also use every effort to deal with the whole crop at that price, to prevent loss to producers?

"6. If any shortage of tinplates or other necessary material has taken place through the shipping strike, will he at once get into communication with those interested and communicate with Hon. W. M. Hughes, and ascertain if such supplies can be obtained by rail?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Kippel*) replied—

"I cannot give the hon. member a reply as definitely and specifically as he apparently desires, but I would like to say that the machinery in the State cannery has been running only a few weeks. I have asked the manager to absorb as fully and as rapidly as possible the farmers' crops at a reasonable price. I may say that 6s. is not a low price."

UNEMPLOYED POSITION.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*), without notice, asked the Premier—

"Will he take the opportunity this day to secure the leave of the House to make a statement upon the unemployment position and outline the immediate plans and policy of the Government for dealing with the present widespread misery arising from the lack of work throughout the State?"

The PREMIER replied—

"I do not think it is necessary to ask the permission of the House to make a statement, but if, as opportunity occurs, hon. members will discuss the question on the Estimates, which have been before the Chamber for some days, I shall be prepared to answer any questions they desire to put."

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

Regulations of 1920, under the Gas Act of 1916.

Regulations of 1920, under the Electric Light and Power Act, 1896.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—SIXTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

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

Question—That £425,000 be granted for "State Insurance Office"—stated.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: In the first speech I made in this House on an Address in Reply, I made the remark that the cost of insurance was too high, and ought to be reduced. That was my opinion then, and my opinion to-day is that the premiums on workers' compensation insurance are still a long way too high, considering everything, and ought to be reduced. The Government insurance of workers' compensation is a long way from coming up to that of some of the companies which the Government practically wiped out of existence when they obtained

the monopoly. This is a letter which I have received—

"Replying to your inquiry re Toowoomba Co-operative Insurance Company, I have to say that for a number of years that company returned to its policy-holders 33½ per cent. of the premiums paid, and to its shareholders an annual dividend of 10 per cent. Whilst it charged a rate which was lower than the underwriters' tariff, it made a special point of dealing liberally with all claimants.

"When the company was compelled to wind-up owing to the provisions of the Act under which the Government created a monopoly in workers' compensation business for its own office, the distribution of the accumulated profits amounted to something like four times the amount of paid-up capital.

"I shall be glad to give you any further information on this subject which may be of service to you."

This company was working for some years in Toowoomba. I had returned the first year as much as 60 per cent. of the premium paid, and 10 per cent. on the capital which was distributed when the company was wound up compulsorily to Government interference. For every 10s. I put into that company I received back £2 at the final distribution. The State Office falls a long way short of that co-operative company in business management. Those who insured with that company lose at least 30 per cent. through the Crown making a monopoly of that insurance. Then, again, the premiums under the Workers' Compensation Act must have risen fully 25 per cent. during the last three years, without the compensation increasing correspondingly at death.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: That is not correct.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Are not the premiums based on the amount of wages paid? Are not employers debited with a certain percentage of the wages paid by them? The benefits were fixed permanently three years ago and have not been increased since. On the other hand, wages have increased during the last three years by about 25 per cent.

Mr. GLEDSON: Wrong again.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Therefore, the premiums being based on the amount of wages paid, they must have increased according to the increase in wages. But the permanent compensation for death has not been increased. The Insurance Department ought to pay a very big dividend. When this Act was being passed, it was stated that it would work upon a co-operative basis, that it was not to be made a means of getting revenue from one portion of the people to relieve another portion; that is, that no portion of the profits from insurance was to be carried to revenue, which would be taxing one class in order to relieve another. We know perfectly well that money from the Insurance Department has been carried forward to relieve other departments. Therefore, this Insurance Department is being made another means of taxation, a way of adding an extra tax to one class of people. There are several reasons why the Government ought to be able to run the Insurance Department on less premiums than a private company. In the first place, every person has to insure, whether he is carrying any risk or not. In times past the owner or proprietor of a

business could take the risk and be responsible; if there were very little risk, he need not insure. Now everybody has to insure, and the rates are higher than they should be. Look at New South Wales. I know the benefits are greater here than they are in New South Wales; but the premiums are considerably higher.

Hon. J. MULLAN: Do not the benefits correspond?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Nothing like it. Here are the figures—

Occupation.	Qld. Per cent.	N.S.W. Per cent.		
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Brickmaking	27 6	11 6	to	27 0
Breweries	26 0	10 0		
Builders	35 0	22 6		
Carters & carriers	35 0	30 0		
Timber-				
getters	60 to 100 0	72 0		
Meatworks	22 6	9 0		
Laundries	17 6 to 25 0	9 0		
Jam factories	22 6	9 0		
Gasworks	20 0	6 0		
Farmers	15/- to 100 0	13 6		

I contend that anything like 100s. per cent. or 20s. per cent. is a long way too high for any insurance in respect of farming or anything of that kind, where there is very little risk. It appears to me that the business the Insurance Department have hold of is one you could run with your eyes shut. The premiums are made so high you could employ as many hands as you liked, and be reckless with the whole thing, and it could not help paying, because there are so many businesses in which there is practically no risk and upon which comparatively high premiums are enforced. If it were worked upon a co-operative basis, where the benefits were returned to those who paid the premiums, it would be a very different matter. I ask the Minister to consider very carefully whether these premiums cannot be reduced by at least 30 per cent. I am sure they ought to be, when a co-operative company returned 30 per cent. of the premiums and paid 10 per cent. on the capital.

Hon. J. MULLAN: They did not give the benefits we are giving under the Act.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The benefits have not been increased correspondingly with the increase of premiums.

Hon. J. MULLAN: More than correspondingly.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And not correspondingly with those under the New South Wales Act.

Hon. J. MULLAN: If you had been here last night, you would have heard my reply on that point.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: At death there is a matter of about £100 more paid in Queensland than in New South Wales. But we find that many of the premiums here are double those of New South Wales. Take clothing manufacturers. In Queensland it is 12s. 6d. per cent. and in New South Wales it is 2s. 6d. per cent.

Hon. J. MULLAN: And what are the benefits?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Perhaps 25 per cent. more in Queensland; and the premiums are 125 per cent. more.

Hon. J. MULLAN: A man is not sure of getting the benefits at all there.

Mr. Bebbington.]

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That is all nonsense. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that the law is behind any person in New South Wales the same as it is here. And he knows the State uses the same means to give as little compensation as possible.

Hon. J. MULLAN: Not at all. We are most generous.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I admit they are generous; but they are not going to pay anything they can avoid or that we are not entitled to. It is about time public opinion woke up as to this matter of extracting premiums from the people and making this another taxation department. The sooner there is a public inquiry into this matter the better.

[4 p.m.]

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*): The hon. member for Drayton appears to have found another mare's nest to bring before the Committee. In what he is misquoting there is a certain amount of truth.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Is that letter right or is it not?

Mr. BRENNAN: I would ask the hon. member what people had shares in the company? One man who met with an accident, and who was paid compensation for a few weeks, when he became permanently injured could not get a settlement from the company. The hon. member for Pittsworth was insured in the company, and the company would not pay him compensation for the accident he sustained. It only shows how dishonest the company was when it closed down upon the just claim of an insurer. The hon. member for Drayton should apologise to the House.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: What for?

Mr. BRENNAN: This company had a select few who took no risk whatever. In connection with fire insurance, they had no fire at all among their own friends, and they could not help but return 60 per cent. profit.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They accepted every application made to them, as far as I know.

Mr. BRENNAN: There was an unfortunate man in Toowoomba who met with an accident, and broke his leg in three places above the ankle, before this Government started the State insurance scheme. We accepted a lump sum of £50 in settlement of the claim. That was a man who was permanently injured for life. This Government pays something like £450 for a similar accident. You can go to the clerk of petty sessions and get a settlement within twenty-four hours at the present time. We know how the Government have reduced the rate of premiums payable, and are showing a profit on the business, yet we find the hon. member for Drayton making wild and rambling statements in connection with this matter. The hon. member said that farmers could not get a refund of the land tax, yet he knew of a farmer who got a refund for three successive years, but was not honest enough to say that he knew about it. No matter how we disagree in politics, we must be fair and give the Commissioner credit for making a success of the enterprise. I trust the hon. member for Drayton will not be guilty of any more conduct of this kind.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I take exception to the unwarranted attack of the hon. member for Drayton on the Commissioner

by saying that the Insurance Office could be run with your eyes shut, and saying that there is reckless expenditure. As hon. members on this side have pointed out, the State Insurance Office is the bright spot in Government enterprise.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: So it is, but the premiums are too high.

Mr. GLEDSON: I do not know what troubles the hon. member, unless it is that he has lost two or three shillings of dividend in the company he was in, which had to close up, as it could not make a profit out of workers' compensation in Toowoomba. If everyone who loses a few shillings of profit because their company is wound up in the interests of the State is to have the privilege of attacking officers of the department, what sort of political life have we come to?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Do your business on a fair basis.

Mr. GLEDSON: It is a mean and paltry attack to make on an officer of a department, who, everyone admits, is sympathetic and is doing something for the country which was never done before—that is, giving the workers a fair deal. The hon. member says that premiums in Queensland have been increased because wages have been increased 25 per cent., while compensation has not been increased one penny; but that, on the face of it, is a deliberate misstatement. He knows that the Workers' Compensation Act provides that 50 per cent. of the wages shall be paid in compensation. The hon. member said that while premiums increased, compensation did not increase.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I said compensation in case of anyone killed.

Mr. GLEDSON: In the case of a man who was getting £3 a week, the compensation would be £1 10s. a week, and if he got £4 a week the compensation would be £2. The relatives of a man who is killed, who got £3 a week, or £156 a year, receive an amount equal to three years' wages, which comes to £463 compensation. At £4 a week, the compensation would be £600. An increase of wages from £3 to £4 a week would mean increasing the death allowance to widows and orphans from £463 to £600. When men get up and make such deliberate misstatements—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in saying that another hon. member makes deliberate misstatements.

Mr. GLEDSON: I will withdraw the expression.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You know there is no increase in the full amount of £600. The amount of £600 has not been increased, notwithstanding the 25 per cent. increase in wages.

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member knows that compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act is based on the wages earned for the preceding three years. Compensation is not paid in a lump sum at death. The hon. member for Drayton also compared workers' compensation here with the position in New South Wales, but there is no comparison between New South Wales and Queensland. We have our own special cases. Unfortunately, I have had my share of them in connection with the industry I have been engaged in. One man received an injury in New South Wales—the loss of an eye—and

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he did not get one penny of compensation there. He came to Queensland, and was unfortunate enough to get hit on the eye with a piece of coal, and lost the other eye. The Commissioner did not say, "Go down to New South Wales and get your compensation," but paid him full compensation, and the man went back to New South Wales immediately after that. A similar case arose in New South Wales, which it cost the union £80 or £90 to fight to get £150 compensation for the injured man.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: That is an isolated case.

Mr. GLEDSON: It is one case. We find, from a Press report of a case in Victoria the other day, that they have to go to court to get their cases settled there the same as in New South Wales; whereas the Queensland Commissioner, in his report, says that there have been only two cases taken to the court in Queensland out of 50,000 claims.

Mr. SIZER: Probably there were no more than two in Victoria.

Mr. GLEDSON: This is one of them. A man was killed, and the judge gave an award of £400, to be paid at the rate of £9 a month. The costs amounted to £30, which brought the compensation down to £370, as against £600 which would have been payable in Queensland. The widow in this case had three young children dependent on her for support.

I would like to reply to a statement made in connection with miners' phthisis cases. A complaint was made last night about £10,000 being paid out of the general insurance premiums to assist miners' phthisis cases. The mining industry in Queensland pays a good sum of money in premiums, not only in connection with miners' phthisis, but for general compensation, and that money is relieving the general revenue of the State. If it was not paid in this way, it would have to be paid by the Home Secretary's office, and would come from the general revenue of the State. Hon. members opposite should remember that it would come from the consolidated revenue through the Home Secretary's Department, instead of being administered by the Insurance Commissioner in the interests of those unfortunate workers who are suffering from that disease.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING OFFICE.

The TREASURER: I move that £6,231 be granted for "Government Advertising Office."

Mr. VOWLES: I would like to ask whether not only the Government Advertising Office but all other advertising is under the control of the one head?

The TREASURER: It is under the control of Mr. Watson.

Question put and passed.

THE TREASURER.

CENTRAL SUGAR-MILLS.

The PREMIER: I move that £354,600 be granted for "Central Sugar-mills Fund."

*Mr. SWAYNE: This is a question which I think is well worthy of some discussion. Anyone who looks at the reports in connection with the Central sugar-mills will see that we have got £1,500,000 invested in these mills, and they are largely connected with the welfare of the largest agricultural indus-

try in the State. There is a good deal said about the management of the mills under Government control. There is one feature which is becoming apparent in connection with Government controlled mills, and it was very noticeable during the last twelve months. The position during the past twelve months emphasises the antagonism which exists between the extreme unionism and the farmers' interests. It also accentuates the impossibility of the Government, which is under the domination of these organisations, to give fair play to the farmers. Whenever the two interests clash, you will always find that the Government decides against the interests of the farmers. Right from the very first, away back in 1916, at the time of the Dickson award, we know that the influence of these unions has been detrimental to the growers, and every time their interests clash, the Government invariably back down and sacrifice the farmers' interests to those of the organisation. I might point out what took place just before the Dickson award was made. We know that when the case was proceeding, the Government instructed Crown counsel to appear and urge the inclusion in the award of an impossible dietary scale. We also know that the Dickson award provided for retrospective rates of payment which were illegal and could not be enforced by law. None of the mills of Queensland complied with the award, so far as the retrospective payments were concerned, except those under Government control. Although there was no compulsion on the part of the Government to pay those retrospective rates, they paid them just the same, which meant that the sum of £5,000 was taken out of the farmers' pockets, as it had to come off the price which they received for their cane. Then, again, we find that during the strikes, which are constantly occurring, the work of the mills is hung up, and this jeopardises the farmers' crops. In every case where this has occurred in connection with the co-operative mills, the farmers have been allowed to go in and work the mills for themselves, and in that way they save their crops. Generally, a dispute occurs over which the farmers have no control, and their harvest is hung up. Owing to the action of the co-operative mills and private mills in this respect, they can get their cane off, but in the case of the Government mills, when a request is made for permission to work the mills by the farmers, in the same way as the farmers work the co-operative mills, the request is invariably refused. I can cite the cases of South Johnstone and Proserpine mills to prove the correctness of my contention. With regard to Proserpine, during the last two years we have had very marked instances where the farmers' interests were sacrificed to the demand of the extremists. As you know, Mr. Smith, there are awards for the mill workers and also for the field workers. You also know that the State is divided into three districts so far as the various awards are concerned. The Proserpine and Mackay mills happen to be in the Central District so far as the awards are concerned. It happens that the awards in the Northern district are higher than those in the Central. A demand was made at Proserpine for the Northern award to apply to that area, and the management gave way to that demand. That added to the cost of manufacture, and the extra cost came out of the farmers' cane. I contend that the action of the

Mr. Swayne.]

Treasurer on that regard was not to his credit. We must look to the Treasurer as being answerable, because he has the control of the mills. The Treasurer's concession has led to a similar demand being granted in connection with field work during this season. The farmers resisted at first, but the acid was put on them and they had to give way. The farmers also received a demand for excess wage rates at the Proserpine Mill. The cutters there were doing very well, but a demand was made for the excess rates, and the farmers refused to pay, because they were paying the rates that had been fixed under the award. The cutters remained in the field and cut the cane, but then the mill hands took charge, and they refused to load the cane. The manager of the mill directed them to load the cane, and they refused to do it. The upshot of it was that the grower had to give way and pay whatever was asked. Further pressure was put upon him by the mill employees, who are under the control of the Treasury. Although the manager reprimanded them at the time, still, the fact remains that the men remain in their positions, and really no notice was taken of them. Through the action of the mill employees, the farmers had to submit to whatever demands were made upon them. When the demand was made for No. 1 rates to apply to the field workers in the Proserpine district, the farmers naturally resisted, because they were not doing too well, and they were paying the award rates.

Mr. COLLINS: They agreed to pay it. Why don't you tell the truth?

Mr. SWAYNE: Agreed under compulsion, strengthened through the mill yielding the previous year. Again, owing to the action of the mill employees, they had to give way. They carried a resolution that owing to the action of the mill hands in the previous season they had no option and no choice, but had to give way. You see how the farmers are victimised through the enterprise being under political control. It serves to exercise the contention always raised on this side of the House in connection with State enterprises—that it is impossible to secure sufficient control through the intrusion of politics. I am speaking of one mill, but the same sort of thing has occurred in nearly all the Government mills. The Treasurer commented upon it very strongly when he was speaking at Babinda, but he seems to be utterly powerless to do anything. I can mention the case of a mill under Government control where the men were engaged in stacking sugar. Five men put the sugar on the trucks, but ten were put on for stacking, but it was insisted that in trucking the same number should be employed, or two men to do one man's work. The manager said the demand was unreasonable. The manager resisted the demand, and there was a strike. The farmers went to the manager and congratulated him on the stand he had taken, because they were under the impression that at last some stand was going to be made against this unceasing stream of demand on the part of the workers. The men were discharged, but an order came from Brisbane that these should be reinstated, and they were reinstated. I have only to mention such instances as those to prove my point, that when the interests of the farmers and the workers clash, the interests of the farmers are sacrificed by the Government every time. We know what happened at South John-

stone in 1912, when there was trouble with the mill hands. The farmers wanted to do the same as they had done at Goondi and Mourilyan mills, both privately-owned concerns. They wanted to go in and work the mills, but permission was refused them so far as the Government mill was concerned. A further delay took place, and it was a delay which everyone condemned. At any rate, the extremists were able to hold up the whole thing just because the department controlling the mill refused to allow the farmers to work it. The farmers were sacrificed, and they lost a considerable portion of their cane. I know that some of the farmers only got one-half of what it was estimated their crops would be. Then, again, in regard to these mills, there is a delay in starting operations at the South Johnstone mill, and this occurs year after year. We know it could not be helped when the mill started, but it is going on year after year. I have a statement here showing that the cane was ready to be crushed in May, 1918, but the mill did not start until August. It is contended that the late starting is detrimental to the farmers' interests. I asked the Treasurer some questions on the 1st October last, and his replies are somewhat misleading. I may say that I know a great many men in the Proserpine district. They are all fellow-farmers of mine, and they naturally come to me in their trouble. In October last, I asked the Treasurer the following questions:—

"1. Is it a fact that, notwithstanding the award of the court had placed it in the Central Division, the Bureau of Central Sugar-mills agreed to the wages and conditions awarded for the Northern Division being applied to the employees in the Proserpine Mill?

"2. If so, will not the increased cost of manufacture resulting from this concession to the Australian Workers' Union mean an increase in the cost of manufacture, and a decrease in the money available to pay the grower for his cane?

"3. Is it not reasonable to suppose that this yielding on the part of the bureau last season encouraged the Australian Workers' Union to make a similar demand on the farmers this crushing, the giving way to which, under an accompanying threat of strike if not granted, means again a further increase in working costs to be borne by the producer?"

The Treasurer, Mr. Theodore, gave the following replies:—

"1. Yes.

"2 and 3. No such results are apprehended. The general manager of Government Central sugar-mills is of opinion that the concession will insure industrial peace, and the economical working of the mill in consequence."

In spite of that forecast by the Treasurer, we have had nothing but a constant stream of troubles during this crushing, because the department yielded to the demand that was made at the growers' expense. That is the whole reason why we have all the trouble we have at the Proserpine Mill this season. Again, I find that I asked the Treasurer—

"Is it a fact that, in spite of the concessions made to workers in the Proserpine Mill by the Comptroller of State Sugar-mills, for the purpose of securing industrial peace, as mentioned

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in his reply to my question of 1st October, there is at the present moment a strike there and the mill is in charge of strikers who are members of the Australian Workers' Union?"

And the reply was, "No." I have here a letter which says the reply was, "Yes," proving that exactly what I indicated in my question did take place, in spite of the Treasurer's denial. He actually denied there was a strike, and there was [4.30 p.m.] a strike. There is no getting away from the evidence, which shows that the troubles these growers were under this last crushing is entirely owing to these industrial disputes. In the case of co-operative and privately-owned mills, as the Treasurer himself pointed out, there is much less than in the State-controlled mills, and the only conclusion you can come to is that it is owing to the weakness invariably shown in giving way. I also asked—

"1. Was the canegrowers' board of advice at the Proserpine officially consulted in connection with any of the recent strikes, or asked for any assistance in helping to deal with the situation created by them?"

"2. Did the Canegrowers' Association at the Proserpine wire him supporting, or in any way regarding the action of the Proserpine Mill management in the stand it adopted?"

"3. If so, did he reject the advice of the growers' board by granting the strikers' request for controlling the employment of labour in the mill?"

I might point out that on the lines of the 1911 Act, in accordance with an amendment moved by myself to that Act, a growers' board of advice was appointed, but the growers complained that their advice was not taken. In reply to my question as to whether he rejected the growers' advice, he says "No": he did not reject it. Yet here is a copy of a letter to the Treasurer himself in which it is pointed out that his reply to me is directly contrary to facts. This is the comment that the growers of Proserpine made on the Treasurer's reply to me denying that such a thing happened—

"The Honourable the Treasurer of Queensland, Brisbane.

"Sir.—I have been directed to point out to you that your reply to question No. 3 which was asked by Mr. Swayne is not correct, as you did reject the advice of the Growers' Board by granting the strikers' request for controlling the employment of labour in the Proserpine Mill.

"I have the honour to be,
Yours, etc.,

"M. A. MACKENZIE,
Secretary, P. F. and C. G.
Association."

We often have to complain of the inaccuracy, to say the least of it, of the replies we get from the other side. Now, we have a direct refutation of an answer which the Treasurer gave me. He is either ignorant of what is taking place when he says there is no strike when there is a strike, or else—well, we can leave it to the Committee to think for themselves. Either he is ignorant or he is misleading. I have here a most striking instance of the way the losses run up under this control. I have here a letter

which points out that ever since the present Government came into office the losses in working the mill kitchen have been on an increasing ratio. In 1914, in working the kitchen, they lost £30. The loss has increased and increased until in 1917 it was £500, and in 1918 it actually amounted to nearly £1,000—it came to £900 odd. In view of such striking evidence of the incapability of this Government to run a mill kitchen, is it any wonder that they are behind to the tune of something like £1,500,000 in working the railways? I think I have pointed out how incompatible it is to the growers' interests that their affairs should be controlled by a Government that is under the dominance of unions, that is union-ridden, as we know unionism to-day—an irresponsible, suicidally selfish unionism; and these men are up against the growers.

There is another matter I should like to draw attention to before I sit down. I find it rather difficult to understand why mills that are under Government control should pay a lower price than mills under co-operative or private control. Of course, I know the reply will be that the Central Board have control of these matters and fixes the price, but in the case of the Proserpine the price was fixed by the local board, and I am curious to know what pressure was brought to bear on those growers to induce them to accept a price of 2s. per ton less than what the other mills had to pay. In my own electorate the same thing occurred. While the board award was £1 10s. 3d. for 12 c.c.s. cane, these two Government mills—Proserpine and North Eton—were let off at £1 8s. 3d. for the same quality, and I must say that I cannot follow the reasons that are given by the control as to why there should be this difference in price. Looking at the report upon the Government Central sugar-mills, we find on page 4—

"Although subsequently, in furtherance of these arrangements and representations, a price for cane, approximately, 2s. per ton lower than other mills in the Mackay district was fixed by the local cane prices board, the growers appealed against the price, which appeal was dismissed. The contention that such a mill as North Eton, with all its cane supply on a very light tramline, is in a similar position to a mill drawing its main supplies by railway is not sound. It is not possible for a mill whose tramways are revenue-producing three months per annum, to pay interest, depreciation, and maintenance on such tramways and rolling-stock, and haul cane at a price similar to the Railway Department, whose plant is revenue-producing throughout the year, and whose charges are lighter."

The comptroller raised the contention that a mill that is served by the railway is better off than a mill served by some tramlines. But I might point out that another mill—Plane Creek—in the same district, served almost wholly by its own tramlines, pays a higher price. I know that the Central Board, in their wisdom, defeated the appeal, because an appeal was made by the growers against £1 8s. 3d. Although they stood by the Treasurer in the matter—

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

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I do not know why the hon. member for Mirani devotes

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so much time to a mill in my electorate, because I think I am quite competent to look after both the growers and the mills in that electorate. But every session he devotes a certain amount of his time to this matter, while he would be far better occupied looking after the interests, may be, of his own Homebush farmers who are under the control of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. I am not going to say that all the disputes that took place in Proserpine were justified.

MR. SWAYNE: I should think not.

MR. COLLINS: But I am going to say that the farmers in that district, may be, have a little more confidence in the district than the hon. member has, because on Thursday, the 8th January, I asked the Treasurer the following question:—

"1. How many tons of cane were crushed at the Proserpine mill for the 1919 season?

"2. How many tons of raw sugar were made from cane crushed?

"3. What was the average price paid per ton of cane?

"4. Was the whole of the cane crushed?

"5. Has the area under cane increased or decreased for the 1920 season?"

And the replies were—

"1. Tons cane, Proserpine, 1919, 35,250.

"2. Tons raw sugar made, 4,876.

"3. Average price per ton cane, £1 14s. 3d.

"4. All available cane was crushed.

"5. The area under cane has increased for 1920 season."

That is my reply to the hon. member for Mirani. Just imagine an intelligent body of farmers which I represent to be so foolish, as the hon. member for Mirani would make this House believe they are, as to put more cane under crop than the year before! Men do not do such foolish things as that in my electorate—they might do them in the hon. member's electorate. He is always interfering in Proserpine, and anyone who followed Proserpine closely last season knows well that we had all those disputes practically after the hon. member had been continually asking questions. He is the one who stirs up strikes, because the questions he asks in this House have an influence outside of it. When the Dickson award was put into operation the hon. member and some of his party got the Proserpine farmers out on strike for a number of weeks, and practically helped, to some extent, to ruin the district at that particular time, and I think they will never forgive the hon. member for Mirani for the advice he tendered at that particular time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: You are the champion for stirring up strikes.

MR. COLLINS: I am not a champion for stirring up strikes. I am a man who keeps people in their proper place, like I am trying to keep the hon. member for Mirani in his proper place. If Proserpine is such a terrible place as the hon. member for Mirani says, and the farmers cannot get their cane crushed, how is it that the Auditor-General says on page 4—

"Appendix B shows that the highest price paid for cane was at Mulgrave, with Isis, Proserpine, and Plane Creek following in the order mentioned."

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or, in other words, Proserpine was the third highest place in the payments for cane. Now let us read the payments, and the relative prices for 12 c.c.s. to growers. They are as follow:—

	£	s.	d.
" Babinda	1	13	6
South Johnstone	1	12	4
Mulgrave	1	10	4
Proserpine	1	10	2
North Eton	1	9	11
Isis	1	9	10
Gin Gin	1	8	9
Mount Bauple	1	8	6
Mossman	1	7	8
Plane Creek	1	6	5

Let the hon. member explain that. Plane Creek is in his electorate, and that is where the farmers are getting ruined. According to the report of Mr. W. J. Short, it says on page 4—

"The operations of this mill resulted in a profit of £5,248, which was appropriated for redemption, etc., as provided for by the local award.

"Only 24,800 tons of an estimated 47,000 tons of cane were harvested from Proserpine area owing to frost, but arrangements were made whereby surplus Burdekin cane, amounting to 31,403 tons, was treated at Proserpine Mill."

"This extra cane saved the situation, the extra tonnage treated so affecting overhead charges that the mill was able to distribute a further cane payment at the close of the season."

Now, if the Proserpine Mill was so badly managed, how is it that when I went along among the farmers on the Inkerman Estate, some of them came miles to thank me personally and tell me to thank the Government for the way in which they have been treated at the Proserpine Mill, notwithstanding the fact that their cane had to be railed nearly 100 miles? The Burdekin farmers have been accustomed to private enterprise. There we have the celebrated John Drysdale, at the present time employing forty Japanese in connection with his Inkerman Mill, while returned soldiers are carrying their swags round the country after having fought to protect such men as John Drysdale.

MR. WARREN interjected.

MR. COLLINS: The hon. member for Murrumbidgee went away and fought for the property-owners of Australia, and men like him are being denied the right to work. Japanese being put on in their stead. His association are dealing with the matter at the present time, and I hope they will deal with it effectively.

MR. SIZER: I hope so, too.

MR. COLLINS: And put John Drysdale in his proper place.

MR. SIZER: Oh!

MR. COLLINS: That is another matter, isn't it? (Laughter.) We have none of these things happening in connection with the employment of labour in the Central sugar-mills. There are not forty Japanese clearing the weeds from the Proserpine tramway; it is being done by the white residents of the district. The hon. member for Mirani makes it his special study to find all the dirt he possibly can dig up in connection with

Proserpine and other Central mills in different parts of Queensland. His own cane-growers will, later on, crush the hon. member for Mirani. There is only one black spot in the North at present, and it will be wiped out very shortly, and it will all become white. (Laughter.) The best reply I can give the hon. member for Mirani is that the farmers of Proserpine have more cane planted than they have had for a number of years past. It is quite true there are a few disgruntled men there like the hon. member for Mirani. We have farmers at Proserpine who grow less than 50 tons a year. Maybe some of those who grow 20 or 30 tons write to the hon. member for Mirani. Some of the largest growers support the hon. member for Bowen.

Mr. MOORE: The capitalist is over there. The small men are here.

Mr. COLLINS: I am not saying a word against the small men when they are genuine. It is men like the hon. member for Mirani who are always growling that they cannot get a livelihood; while men who have bigger minds and, maybe, more muscle go on the land and make a success of it. At any rate, I am not going to allow him to get up here from time to time and howl against the working men in my electorate: denouncing the general manager of the Central sugar-mills, who is a man with a certain amount of common sense. That is what you want when you have to deal with men. The judge may have made a mistake—I believe he did—in not including the Proserpine Mill in the Northern award. The general manager included it, and paid the Northern award rates to the mill hands. The hon. member would have us believe the farmers did not agree to that. He knows the farmers did agree to pay the men in the field the Northern award rates. Will he deny that?

Mr. SWAYNE: They had to.

Mr. COLLINS: They agreed at a properly constituted meeting of their organisation to pay the rates. They are not as mad as some farmers in other parts of Queensland; they possess a good deal of common sense. I am not going to defend all the disputes that took place at Proserpine.

Mr. MOORE: I see there is an item down in connection with the Proserpine Central Sugar Mill that does not appear in any other balance-sheet—that is, "Kitchen Supplies, £50." I would like to know what kitchen supplies have to do with a Central sugar-mill. Is a kitchen provided for the workers?

The PREMIER: There is a kitchen at every mill for the workers, but there is a different arrangement about feeding the employees. Some arrange for their own mess, and in other cases the mill provides for them.

Mr. MOORE: There is another thing which struck me as a most peculiar position. It is referred to on page 7 of the Auditor-General's report in connection with the South Johnstone Mill. This is what it says—

"One of the factors contributing to the loss on the year's transactions was the price paid for cane. The local board made an award fixing the price for 12 c.c.s. cane at 28s. per ton, with a base price of 27s. 6d. Payments were made at the latter price. The average c.c.s. over the whole season was only 10.73,

the award rate of which is 24s. per ton, thus accounting for an over-payment of 3s. 6d. per ton over the whole crop, or a total overpayment of £8.243"

It seems an extraordinarily unbusinesslike sort of method to pay before you have a test.

The PREMIER: We have to pay the base price under the award.

Mr. MOORE: The price paid should be fixed by the test of the cane, the same as the butter factory pays on the test of the cream it gets.

The PREMIER: The average price for the season is 12 c.c.s.

Mr. MOORE: They fixed it too high.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. MOORE: And that might happen at any time. The board fixes a price which puts a mill in a position it has no earthly way of getting out of. It shows the value of the amendment which Colonel Rankin endeavoured to have put in the Bill when he was in this House.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That comes under another vote.

Mr. MOORE: It seems to me such an extraordinary position for any mill to be placed in. If butter factories were run on such a principle as that, we would not have any factories in Queensland. Some alteration will have to be made. These cane prices boards will have to understand what the average c.c.s. of the cane is going to be before they fix the price, so that the mill will not be involved in a loss, but can pay a dividend afterwards if necessary. When there is an accumulated loss of £70,132 at South Johnstone, it does not look as though it was going to be a profitable investment for Queensland.

The PREMIER: Do you know who established that mill?

Mr. MOORE: Yes. It is admitted it was established in the wrong place, but it is claimed to be an asset, because 160 farmers are settled there who would not have been there otherwise. It is a pretty expensive way of doing it. The position may become better later on. It is to be hoped it will. It is surely up to the Government to find some method by which an unavoidable loss cannot be put on to a mill.

The PREMIER: I should think it will not happen again.

Mr. MOORE: We have had so many things that were not going to happen again. If this is going on year after year, it is going to be a heavy burden on the suppliers of cane to have to pay this amount. I was rather struck with the speech of the hon. member for Mirani. He always strikes me as being worth listening to on sugar, because he is a grower, and understands the difficulties of sugar-growing.

Mr. COLLINS: He is in this House most of his time.

Mr. MOORE: He understands the difficulties they have to put up with far more than the ordinary man who walks through the sugar districts. My idea is that a man who grows sugar-cane should understand the position better than someone who goes round organising.

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Mr. COLLINS: I know all the sugar districts from Nambour to the Mosman.

Mr. MOORE: Going round organising the workers.

Mr. COLLINS: I talk to intelligent farmers.

Mr. MOORE: I have listened to an intelligent farmer here. When the hon. member for Bowen said the big men were among those supporting him, and the small men went to the hon. member for Mirani, it struck me as that, if the small men are going to be downtrodden by the present Government, and have to come to a member of the Opposition to get justice, it is something the hon. member for Mirani should be extremely proud of. I hope he will continue to be the mainstay of the small man, and let the capitalists support members on the other side.

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): I am not a grower, and am not a cane worker, but I am going to air the grievance of one man employed in the Gin Gin Mill. He claims that he has endeavoured to secure justice from the department and also from the unions. First of all, he belonged to the clerks' union, and then to the Australian Workers' Union; and in a general way he has been battered from pillar to post. He has endeavoured by all constitutional means in his power to be heard. He does not claim that the Minister knows anything about it, but believes that if the Minister did know the full and true facts as they appear to him, his position at the present time would not be as it is. I will give, as concisely as possible, the story as it is related to be by this gentleman. He is Mr. Steele. He had been employed at work at the Gin Gin Mill as weighbridge clerk (assistant to the accountant) during the crushing seasons 1915 and 1916, and as a labourer during the period intervening, assisting in the overhauling of machinery. It appears that he was a good man, and they retained his services during the non-crushing season to assist them in overhauling machinery and doing labouring work about the place.

At 5 o'clock p.m.,

Mr. ROBERTS, one of the Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. FRY: Whilst he was so employed he decided to apply for the position of weighbridge clerk at the Mulgrave Sugar-mill, at a wage of £4 a week, and he told the management of his intention. Mr. Stapleton, the cane inspector, who was in charge of the Gin Gin Mill, gave him a good testimonial, and advised him not to apply for the position at the Mulgrave Mill, as the position at the Gin Gin Mill would be a permanent one. Upon this assurance, he decided not to press his application for employment at the Mulgrave Mill. But at the end of the crushing season, Steele claims that he was conveniently dropped for the benefit of a personal friend of the management, named Hennessey, who was mixed up with the management in a share in a mine.

The PREMIER: Could you not see me about this afterwards? It is a very small matter.

Mr. FRY: It is not a small matter. I have seen the testimonials given to the man, and no one can say that there is anything in them which is detrimental; they speak of him as being one of the finest men who

ever worked in the mill. Steele has not been able to get employment again. Apparently, he was driven out of employment at the Gin Gin Mill to make way for a friend of the management. I trust that the Minister will look into his case. It might be said that the man was offered employment again, but you know that once a man kicks up a "stink" about the management, he is going to get the order of the boot from the management at the first opportunity available. That has been the practice in all Government employment.

The PREMIER: Not since this Government came in.

Mr. FRY: During this Government's term, I only deal with matters of recent date, and this is one of them. Hennessey had no claim to the job except that he was a partner in a mine with the manager of the mill. It is stated that the iron work for the mine was done at the mill.

The PREMIER: That is a grave charge.

Mr. FRY: After the man has gone through all constitutional means by way of correspondence to get redress, but has not succeeded, the Minister will be justified in giving him an interview in order to satisfy himself. This appears to me to be a case of sacrificing a married man with a family for a single man. I trust the Minister will take notice of the case.

Mr. SMITH (*Mackay*): I desire to say a few words in connection with this vote. I think that in the General Manager of the Central Sugar Bureau we have a very capable man, who is thoroughly alive to the duties of his office, and is doing everything possible to bring the Government mills to as high a state of efficiency as possible. Of course, we must bear in mind that many of the mills which were built in the early days were put in the wrong place, and, having to pay high haulage rates, are not naturally in a position to do the good work which mills situated in a better position are capable of doing. The chief point I wish to refer to is the price of sugar and the handling of the Queensland product. We know that the Government having £1,500,000 invested in sugar-mills, the success or otherwise of the Central mills is largely bound up in the price paid for sugar. I want to refer to questions that I asked in the House last week with reference to the marketing of the Queensland product in the Southern States. We know that the Commonwealth Government are the sole purchasers of all sugar produced in Queensland, including, of course, that which is produced in our Central sugar-mills. That is purchased at a base price of £21 per ton. The refined product is sold, I understand, at £29 10s. a ton. I am also given to understand that a sum of £4 2s. 6d. is paid to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, acting as agents and refiners for the Commonwealth. That leaves a balance of £3 17s. 6d., the allotment of which, up to the present time, the Commonwealth Government have not yet properly explained. Under the conditions of purchase of the Queensland crop, the Commonwealth Government deliberately prohibited any extensions of this industry. While they were talking all over the Commonwealth about the necessity of increased production, while anyone who understands the position at all is desirous of seeing our primary industries extended as far as

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possible in Queensland, yet during this period, under the terms of purchase imposed by the Commonwealth, this Government was directly prohibited from building any new sugar-mills, from extending the crushing capacity of any existing sugar-mills, or from increasing their efficiency generally. This was done at a time when we recognised the necessity of increasing production. Yet, during this period the Commonwealth Government have had to import a large quantity of sugar to make up the deficiency. Only on three occasions has sufficient sugar been produced in Australia to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth, and only on one occasion has there been a surplus, yet we find the Commonwealth Government imposing conditions which deliberately prohibit any extension of the industry in the State.

I come now to a very important point, which has a bearing also on the question of whether central sugar-mills can earn a profit or not. I have pointed out that there is a balance of £3 17s. 6d. between the price paid for raw sugars, the charges for refining, and what it is being retailed at. What I would like to know is how that £3 17s. 6d. is allotted. I am of opinion that that is placed to the credit of a fund which recompenses the Commonwealth Government for the increased price they have to pay for the imported article: that is to say, I understand that they have paid a large sum, which has been stated in one case as £28 and in the other at £34 a ton for Javanese or Mauritius sugar. That sugar was placed on the market at the same price as the Queensland product. That arrangement is one that is subversive of the interests of the central sugar-mills, and of the industry generally in Queensland. It means that, while the Commonwealth Government prohibit the extension of the industry in Queensland—prohibit increased production here—yet they are making £3 17s. 6d. of the wealth produced in Queensland go to pay for sugar grown by coloured labour elsewhere. In the Southern States for many months past the people have been complaining bitterly of the conditions under which sugar is obtainable. In many places they have to take half raw and half-refined sugar; in other places, they have only got the raw product; and an imported article is being placed directly on the market in the Southern States which is not produced in Queensland. One only needs to look at the sugar on the dining-tables of any of the restaurants and hotels. It reminds me of children trying to make toffee: it is a sort of sticky mass—half toffee and half sugar, in an almost molten condition. That is the reason why there are serious complaints and comments about the position. I want to make it clear that that sugar which is being complained of is, first of all, being paid for at a higher rate than what is given for the Queensland product. It is being grown by coloured labour in Java and elsewhere, where the conditions of labour are such that the Indian Government have prohibited any further men being sent from India to work on those plantations. A Presbyterian missionary who has done service there for a number of years has been so disgusted with the whole position that he has recently published a book exposing the awful conditions under which sugar is grown on the Islands. I contend that the industry is of national importance to the whole Commonwealth. It is a most important industry in Queensland; and we can, and should,

produce enough sugar to meet the requirements of the whole Commonwealth, if we receive a price and the conditions of purchase are such that the extension of the industry can be carried on without let or hindrance. It is no part of the Labour party's policy to demand that a thing must be cheap, simply on the basis of cheapness. We, as a community, have no right to get a thing cheap if its cheapness depends on the inadequate payment of any section engaged in the production of the article. We say that anyone engaged in the production of our primary products should receive a price which gives them a legitimate return for labour, and for the capital invested in the industry, and the risks which they run from various causes. I am pleased to see that action is not only being taken by the cane-growers, but it is being supported by the Queensland Government. The Premier has stated that he is going to do his best to secure better conditions of purchase in the future than has been the case in the past. He has also said, in reply to my question, that he will not permit of any clause being inserted in the agreement by the Commonwealth Government which prohibits any increase in the production in this State. We know that during the war period the price of sugar went up enormously in every part of the British Empire. At the present time, I understand that the British Government have paid as much as £40 a ton for raw sugar grown in the West Indies, and other charges are superimposed on that. That shows that the price of sugar is very high in the world's market at the present time. I contend that, inasmuch as the Queensland sugar industry provided that commodity to the Commonwealth, and a plentiful supply of it during the war period, at a price which everyone could afford to pay, then when the conditions become normal we have the right to demand a standardised price based on the cost of production under the conditions prevailing in Australia. That is what I am contending for at the present time. We should have the conditions made such that the industry will be placed on a sound economic basis, so that men will be induced to go into that industry and put their land under cultivation. They will then be able to grow cane of higher sugar content if they receive a price which will stabilise the industry, and enable the people of the Commonwealth to get a pure sugar at a legitimate price. These are the things that I rose to speak on, and I hope that what I have just outlined will be carried out. I hope that the Commonwealth Government will support the Queensland industry by giving decent conditions of purchase, and that they will not in the future do what they have done in the past—namely, encourage the importation of Java-grown sugar grown on the plantations of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to the detriment of the white sugar grown by white labour in Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: I know that this vote is deeply interesting to the whole of the members of the Committee, particularly to the gentlemen who are engaged in the sugar industry. I merely rose to make one or two observations in reply to an interjection made by the Treasurer with regard to the South Johnstone Mill. That hon. gentleman wishes to associate some blame for the

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South Johnstone Mill on to the late Government. I want briefly to state the facts. The facts are, that a Royal Commission was appointed, including the late Mr. R. A. Rankin, Dr. Gibson, and Mr. Paddle, to inquire into the sugar industry, and place certain districts in order, as they considered were entitled to a mill. The Commission placed Babinda first, and the second was the South Johnstone. The Government of the day accepted absolutely the recommendations made by the Commission.

The PREMIER: The Commission did not select the site at all.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman wants to get me on to another track.

The PREMIER: The Commission did not select the site at South Johnstone at all.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman says that the Commission did not select the site at South Johnstone at all. If that is so, then I am perfectly certain that the Government of the day was guided by the recommendation of the officers of the department, who are the best judges of those kind of things.

The PREMIER: A deputation of interested persons came down from Innisfail and waited upon the Premier, and that is how the site was fixed at South Johnstone.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is a statement of the Treasurer that has no foundation in fact, and the Treasurer is only making the statement hoping that it will catch on.

The PREMIER: I remember quite well that a deputation of interested persons came down from Innisfail and waited on the Premier.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The fact remains that the Government of the day followed the recommendations of the Commission that had been appointed in that particular regard. I rose more particularly to take exception to the amount of money put down here for postage, telegrams, and incidental expenses. If there is one thing more than another that this Government are noted for, it is the question of incidentals. With a view of having this question further discussed by members of the Committee who thoroughly understand the position, I move a reduction in the vote by £1.

The PREMIER: Just a word in connection with the statement made by the hon. member for Bulimba on the question of the site for the South Johnstone Central Mill. It is generally admitted that the trouble in connection with the South Johnstone Mill has been occasioned owing to the bad selection of the site for the mill. Everyone knows that the Commission did not select the site for the mill at South Johnstone at all. The hon. member for Mirani will agree with me that the site is a bad one. Anyone who knows anything about the subject must admit that. The South Johnstone Mill has laboured under great difficulties through its inability to get a sufficient supply of cane. That is due to the fact that the cane has to be hauled very great distances, and has to be hauled over a steep range from Liverpool Creek. Everyone recognises that. The Commission did not recommend the site for the South Johnstone Mill at all. The Commission recommended that the first mill should be at Babinda, and that there should be a mill at South Johnstone, but they did not select the site. The Government of the day took

it upon themselves to amalgamate two localities—namely, Liverpool Creek and South Johnstone; and they selected a site against the wishes of a great number of people of that district. I remember a deputation of interested persons who came down in connection with that proposed site.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Will you lay the papers on the table?

The PREMIER: I will lay the papers on the table, if you like. The deputation was introduced by Sir Robert Philp. They were persons directly interested in the matter, and the Government of the day weakly yielded to them, and chose the present site of the South Johnstone Mill against the wishes of Mr. Lennon, who was the member for Herbert at the time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is not correct.

The PREMIER: It is correct. The hon. member for Bulimba ought to remember the facts well, because he was Treasurer at the time. He ought to have all the facts at his fingers' end. The fact that the South Johnstone Mill is proving a failure is because of the site. If the hon. gentleman wants the papers laid on the table, I will lay them on with pleasure.

MR. SWAYNE: I would like to have a few more words to say in support of the amendment. I think that we are justified in exercising very close supervision of any increases that are asked for in this vote, especially those of us who are sugar-growers. In regard to the speech of the hon. member for Mackay, I may say that he and I are in perfect accord in regard to the demand that a higher price should be allowed for sugar in order to defray the present cost of production. Later on, when we come to the agriculturists' side of the question, when we are dealing with the experimental bureau, I shall have something more to say about it. There is one statement which the hon. member for Mackay made which is not in accordance with facts, and that is regarding the margin which exists between the price paid for raw sugar to-day and the price received by the Federal Government. The hon. member says that there is a difference of £3 17s. per ton to be accounted for. The Queensland members in the Federal House take a great interest in this matter, and Mr. Mackay, the hon. member for Lilley, asked a series of questions in the House of Representatives in June, 1918. This will be found in No. 33, Commonwealth "Hansard" for 1918. The following are Mr. Mackay's questions addressed to Mr. Massey Greene, the Minister for Trade and Customs, and the Minister's replies:—

"1. How is the difference between the price of refined sugar at £29 5s. per ton and the price of raw sugar at £21 per ton accounted for?

"2. What was the estimated surplus of sugar on hand at 30th March, 1918?

"3. Is the cost of sugar destroyed by the recent cyclone in North Queensland to be a charge on the consolidated revenue or the sugar fund?

"MR. GREENE: The answers to the hon. member's questions are as follows:—

"1. The difference between the price of £21 per ton paid for raw sugar 94 net titre and the price of £29 5s. per ton charged for 1A refined sugar, the

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following figures will show approximately the position. 1A sugar is sold in Sydney at £29 5s., and in Melbourne at £29 7s. 6d. per ton. There are also other varieties of sugar and golden syrup and treacle—

	£	s.	d.
The gross proceeds received for the refined products of 1 ton of raw sugar melted averages	27	12	1
Less discounts on sales, which average	0	19	11
Therefore the net amount received is not £29 5s., but	26	12	2
The raw sugar is purchased at 94 N.T., but averages 96.32 N.T., which, at £18 per ton for 94 N.T., equals	18	8	11
To this must be added the shipping charges, freight on the raw sugar, harbour dues, exchange, insurance, sacks, landing, wharfage ...	1	15	10
Refining charges, C.S.R. Company	1	15	2
Selling charges, C.S.R. Company	0	7	0
Payment for services of C.S.R. Company	1	0	0
	£23	4	11
Difference between £26 12s. 2d. and £23 4s. 11d.	3	7	3
Surplus per ton at 96.32 N.T.	3	7	3
which is equal to for 94 N.T.	3	5	7
Additional price for raw sugar this year, £21 per ton, formerly £18	3	0	0

Leaving an apparent balance of 5s. 7d. per ton to meet interest on cost of sugar (surplus), estimated at 80,000 tons; depreciation in strength of sugar in stock; war risk insurance; insurance on raw sugar in store; increased freight on refined sugar; extra costs caused by strikes. It is estimated that more than 5s. 7d. per ton will be required to meet the above items.

"2. About 80,000 tons.

"3. On the consolidated revenue at present."

So that accounts for the difference in the two prices. At one time, when sugar was £18 per ton, they accumulated a profit of £500,000, but they gave it back to the growers when they increased the price to £21 a ton. I know the growers complained over and over again about the price paid in 1918. Mr. McGowan, who is a supporter of the party opposite, wrote to me, and he supported my then action. I have a letter which I can quote, and I am authorised to give the name of the writer to bear out what I have said. I might read a resolution which was passed at the annual conference of the united canegrowers held in Brisbane yesterday. It says here—

"The association decided to support the Proserpine deputation regarding the abolition of union control in that district."

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My remarks to-day require no further justification than that resolution passed by the united canegrowers yesterday. I have a letter from Proserpine, dated 13th October last, which I would like to read to the Committee. It is as follows:—

"NORTHERN NATIONAL POLITICAL UNION,
PROSERPINE BRANCH.

"13th October, 1919.

"Hon. E. B. Swayne, M.L.A.,

"Parliament House, Brisbane.

"Honourable and Dear Sir,—Your letter of the 3rd instant, covering questions asked for you in the Assembly relative to Proserpine Mill employees being put in No. 1 district by the General Manager, Central Mills, was read at the branch meeting on 11th instant, when I was instructed to write you fullest information.

"The history of this super-arbitration act dates from last season when, on the advice of the General Manager, the mill workers were paid No. 1 district rates. Previous to the present crushing season there has been continuous rumours to the effect that industrial trouble would be deliberately hatched by the lords of creation. To this end the chief engineer and several other employees were marked by the Australian Workers' Union for removal, but, fortunately, so far, they have been unsuccessful. The idea then occurred to them to turn in the direction of the grower. Mr. J. Hinschen was the first victim of the plot. His cutters were paid award rates, the cane averaging over 15 tons per acre and standing erect. They asked for an increase to allow of them making a minimum of 25s. per day; they were then making 3s. per hour. Mr. Hinschen refused to break the award, and when his cane arrived at the derrick to be unloaded the two men refused to lift the load. The manager ordered them to do so, but they refused point blank. The union would not commit itself in any way. Mr. Hinschen invited the union to submit the case to arbitration and he would abide by the decision. The cutters refused to leave the paddock and leave others in to cut. Thus Mr. Hinschen was forced, by direct action, to concede them another 3d. per ton under protest. The men at the derrick are still there. In union circles this case was regarded as a mighty triumph for direct action, and, therefore, the union decided to put the acid on all the growers, by requesting that cutters be paid No. 1 district rates also. A conference was arranged between the executive of the Australian Workers' Union and the growers' board of management on the 15th September, which resulted in the board promising to call a general meeting of growers to discuss the proposal, and if carried to make it retrospective to the 15th September. The general meeting was fixed for the 27th September. At this meeting about eighty-two growers were present. I moved—

That this special meeting, representative of Proserpine canegrowers, is of the opinion that, under the terms of the McCawley sugar-workers award of 1919, sugar-workers have every protection against unscrupulous employers

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and also are awarded a fair economic value for their labour. Therefore, and having regard to growers' right to live in reasonable comfort, growers here assembled pledge themselves on their word of honour that they will loyally abide by the McCawley award until all the provisions of the award are honestly exhausted in the settlement of any dispute that might arise between worker and grower.

To which an amendment was moved by H. H. Holmes, seconded by F. W. Grosskreutz—

That on account of the general manager paying the mill employees No. 1 district rates, we have no option but pay cutters No. 1 district rates also.

"The amendment was carried by forty-nine to thirty-three. By fifty-five to sixteen it was further decided to submit the question— viz.,

That Proserpine growers agree to make No. 1 district rates the standard for this season—

to a postal ballot.

"On Sunday, 23rd September, the Australian Workers' Union held their meeting, and when they were notified that the result of the growers' ballot would not be known under a fortnight, by about 150 to 10, they decided to strike, and thus applied the acid of direct action to gain their point. Another meeting of growers was held, which decided to rescind the motion regarding the postal ballot, pay the cutters No. 1 district rates, and make it retrospective to the beginning of this season. The growers again took up the line of least resistance when they made such an unconditional surrender. It appeared such a miserable exhibition of weakness that their masters addressed themselves to union control at the mill and speedily manufactured trouble in the sugar-room. Alas! those cherished hopes of the general manager for industrial peace and economic working of the mill! Another strike was on which the Australian Workers' Union termed a lockout, because the manager still assumed he was manager of the mill. Usually, five men are engaged in the sugar-room loading sugar into railway wagons. When they are stacking sugar ten is the complement of men required. The chemist ordered the five men to load sugar, when they stated they wouldn't touch it until they got five more hands and then sat down. The chemist went on his other duties and returned after two hours, and found them still in their favourite 'pose'—sitting down. The chemist immediately told them to get their time, and, of course, they were then the injured innocents. Night shift turned up Sunday, 5th instant, and refused to work in the sugar-room: day shift, Monday morning, 6th instant, also refused to go into the sugar-room until the discharged men were reinstated, which the manager firmly refused to do.

"Those farmers available in town on the 6th instant met and decided to compliment the manager on his firm stand against union control. They drafted a wire for the Treasurer and General Manager, asking—

In the event of the union refusing to

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return to work to-day, 6th instant, would growers be allowed to man the mill with protection for themselves and loyal unionists from intimidation?

"Also one to Collins requesting him to use his influence in this direction. Collins did not reply. General Manager replied Mr. Theodore would reply. Theodore replied—

Position at Proserpine serious.

Matter under consideration.

"Growers' meeting on the 7th instant labelled the Treasurer's reply pure evasion, and drafted another wire asking the Treasurer for 'a definite Yes or No' to Monday's wire. He has not yet replied. Growers then discussed ways and means along constitutional lines, which resulted in a conference of the manager and chemist, Australian Workers' Union representatives, and president and secretary of the Farmers' Association. Our representatives reported that from what transpired at the conference they were convinced the mill side of the dispute was correct. However, at the conference, the manager intimated he was prepared to reinstate the men and that when they were stacking sugar five extra men would be supplied. (These were his instructions from Brisbane.) The union then asked for lost time for the two shifts that turned up to work. The manager promised to refer it to the General Manager. These terms were then submitted to a general meeting of the Australian Workers' Union on the 8th instant, and the trouble took on quite a new phase, but which unmasked the union as to what it wanted, as the following Australian Workers' Union resolution indicates:—

That we resume work providing the clerk of petty sessions is prepared to draw his supply of labour through the Australian Workers' Union office at Proserpine.

"The local clerk of petty sessions instantly wired the above to his superior officer, and received a reply on the morning of the 9th instant, granting the union's demands.

"Theoretically, the Government controls the mill for the growers to safeguard the taxpayers; but with Labour in office the mill is simply a vote trap. With them might is still right, and the growers' best interests are sacrificed by a species of corruption unworthy our Constitution and a disgrace to the flag under which we live. My union greatly appreciate your efforts on behalf of Proserpine growers (we are practically disfranchised), and is grateful for the publicity your questions give to our most unenviable position, as serfs in the hands of a callous and spurious form of unionism and their creatures on the Treasury benches.

"With kind regards, hoping this wearisome letter may be useful for the purpose you have in view. Kindly acknowledge receipt.

"Yours faithfully,

"FRANK FERGUSON, Secretary.

"P.S.—Work commenced on Thursday, 9th instant, and they are still working.—F.F."

Mr. COLLINS: Who is it signed by?

Mr. SWAYNE: By Mr. Ferguson. I have the authority to give these names, and I contend that the position of the [5.30 p.m.] growers must be very bad indeed when they have to go to a member outside their own district to take on their case. It has occurred more than once in the North, and the correspondence quite bears out what I have said as to the sacrifice of the growers' interests.

Mr. COLLINS: Can you prove that I received that wire?

Mr. SWAYNE: I am a grower myself, and there is not a year that I am not working in the fields amongst my cane and have the plough in my hands, so it is only right that I should have a good deal of sympathy with the growers when they cannot get justice from their own representatives.

Mr. SMITH: When I was speaking earlier this afternoon I referred to the various prices that the Commonwealth Government get for Queensland raw sugar, and the refined article. Since then the member for Mirani has given a tabulated list of figures explaining the various charges. I was quoting from a debate in the Senate on the Commercial Activities Bill in which Senator Russell, Minister in charge of that measure, gave the figures referred to. But, accepting for the moment that the figures given by the hon. member for Mirani are correct, that does not alter the situation one iota. It appears from his statement that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and other interests concerned are being better paid even than I thought they were. We all know that with regard to refining there are large quantities of by-products, such as syrup, etc., which are sold at a very good profit. In addition, the shipping charges are very high. In that connection, I may say, at the request of the shipping companies the Commonwealth Government readily agreed to increase the shipping charge, which made the freight charges, particularly for sugar from Bundaberg to Melbourne, much higher than from the Islands to Melbourne, thereby showing another disadvantage to Queensland people. Then there is a managing charge of £1 per ton. The hon. member for Mirani gave a tabulated list of the various charges, giving £29 7s. 6d. Amongst other things, there are shipping charges, refining, selling 7s., and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's managing charge of £1 per ton. We know that the Adelaide Company handle most of the sugar, and they are said to be really owned by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. They, therefore, get profits out of that. There are refining profits, and syrup, and so on, and they are doing very well. In addition to that they get a managing charge of £1 per ton. When we recognise that since this Commonwealth purchase has been in operation the company has handled 1,150,000 tons of sugar, it shows that this company have made a huge profit in three years. However, that is the position as it stands, and it shows that there is room for readjustment of the whole position in the interests of the Queensland sugar-grower. We should have conditions which would enable the industry to extend to such an extent in Queensland that there would be no question of importing any sugar at all from Java, Mauritius, or any other place where sugar is grown by coloured labour. We, on this side, stand for Australian industry—a White Australian policy, and that policy

is dependent upon the sugar industry, consequently there is a necessity for establishing conditions which will enable those things to be done. I notice that the hon. member for Mirani had nothing to say about the position taken up by the Commonwealth. As I pointed out, they paid a higher price for imported sugar to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, who were the vendors, than they were prepared to pay for the Queensland product. Is he prepared to justify such a state of affairs, particularly as sugar is grown under conditions which have caused a Presbyterian missionary to write a book exposing the whole conditions, and the Government of India are prohibiting any further labour from India going to these plantations? We, therefore, say that that provides ample evidence in support of a good case for growing as much sugar as possible in Queensland to meet Australia's requirements. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. SWAYNE: Regarding this sugar transaction, after all the sum of 7s. as mentioned by the hon. member, is not a very great charge for handling. But what I want to point out more particularly is that no matter what the virtues, or rights or wrongs of the agreement may be, it was made by this Government with the Commonwealth, and I do not think the conditions have altered very much since it was first made. We did not hear at first of any protest being made against the Colonial Sugar Refining Company being allowed to have a cut out of it, and, in fact, I think I have heard Mr. Ryan say in later years, that he has made the Commonwealth Government agree to his terms.

Mr. KIRWAN: He never said that.

Mr. SWAYNE: The point is that the agreement is a mutual one between the Commonwealth and the Government of this State; and I take it, if there is anything wrong about it, the Government of this State are just as much to blame as the Commonwealth Government. Another point I want to make is that when it first became a matter of Government control I pointed out to the Treasurer that there was a great opportunity for the mills to test the possibility of turning out the raw sugar in a grocery form. It has been done in former years. I asked this Government then to go into the matter and ascertain if it would be of any advantage to market the sugar direct from the mills to the consumers, and so get past the refiners. They did not do this, and, apparently, they are satisfied with the arrangement as it is, and evidently they do not think that anything is to be gained by going outside the refinery.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member for Mirani said that the agreement entered into between this Government and the Commonwealth was mutual, and that there had been no protest entered by this Government. That is entirely wrong, because if he looks up the correspondence he will find that the last telegram sent was by the Treasurer, Mr. Theodore, then Acting Premier, and he entered a protest which said that owing to the fact that the mills were crushing there was nothing else left to do but sign the agreement. Will the hon. member deny that?

Mr. SWAYNE: He could have held the sugar.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member believes in direct action, then! (Hear, hear!) I have listened very attentively to the hon.

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member, and would ask him what about the hostility shown by the millowners in this State? There is not a word said about that. What about the hostility shown by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's Homebush Mill, in connection with his own sugar-growers? What about the same company at Macknade, Victoria, Goondi, and Hambledon? Not a word about them. He is not concerned about the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. The figures he read out this afternoon from Massey Greene were, to all intents and purposes, a defence of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, of whom the hon. member is the greatest advocate in this House. The Commonwealth Government and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are one and the same. Anyone in Australia who uses his thinking faculties knows that. Then, again, he made reference to a gentleman at Proserpine named Ferguson, who wrote him a very long letter—a kind of historical letter. I should say—reviewing the history of the Proserpine Mill, in which he said a certain telegram was sent to "Collins." How does the hon. member know Collins received that telegram? If I remember correctly, he was laid on a sick bed for three weeks about that time. I have no recollection of having received anything that was not handed to the Treasurer or replied to. I know the type of man Mr. Ferguson is. He is one of the leaders of the Tory party in Proserpine. I could quite understand him, in an understanding kind of way, instead of coming out and acting the part of a man, writing to the hon. member for Mirani, knowing that if there is any dirty work to be done, the hon. member for Mirani is the man to do it. The hon. member is welcome to the support of Mr. Ferguson. He does not support me. He is opposed to anything this Government might do. We could not do right, according to Mr. Ferguson. At any rate, the hon. member got the hon. member for Bulimba to move a reduction of £1 in the vote so that he would have an opportunity of replying to the statements I have made. We have listened to the reply, and I am sure it must be admitted he made a very weak one.

Amendment put and negatived.

Original question put and passed.

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

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the votes "Harbours and Rivers," £103,986 "and "Steamer "Allinga" Charter Account, £34,000 " were put and passed.

PROVISION FOR INCREASES.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That £15,500 be granted for "Provision for increases to salaries of General and Professional Officers in all departments, and to employees of the State Enterprises."

Mr. FRY: I would like to know whether men who have not qualified have been appointed to the ranks of the professional officers of the Health Department, while qualified men are waiting for appointments. I understand there has been a breach of faith on the part of the Government in appointing a gentleman who has not the qualifications, or any portion of them, for the job while qualified men are waiting. I understood that, in an important department

like that, only qualified men were to be appointed.

The HOME SECRETARY: There was no one appointed to a position requiring a qualified man who has not passed the examination.

Mr. FRY: Will the hon. gentleman say no man was appointed after the last examination who did not have his diploma?

The HOME SECRETARY: I say nobody has been appointed to a position requiring qualifications without passing the examination.

Mr. FRY: Was any relative of the hon. member for Burrum appointed to the department, and had he a diploma when he was appointed?

The HOME SECRETARY: It is not necessary. He was not appointed to a qualified position.

Mr. FRY: He is an assisting inspector?

The HOME SECRETARY: The position does not require professional qualifications.

Mr. FRY: When you send out a man to do important work he should have that diploma. However, I am not going to push the matter. I wanted to find out if that were the case, and the particulars of it.

Question put and passed.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

CENTRAL RABBIT BOARD FUND.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That £10,000 be granted for "Central Rabbit Board Fund."

Mr. GUNN: I notice every year we have the same amount. Surely, it must fluctuate! I do not believe in this vote. I think you could do better without it. I would like to have some explanation as to how it is being expended.

The PREMIER: It is fixed by the Act passed by your Government.

Question put and passed.

WARREGO RABBIT DISTRICT FUND.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the sum of £4,900 was granted for "Warrego Rabbit District Fund."

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND STOCK.

DISEASES IN STOCK AND BRANDS ACTS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the sum of £46,309 was granted for "Diseases in Stock and Brands Acts."

LIVE STOCK AND MEAT EXPORT ACT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That £690 be granted for "Live Stock and Meat Export Act."

Mr. GUNN: I thought the inspection in connection with the export of meat was done by the Commonwealth Government now. I see there are two inspectors down here at £220 a year each, and the estimated receipts are £650. What are the receipts for?

The PREMIER: I have ascertained that the two gentlemen who occupy these positions are Mr. Jost and Mr. Riordan, the former having been appointed in 1914 and the latter in 1915. These inspectors are on duty at bacon and ham factories only.

Question put and passed.

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REGULATION OF SUGAR-CANE PRICES ACT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That £14,275 be granted for "Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act."

Mr. SWAYNE: Now we have come to the Cane Prices Board vote. (Laughter.) Some time ago, when the new agreement with the Commonwealth Government was foreshadowed, I asked the Treasurer if he would exercise all care that, in the making of that agreement, his hands were not tied in any way regarding necessary amendments of the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: In what direction?

Mr. SWAYNE: For instance, in regard to contracting out.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are in favour of contracting out, aren't you?

Mr. SWAYNE: What an absurd thing to say! I have always stood for the principles involved in this Act. I want to see the Act protected and fair play between both sections. Such would not be the case if my opinion were as the hon. gentleman tries to make out it is. He must realise that that would make the Act abortive. I should be the very last to desire anything of that kind. I may say there is a desire on the part of both sections that agreements should be made for longer terms than the present award are made for. Those agreements should be subject to the approval of the board.

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

Mr. COLLINS (Bowen): We all know that the benefits derived from the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act have been of much assistance to the sugar-growers of Queensland. Through the passage of that legislation, about £1,000,000 have gone into the pockets of the sugar-growers, which, if the Act had not been passed, would have gone into the pockets of the millowners. The hon. member for Mirani made reference to the battle between the Commonwealth and the State Governments. I want to read the telegram sent by Mr. Theodore, then Acting Premier, in connection with the agreement quoted on page 8 of the return—

"Re proposed sugar agreement: We are compelled to accept conditions you have laid down, although we regard some of them as grossly unfair. You stipulate that we must not, during currency of agreement, allow any alteration, enlargement, or extension of any sugar-mill so as to increase its capacity; that condition will have effect of preventing a number of millowners from increasing efficiency of their mills, and thus prevent them from being in a position to pay as high a price for cane as other more highly-improved mills. You further stipulate that you will not allow any alteration of Sugar Cane Prices Act during currency of agreement; by this embargo you will prevent Queensland Parliament from making effective cane price legislation which was designed to protect growers from exploitation at hands of proprietary millers; the Act at present requires amendment to prevent certain large millers from evading its provisions. However, the mills are crushing, and sugar must be disposed of, so we have no alternative, and must accept

your terms; but I urge you to give further consideration to these important matters. The agreement, with alterations giving appeal from refinery manager as agreed to by you, will be signed and returned to you forthwith, and necessary proclamations will be issued at an early date."

You will notice there that we were prohibited, as a State, from amending the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act. I have heard the hon. member for Mirani and other hon. members talking a great deal about increased production. This is a portion of the agreement which, to all intents and purposes, block increased production—

"The Queensland Government will not during the said seasons of 1918 and 1919—

"(i.) Erect or assist in or encourage the erection of any new mill for the treatment and manufacture of sugar-cane into sugar; or

"(ii.) Remove or assist in or encourage the removal of any sugar-mill from its present site; or

"(iii.) Alter, enlarge, or extend, or assist in or encourage the alteration, enlargement, or extension of any sugar-mill so as to increase its present crushing capacity."

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You know the reason for that.

Mr. COLLINS: Of course, I know the reason. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company were behind this agreement.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Because you could not sell sugar produced in Queensland outside Australia.

Mr. COLLINS:

"3. The Commonwealth Government and the State Government mutually agree—

"(a) That neither Government will, until this agreement has been fully performed and the refined sugar resulting from the refining of raw sugar delivered under this agreement has been fully disposed of by the Commonwealth—

(i.) Take or sanction any executive or administrative action; or

(ii.) Introduce, support, assist, or encourage any proposed legislation—which would have or be likely to have the effect of altering (otherwise than as set forth in this agreement)—

(i.) The conditions existing on the fourteenth day of May, one thousand nine hundred and eighteen; or

(ii.) The legal rights and obligations of sugar-cane growers and sugar-mill owners on that date—

in connection with the growing, selling, purchasing, and supplying of sugar-cane and the treatment and manufacture of sugar-cane into raw sugar: Provided, however, that this clause shall not in any event remain in force after the thirtieth day of September, 1920."

That is one of the reasons why I speak on this question, because, in my electorate, in connection with the Kalamia Mill, and also in the Mackay electorate, in connection with the Farleigh Mill, difficulties have arisen, and we will have to deal with those difficulties under the present Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act. Under this agreement we have no power to amend or alter that Act

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until after September this year. It is just as well that the sugar-growers in my electorate should know that, because they sometimes expect too much from this Government, and in the far North we are so far away from the seat of government that the people there are inclined to blame the State Government instead of the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government imposed restrictions on the sugar industry, blocking increased production. The position at Kalamia is that the canegrowers there up to the present moment do not know definitely whether Kalamia Mill is going to crush or not. It did not crush last year, and we had to put into operation the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act to enable them to get their cane crushed. I believe the same difficulty has arisen at Farleigh. I understand the manager has informed the suppliers that the company will crush, provided they will accept a less rate per ton than the Central Board award lays down, and more than likely the company that owns Kalamia will make a similar offer. Kalamia is owned by the Australian Estates and Mortgage Company. By their actions in the past they inflicted a heavy loss on the growers at Kalamia in my electorate. The hon. member for Mirani knows that there has been an attempt to get outside the Act in connection with the mill at Homebush and elsewhere. It is just as well for the people of Queensland to know who are their friends, and to know what are the powers of this Government, so as to put the blame on the right shoulders—that is, the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I want to point out that the hon. member for Mirani was one of the first members to advocate a Bill for the regulation of sugar-cane prices.

Mr. KIRWAN: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Colonel Rankin and myself spent a week or two, and the hon. member for Mirani spent three or four weeks and more than that, and a considerable amount of money in framing the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Bill which was passed in this House. The Bill framed by the present Government was not exactly a copy of it, but a copy in principle.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A great improvement.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The first attempt made to fix prices was some years before the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Bill was introduced. The hon. member for Mirani not only had the honour of assisting to frame the first Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Bill, but he was the largest sugar-grower in his electorate when he became a member of Parliament. He is a grower, and his interests have always been with the grower, and when there has been any attempt to get outside the Act, the hon. member has always stood by the farmers and put his foot down in favour of the Act being administered in the interests of the sugar-growers. The present Government owe a great deal to the hon. member for Mirani for assisting them in the administration of this Act. At the time when a strike was on, and no boats were going up north with supplies for the sugar-mills, and the sugar-growers were in as bad a position as they are in now, the hon. member for Mirani went down to Melbourne, and he had no sooner landed in Melbourne than the steamers started running. (Government laughter.)

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At ten minutes past 7 o'clock p.m.,

Mr. KIRWAN, one of the Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. SMITH: I desire to say something in connection with this vote, which is a matter of vital importance to the sugar-growers of Queensland. Since the inception of this legislation, the growers have been placed in a better position than they have ever been in before. They were given a tribunal on which they had proper representation, and a definite voice in the matter of fixing the price of the commodity which they produce by their labour. Prior to the sugar cane prices boards, prices were fixed by the mill owners at a rate satisfactory to themselves. One only needs to look up the evidence given before the Royal Commission in 1911 to see the parlous position the sugar-growers were in then. They were compelled to accept the price fixed by the mills, and that price was generally founded on what the least efficient mill in the district was able to pay. The Labour party altered all that, and established tribunals having a proper legal status, which fixed the price on a just and equitable basis. The local boards, with the Central Board as a court of appeal, have power to take all evidence bearing on the question, and give an award which is just to all interests concerned. One can realise how great an advantage that has been to the grower. Under the old conditions the mills could dictate the price which they liked, and impose any conditions on the grower. They could, if they felt so inclined, practically turn a man out of the industry. If a man came into conflict with the directors and manager of a mill, the mill could so arrange things that the supplier was kept short of trucks, and as a result, was sometimes left with stand-over cane. But now the local boards and Central Board not only make an award, giving a base price for the cane, but have also the power to deal with the conditions of the supplying of the cane. So that every grower in a particular mill area is given an equal opportunity of harvesting his cane and having it properly crushed. As a matter of fact, as my friend the illustrious member for Bowen—I might call him that—said, this legislation has been the means of placing £1,000,000 into the growers' pockets which would otherwise have gone to the large proprietary interests. I was rather interested in listening to the hon. member for Mirani, when he advocated an amendment of the principal Act. I agree that the Act requires amendment in certain directions, but I would certainly be opposed to amending the Act in the direction that he has indicated. He has advocated an amendment of the Act in the direction of enabling the growers to enter into contracts or agreements with the millers. Let us consider for a moment what the position would be under conditions such as that. In this House, we often hear from hon. members opposite a good deal of talk about freedom of contract and free agreements. But everyone must understand that agreements entered into between the milling companies and the suppliers would be of such a one-sided nature that there would be no freedom of contract about it at all. It is also very interesting to bear in mind that this Act had a rather stormy passage through the Legislature. We well remember that a Select Committee was appointed by another place, at which the general manager of the

Colonial Sugar Refining Company advocated that the Bill should be amended in the direction of providing for those agreements. We only need to look to what has already taken place, even within the Act. We know that the Act is not what we desire it to be, but we had to accept certain amendments with a view of saving that which is best in the measure. We know that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company have been in the position of forcing the growers to sign agreements which are of a one-sided nature. We know it is the custom, and has been for many years, to make advances to suppliers to the mill early in each year, and to grant liens on their crops to enable them to go on with cultivation, planting, and so on. The Government, in connection with their mills at South Johnstone, Babinda, and so on, make these advances to the growers just the same as the other mills have done. But the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, who, at all times, have done everything to prevent the passage of this measure, quite openly declared before the recent Sugar Commission, presided over by Mr. A. Piddington, K.C., that they were out to fight the Act. They discovered what they considered a flaw in the Act enabling them to make agreements, and the result was that at every one of their mills in Queensland—Goondi, Macknade, Hambledon, and Homebush—they presented agreements for the approval of their suppliers. They drew up an exhaustive agreement, and demanded that the growers should sign it. They placed on it this condition—that if the growers supplying their mill in any particular area did not sign those agreements, the mill would not crush their cane. In addition to refusing to crush the cane, they were able to use economic pressure by refusing to grant the usual advances made and the usual liens on crops. They are a wealthy company, and they were able to use their financial strength and their economic position to tell the suppliers to their mills that, unless they agreed to sell their cane under the conditions dictated by the company, no liens on crops or advances of any kind would be made. That is the form of agreement which would be drawn up if an amendment of the Act were made in the direction indicated by the hon. member for Mirani. It is rather interesting to know that a deputation waited on me, on three different occasions, in connection with the Homebush Mill. They pointed out to me that they were growers for the Homebush Mill, and the company practically pointed a pistol at their heads. Unless they signed the agreement, with all the conditions laid down by that wealthy company, they said they would be placed in a serious financial position. A good many of them refused to sign the agreement. The Government, with the powers its holds under the Act, can operate the mill under certain conditions. The growers felt that a breach of the Act had to be established before the Government could come in to their protection. Litigation would have to be entered into, and they felt that, as a result of losing perhaps the best two months of the sugar season—which would happen before the mill could be placed in full operation—it would be best for them to sign the agreement dictated by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company under protest. But the growers are looking forward to the time—and if I have any influence with this Government, I will see that it is done—when an amend-

ment of the Act will be made that will give them greater protection than exists at the present time. (Hear, hear!) There is no freedom of contract about it at all. There can be no freedom of contract where one party to the agreement or the contract is in the economical position of being able to dictate terms to the other. I will oppose with all the influence in my possession any amendment of the Act in the direction indicated by the hon. member for Mirani. The amendment referred to has been advocated by opponents of this legislation ever since its inception. Once they have the right to make agreements outside the scope of the Act, as it now exists, it means an end entirely to all the advantages that this legislation has given, and places the growers, through their economic dependence, right back in the hollow of the hands of those proprietary mills that formerly controlled the situation.

Let me indicate another situation that has arisen. The sage of Bowen has referred to the Kalamia Mill that is owned by one of the largest financial corporations in Australia at the present time—the Australian Estate and Mortgage Company. As a matter of fact, I am of opinion that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are behind the scenes operating in everything that is taking place. They have thrown down the gauntlet by forcing the growers at their mills to sign these agreements, and they have also exercised influence with other proprietary concerns to adopt a like attitude. What is the position? The Farleigh Mill, we know, is owned by a Bundaberg firm, and the company owning it have found sugar-milling a very lucrative occupation. It has been pointed out to me in that district that the Farleigh Mill was bought by that company for a very low sum—approximately, £50,000. They have paid large profits to the owners of the mill up to the present time, in addition to making very considerable improvements out of the profits. The value of that concern is something like £100,000 to-day. That is an indication that that company has been doing exceedingly well out of this venture. But this company, in common with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and other financial corporations supported by hon. members opposite, have placed themselves steadily in opposition to this legislation. They want to be able to dictate terms to the suppliers of their mills. Since the Act has been in operation they have violated it, and made breaches of the award. They have been fined on several occasions for breaches of awards. In addition to that, two of the growers have been compelled to enter into litigation with them, extending to the High Court of Australia, to make this company do the fair thing by the suppliers to the Farleigh Mill. They went to the Supreme Court, where the Farleigh Company won the case; but on an appeal to the High Court of Australia the decision of the Supreme Court was overturned, and a verdict given in support of the suppliers. That is sufficient evidence to show that this company have done everything in their power to oppose the measure. They used their financial strength to try and coerce their suppliers, and they would heartily welcome the suggestion of the hon. member for Mirani that an agreement should be entered into. What is the position? They have given notice to their suppliers—quite legally. I understand—that they intend to give up the business of sugar-milling. That

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means a very serious thing to the sugar suppliers. We know that the canegrower does not plant his crop for one year, but he expects to get three crops off one planting; and, consequently, to give a few months' notice to those suppliers, if they intend to leave the business alone, is placing the suppliers in the position that they are confronted with financial ruin. They have indicated, however, that, if the growers are reasonable, they might consider the question of reopening the mill. By "reasonable" they mean that they desire to have a reduction in the award that was made for the past sugar season. I am informed that the manager concerned indicated to the suppliers that if the growers did not oppose their application for a reduction in the price of 2s. 6d. per ton, and if they were prepared to accept what the company considered a reasonable price for the ensuing year, then they would be prepared to continue in the business. That is the position. They have indicated to their suppliers that if they accept 4s. less per ton of cane than a just, legally constituted tribunal would award them, then they would be prepared to continue operations as millers. That is what I consider would take place if agreements were made legal and statutory under the Act. There can be no possibility of any freedom of contract between the financial corporations exercising to the fullest possible extent economic pressure on men who are only living from day to day and month to month. It is adopting the methods known in America as the "Iron Heel." No one blames a man for giving in when he has a pistol held at his head, because if he does not accept the conditions laid down he will have his head blown off. These companies are in the same position. They say to the suppliers, "Accept the prices which we dictate, or it will mean your financial extinction." These men have settled on the land, have built homes there, and have established a means of livelihood for themselves and their families. I contend that the Government should amend the Act in the direction which would give them greater powers, rather than less, than they have at the present time.

In view of the fact that the crop is a three years' crop, we ought not to allow those companies to say that they will cease crushing and leave the men's cane standing in the ground. I know the Minister for Agriculture and the Treasurer, who have been fully acquainted by myself [7.30 p.m.] with the position, are prepared to do everything they can to assist those growers, and they will see that those men are not bludgeoned into signing agreements at the behest of financial corporations. I feel sure, too, that the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture will see that those men can continue to cultivate their land, and that steps will be taken to secure them a market. (Hear, hear!) I think the legislation should be amended in the direction of giving the Government power not only to take over the mills when a breach of the award has taken place, but give them power to take control over the mill, rolling-stock, and tramlines if it is indicated that the companies intend to place the suppliers in the financial jeopardy which I have indicated. Those are things of urgent importance to every sugar-grower. No amendment of the Act having for its purpose the legalising of agreements, as suggested by the hon. member for Mirani, will be supported by me for

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the reasons I have already indicated. That proposal would only be the means of inserting the thin end of the wedge, and very soon the growers would be placed in the position they were in before any legislation was passed at all; and that is, that they would be subject to the terms dictated by any particular mill. The canegrowers generally are in a unique position as compared with other industries. We know that the commodity can only be treated at a certain time of the year, and we also know that it cannot be dealt with the same as other crops. The canegrower is practically in the position of being compelled to send his cane to the nearest available mill. That is one of the chief reasons why the legislation was passed—to give the canegrowers a reasonable opportunity of having their cane harvested at a reasonable price. I cannot understand any one opposing the existence of this legislation, other than the fact that we know that financial corporations resent any legislative enactment which curbs their desires for profit. We know that the financial combinations of Australia are doing everything in their power to get into the position of being able to dictate the terms upon which the rest of the community shall live. This central board provided for in the vote now before you, Mr. Chairman, is composed of a canegrowers' representative, a millowners' representative, sugar chemist, accountant, and so on; and they have every means at their disposal of fixing a price which gives justice to all. That is fully apparent to anyone who, from an unbiased standpoint, has studied the measure. Anyone, therefore, who opposes the existence of this measure—who opposes the administration of the existing Central Board—stands condemned as a man who desires to be in a position, not to have justice done to them, but to dictate terms to those who are less fortunate than themselves in the community.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SWAYNE: I am rather amused at the efforts made by members on the other side—I suppose it would not be parliamentary if I said to deliberately mislead as to what I said and place me in a false position as regards this Act. What I did say—and I said it after consultation with a good many growers—was that it would possibly be an improvement in the Act if it were made possible to make an agreement, virtually an award, for a longer period, because it was to be subject to the approval of the board, just the same as an agreement under the Industrial Court, where the judge calls the employers and employees together. I also said that I was opposed to any contracting out. I used the words, "That any contracting out would make the Act abortive." What do hon. members make of that? Have they anything to say against it? As I said, it might be an improvement if the awards were made to extend for a longer period than one year. I called it an agreement—I said distinctly that agreement was to be approved by the Central Board. If there is anything objectionable in that, I fail to see it. Regarding the tactics of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company at Homebush, I strongly disapprove of them. I do not think it fair that those growers should have any pressure brought to bear upon them which would place them in a position of not taking advantage of the Act that has been passed. I do not care what company or individual it is, the Act should apply to all alike, and I certainly strongly object to this

attempt to sidestep the Act. There is one question I should like to put to the Minister in charge of this Bill: and I think the position I am going to lay before you, Mr. Chairman, will furnish very strong grounds for doubting hon. members' sincerity in regard to this particular piece of legislation. What about the 1920 crop? What is to prevent the Colonial Sugar Refining Company from just repeating the same performance in regard to that crop as they did regarding the 1919 crop? Of course we know what hon. members opposite are going to say. They are going to say that the agreement with the Commonwealth holds good until 20th September next, but that only applies to the 1919 crop. It does not apply to the 1920 crop. Although I am not a lawyer, I think it would, at any rate, be worth the Minister's while to find out whether we could not pass an amending Act this session of Parliament. I brought the matter up about the middle of the session, as to whether an amending Act could not be passed to prevent any pressure being put by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company or any other corporation on the growers in regard to the 1920 crop, because, although the agreement we are at present selling under does extend to the 20th September next, it does not—unless I am very wrong—apply to the 1920 crop. And there is nothing to prevent the company, we will say, when the crushing commences, about the middle of the year, from doing exactly the same as hon. gentlemen on the other side are now pretending to object to in regard to the last crop.

MR. COLLINS: You ought to withdraw that word "pretend." We are not pretending.

MR. SWAYNE: I have said nothing unparliamentary. I should like to have used stronger language—but it would have been unparliamentary—because I believe they have attempted to put us in a false position as regards this legislation. Whatever is done should be done under approval of the Central Board, and also there should be no contracting out allowed.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: With regard to the statement made by the hon. member for Mirani, I think he was not listening very attentively to the clause of the agreement quoted by the hon. member for Bowen, which says that no fresh legislation shall be introduced by this Government before the 30th September next; so there is no use the hon. gentleman getting up and talking about the Opposition not being against any legislation amending the cane price legislation this session, because his friends in the Federal Parliament—prompted, I suppose, by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's influence—have insisted on clauses being inserted in the sugar agreement preventing us introducing legislation in the interests of the farmers.

MR. GUNN: Evidently you are going to sugar the sugar industry.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am afraid, from the interjection, that the hon. member has very little sympathy for the industry or the grower. I will now read the clause. Amongst other things, it forbids this Government to introduce any fresh legislation, and it proceeds—

"(ii.) In connection with the growing, selling, purchasing, and supplying of sugar cane, and the treatment and manufacture of sugar cane into raw sugar: Provided, however, that this clause shall

not in any event remain in force after the thirtieth day of September, 1920."

So what is the use of hon. gentlemen getting up and saying that so far as the Opposition are concerned they will not oppose any legislation?

I want to take this opportunity of congratulating the Government for introducing this very fine piece of legislation, and I find—with regard to the alarm of Mr. Hughes and his Government about overproduction, and that clause which prohibits the improvement and the erection of any new mills, which this Government protested so forcibly against in the telegram read by Mr. Collins this afternoon—on going through the figures, that during the years from 1912 to 1918, inclusive, we have imported into this country no less than 480,000 tons of black-grown sugar which should be produced in Australia. In the face of that, I would like to ask why the Federal Government should insist on no fresh sugar-mills being established—on no mill being improved—when we were forced to accept that agreement or sacrifice the sugar-growers' interests, as Mr. Theodore pointed out in his telegram. He pointed out in that telegram that we were compelled to accept the agreement with those obnoxious clauses in it. I say there must be some influence at work that prevents the developing of this great sugar industry in this State. We have thousands of acres of valuable fertile land lying idle in Australia and Queensland that should have produced sugar for Australia, and, in the face of that, we have imported into Queensland from 1912 to 1918 no less than 480,000 tons. Only in one of those years, and during the time the Labour Government were in power—in 1917—did we produce more than was required for the people in Australia. In that year we produced 307,714 tons, and the consumption was 274,000 tons, showing 33,000 tons more than was required. At the present time it is hard to say what it is costing the people of Australia, but, if we can take any notice of the price of sugar outside Australia, it will probably be costing £40 or £50 a ton. Last year we had to import 50,000 tons at a considerably higher price than what the Federal Government are prepared to pay producers of sugar in Queensland. With these facts before us, it is no use the Opposition getting up and saying they are in favour of developing the industry, and that they are in favour of the sugar-grower, because it was the Labour Government who introduced the legislation which forced the millers to pay a reasonable price for their cane. The hon. member for Mirani read the agreement between the Federal Government and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, pointing out the small profits and apologising for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. It is impossible to serve the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and the growers of this State. When this legislation was introduced, the growers were not getting a fair deal at the hands of the millers. The Royal Commission in 1911 made use of words something of this nature: After going carefully into the whole question, they said, "When we turn to the millers and refiners we find them, generally speaking, in a very solvent and sound financial position: but when we turn to the growers we find a very different state of affairs." The grower, they pointed out, was compelled to accept the price offered to him by the miller, or starvation and ruin stared him in the face. That was a condition of

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things this Government was not prepared to allow to exist, and they introduced the cane prices boards legislation which, as the hon. member for Bowen has pointed out, has had the effect of putting into the pockets of the growers in Queensland in four years the enormous sum of £1,000,000. I say the grower benefits to the full extent by that large increase, which, in round numbers, amounts to 5s. on every ton of cane produced in Queensland, taking the average.

Mr. COLLINS: After all, there has been a good deal of coercion in the hon. member for Mirani's district. I know something about the tyranny of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company apart from that which they exercised over the growers. Is it not a fact that in 1916 the Homebush farmers sent a deputation to Cairns to the Central Board asking them to make the agreement submitted by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company the award? The hon. member knows they put on what the hon. member for Mackay refers to as economic pressure. We hear a lot about direct action on the part of the workers. I suppose this is not direct action on the part of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. They simply said to the sugar-growers at Homebush, "You can crush your cane only on the conditions laid down by us"; and the farmers—the cultivators of the soil round about Homebush—had to accept the terms of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Yet the hon. member gets up in this House and talks about agreements that will be subject to the approval of the court, and all that kind of bosh. The hon. member questions our sincerity. Ever since I have been in this House I have questioned his sincerity. When I was sitting in opposition years ago I kept my eye on him. I remember, when the Profitteering Bill was going through this House, he practically defended the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, whether he knew it or not. If he wants to see whether I am wrong, all he has to do is to go to "Hansard," No. 25. He tried to make out that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company consisted of small shareholders. He ought to have said, "Widows and orphans." There is a company crushing his own farmers in his district, and they have done it over and over again.

Mr. SWAYNE: I am rather amused at the protestations of hon. members on the other side regarding their desire for an increased price of sugar. If they really do believe in it, their conversion is a very recent one, and I am very pleased that they see the error of their past ways. I congratulate them on the fact. Going back a little bit, I would like to point out that in the year 1914 our crop was first sold under price-fixing legislation. It was a Labour Government at the time, Mr. Fisher being Prime Minister. By placing an embargo upon the export of sugar, he put us into the hands of Southern buyers. I think they put on a price of £15 a ton. The matter came up in this House during Mr. Denham's Premiership; and because hon. members on this side expressed a strong opinion that we should get more than £14 or £15 a ton for our sugar, the present Premier said we were in favour of dear living. Then, when a delegation from both sides of the House went down to Melbourne, Labour members were taken to task by a Labour convention sitting in Rockhampton, and the branch of

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their organisation in Cairns sent a wire down to Melbourne expressing the hope that a higher price would not be granted. Again, when there was before the Federal House a Bill for the purpose of raising the price from £18 to £21 per ton, Mr. Tudor, the leader of the Labour party in the Federal House, said it meant dearer living. In regard to the £500,000 that had accumulated and which the Hughes Government were going to give us by way of increased price, Mr. Tudor said, if anybody were entitled to it, it was the consumer and not the producer of sugar. Again, I draw attention to the fact that, when the price was raised from £18 to £21 per ton, the first reference to the increase in price came from Mr. Hughes, not from Mr. Ryan. When the conference was held between the Australian Sugar Producers' Association, the United Canegrowers' Association, and other people, and it was suggested by the members of the United Canegrowers' Association that there should be an increased price asked for from £21 to £24, a doubt was expressed by the Australian Sugar Producers' Association as to whether it would be wise to do so, for which they got very thoroughly slated. We find that the present Premier and Mr. Lennon agreed with the delegates of the Australian Sugar Producers' Association that it would not be wise to ask for an increase from £21 to £24. I am very glad to find that now they are realising the error of their ways. I welcome the accession of strength we are getting in our efforts to obtain a fair price for the sugar producers of Queensland. At the same time I strongly object to their trying to make party capital out of it.

Mr. COLLINS: That is what you are doing.

Mr. SWAYNE: The hon. member says: I am trying to make party capital because I am controverting the erroneous statements that come from the other side in regard to this important matter.

Mr. GUNN: In reference to the price of sugar, I find the following at page 1243 of "Hansard" for 1914:—

"Mr. THEODORE: I said, 'If we can correctly draw an inference from their remarks.' As a matter of fact, the Chief Secretary did say that sugar should go up in price on account of things that are happening elsewhere. Everyone in the community is a consumer of sugar. The Minister for Agriculture wants to see dear meat, and other members of the Cabinet favour high prices, because they mean success to the commercial enterprises, success to the middleman, and success to certain businesses, and they do it without any regard to the interests of the whole community.

"The Treasurer: Who said they wanted dear meat?

"Mr. THEODORE: The Minister for Agriculture said it some months ago.

"Mr. Hunter: And the Premier said to-night that sugar was too cheap."

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He said cane was too dear.

Mr. GUNN: This continues—

"Mr. THEODORE: Yes, the Chief Secretary wanted a higher price for sugar. That would mean dearer living for the people in the State. I don't think we can draw any other inference from his remarks."

Question put and passed.

SUGAR EXPERIMENT STATIONS ACT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That £11,665 be granted for "Sugar Experiment Stations Act."

Mr. SWAYNE: These stations are a very great boon to the industry, and it is, perhaps, worth while to point out, in view of the fact that we hear so much stated erroneously about the industry being spoon-fed, that they are maintained at the expense of the industry. The growers are levied on to finance the stations.

Mr. GLEDSON: Only half of it.

Mr. SWAYNE: At any rate, they are levied on. To that extent, at any rate, what is done in regard to other State farms is not done in regard to these stations. I think the hon. member for Bowen might agree with me that in this respect our industry stands out by itself. What I want to say is that, while a series of very useful experiments with regard to methods of cultivation—manuring, fertilising, and so on—are carried out, I should like to see something more done in the way of improving the variety of the cane. In ten years, I think, the average sugar content of our cane, or the average extraction, has been increased by something like $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. That is not sufficient. People not connected with the industry point to the huge strides made in regard to the beet root: that when beet sugar was first made the sugar content of that root was only about 8 per cent.; and now, by selection, cross-propagation, and so on, it has been increased to 16 or 18 per cent. They say, "Why can you not do the same with cane?" Beet lends itself to improvement in that regard, being grown from a seed. Except in very few instances, sugar-cane is grown from a cutting, and you cannot hybridise or cross-propagate it, as can be done in the case of a plant grown from seed. Only in the last twenty years has it been known that cane can be grown from seed, and a certain amount of experimental work in cross-propagation of breeding has been undertaken in the West Indies and other countries. It has been undertaken also by the Acclimatisation people in Queensland and other people at other places in Queensland. I should like to see the State take this work in hand. Hitherto they have not had an experimental station climatically suitable for this work, but they are now establishing a station in the North on the Johnstone. I should like to hear from the Minister whether it is intended to undertake this very necessary improvement work by special selection and crossing. If we can only get another 2 or 3 per cent. added to the average sugar content of the cane in Queensland, it will be a very great advantage not only to the industry but to the State as a whole. Furthermore, in regard to the future of the industry, we know an attempt is now being made to get for our article in Australia something like a fair price. The hon. member for

[6 p.m.] Mackay dealt with the previous question this evening, and I am quite in agreement with him there. We certainly want a higher price, but he rather understated what the world's prices are. I think he spoke of £40 a ton. "The International Sugar Journal" of last December gives the British price as 114s. per cwt. That means that in the old

country, at the present time, they are paying over £100 a ton for their sugar, and I think they are limited to a ration of about 10 oz. per week. All the facts which come to our cognisance indicate that it will be many years before there is anything like cheap sugar again. The Queensland producer is not getting anything like half the world's parity at the present time. The sugar-growers rendered great services to the Commonwealth during the war; and when the whole of the world, except New Zealand, were starving for sugar, and limited to a ration of a few ounces per week, the people in Australia had plenty, and the jam industry was carried on most profitably. Whether the fruitgrowers got their fair share, I cannot say; but I am inclined sometimes to think that they did not get it. The jam industry also did great service to our troops on the other side of the world. In support of our claims for a higher price, arguments were adduced that not only is there an advantage in having the article raised within our own country, and that every country should be self-supporting as regards the necessities of life, but from the defence point of view it is a valuable factor, because it is the one industry which can possibly bring about close settlement in the North. If the sugar industry is ruined, it means a great risk to the North. The people of Australia should realise what the depopulation of North Queensland would mean. If any alien nation were, through lack of population, allowed to obtain a foothold, our ideal of "White Australia" would disappear, and there would be the expense of maintaining a land frontier against possible foes instead of having the sea between us and other nations. I think that, although we are asking for a higher price for our product, it is still a very low price as compared with the rest of the world, and it is up to Australia to treat us liberally in this matter.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Mirani wants to know if any of this fund is being spent in the direction of introducing sweet varieties of cane. Since the war, very little has been done in that direction. In the days gone by, when the Colonial Sugar Refining Company bought cane at so much per ton, there was a great incentive on the part of the miller then to introduce a sweet variety of cane, and, to their credit, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company has done a lot in introducing sweet varieties from New Guinea and other parts of the world. Now that sugar-cane is paid for largely on an analysis basis, the incentive for the miller to introduce sweet varieties is not so great. Therefore, it will devolve on this Government to launch out in that direction, because nearly as much labour is expended in the cultivation of varieties of low density as would be expended on sweeter varieties, so that it is also in the interests of the growers as of the millers that a sweeter variety of cane should be grown. Now that the war is over, while I am in the Agricultural Department I will do everything possible to see that sweeter varieties of cane are introduced. There is also a responsibility on the millers' part in the matter of extraction. It is certainly not creditable that so large an amount of sugar goes up in smoke or down the drain.

Question put and passed.

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STATE BATTERY AND TREATMENT WORKS,
IRVINEBANK.

The PREMIER: I move that £40,000 be granted for "State Battery and Treatment Works, Irvinebank."

Question put and passed.

LOAN FUND ACCOUNT, 1919-1920.

PREMIER AND CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT—
SOLDIER SETTLEMENT AND REPATRIATION.

The PREMIER: I move—That £400,000 be granted for "Soldier Settlement and Repatriation."

Mr. VOWLES: I desire to refer to a matter upon which I have been in conversation to-day with the Premier. Quite recently I referred on the Immigration vote to the misrepresentation or misunderstanding that is going on in the old country in regard to the conditions which obtain in Queensland as far as soldier settlement is concerned. I have a statement here which I got this afternoon from a soldier, a man who fought for the British Empire, and who was wounded on many occasions. He has spent his savings, and not only his savings from his war service but his war gratuity, and has also compounded and realised the pension coming to him. He has expended the whole of the money in coming to Australia with his wife and youngster, on the understanding, through the misrepresentations in the old country, that when he landed here he was entitled to certain privileges as a soldier. I am not doing this with the view of castigating the Government, but with a hope that immediate steps will be taken to prevent other men from coming under the same mistake. He tells me that there are, to his knowledge, 3,000 men who are waiting to get passages to come to Australia, believing that certain conditions obtain here which do not obtain. It might simplify matters if I were to read this statement to the Committee, and I think that when hon. members hear it they will come to the conclusion that a very great hardship has been suffered by this man, and he is not the only man here: I have met another man to-day with the same tale of woe. They are stranded in Queensland, in a land of plenty, as it was represented to them in the old country. They have sunk all the money they had, and but for the Government of Queensland, which is keeping them going for the moment, they and their families would be out on the streets, and all the hopes they entertained would be things of the past. I do not want to give this man's name. I will leave out all names. This is what he says—

"STATEMENT.

"I am a married man, with one child. I expect that my wife will be confined with another child in about a month's time. I am twenty-five years of age, and was born at Kennington, London. I was employed before coming to Queensland, first in the Refuge Insurance Company's office, and latterly as an inspector in the Ministry of Munitions. I am an ex-soldier, having joined the army in March, 1913, being discharged June, 1916. I first considered the question of coming to Queensland as an immigrant in August, 1919. I was induced to think about the matter by the propaganda appearing in the Press, and upon the

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hoardings in London, and in booklets issued by the Overseas Settlement Committee, and distributed to all labour exchanges throughout the United Kingdom, and also through dispersal camps formed for the purpose of demobilising the army."

It is all owing to the circulars which are being circulated in the old country, and which, to my mind, are misleading the people. Whether it is done wittingly or unwittingly, it is done with the knowledge and approval, apparently, of our Home Department. Then he further says—

"I formed the opinion from the propaganda which I read that Queensland offered the best inducement to an immigrant of my class, because of the fact that it offered me a larger advance of capital and better land settlement conditions than any other State. No other State, it appeared from the propaganda, would have offered me anything like the same advantages, unless I had been a resident there before the war. One of the posters which impressed itself on my mind, I saw at Cockspur street. It referred exclusively to Queensland. Its features were a picture of a man with a spade and a bag of gold labelled £1,200 by his side. It was labelled, 'Queensland—the Queen State—My Land,' and impressed me a good deal. One of the particular inducements, from my point of view, was contained in a booklet, which declared that no previous agricultural experience was necessary for anyone wishing to secure a farm in Queensland under the overseas settlement scheme. In accordance with a paragraph which appeared in the Press I applied, in August, 1919, for forms of application for a free passage and acceptance as a Queensland settler to the secretary, Overseas Settlement Office, 59 Victoria street, London. I subsequently received two forms to be filled in, and in accordance with instructions returned them to the Overseas Settlement Office. I later received a letter, of which the following is a copy:—

"MEMORANDUM.

"From the secretary to the Agent-General of Queensland, 409 and 410 Strand, London, W.C.2.

"27th August, 1919.

"Your passage has been approved by the Queensland Government. The matter now rests with the Overseas Settlement Office, to which department all future correspondence should be addressed.

"(Sgd.) P. J. DILLON.

"Secretary.

"So soon as I received the above letter, I went to Mr. Heath, secretary to the Overseas Settlement Committee, and asked him when I was due to sail. He said that if I was in a hurry to get away my best plan was to make written application to the passenger department, Orient line. He said that I had better pay my own passage money, which would afterwards be refunded by the Overseas Committee."

This man paid £85 for his wife and family, as he thought when he arrived here that he would get a refund of that amount, but he discovered that he was only entitled to

get a refund of £35. There was some cables sent by the Chief Secretary's Department to England to make inquiry, and the cost of the cables was charged against the £35. He further says—

"I went personally to the Orient Company and obtained accommodation on the 'Ormonde.' I sailed for Queensland on 15th November, 1919. Before I left England I was told by Mr. Heath, secretary to the Overseas Committee, that I was lucky to get away on the boat, as there were 3,000 applicants approved and awaiting accommodation to travel to Queensland under the committee's scheme."

Now, I say it is a deplorable state of affairs if there are 3,000 men waiting to come out, and if his brothers and relatives are waiting to come out here on the strength of the representations which were made by him in the old country. They have no employment to go to when they come here, and they are coming here to swell the ranks of our unemployed.

The PREMIER: Don't get excited.

Mr. VOWLES: This man will tell you that there are 3,000 others who are in the same position as himself. They made applications for passages to Queensland. He says himself that he was responsible for misleading his friends. I say that the time has arrived when immediate action should be taken to make the true conditions regarding immigration and settlement of soldiers here known to the men in England. He further says—

"The concessions which I expected to secure from the Queensland Government on arrival were those set out in the paragraph relating to Queensland in the official pamphlet, 'Official information for the use of intending settlers in other parts of the Empire,' first edition, March, 1919, published by the Overseas Settlement Committee, copy of which is attached and signed by me."

The PREMIER: Who was it issued by?

Mr. VOWLES: I could not tell you. I am giving it as a statement of fact. I do not care who was responsible for issuing it, but I want it cleaned up. I am not bringing it forward to make capital out of it but I want to see that these people are not misled. This man further says—

"I took it that the Queensland Government, by approving me and the passages of my wife and myself, had contracted to settle me upon the land upon the conditions relating to Queensland set out in that pamphlet. I was so impressed with the scheme of the Queensland Government that I told numbers of people whom I met among ex-service men of its details and advised them to take advantage of it. A number of them did so, including three of my own brothers, and a number of others. I persuaded these people to take advantage of the scheme, because I thought it was a grand scheme. So soon as they saw the propaganda of the Queensland Government they jumped at it because it seemed a very fine opportunity. After seeing the propaganda they did not need much more persuading."

"I landed in Brisbane from the 'Ormonde' on the 2nd of January, 1920,

with my wife and child. I expected that there would be someone to meet me at the boat, representing the Overseas Settlement Committee or the Queensland Government. There was no one to meet us. There were three families under the scheme on board the 'Ormonde.' I went to the Repatriation Department, because I thought as an ex-service man I would get information there and also an allowance. After landing I was without money, having expended all my savings on passage money, which has never been refunded to me. The Repatriation Department told me that they could give me no allowance, as I was an ex-Imperial soldier. They advised me to go to the Lands Department. I went to the Lands Department, and was there asked to fill in a registration form. The official whom I saw—a Mr. Keenan, I think—told us that he knew nothing whatever about the Overseas Settlement Scheme. He asked me to see Mr. Adams, secretary to the Minister for Lands and the War Council Land Settlement Committee. I saw Mr. Adams. He also told me that he knew nothing whatever about the Overseas Land Settlement Scheme. He said that it was some harebrained scheme which had been got up at home and which was not in connection with this State at all. He was quite indignant about the matter. He said he was sorry for me, and telephoned Mr. Allen, a trustee of the Queensland Patriotic Fund, and asked him to arrange a sustenance allowance for us. Mr. Adams was most kind and considerate, and seemed willing to do anything he could to help us. I went to see Mr. Allen, who gave me £1. I was at that time absolutely penniless, and if I had not secured that money I would have had to leave my lodgings in Wharf street and to have taken my wife, who was then about two months off confinement, into the streets. We were absolutely destitute, and could not even have paid the 7s. necessary to release my luggage. I saw Mr. Allen upon the following day, and he gave me another £2 on behalf of the Queensland Patriotic Fund. I then returned to Mr. Adams and thanked him for his help, and he secured an interview with Mr. Theodore, the Premier, for me. I saw Mr. Theodore, in company with Mr. Crawford, a fellow immigrant under the scheme. I explained the details of the whole matter to him, and he told us to see Mr. McDermott, the Under Secretary to his department, next morning. Our interview with Mr. Theodore took place on 14th January last. We saw Mr. McDermott on the following morning, and he gave me a cheque for £3. He also advised me to look for work and report to him on the following Friday. I have been seeking work ever since, both on my account and with the help of letters of introduction from Mr. McDermott, who has treated me with every courtesy. The only work which I secured was four days' employment with the Metropolitan Life Assurance Company. I was unable to carry on this work in view of the nature of my wounds received in the war. I served in the early months of the war as a rifleman in the King's Royal Rifles. I was one of the original expeditionary force and served

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for two years, inclusive of the actions at Mons, Marne, Aisne, Neuve Chateau, first and second battle of Ypres, Loos, La Bassee, Festubert. I was eventually wounded on 26th October, 1914, at first battle of Ypres, also at La Bassee and Festubert. Included in all, my wounds are as follows:—

“Bullet through left shoulder.

“Bullet through left buttock.

“Bullet left arm and bayonet left arm. There are still splinters of bone loose in this arm; sometimes they come through the flesh to the surface. As you can hear the broken bones creak with the movements of the arm. (Note.—The creaking of the bones was distinctly audible to the writer who wrote this statement from dictation.)

“Bullet right thigh.

“Bullet right calf. This was a serious wound, severing the main arteries of the leg, which have been tied but which have now come undone. The leg is now $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches bigger round the calf than the other leg and is causing considerable pain.”

This man is a wounded soldier.

Mr. COLLINS: Is that how Great Britain treats her wounded soldiers?

Mr. VOWLES: He wanted to come to Queensland, and he came here owing to the misrepresentation that was circulated in England. He further says:—

“It was because of this wound that I found myself unable to continue as an insurance canvasser for the Metropolitan Life Company. The Overseas Settlement Committee knew of these wounds. They saw my army discharge and also insisted upon a medical certificate accompanying my application. After leaving the employ of the Metropolitan Life Assurance Company, I showed the wound in my leg to Mr. McDermott. He told me that I was not fit to go upon the land owing to my physical condition. Since the 15th January I have been receiving an allowance of £3 per week from the Government, through Mr. McDermott, as sustenance. I have not yet received any refund upon my passage money. Mr. McDermott has told me, however, that he has cabled to England, and as a result has received a refund of £35 from the Overseas Settlement Department. This has not yet been paid over to me. The £3 per week which I have been receiving as sustenance from the Government and the cost of the cables which Mr. McDermott sent to England is to be deducted from the £35 which has been refunded. To date £15 has been advanced me for sustenance, and I do not know the value of the cables. I have been unable to secure any land whatever, or any advance such as I was promised in the official pamphlet of the Overseas Settlement Office. In fact, I have not received any of the concessions which I expected to receive. I realise, after seeing the country, that I am absolutely physically unfit to settle upon the land in Queensland by reason of my wounds. This was not suggested to me by the Land Settlement Committee or anyone else in England. Since my arrival my

wife has seriously failed in health, also my child. My wife is naturally very worried by the trouble which we have had, her health being, of course, seriously impaired by her condition. There is nothing left for me to do but to return to England immediately. Mr. McDermott has cabled my brother to send me passage money. So soon as that arrives I intend to leave for England. Apart from the sustenance allowance which is being advanced against the passage money owing to me, I have not a penny in the world. The position which I gave up to come to Queensland in August last was a permanent one. It yielded me an income on an average of £7 per week. I had a soldier's pension of £1 per week, being classed as 50 per cent. disabled. For about three months before deciding to come to Queensland I was attending hospital, and my pension during that period was increased to £2 14s. 6d. per week. In order to pay passage money and meet the necessary expense of leaving England, I compounded my pension, the period of which was due to end in April of this year, for £83 15s. My passage cost me £84. My other expenses on the voyage, etc., amounted to about £20. The £84 included the passages of my wife and child. I have now no further claim upon the British Pensions Department; but had I continued to draw my pension until April I could have gone before the Pensions Board and would probably have received a life pension. If my brother does not send me my passage money, I shall be destitute in a few weeks and shall be unable to return to England.”

I think everybody must agree that that is a very sad case, but I have had brought under my notice another case which is more sad than that, as in the latter case the wife of the unfortunate individual has died since he came to Queensland. Is this sort of thing to continue? I do not know who is to blame, but I do say that during the last few days we have had evidence of gross misrepresentations regarding the conditions which obtain in Queensland. Whoever is responsible for these misrepresentations is responsible for the fact that this man is stranded in Brisbane to-day. He was in England when those pamphlets appeared, and, no matter who was responsible for the appearance of the pamphlets, we ought to do what we can to remedy this trouble and see that it does not recur in the future. It is probable that it was in view of such facts as these that the Trades Hall told the Premier that no more men should be brought to Queensland to swell the ranks of the unemployed. I could quote from reports made to the Industrial Council statements showing that there is a great increase in unemployment, more particularly in the metropolitan area. At any rate, here we have four cases at least in which men have been induced by misrepresentation to give up good positions and sell their homes to come to Queensland. One of those men tells me that he brought out a sewing-machine with him and some odds and ends, which he has been compelled to sell since his arrival in Queensland. Lying misrepresentations have been made to these men by someone, and it is up to the Premier to let those 3,000

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men who are giving up positions to come to Queensland know that we are not looking for working men, but are looking for men who will create production and will create work. If he does not do that, he will not be doing a fair thing to the men in Queensland or to men who are in the unfortunate position I have described.

The PREMIER: The case the hon. member has referred to is certainly a most unfortunate one, but the hon. member would lead members of the Chamber to believe that he blames the Government for what has happened.

Mr. VOWLES: Well, who is to blame?

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows that it is not the Queensland Government who are to blame. The first intimation we had of the organisation known as the "Overseas Settlement Committee" was when two or three of these immigrants arrived here in the "Ormonde." They came to the office and stated that they were penniless in Brisbane, and that they were misled with regard to the conditions existing in Queensland. They were told that the Government had no knowledge of those misrepresentations, and that no arrangements had been made with the Overseas Settlement Committee in any form to prepare for the reception of immigrants from England. The Overseas Settlement Committee are an organisation acting under the Imperial Government, but they have made no arrangement whatever with the Queensland Government, whatever arrangements they may have made with other Dominion Governments. I believe they have some arrangements with overseas Governments under which they are authorised to make arrangements to send immigrants from England, but they have no such arrangements with the Queensland Government. So soon as we knew that these men had arrived under a misapprehension we communicated with the Agent-General in order to ascertain how many immigrants the Overseas Settlement Committee had directed to come to Queensland, what arrangements they were making to assist those immigrants, and what steps they were taking to enlist immigrants for Queensland. I think I mentioned that fact to the leader of the Opposition this afternoon before he made his statement in the House. The pamphlet referred to was published by the Overseas Settlement Committee, on which we have no representation, and certainly they have no authority to act for the Queensland Government. We communicated with the Agent-General in order to ascertain what are the facts with regard to the 3,000 persons who, it is said, are coming to Queensland. I think the man who made that statement must have been under a misapprehension, and was, perhaps, given to understand that there were 3,000 persons who were directed to overseas Dominions, because we find that arrangements have been made for only thirty-five to come to Queensland.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Who is responsible?

The PREMIER: The Queensland Government are not responsible. The Overseas Settlement Committee have, in my opinion, taken too much upon themselves in assuming that provision would be made in Queensland to receive those men. They should at least have let us know what number of men were likely to come to Queensland, so that some provision might be made for them. That

has been done since this matter has been reported. The Overseas Settlement Committee are interesting themselves in the matter, but we declined to make any arrangements with the Overseas Settlement Committee to send out an unlimited number of immigrants until we had made our own arrangements with regard to immigration. Certainly no one has been authorised to say that we have 250,000 acres of land earmarked for immigrants from England. Last July the Imperial Government entered into negotiations with the Queensland Government with the view of getting us to take so many immigrants, but we have not yet concluded any arrangement with them. That is one of the matters I intend to take up with the Imperial Government when I am over there, but there is no

[8.30 p.m.] arrangement made with the Imperial Government, much less with the Overseas Settlement Committee. The matter has been taken in hand, and as regards the particular men the hon. member complained about I fully sympathise with them, and fully realise their misfortune and the difficult position they are placed in through arriving here expecting to be welcomed at the ship's side and fully provided for, and then to find that they got a cold reception, or, indeed, no reception at all, because no provision had been made by the persons who sent them out. They immediately wanted to go back again, which would have been a doubtful advertisement for Queensland. At any rate, I have done my best to make them feel welcome here, and have had arrangements made for providing them with a temporary allowance, and I am surprised that they should feel aggrieved at the Government. I think one man was found a job with the Queensland Government, but evidently the conditions did not suit him.

Mr. VOWLES: You sent him out to the Museum.

The PREMIER: We got him a job as an insurance canvasser.

Mr. VOWLES: He has a wounded leg, and could not do the work.

The PREMIER: I do not know the particulars, but all along we have given him reasonable sustenance. At any rate, we are not going to leave the men stranded, and we have taken full precautions to see that no others come out under the same circumstances, and the authorities on the other side have been warned not to send immigrants here until we can provide for them. One of these immigrants told me that there were quite a number—I do not know how many—of men sent out through the Overseas Settlement Committee on the same boat who were going to other States, and it is quite possible an arrangement was made with the other States, but it has not been made with Queensland.

Mr. VOWLES: It would look so by the pamphlet.

The PREMIER: I saw that statement in the pamphlet myself, but it was not authorised by the Queensland Government.

Mr. VOWLES: Why not cancel it?

The PREMIER: It was cancelled as soon as it came before my notice. And the Agent-General was told to inform the Overseas Settlement Committee not to engage men

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for Queensland. That is a matter we refused to arrange with the Imperial Government even, before we were in a position to carry out our programme.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The Government must be held to be responsible for the actions of the Agent-General's Office in London, and it certainly would appear that this Overseas Settlement Committee would not, under any circumstances, take upon themselves the responsibility of sending immigrants to this country without the cognisance of the Agent-General's Office in London.

The PREMIER: But they did do so.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It is not fair to assume any such thing.

The PREMIER: I admit that it is unheard of.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The Premier has admitted that this Overseas Settlement Committee is a semi-Government institution, and we know quite well that the Imperial Government does not take liberties with any of the colonies, and I think we have a perfect right to assume that this Overseas Settlement Committee has not done anything in regard to sending immigrants to this country without the cognisance of the Agent-General's Office.

The PREMIER: They mentioned that we have 250,000 acres reserved in Queensland, and they have no authority whatever for that statement.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Reference has been made to the poster in London of an immigrant carrying a bag of gold on his back with £1,200 marked on it, which we know quite well signifies the amount which the Agricultural Bank advances to settlers of a satisfactory character. We recognise that an advertisement like that could only have emanated from the Agent-General's Office in London.

The PREMIER: That was published by the Overseas Settlement Committee.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Do you say it was published by the Overseas Settlement Committee, having reference to Queensland, without the cognisance of the Agent-General's Office? It is not conceivable. It is no use the Premier trying to shelve the responsibility for that, as the Government are responsible for the Agent-General in London, and it looks as if the Agent-General or his department had done something in this regard without communicating with the Government here. Just to show how these coloured suggestions and coloured information are circulated among the people of England, particularly those who propose to emigrate, one has only to refer to the "Financier" of Monday, 5th January, which has been referred to in this House already, and I suppose every hon. member has a copy. Here you see a statement made by our own Agent-General—one who has recently gone from our midst with full cognisance and full knowledge of the facts as he left them. In the opening of this interview, the interviewer says—

"In the course of conversation I learned much of interest to those who have put their money into Queensland, and who are looking forward with pleasurable anticipation to its future developments. He has come over at an

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opportune time, when the question of immigration is prominently to the front, and as ex-Minister for Public Lands he will be in a position to give most valuable advice to British ex-service men and women who may contemplate taking advantage of the offer of the Imperial Government of free transport to any part of the British Empire."

That clearly shows the connection between the Agent-General's Office in London and this Overseas Settlement Committee, and this Settlement Committee is the body which is administering this free transport of ex-Imperial service men to any part of the British Empire. We will follow this interview through, and see what this present Agent-General says in regard to Queensland. In the first place, he says—

"One of the principal areas for settlement is in the Burnett district, where there are 2,700,000 acres available."

That may or may not be true. There are divergent opinions regarding the quantity of land available in the Burnett district; and if the Agent-General had been fair to those contemplating emigrating to this country, he should have said that it would be at least five years before these lands are available. The Premier shakes his head. In the first place, the hon. gentleman has to go to London, and he has to cajole the British Government into lending him money to build that railway on the promise that, if they lend Queensland enough money, they will provide settlement for Imperial ex-service men. We know quite well that is the idea, and the Premier has, first of all, to get on the soft side of the British Government to advance that money chiefly for this purpose, and, incidentally, I think the British Government will be well advised to send some independent expert into those areas that are proposed to be opened up. I hope that these lands will develop to such an extent as to settle a large number of soldiers; but they should send some independent expert to test the veracity of this proposition—a gentleman who has no bias or whose opinion is not influenced by the fact that there is a copper mine there in which certain gentlemen have shares—where there is no parish pump to be worked, and where the whole proposal may be judged absolutely on its merits. That would be a fair suggestion to place before the British Government before numbers of ex-service men are sent here, perhaps, to experience conditions similar to those experienced by the men to whom the leader of the Opposition referred. In referring to the tropical North and referring to the opening of the line from Townsville to Cairns, Mr. Hunter said—

"It is estimated that this will open up 18,000,000 acres of tropical and semi-tropical lands suitable for sugar-growing and general agriculture. The line will connect up with the Cairns Railway."

From information I have on the subject, instead of there being something like 18,000,000 acres of land suitable for agriculture which will be opened up by this railway, I think 100,000 acres suitable for developmental purposes would be much nearer the mark.

The PREMIER: You say 100,000 acres will be opened up by the railway from Townsville to Cairns?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: In my judgment, yes.

Mr. H. J. RYAN: Have you been that far north?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I have been up as far as Cairns, and, from the information I have got from those who should know, I say it is ridiculous to state that 18,000,000 acres of land will be made available, and it would be very much nearer the estimate to say 100,000 acres.

The PREMIER: Do you know of the Oswald's Track country?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am quite aware of that. The hon. gentleman has already attacked my knowledge on the Innisfail matter, and possibly he will find, ultimately, that my knowledge is much more accurate than his own. However, I am quite prepared to abide by my knowledge and my source of information on this subject. It is a gross exaggeration to say that 18,000,000 acres of land will be opened suitable for settlement purposes when this line is built.

Further than that, I ask any man in this House if, when that railway is completed, there is anything in the labour conditions of the North to-day which would encourage men to settle there? We know the turmoil which exists there, and under the existing labour conditions it is almost impossible to encourage settlement as much as we would like to see done. What is the use of any Agent-General or any Government talking about these many millions of acres of land which are held out as a bait to would-be settlers when we know quite well that there are hundreds of soldiers in Queensland who cannot get land, and who have been waiting for months for land that is unopened and undeveloped. One has only to look at what is happening at present to see actual good grounds for complaint, and to see the reason why we have illustrations such as the leader of the Opposition has pointed out to-night. Regarding the Chief Controller of Soldier Settlements, the Agent-General make this remark, and it has a very important bearing on the vote under consideration. He says—

"In Queensland there is what is called a 'General Controller of Soldiers' Settlements'—a practical farmer who has made a success at the work himself. He has his deputies in different districts, and all the work on the farms is done with his approval. All the expenditure of money has to receive his sanction, and in this way the very best results are obtained."

This is a statement made by our Agent-General about six weeks ago in London. But what has happened since then? Before the Agent-General landed in London that Chief Controller had resigned his position, and, instead of this department now being in the hands of a competent controller who knows his business, we know quite well that the whole administration of this soldiers' settlement matter has come under the entire direction of the Lands Department, surrounded with the red tape of a department and controlled by those who have very little practical knowledge of the problem. As the Agent-General pointed out, the success of this soldiers' settlement matter lies in the fact of having at its head a man who knows his business and has proved himself

to be a success in that particular line. Yet the very factor which the Agent-General has held out as an inducement for other people to come and take part in this soldiers' settlement has been wiped out, and it has gone back to the old red-tape system, and is placed under the control of the Minister for Lands. Understand, Mr. Chairman, that I am not casting any reflection.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He certainly knows a lot more about the business than you do.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: He certainly does. I am quite prepared to admit it, and I would have very much greater confidence if the Minister and his departmental officers generally would be frank enough to make a similar admission. The Agent-General, in dealing with the question of advances made to the soldiers, overstates the position—not to a great extent, I admit. He says that the soldier has £1,250 advanced to him. That is not the case: £1,200 is the limit, and of that £625 is advanced under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act. The second advance, we know, is the one which is absolutely uninfluenced by the fact of that man being a soldier. He becomes an applicant to the Agricultural Bank for another £575, making his total indebtedness £1,200. In my judgment, this £1,200 should be consolidated. It should be administered at the one time, by the one department, and, instead of making the soldier dependent upon the whims of two separate departments, he should know from the very outset that there is to be £1,200 available to him which is to be administered by one department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Which do you think the best?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I would certainly go back to the system which put this matter under a Controller of Soldiers' Settlement.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He had no power to issue money. He had power to recommend it.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I understand he had power to authorise money, and, whether he had or not, that system, in my judgment, would be an improvement. When the £625 is exhausted, it is next to impossible to obtain £575 from the bank, as it will not recognise the rate of advances in practice in various places. We have had instances brought before this House repeatedly where an applicant has gone to the Agricultural Bank to get the balance of his amount, £575, and, seeing that the bank is administered by a separate department which views the application in a very different manner, the applicant has to go away with only a portion of the advance. I will give an illustration to prove that the Agricultural Bank views the position from a different standpoint from what the Repatriation Department would do. It has been the practice to make advances to settlers on growing crops, which is very necessary. When a man selects land without any capital at all, it stands to reason that those financing him should be sympathetic in the manner of advancing money to him upon his growing crops. This is a form of security, or a risk, or a method of advance which the Agricultural Bank will not sanction, and it shows clearly that

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the two methods of advancing are conflicting, and thus are a detriment rather than a help to the soldier looking for assistance. Then, again, the bank pays very much below the ruling rate for clearing and other work. They look upon the clearing in quite a different light from what either the Soldier Settlement or the Repatriation Department would do.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What money does the Repatriation Department grant?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Oh! you know what I mean—the Lands Department, under its Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act. But the position is that the administrators of that Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act view the matter in an entirely different light from the Agricultural Bank, with the result that when a man has exhausted his original £625 he finds himself thrown upon an unsympathetic department, which very often has the effect of the man throwing up his possibilities and ambitions in despair. I say, without any fear of contradiction, that there are practically none of these settlers who are out of the wood yet, and, with the increased cost of building and other materials, it will be impossible to finance them with the money available. I do not want to throw any cold water on this Government's attempt, neither have I done so at any time. From my place in this House, I have never yet criticised the Government's attempt to assist the returned soldier. But when we see the position coming to a crisis, it is high time that we called attention to the matter, and I can see quite clearly that these settlers will want a great deal more financial and sympathetic assistance than they are receiving at the present time; and when we see this coming, it is our duty to call the Government's attention to it. It has been a practice on these settlements, with the object of saving money for these settlers, to buy building materials in bulk, and let the contract for the erection of the house by piecework. They bought all their materials in bulk, and made arrangements with tradesmen to put up these houses by piecework, thus effecting considerable economy in the erection of these houses. It has been necessary for these men to economise in every possible direction on account of the action of the Lands Department in abnormally raising the royalties on timber. The soldier settlers and all those people who are looking to erect houses under the Workers' Dwellings Act now pay £150 more for timber in order to put those houses up, and, further, the Lands Department is the department that is mainly responsible for the extra cost of the building of those houses. To counteract that extra cost imposed by the Lands Department, which comes under the same control as the discharged soldiers' settlements, these men have to look round for opportunities of saving money, and by letting out the erection of the house on piecework they affect considerable economy. The Director of Labour has issued a notice to supervisors that all piecework must be discontinued and only day labour employed. That is the way this Government is assisting the returned soldier to overcome his difficulties. Simply because it is likely to cause tradesmen to give perhaps a little more earnest attention and time to his work by permitting piecework, and therefore establish independence of thought and feeling, which the

junta will not tolerate, instructions have gone forth from the Director of Labour that this piecework is to be stopped. And the day-labour system only is to be permitted, with the result that those returned soldiers, who ostensibly have the sympathy and support of hon. members opposite, have to face the increased cost of erection. Not only have the Government increased costs by about £150 on account of their greed in the matter of timber royalty, but they now have cut out the piecework system and compelled these struggling soldiers to engage day labour with its attendant additional cost.

It would be interesting to know what portions of land there are in Queensland ready for settlement—what portions have been surveyed and are open for settlement at the present moment. I would like the Minister for Lands to give us that information. I am more concerned, as I said the other night, in seeing that we have land available, and arrangements made for the settlement of our returned men, rather than that those people from overseas who are looking to Queensland for a home and may come here in hundreds, possibly thousands, should share the fate to which the leader of the Opposition has called attention.

Mr. GLEDSON: I want to have a few words on this matter to show the unfairness of the hon. member for Oxley. Most members thought that the reply of the Premier to the leader of the Opposition would have been sufficient to show to the Opposition that the Government had nothing to do with bringing men here and leaving them penniless and stranded. But the hon. member for Oxley makes the statement that the Government, through the Agent-General's Office, are responsible for bringing these men out here, and he quotes the "Financier" of January 5th, leaving out, however, a portion in which the Agent-General deals with this matter. I want to give the public of Queensland the portion he left out, which is as follows:—

"Soldiers and ex-service men from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand had been allowed to select. Although no general scheme for the settlement of such men had been outlined yet, under the Soldiers' Settlement Act passed in 1915, power was given to the Governor in Council, by proclamation, to make the provisions available to the ex-service men of Great Britain and her allies.

"In the circumstances, observed Mr. Hunter, if arrangements favourable to the Government were offered, there would be no difficulty, in view of the large area of Crown land available, in providing farm lands for all desirous of throwing their lot in with the State of Queensland."

Those are the statements made by the Agent-General—that if arrangements were made by the Imperial Government, there would be no difficulty in getting land. That portion was left out by the hon. member for Oxley, although he quoted the portion above and the portion below.

At five minutes before 9 o'clock p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. PAYNE (*Mitchell*): The hon. member for Oxley wanted to make out that he did not wish to harass the Government, or do anything to prevent soldiers or people from

[*Mr. Elphinstone.*]

the old country settling on our land. I have been listening to the debate all night, and nearly every member of the Opposition has been crying "stinking fish." The member for Oxley, in arriving at the acreage fitted for closer settlement in the Burnett district, appears to me not to have quoted facts at all. He must know that the Burnett district has been considered with respect to railways by Governments during the last twenty years. I would like to ask the hon. member whether he thinks the present Under Secretary for Lands has any knowledge of the good and bad land in Queensland. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that he is not a practical man himself, his experts have been over this area year after year, and this is what Mr. Graham said in sworn evidence on the 3rd October, 1919, before the Public Works Commission—

"I have known the Callide country intimately from boyhood. I was born in that district. The North Burnett I have inspected, and I say unhesitatingly that there is no place in the State—I go so far as to say there is no area in the Commonwealth—so suitable for close settlement as are these two areas that are now proposed to be tapped by these railways. I have said a good deal at different times on this question. Three times I gave evidence before a Select Committee of the Upper House, and I would like to tender my opinions in those cases to the Commission. One was in December, 1915; another in October, 1916; and the last in November, 1917. The evidence I then gave was as follows (21st December, 1915):—

The Many Peaks-New Cannindah extension of 27 miles 53 chains is the first step in the way of opening up the famous Northern Burnett, than which there is no better land for close settlement in the State. Hundreds of thousands of acres can be made available by further extensions to this line, but the present proposal, besides opening up copper deposits at Cannindah, will bring within reasonable distance of a railway for settlement purposes 266,432 acres of land immediately available for selection, besides 58,240 acres held under lease, and 128,900 acres held under grazing selection, which could be resumed, and 14,157 acres of timber lands within proclaimed State forest reserves."

On page 26, Mr. Graham said this—

"I say without any hesitation that those railways are absolutely necessary in the interests of close settlement, and it does not matter what they cost. It is generally stated that in the North Burnett there are 4,000,000 acres of land. Say there are 2,000,000 acres of first-class agricultural land. That land at the present time has a nominal value of 10s. per acre. One railway will not open it up; we will have to have branch railways as feeders from the main line itself. It will be wasting good land not to do it. If you go 10 miles from the railway you have to give big areas, whereas with railway communication handy the land can be cut up into small areas. If you put a railway in there, that land will be worth from £3 to £4 an acre. That will mean a value of £6,000,000 at £3 an acre, or £8,000,000

at £4 an acre. Under those circumstances, what does it matter what the railway costs?"

I had thought that any member of this House would have made sure of his facts before he doubted that the area mentioned by the Premier existed. I have travelled over those areas, and, although I do not claim to be an expert, I am an Australian native of the second generation, and [9 p.m.] have done a great deal of farming; and when the hon. member for Oxley says that Queensland has no land available for settling soldiers or people from abroad upon, I know he is saying something that is absolutely incorrect. I admit that a good deal of money will have to be spent on the Northern portion of this State to open up the most valuable areas of land I have seen in any part of Australia. One can go from Molloy through scrub right round the coast to Cooktown; men who have been living there for years have given sworn evidence that that belt of scrub runs right round to Cooktown. What is the good of trying to misrepresent?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That is just what we did not want to do.

Mr. PAYNE: I am afraid the hon. member for Oxley badly misrepresented the lands of Queensland to-night. I will admit that railway communication will have to be provided, and that it will cost a good deal of money. The hon. member for Oxley pointed out that the buildings were costing more to-day they were some time ago.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Soldiers' buildings I referred to.

Mr. PAYNE: I am afraid they will cost more. Is that the fault of this Government?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Yes, it is. You are raising the royalty.

Mr. PAYNE: America has shut down on sending anything out of their country. Galvanised iron in England to-day is £100 per ton. I could quite understand the hon. member for Oxley or any other man complaining about these things costing so much if they could prove that it could be done for less—that the material used for building these places could be procured at a lesser rate. He must know that the price of material is rising every day, and it is not possible to make these buildings cheaper. Will anyone say the Government were doing wrong by demanding day labour? If he would look through the pages of "Hansard" he would find that the late Minister for Railways, Mr. Paget, proved beyond any doubt that the railways of this country were built very much cheaper and better by day labour than by contract.

Mr. SIZER: That was under a Liberal Government.

Mr. PAYNE: It does not matter whether it was under a Liberal or a Labour Government. Anyone with an ounce of common sense knows that, properly supervised, day labour is better than any other system for the building of houses or railways or the clearing of land or anything else. I do not know whether these men are in earnest in trying to get the lands of this State settled. I have my doubts about it. I do not know whether they are in earnest about the success of the Premier, when he is in England, in raising sufficient money to do the develop-

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ment work he has intimated he is going to do. I have my doubts about that too. Anyone listening to the arguments of the Opposition to-night could see they are raising every obstacle they can be prevent the Premier, when he arrives in England, being the success we expect him to be. Nevertheless I think he is going to succeed, and that he is going to get sufficient money to develop our secondary industries. I know very well the members of the Opposition do not want to see the steel works a success in Queensland. (Opposition-dissent.) They do not want those works to succeed because they are the supporters of a class of people in this country who do not believe in State enterprise.

Mr. FOWLES: I don't.

Mr. PAYNE: It is honest to make that statement. Not believing in State enterprises, it is only natural to expect that the hon. member will place every obstacle he can in the way of State enterprises. That is what hon. members opposite have been doing to-night. They have been howling about the treatment meted out to returned soldiers in Queensland and about the cost of erecting their buildings. If they only spent a little time looking up facts, and were fair-minded, they would find that the returned soldiers who are settled in Queensland are getting a better deal than they are in any other State in the Commonwealth. I challenge the leader of the Opposition or any of his supporters to prove otherwise. I am sick and tired of hearing these men, with their tongues in their cheeks, saying they would like to see this country build the iron and steel works, that they would like to see the secondary industries established, and that they would like to see this the queen State of the Commonwealth. As a matter fact, all their arguments during the debate on the Financial Statement and the Estimates have led me to believe that as far as Queensland is concerned they do not care anything, and they would do anything to block the only Labour Government in the world from carrying out their policy and making this a better State than any other in the Commonwealth.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If the remarks of the hon. member for Oxley were allowed to go out without contradiction, some people who do not know the facts of the case might believe them. He started off by saying he did not rise for the purpose of doing any injury to the Government. In endeavouring to injure the Government he was doing an injury to Queensland. He followed practically on the same lines as the hon. member for Murrumbidgee the other evening. I know the hon. member had an imperfect knowledge on the subject about which he spoke on that occasion, and I hope he will be man enough to get up and admit he made a mistake.

Mr. WARREN: I will prove it is true.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The secretary of the association which has control of the whole business has contradicted what the hon. member said.

Mr. WARREN: It has not the control of the whole business.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member for Oxley referred to repatriation with regard to settling soldiers on the land. Repatriation has absolutely

nothing whatever to do with settling soldiers on the land.

Mr. SIZER: That was only a mistake.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I drew his attention to it on more than one occasion when he was speaking. I want to tell the readers of "Hansard" that repatriation has nothing whatever to do with the settlement of soldiers on the land; but the Queensland Government have all to do with it. The hon. member did not tell us how he would propose to deal with the people's money out of the Government Savings Bank in the matter of the advances the bank makes. Possibly he would like the Government Savings Bank to carry on in the same slipshod fashion as some of the concerns he has been associated with, which probably fell to the ground on that account. It is as well to be candid about these things. When any hon. member of this House, in order to injure the Government, tries to destroy the good work they are doing with regard to the settlement of soldiers on the land, they are poor Australians and poor patriots.

Mr. WARREN: You cannot stand criticism.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Government does not mind the criticism. I have scores of letters at my office from soldiers who have tried their luck in other parts of Australia and have come here. After having been settled on the land, they have expressed their gratitude to the Queensland Government for what has been done for them.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member has referred to the fact that the Land Settlement Committee were not doing a fair thing by the soldiers, and the reason was that since Mr. Rose ceased to be comptroller there has been no practical man on the committee.

Mr. SIZER: Tell us why Mr. Rose left.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He resigned. That is all I know about it. I think the man was overworked, really. I interjected, while the hon. member for Oxley was speaking, that the least practical man on that committee knew a lot more about that business than the hon. member for Oxley does. We have gentlemen on that committee who have been associated with pastoral, grazing, agricultural, dairying, poultry-keeping, and beekeeping—in fact, there is no primary industry in Australia that they have not been associated with; and still we have the hon. member for Oxley, in order that a little of the mud that he is throwing about may stick on the Government, making those wild statements. I say that it is a poor specimen of a patriot who will speak about returned soldiers with his tongue in his cheek, and pretend that he is their friend.

With regard to day labour, it has been proved beyond a doubt that the best work in building, the construction of railways, or anything else, is done by day labour. In proof of this, I would refer to the big cyclone in the North, when everything was blown down practically except Government buildings constructed by day labour. This can be ascertained by anyone who makes inquiries. The hon. member tried to make

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the people believe that, owing to the fact that the Queensland Government is charging a higher royalty for their timber, the soldiers are paying so much more for their homes now. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as a royalty on timber in Queensland at the present time. The Forestry Department are sellers of timber, and we are selling it lower than private enterprises are. Another thing: For fencing or rough building purposes, or anything else, there is not a soldier on our land, with the exception of places like Mount Hutton and Cecil Plains, where there is not sufficient timber growing with which, if a man desires to work it, he can build his own cottage. Further than that, the Land Settlement Committee are now about to consider the question of getting travelling mills, so that where timber is plentiful these mills may be taken to cut timber at the lowest possible price for soldier settlements. We have hon. members opposite getting up and slandering the Government by false statements, and getting them into "Hansard." It is a pity that anybody is so petty-minded as to make statements like that. I resent that as a Queenslander, and as one who, with a number of others, have done all we possibly can for the settlement of soldiers on our lands; and I believe that, when the final chapter is written with regard to soldier settlement, it will be found that Queensland has done infinitely more than any other State in Australia in this matter.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

The PREMIER: I move—That £272,400 be granted for "Department of Public Works."

Question put and passed.

THE TREASURER.

The PREMIER: I move—That £939,532 be granted for "The Treasurer."

Mr. SIZER: With regard to the item for workers' homes, the Government are evidently not very desirous of going far with that scheme during the forthcoming year, as they have only voted £25,000 for it. On a very modest estimate of the cost of building in these days, a house would cost not less than £500, which proves that the Government do not intend to build more than fifty workers' homes during the year.

The PREMIER: There is no use in appropriating more than we shall require during the present time of the year. It does not mean that we are going to confine ourselves to fifty, or one hundred, or to any number. There are a lot of preliminary arrangements to be entered into before a big scheme of workers' homes can be carried out. Land has to be acquired, and inquiries have to be made as to where homes are most required, and where there is most congestion. Then regulations have to be framed, and organisation entered into before the buildings can be started. We have only put on what we think we will actually require before June. It is obvious that there will be very few houses finished before next June.

Mr. SWAYNE: I have some correspondence here with regard to the position of the Inkerman irrigation scheme. A lot of the farmers there are very much concerned as to the prospects of the scheme and the way in which the cost is piling up under the day-labour system, which was so highly eulogised on a preceding vote by the Secretary for Public Lands. The writer of this letter is Mr. John Mann, who gives me the authority to use his name. He says that he thinks he is safe in saying that at least 50 per cent. of the farmers are frightened of the scheme on account of the high cost which is being piled up by the day-labour system. He says—

"The resident engineer is doing his best, but he is sadly handicapped by reason of the 'go slow' policy which is rampant on the job. Apart from the work done by labour-saving machinery, I estimate that the work is three times as costly as it would be under a different régime."

Mr. BRENNAN: I rise to a point of order. I think that letter should be laid on the table of the House.

Mr. SWAYNE: I gave the writer's name. There is only part of the letter here, because only part of it refers to this scheme.

The PREMIER: Would it not be better to see me afterwards and hand the letter to me? (Laughter.)

Mr. SWAYNE: Mr. Mann speaks about the expense of the work and its slow progress. He also says—

"In view of the two serious droughts which took place while the work was in progress, could not a systematic attempt have been made to use the wells sunk to water as much cane as possible?"

The point raised in this letter is that several wells were sunk, and, as it was a dry time, the farmers wanted the water pumped from the wells on to their farms, so that they could save their crops. There was a serious drought on at the time, and the farmers were in bad circumstances and wanted the water. The letter goes on—

"If a Commission were appointed to inquire into the cost of the work, it would be an eye-opener."

Then, later on, he says—

"While the work was in progress, could not a systematic attempt have been made to use the wells sunk to water as much cane as possible? Is it not a fact that the Government refused permission to a settler to install his own plant, the said settler being disgusted with the delay in completing the scheme?"

Then, later on, he says—

"Will the Government call for a report from them as to whether they are satisfied with the progress of the work?"

Then, later on, he says—

"I think I am safe in saying that at least 50 per cent. of the farmers here are frightened of it. How is it that the farmers here are applying for leave to erect their own plants to avoid the heavy cost of the scheme? You can ascertain why the department refused permission this year to So-and-So to erect his own plant."

The PREMIER: What have you blotted out of that letter?

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Mr. SWAYNE: The names of other farmers mentioned. I have given you the date of the letter, and the writer's name. He complains about the carelessness of those engaged in the work. I think the Treasurer might explain how it was that nothing was done to save the farmers' crops during the dry time, or why it was that some of the farmers were prevented from using their own plants.

Mr. COLLINS (who was received with Government "Hear, hear!"): I object to the hon. member for Mirani interfering in my electorate. (Hear, hear!) I might point out to the hon. member for Mirani that the Home Hill farmers are an organised body, and an intelligent organised body, and they deal directly with the member for Bowen.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COLLINS: There is a very strong organisation there; and if it is true, as the hon. member for Mirani says, that 50 per cent. of the farmers were dissatisfied with the progress of the work, would they not have held a meeting and have communicated with me direct? (Hear, hear!) I suppose it is some disgruntled opponent of the Labour party who has approached the hon. member for Mirani, knowing that he is willing to do this kind of work. He is always interfering in other people's electorates. The farmers are there on the spot, and they can see all the work as it is going on. It is a peculiar thing that the hon. member says they are making slow progress. Some of the men there are complaining that they are being rushed. There is no "go-slow" about the Inkerman irrigation scheme—no "go-slow" at all. Everyone knows that. It is the lack of cement and other materials that causes a delay at present. It is owing to the shipping strike for which the hon. member for Mirani is to some extent responsible. (Opposition laughter.) He is responsible, to some extent, for the shipping strike, because he supports the party in power who refused to settle the strike. Everyone knows that if the Labour party had been in power there would have been no strike. Owing to the shipping strike, we are unable to get cement and other materials to push the work ahead, as the Treasurer would desire. If there is anything that will stand out in the future as a monument to the Treasurer of Queensland, it will be the big things he is endeavouring to bring about. A big irrigation scheme, such as the irrigation scheme at Inkerman, the biggest of its kind in Queensland, and one of the largest schemes of the kind in the Australian Commonwealth, will stand out as a monument to the Treasurer, just the same as the iron and steel works will stand out as a monument to the Queensland Government for having done big things. (Hear, hear!) The hon. member for Mirani should attempt to deal with big things instead of continually dealing with small things and listening to small whisperings from time to time.

Mr. SWAYNE: The farmers will lose their crops.

Mr. COLLINS: I know the hon. member received letters from sugar-growers dealing with the irrigation scheme at Inkerman. The scheme is one of the best we have in Queensland, and, instead of trying to throw cold water on it, the hon. member for Mirani, if he is the practical farmer he talks about being, ought to be pleased at the progress

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made. The hon. member talks about the irrigation scheme at the Pioneer, in his electorate, and that ought to make him pleased with the progress of the Inkerman scheme.

Question put and passed.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

The PREMIER moved—That £35,000 be granted for "Department of Public Lands"—for wire-netting and forestry.

Question put and passed.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND STOCK.

The PREMIER moved—That £45,000 be granted for "Establishment of Abattoirs."

Mr. GUNN: I would like a little information about these State abattoirs. There was no appropriation last year, but I understood some years ago there was a fence erected at Wolston which cost £245 a mile. I want to draw attention to an article in the "Daily Standard" of 7th February, 1919. The article has the following heading:—

"PURE FOOD FOR THE PEOPLE.

"HUGE STATE SCHEME IN PREPARATION.

"Six abattoirs and one hundred meat shops.

"Complete Elimination of the Profiteer."

There is one paragraph here which is very interesting, and which I would like to read to the House—

"The launching of this scheme will mean that the Government will be able to supply State meat promptly to at least 75 per cent. of its people. The necessary arrangements are now being made to supply that number of people on the basis of 150 lb. of beef and 30 lb. of mutton per head per year. In the meantime, and until the necessary provision can be made to supply the remaining 25 per cent. direct from the State establishment, the selling price of meat will be so regulated that these people will receive a much better deal than they are getting to-day."

Then there is a map here showing all the abattoirs that we are going to have in Queensland. This map looks something like a spider's web in fly time, with a lot of flies plotted in. (Laughter.) It says at the foot of the map—

"The encircled towns in the above map are the proposed sites for abattoirs under the Labour Government's big scheme. In the case of Richmond and Hughenden, also Longreach and Emerald, they are alternative sites."

I see there is to be an abattoir at Brisbane, one at Warwick, one at Charleville, one at Longreach, one at Emerald, one at Winron, one at Cloncurry, and one at [9.30 p.m.] Richmond, and there are others along the coast. If the £45,000 is going to establish all these abattoirs, then it is going a long way. I hope that the money of the people of Queensland will not be wasted on these abattoirs. I think there are better uses to which the money can be put than in spending it on abattoirs. If the Government want abattoirs, the best thing for them to do is to buy one of the meatworks down the river.

Mr. TAYLOR: Like the hon. member for Carnarvon, I think that when a vote like this is put before the Committee the least the Treasurer can do is to give us some information as to the intentions of the Government regarding the establishment of abattoirs. We are not told in what place the abattoirs are to be located, or who are going to be served by the abattoirs. Are they to be used for killing State cattle only, or are they to take the place of the various meatworks? We are entitled to that information. I do not know whether the vote refers only to abattoirs in the metropolitan area, and we should be given some information on that point. My own idea is that if this £45,000 is to be spent in connection with abattoirs for the metropolitan area, those abattoirs and the yards where cattle are disposed of should be erected in as close proximity as possible so as to avoid the unnecessary expense of re trucking.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member for Windsor has asked a fair question. We are asked to pass a vote of £45,000. Is there any business in it? My reason for asking that question is that we are now in the month of February, and that these Estimates will run out on the 30th June. Has any of that money been spent?

The PREMIER: None of it has been spent yet.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: None of the money has been spent, and the hon. gentleman is shortly going to the old country. Is there any chance of any of it being spent?

The PREMIER: It will be spent whether I am here or not. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. W. H. BARNES: We all know that if there is anything the Government are good at, it is spending money; but what we want to know now is what is the policy of the Government in connection with these abattoirs. Last night I drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that it has been stated by a Minister in another place that the policy of the Government should be that only those places which are loyal to the Government should receive certain things. I want to know, if this money is to be spent, will it be necessary for the people to give an assurance of their loyalty to the Government before any portion of the money is spent in their locality?

Mr. VOWLES: I think the Premier should give some answer to the questions which have been asked by hon. members. A sum of money was voted some years ago for the establishment of abattoirs for Brisbane. Afterwards we discovered that some of that money had been spent on work done by day labour, and that it cost £250 per mile for fencing, and £15 10s. per acre for clearing the land. Is there any business in this? Or is it simply an election dodge? If the hon. gentleman does not give the information asked for, we must come to the conclusion that there is no business in the vote. When the department ask for £45,000, they must surely have some scheme with regard to abattoirs, and I think the Premier should give us some explanation respecting it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I intend to press the Premier to give an answer to this question. He has put before the Committee a proposal to vote £45,000, and he has not given us one solitary scrap of information as to when

or where he intends to spend the money, or for what purpose he proposes to spend it. If, as has been said, there is no business in the vote and it is only humbug, let him get up and tell us that it is humbug, and we will stop discussing the matter. But, personally, I do not feel inclined to allow a vote like this to go through without getting some information respecting it. It may be politics to withhold the information asked for, but it is not playing the game. All we want to know is where the abattoirs are to be established, who is to be served by those abattoirs, and are they to be constructed for the slaughter of State cattle or for the slaughter of cattle belonging to any private person? We should also like to know whether it is the intention of the Government to prevent and block the meatworks which are at present operating from slaughtering on their own premises. I hope the Premier will give us that information.

Mr. GUNN: I think the Premier might give us a little information on this matter. The financial year ends in June, and I should like to know whether the Government are going to spend this £45,000 between now and June? In South Australia they built abattoirs, and the result was that the price of meat went up a ½d. a lb. to pay for those abattoirs. They built abattoirs in Sydney which run into nearly a million of money, and the people of Sydney are no better off now than they were when private enterprise killed the cattle in their own yards.

The PREMIER: What amount do you think we should put on?

Mr. GUNN: I do not know what amount. I want to know what you are going to do with what you have on, and I want to know if you are going to stick to the present site. It was stated when Mr. Denham secured the site at Wolston that it was a bad site, but, notwithstanding that, the Government have spent a lot of money in putting up fencing which is perfectly useless and in clearing the land, and then afterwards neglecting the land, and the timber now is just as bad, or even worse, than when the Government started to clear it. It was a waste of public money, and the Committee should know where this £45,000 is to be spent.

Mr. FRY: I think the Premier should supply the Committee with some information regarding this amount.

Mr. VOWLES: I will divide the House if you do not give this information.

The PREMIER: Is that a threat?

Mr. VOWLES: No.

Mr. FRY: I think the leader of the Opposition is quite justified in asking for the information, and the Premier is not justified in refusing it. We should not vote any amount in ignorance, and if we vote this money without questioning it, we will be told afterwards that we should have found out all about it then. This amount did not appear on the Estimates last year, and it is only a fair thing, as the country has to find the money, that the Premier should make a statement.

Mr. VOWLES: I would like to know, without wasting further time, if the hon. gentleman intends to give the information or not?

The PREMIER: What do you want information about?

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Mr. VOWLES: About this £45,000.

The PREMIER: The vote is self explanatory. It says, "Establishment of Abattoirs, £45,000." That is just a preliminary amount. The scheme will cost a lot more than that. There is no intention to change the site.

Mr. VOWLES: You say it is only a preliminary vote?

The PREMIER: That is so.

Mr. VOWLES: So there is no business in it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I would like to ask if this amount is for abattoirs. (Laughter.) Then I want to know if the Government will freeze for owners or on behalf of owners? This is a very important question. Hon. members have talked quite a lot about trusts and combines, and about the meatworks fixing the price of cattle and that sort of thing, but we find the Government are the trusts and combines. I want to know if these abattoirs are built and the meatworks fix a low price for cattle and growers want to export their cattle, will the Government freeze cattle on their behalf?

Question put and passed.

DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That there be granted £66,000 for "Department of Mines."

Mr. GLEDSON: I want to ask the Minister for Mines whether it is intended to go on with the scheme for the manufacture of coke in the Southern part of Queensland. We have a sum down "In aid of Mining," and I do not think there could be any greater aid to mining than to manufacture coke. We have had a statement from the Minister for Mines as to the quality of the coal for coke-making purposes in the Southern part of Queensland. The Secretary for Mines, as reported on page 2622 of "Hansard" for 1917, said—

"I want to say here, too, that the people in Ipswich came to our assistance at a time when we wanted coal and coke, but from one ton of coal under the old system of producing coke we get only 63 per cent. of coke. Under the modern system we would get 75 per cent. of coke. $7\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of tar—from which all the dyes are made—23 lb. of sulphate of ammonia, which is very valuable at the present time and at any time, and all the power to illuminate the town of Ipswich, the Ipswich railway workshops, or any other workshops we had there."

In addition to that, the Government secured the services of an expert coke maker, Mr. Tucksworth, from New South Wales, who made a very valuable report on the matter. I would like to ask the Minister if it is intended to develop our cokemaking plant not only in the interests of the coal industry, but also in the interests of those industries which are dependent on coke. It is a sad thing to find that our own Government are going to New South Wales to buy coke when we have a number of unemployed men in Queensland who could be employed making bricks and in the manufacture of coke and other things. I hope the Minister will take these matters into consideration and that when he is ordering the retorts for the pur-

pose of establishing coke ovens at Bowen that he will also order duplicate ovens to put up a battery of ovens in the Southern part of Queensland to enable coke to be made here as well.

Mr. STOPFORD: I desire to support the hon. member for Ipswich in his request that we should have some information as to the intentions of the Government regarding the manufacture of coke in Queensland. It is an unfortunate thing that Queensland, with a consumption of 60,000 tons of coke per year, should only manufacture something in the vicinity of 18,000 tons.

Every industrial trouble that takes place in New South Wales and every trouble such as that which is now taking place threatens a stoppage of the mining industry in this State. At the present time the Mount Morgan Company, who have a consumption of something in the vicinity of 43,000 tons of coke a year, are absolutely dependent upon New South Wales for supplies. We have not in the State of Queensland a modern coking plant. The coke manufactured at Ipswich has an effectiveness of 25 per cent. less than coke manufactured under modern conditions, and no reasonable business man would expect the Mount Morgan Company, whose margin of profit is so fine, to pay the haulage rates that the Railway Department charge, even if they desired to encourage local industry, on coke that was 25 per cent. less effective than a commodity they could purchase in another State. Politicians are saying that the solution of many of the problems that are facing Australia is to encourage production, but I consider we have also a duty to protect existing industries—(Hear, hear!)—and that it is, therefore, our duty to protect the mining industry in this State. When we consider that the Mount Morgan Company pay something in the vicinity of £452,000 a year in wages, and other amounts for material and railway freights and fares, we must realise that this is a vital matter to the State. At the present time they are at the mercy of every industrial trouble that takes place, and at the moment it is only by arrangement with the Railway Department that we are able to get large coal contracted for from the Tivoli mine, and the residue is made into coke. When you remember that 16,000 persons are directly and indirectly dependent upon the operation of this company, I consider that there is a case for the serious consideration of the Government. The State is also embarking on an enterprise in the North that will demand a large supply of coke—that is, the Chillagoe smelters—and I sincerely trust to hear the Premier say that he will instruct the gentleman in charge of the iron and steel works to go right ahead, because I understand that, as business men, the present Cabinet have not gone blindly into choosing Bowen as a site. I take it that they have gone exhaustively into the question of whether the Bowen coal will coke or not, because I know that certain coal in Central Queensland was deemed from small tests to be suitable for coking, but when the company launched out and tried coking a large parcel they failed, after an expenditure of some £10,000. I consider, not only from the point of view of the encouragement of our local mining industry, but also for the safeguarding of Queensland, that one of the first steps towards the establishment of the iron and steel works at Bowen should

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be the establishment of coking ovens to prove conclusively that the coke possesses qualities to render it effective for the purposes for which it is intended and relieve the position that exists to-day and will continue to exist while we are dependent on other places than our own State.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am rather surprised at the two hon. members who have spoken, and I hope that the Premier will not give them the information they ask for. (Government interruption and laughter.) The idea of the Premier seems to be that all the information necessary is in the Estimates themselves.

Mr. VOWLES: I would like to ask the Premier whether it is intended to spend any further money on Warra? (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: I could not answer that offhand. I shall have to consult the Minister. (Laughter.)

Question put and passed.

RAILWAYS.

The PREMIER: I move—That £2,222,067 be granted for "Railways."

Mr. SIZER: I would like to ask the Premier what is the meaning of an account sent to the Sandgate council for work done by the Railway Department in constructing a drain across the railway. The bill was £90. and one of the items was "Flotation of London loan. £4 19s. 10d."

The PREMIER: What was the date of the account?

Mr. SIZER: The account was sent in in January for work done about eight months ago. The account was sent in long before the London loan was floated.

The PREMIER: It was obviously a loan floated by the Denham Government.

Mr. SIZER: I would like the Premier to give us some information as to whether it is the practice to charge for the flotation in that way.

Mr. GLEDSON: I would like to ask the Premier whether he is taking effective steps to enable the Railway Department to increase its rolling-stock. This is a matter that very much concerns the whole of the industries, and in the coalmining industry, in which I am interested, we found that between the two strikes it was not possible for the department to supply sufficient trucks to enable the mines to load the coal ordered. We had boats in the river here that called for 1,300 tons, and all that we could load was 800 tons, whereas at one time they could supply enough to take 2,000 tons. The whole of the trucks have been spread over quite a number of mines, and it has been rather a serious question.

The PREMIER: I understand that there is a considerable shortage of rolling-stock, principally owing to the inability to get material. Locomotives, wagons, coaches, and various other rolling-stock are completely under requirements, but the matter is being fully looked into and no doubt the position will be gradually improved as money is available and material comes forward.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES.

INTEREST ON PUBLIC DEBT.

The PREMIER: I move—That £10,937 17s. 11d. be granted for "Interest on Public Debt."

At 10 o'clock p.m..

The CHAIRMAN: Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 306—that is, being the last day allotted to Supply, I shall now proceed to put forthwith the questions in connection with the Supplementary Estimates.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, NO. 2, 1918-19.

Question—That £516,223 10s. 10d. be granted for "Supplementary Estimates, No. 2, 1918-19"—put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY TRUST FUNDS, 1918-19.

Question—That £75,859 12s. 5d. be granted from "Trust and Special Funds"—put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, LOAN FUND, 1918-19.

Question—That £347,523 19s. 4d. be granted from the "Loan Fund"—put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again at a later hour of the sitting.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1920-1921.

The TREASURER moved—That £1,450,000 be granted on account of the service of His Majesty for the year 1920-1921 towards defraying the expenditure of the various departments and services of the State.

Mr. VOWLES: This afternoon a deputation representing the unemployed in Brisbane waited on me, and during the week I have had frequent communications from country places telling me that unemployment is rife everywhere, and asking me to approach the Premier with a view to getting something done to relieve the distress. The men who waited on me to-day informed me that they represent some hundreds of men in Brisbane who cannot get work, and they said that they have been told that some scheme to relieve unemployment is about to be launched by the Government in connection with the Home Department. I think hon. members ought to know at this stage what the intentions of the Government are. I am told that the Government intend acting in conjunction with the local authorities to provide work in the direction of roadmaking in the metropolitan area and other necessary work; but the men complain that there is only going to be enough work to keep them employed for two days a week, and that the amount of money they will receive will be the same as they now receive in charity for their families. The men having come to me, I consider it my duty, as leader of the Opposition, to ask the Premier to take hon. members and the public into his confidence in the matter.

The PREMIER: There is, unfortunately, some unemployment yet in Queensland, and the position is accentuated to some extent by the marine engineers' strike holding up shipping and thereby interfering with work

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in Brisbane and other coastal towns. The position, apart from that, would not be so serious. I am sure the leader of the Opposition recognises that the Government are endeavouring to minimise the results of the unemployment as much as possible by granting relief in the shape of rations to those who are unable to get work and who are in distressed circumstances. At the same time, the Government are doing everything they can to employ as many men as possible on Government work, and they are also financing the local authorities with a view to providing extra work. That has lessened the number of men out of work. The Government have been considering the question of offering the men who have been out of work for some time a couple of days' work a week in lieu of rations. That should be less demoralising than giving the men rations each week without their doing any work, as they will not then feel that they are dependent upon charity. The Home Secretary is working out the details of the scheme, and I think it will lead to some improvement of the situation.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would like to ask the Premier how far into the financial year 1920-21 he expects the sum of £1,450,000 which he is asking us to vote will carry him?

The PREMIER: It will provide about six weeks' Supply.

HON. W. H. BARNES: In other words, the House is not to meet until about the middle of August?

The PREMIER: This amount will last till about the middle of August.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a further resolution, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

RECEPTION OF RESOLUTIONS FROM COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

The PREMIER moved—That resolutions be now received.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: May I suggest that the resolutions be taken as read? They are very lengthy.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the resolutions be taken as read?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That the resolutions be now agreed to.

The SPEAKER: I propose to adopt the same procedure in connection with this discussion of the resolutions as has been adopted on previous occasions. I call on hon. members to indicate the resolutions they wish to discuss.

Resolution 1—"Railways, General Establishment"—was agreed to.

On resolution 2—"Railways, Southern Division"—

HON. W. H. BARNES: I regret to notice that the Minister for Railways is not in his place in the House. However, that is not my fault. I presume a Minister is acting for him. This afternoon, certain information, by way of a question, was furnished to this House in connection with the "Douglas Maw-

son." The House may remember that a few days ago I asked the Treasurer if the "Douglas Mawson" had been placed under offer to the Railway Department, and the answer with which he furnished me was that it had not been placed under offer to the Railway Department.

The PREMIER: No; to the Government, I said.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would like to ask, what are we to understand by that paring of words? Who are the railways, if the Government do not run them? Is it not a very important Government Department? If the hon. gentleman is going to fence the question in that way, members of this House should know exactly where they are.

The PREMIER: Someone might put it under offer to the messenger, but that would not be putting it under offer to the Government.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is particularly thin. The hon. gentleman is trying to "fence" an important matter. The position is perfectly clear. From information which has come to hand, it does seem that the "Douglas Mawson" was offered to the Railway Department. Is it at all likely that an offer of that kind would be made to a department without the responsible Minister being advised of what was taking place? Anyone who knows what the conduct of the department is, would know at once that, whether it were the Commissioner for Railways or anyone else, if an offer were made, the Minister would be apprised of it. I want to ask the Minister if an offer of the "Douglas Mawson" was made to the Commissioner for Railways, the Minister for Railways, or to any responsible officer in the department? This is a matter in which the people of Queensland are deeply concerned, and we certainly are entitled to receive a reply to-night. What is the position? Our opportunity will soon be passed by. The House soon will be adjourning, and this matter of important public interest in the meantime will have to be relegated to the wastepaper basket. I press the question, and ask the Minister who appears to be acting for the Minister for Railways if an offer was made, and what was the price at which this boat, more recently offered for £18,500, was offered to the Railway Department.

The PREMIER: I have dealt with this already a couple of times. The hon. member is very persistent, and apparently will not accept the statement I made on the last occasion, when I told him the owner had stated to the department that he was the owner in September—when the hon. member says an offer was made—and he gave no authority to anyone to offer it to the Queensland Government or to the Railway Department.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We have documentary evidence.

The PREMIER: Mr. Miller was the owner. He says he authorised no one to make that offer. What more does the hon. gentleman want than that? No offer came to my cognisance, no information about an offer to the Railway Department, if an offer was made by some broker or tout, or someone trying to catch business. It may have been so; I do not know. At any rate, the Government know nothing about it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It has been reduced to a copy of a letter this afternoon.

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The PREMIER: Not from the owner.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Someone acting for the owner.

The PREMIER: Not from anyone acting for the owner. The owner says he authorised no one to make an offer.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: It is one way of fencing.

The PREMIER: Of course, a man with a mind like that cannot be satisfied with anything. I have said that no offer was made to the Government since 1917 up till now, and if any offer was made to the Railway Department, I knew nothing about it. The man who owned it in September—for he came into possession of it about May last—told Mr. Beal (Under Secretary to the Treasury) that he had authorised no one to make an offer to the Government during last year. Beyond that I cannot go.

Question put and passed.

Question—That resolutions No. 3 to No. 45, both inclusive, be agreed to—put and passed.

On resolution 46—*“Department of Public Works, Chief Office”*—

Mr. FRY: I wish to ask the Minister for Public Works what progress has been made with the high school in South Brisbane? South Brisbane is a very large city, and, at the present time, as there is no suitable school there for the children, it would be in the interests of the children if the school was erected as quickly as possible.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLICWORKS: The estimated cost of the building is £10,000. We are asking for £5,000 this year on account. The plans have not yet been prepared. I will make inquiry with a view to expediting the work. There is a very severe tax on the financial resources of the department, and very many urgent calls from the country as well as the city and suburban areas. I realise the importance of this matter, and will make inquiries with a view to expedition.

Mr. FRY: Thank you.

Question put and passed.

Question—That resolutions No. 47 to No. 53, both inclusive, be agreed to—put and passed.

On resolution 54—*“Advertising Office”*—

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Before this resolution goes through, we ought to get some indication of the policy which is being pursued with respect to advertising. As far as one can see, the principle which is being followed is, that advertisements are being given to those daily papers which support the Government politically. There is no end of advertising matter appearing in one particular paper. What principle is followed in connection with advertisements?

The HOME SECRETARY: The same as your Government followed with regard to “The People.”

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Any advertising by the Government I was connected with was done on the lines of what was fair and just to all the papers; but, apparently, the principle now adopted is to see that only one paper gets any help in connection with advertising by the State.

Mr. GUNN: I have noticed that the “Daily Standard” has a wonderful adver-

tisement, headed “Queensland wants millions of new settlers.” I think the “Standard” is a very good paper, but there are other papers besides the “Standard” which want to be advertised in—the “Telegraph,” the “Courier,” and the “Daily Mail.” I find from a return tabled with regard to the Tourists’ Intelligence Bureau for the last financial year, that the cost of advertising in the “Daily Standard” alone was £600, “Steele, Rudd’s Almanac,” £200; “The Patriot,” £100; “Sapsford’s Almanac,” £38; “Tweed and Brunswick and Richmond River Guide,” £8; and “University Magazine,” £5. Those obscure papers, and the “Daily Standard” receive advertisements, but the “Courier” and other leading papers are left out, which I do not think is fair.

Hon. J. MULLAN: I can assure the hon. gentleman that the advertising sub-department is being run on strictly business lines, with great advantage to the State, by this Government. Before this Government came into power there was no continuity of policy. There is now an advertising manager. In three years the sum of £16,000 has been saved by the present Government, as against the three years the business was conducted in such a confused way by the former Administration. Hon. gentlemen opposite should be the last to talk about subsidising papers, considering the manner in which they did the advertising when they were in office. Some of their papers openly oppose the business propositions of the Government. The other day, when the Government sought to raise debentures, one of the papers which had the advertisement in one page was condemning the Government for raising debentures in another page. Would a business man who advertises his wares in a paper tolerate that paper commenting in such a way as to destroy his business? Every penny of this appropriation is well expended in the interests of the country.

Mr. FRY: A responsible Minister of the Crown should not make statements that, because a paper is opposed to the policy of the Government, advertisements should not be given to it.

Hon. J. MULLAN: I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. FRY: In effect, the hon. gentleman did. If you advertise in a paper which is opposed to the Government, to a certain extent you break down the power of that opposition. We have to bear in mind that the whole of the people in the State are not supporters of the Government policy; they are almost equally divided on the question of policy.

Mr. POLLOCK: With regard to the practice of the Government respecting advertisements, I should like to know if the hon. member for Kurilpa had an advertisement in the “Courier,” stating that he was a good optometrist, and the “Courier,” on another page, had an article [10.30 p.m.] stating that he was not much use at the business, would he continue his advertisement in that paper? (Laughter.) If the hon. member for Bulimba had an advertisement in the paper stating that he was a boss produce agent, and the “Courier,” on another page, had an article stating that he knew nothing about it, would he continue his advertisement in the “Courier”? If the hon. member for Dalby advertised that he was a solicitor of some

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prominence, and the "Courier," commented on that advertisement, and said he was a "bum" solicitor, would he continue his advertisement in the "Courier"? (Laughter.) If the hon. member for East Toowoomba had an advertisement in the paper holding himself out as an expert plumber, and the "Courier" on another page stated that he was not much of a plumber, would he continue his advertisement in the "Courier"? If the hon. member for Drayton had an advertisement in the paper saying that he knew all about butter—(laughter)—or that he was a good water diviner, and, on another page, the "Courier" said he knew nothing about butter, or that he was no good at water divining, would he continue his advertisement in the paper? Or suppose the hon. member for Oxley published an advertisement affirming that he knew all about making cement—(laughter)—and the "Courier" pointed out on the next page that he had been a failure at that and everything else he had undertaken, I wonder how long that advertisement would be kept in the "Courier"? Well, these illustrations indicate the policy the Government have adopted with regard to advertising, and it is one that can easily be defended.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I want to ask the Assistant Minister for Justice if I was correct in understanding that the Government were going to withdraw the advertisement respecting Government debentures from the "Courier" on account of the comments they made concerning the Government.

Hon. J. MULLAN: No. The Government is too broadminded for that.

Resolution agreed to.

On Resolution 55—"Contingencies—Court of Industrial Arbitration (Department of Justice)"—

Mr. SWAYNE: When discussing the question of Arbitration Courts in Committee I pointed out the loss and distress caused by illegal strikes, and expressed the opinion that with the existence of an Arbitration Court there should not be such occurrences in Queensland. I used these words. (The hon. member was proceeding to read from his speech.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in quoting from a speech delivered this session?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member was quoting from a previous debate of this session, and he is not in order in doing that.

Mr. SWAYNE: I suggested on that occasion that there is no reason why such occurrences should take place, and that steps should be taken to prevent such occurrences. Afterwards the hon. member for Bowen continued the discussion, and put into my mouth words which I did not use. The hon. member misquoted me, and I think he should now withdraw his remarks.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolutions 56 and 57 agreed to.

On Resolution 58—"Salaries and Contingencies—Electoral Registration"—

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I should like to ask the Assistant Minister for Justice if any definite decision has been come to by the department with regard to using the services

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of the police for collecting the names of persons entitled to be enrolled, and removing from the rolls those who are disqualified.

Hon. J. MULLAN: The hon. gentleman can rest assured that the Government will do everything necessary to see that every eligible person is entitled to vote at the next election.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolutions 65 to 73 agreed to.

On Resolution 74—"Salaries and Contingencies—Department of Mines, Chief Office"—

Mr. GUNN: I do not know if I should have any occasion to raise any debate on this matter if it had not been that the Public Service Act Amendment Bill is likely to be among "the slaughtered innocents." At any rate, as that Bill is not likely to be proceeded with this session, I shall have no opportunity of moving any amendment in it. A young fellow who was born in my electorate was educated at the School of Mines at Charters Towers, and then came down to the Head Office in Brisbane, where he was employed. Ten years ago he took the place of Mr. T. J. Dillon, who received £300 per annum. Mr. Albert got the same salary, and now he is getting £364 or £365, while Mr. Cheshire, the officer to whom I now refer, is getting only £270 a year. Mr. Cheshire enlisted and went to the front two or three years ago. He fought all through the war and rose to be captain; he won the military medal and has come back and finds he has got no advancement, while his fellow officers, who were on his mark when he left, have been advanced.

The HOME SECRETARY: He has no grievance at all.

Mr. GUNN: He interviewed Mr. Hamilton before he went to the war, and since then he has interviewed the Minister for Mines, and I have also done so on his behalf. I am not prepared to go into the merits or demerits of the case, but I wish the department would hold an inquiry so that he could bring evidence to support his case and secure him justice, because if something is not done he will be hounded out of the department, and he will have a grievance for all time against the Government. He is a fine young fellow, and I do not know what his political views are. I know he was inclined to Labour when I knew him first, but he thinks he has a very serious grievance against the Government, and I take this opportunity of asking the Premier to see that he gets a proper inquiry.

Question put and passed.

Resolutions 75 to 120, both inclusive, agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

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

The PREMIER: I beg to move—

"(a) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1919-1920, a further sum not exceeding £2,597,469 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(b) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the

service of the year 1919-1920, a further sum not exceeding £495,686 19s. 4d. be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

"(c) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1919-1920, a further sum not exceeding £2,079,999 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(d) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1918-1919, a supplementary sum not exceeding £605,112 17s. 7d. be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(e) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1918-1919, a supplementary sum not exceeding £75,859 12s. 5d. be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

"(f) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1918-1919, a supplementary sum not exceeding £547,523 19s. 4d. be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(g) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty on account, for the service of the year 1920-1921, a sum not exceeding £750,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(h) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty on account, for the service of the year 1920-1921, a sum not exceeding £300,000 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

"(i) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty on account, for the service of the year 1920-1921, a sum not exceeding £400,000 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account."

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would like to ask the Premier what amount of money he expects will be spent on account of loan for the year ending 1920. The hon. gentleman some little while ago intimated that probably the amount would be about £4,000,000.

The PREMIER: That is so.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would point out that that probably is the largest amount that the State has ever been responsible for in the one year.

The PREMIER: The Government spent £5,600,000 in Denham's time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That was so on one occasion, but the present vote is going to be greater than any previous vote, and it is only fair to ask the Premier what is the present position of the loan fund.

The PREMIER: Pretty good.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That may be satisfactory from the Premier's point of view, but I question whether it is satisfactory from the Committee's point of view.

The PREMIER: We have just floated a loan of £2,000,000.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We know the State of the loan fund was not too good when the loan was obtained from the old country, and seeing that the hon. gentleman recently has turned down applications for money and said that the finances were strained, I want to ask what is the position of the loan fund to-day. The Premier is bound for the old country, and the country, at any rate, is interested to know whether the state of the loan fund will permit him to have ample time to deal with loan matters when he gets to the old country, and we want to know what amount of money he expects to raise when he gets to the old country. After all the repudiatory legislation, I doubt very much whether he will be successful. No doubt he has made up his mind, and if he has not made up his mind, he will be advised by his financial experts on the other side as to the amount of money he proposes to raise, and the hon. gentleman ought to furnish the Committee with information along those lines. Further, I would like to ask the hon. gentleman whether he intends to take any steps in regard to maturing loans. I need scarcely remind the hon. gentleman that we have maturing loans. He was very much exercised when on this side of the House as to maturing loans, and I venture to say that he is very much more exercised now. I want to know what prospects there are of renewing loans falling due in the near future.

The PREMIER: The funds standing to the credit of the Loan Account at the end of January were about £1,870,000, which will be sufficient to carry us on for some time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is still about five months to go.

The PREMIER: But the hon. member must remember that certain payments are received, and, with those, it will be seen that the amount will be sufficient for some time. It is my intention, of course, to arrange for further loans. We cannot continue an active public works policy and finance the iron and steel works without making ample financial provision. We do not want to run "too close to the wind," and then be faced with the possibility of having to shorten sail to a considerable extent. As the hon. member has surmised, the question of dealing with loans falling due in 1922 and 1924 will also receive consideration on the other side. I hope that by making early provision we shall be able to make the best bargain possible.

Mr. ROBERTS: I was in Toowoomba yesterday, and there seemed to be a general statement that the Railway Department was shortening hands. I am told that there is a reduction of between £9,000 and £12,000. I referred earlier in the afternoon to the fact that 160 men are registered at the Labour Bureau for employment, and I would like to know from the Premier whether the statements that are being made are correct? The position is serious. We know that any number of men are out of work in Brisbane, and that the department even sent men to work at Toowoomba.

The PREMIER: There is no justification for the assumption that the Railway Department is shortening hands or closing down on construction or development work for the purpose of restricting expenditure. If there is any closing down in Toowoomba, I think it must be as a result of an inability to get

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material. I do not know of any other reason for shortening hands at the present time.

Mr. SWAYNE: I should like to get a little information about the building of railways in the near future. There are some very necessary lines, the cost of which will not be very great. I have in my mind one that passed both Houses a few days ago—that to Owen's Creek. There is a body of farmers there who have produced up to 21,000 tons of cane, and who, it is estimated, could produce in that district up to 30,000 tons, but owing to the removal of a tram-line, the production fell to 7,500 tons, and there is a possibility that some will be driven off the land. They would be able to do good work for themselves, the country, and the Railway Department, if the line were built at a cost of only about £42,000. Ministers, including Mr. Adamson and Mr. Coyne, went into the matter and promised favourable consideration, and, apparently, the evidence produced satisfied the Select Committee of the Council. I should like to know whether there is any possibility of, at any rate, 2 or 3 miles being built by the end of August, for use this crushing season.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I should like to ask the Premier whether the amount he has mentioned as to the credit of the Loan Account in January includes any money received from the Commonwealth for advancing to local authorities.

The PREMIER: The amount I mentioned did not include any such money from the Commonwealth. No money has yet been received. I am afraid I cannot give the hon. member for Mirani any definite assurance that the Owen's Creek line will be commenced in the immediate future. There are so many demands for railway construction, and material is so very costly, that I see no possibility of the starting of any new lines, with the exception of Mount Oxide line.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the resolutions, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

RECEPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the resolutions were received, and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 5.

FIRST READING.

A Bill founded on the resolutions reported from Committee of Ways and Means was introduced and passed through all its stages without debate.

[11 p.m.]

PROFITEERING PREVENTION BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

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

Clause 2—"Application of Act"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I move—That the Legislative Council's amendments in this clause be disagreed to. They would impair the efficiency of the Bill.

Mr. VOWLES: I notice that in the Council's amendments in subclause (i) they have endeavoured to prevent what appears to me to savour of repudiation with respect to the rights conferred on existing corporations by Act of Parliament. It may be all right to

make provision with respect to the future, but all existing rights should be preserved unless good cause is shown for interfering with them. I strongly protest against the principle of the original clause.

Question put and passed.

Clause 3—"Interpretation"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I move—That the amendments of the Legislative Council in the clause be disagreed to. The proposed modification of the definition of "Association" would seriously interfere with the usefulness of the Bill, and if it were accepted, we might just as well throw the Bill in the waste-paper basket.

Mr. ROBERTS: I notice that the Council's amendment includes the words "nor a friendly society." Do I understand that there is a possibility of the Bill being used to interfere with the work of friendly societies? I certainly protest against any interference with the work of friendly societies by the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: By the original definition, that is not proposed at all.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had disagreed to the Legislative Council's amendment in the Bill.

MESSAGE TO COUNCIL.

The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Council with the following message:—

"Mr. President,—

"The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Council of date, 19th instant, relative to the Profiteering Prevention Bill, beg now to intimate that they disagree to the amendments—

"Because they interfere with the general scheme of the Bill."

NEW RAILWAYS.

MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt from the Council of messages intimating that they had approved of the plans, sections, and books of reference of the following new railways:—

Boyne Valley (Northern Burnett).

Monto-Rannes.

Dobbyn-Myally Creek.

BRISBANE EXHIBITION LANDS

LEASES BILL.

RETURNED FROM COUNCIL.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—That this House do now adjourn. The business on Tuesday next will be the consideration of the Public Service Acts Amendment Bill, the Factories and Shops Acts Amendment Bill, the Council's amendments to the Brisbane Tramways Purchase Bill, and then the Fire Brigades Bill.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at fifteen minutes past 11 o'clock p.m.

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.]