

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 29 AUGUST 1922

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TUESDAY, 29 AUGUST, 1922.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Maroo*) took the chair at 3.30 p.m.

QUESTIONS.

ESTIMATED COST OF IMPROVEMENTS AT ROMA STREET STATION AND MAYNE JUNCTION.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. What was the estimated cost of—(a) proposed extensions and improvements at Roma Street Station; and (b) engine sheds, embankments, cottages, and other improvements at Mayne Junction?"

"2. What is the total expenditure to date in each case?"

"3. What is the estimated cost of completing the improvements in each case?"

"4. When is the work expected to be satisfactorily completed?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Lacombe, *Kippel*) replied—

"1. (a) £376,000; (b) £224,000—total, £600,000. The estimate of £600,000 was made in 1911, and is a rough approximation only. It is equivalent to £1,300,000 at present day costs.

"2. (a) £221,126; (b) £198,488—total, £419,614.

"3. (a) £543,200; (b) £369,000—total, £912,200.

"4. A definite date cannot be stated at present."

"GOLDEN CASKET" RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS.

Mr. T. R. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. What amount of money was received for sale of tickets in "Golden Caskets" Nos. 1 to 52?"

"2. What amount has been distributed to—(a) hospitals; (b) other bodies, with names of recipients and amounts?"

"3. The amount disbursed—(a) donations; (b) management expenses; (c) balance, and where deposited?"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*), in the absence of the Home Secretary (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*) replied—

"1. The Government has only exercised supervision over the "Golden Casket" Art Unions since No. 7 "Casket." The amount of money received for sale of tickets, Nos. 7 to 52, totals £1,255,021 9s. 6d.

"2. The proceeds received by the Home Department from the "Caskets,"

Nos. 7 to 52, were distributed as follows:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
(a) To hospitals	...			308,407	2	3
(b) To other bodies namely						
(1) Trustees, dependents						
Mt. Mulligan miners	10,458	0	10			
(2) Tara bush nursing scheme	...	100	0	0		
				10,558	0	10
				£318,965	3	1

"3. The amount disbursed—

	£	s.	d.
(a) Prizes	574,776	3	6
(b) Management expenses	71,236	3	9
Federal taxation	92,998	7	2
State taxation (Nos. 9-52)	57,391	19	6
	£796,392	13	11

(c) Balance, including interest earned (approximately), deposited in Commonwealth Savings Bank, Brisbane ... £145,863 19 3 1/2"

JURISDICTION OF RAILWAY APPEAL BOARDS.

Mr. GREEN (*Townsville*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"In view of the confusion which at present exists owing to the conflicting decisions of the Northern, Central, and Southern appeal boards as to the jurisdiction of such boards in the case of interdivisional appeals against promotions, and also in view of the great dissatisfaction existing amongst railway employees in the Northern division owing to their being debarred from appealing in cases of promotions to positions in the other divisions, has he considered the advisability of amending the Railway Act so as to give the right of appeal against promotions to all employees irrespective of where stationed? If so, will he kindly state his decision in this matter, and his reasons for such decision?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

"Queensland is divided into three parts, and the Railway Act recognises these divisions in regard to appeals. It is not intended to amend the Act at present, but men in the North and West are given an opportunity to transfer South or East as occasion permits."

DATE OF OPENING BOWEN COAL FIELD RAILWAY.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*), without notice, asked the Secretary for Railways—

"When will the railway to Bowen Coal Field be opened for traffic?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

"On Thursday next."

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear! (Opposition laughter.)

DATE OF OPENING MURGON-PROSTON
RAILWAY.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*), without notice, asked the Secretary for Railways—

“When will the Murgon to Proston railway be opened for traffic?”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

“Approximately December next.”

(Renewed laughter.)

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO REGULATE OR
ABOLISH PROPRIETARY RACING.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*), without notice, asked the Premier—

“Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation this session to regulate or abolish proprietary racing?”

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

“The intentions of the Government with regard to the introduction of legislation during the present session will be disclosed in due course.”

(Laughter.)

OMISSION FROM BUSINESS-PAPER OF
QUESTION CONTAINING UNBE-
COMING EXPRESSIONS.

The SPEAKER: On Friday last the hon. member for Mirani gave notice of a question addressed to the Premier for to-day. That question does not appear on the business-paper, for the reason that I consider it is a breach of the privileges of this House to ask such a question. It was not asked, in my opinion, for the purpose of gaining information and it contained unbecoming expressions.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PAPERS.

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

Annual Report of the Director, State Children Department, for the year 1921.

Amended Regulation and Regulation dated 18th August, 1922, under the Animals and Birds Act of 1921.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—SECOND ALLOTTED
DAY.

(*Mr. Kirwan, Brisbane, in the chair.*)

PREMIER AND CHIEF SECRETARY.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Question stated—“That £12,455 be granted for Chief Office.”

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I would like to know whether the Premier intends giving us the information which we have asked for in connection with several very important matters. By interjection on several occasions the hon. gentleman has informed me that he would give the information when the Estimates were being discussed. When is it his intention to give us information asked for by a resolution passed unanimously by this House respecting the travelling allowances paid to members of Parliament during a certain number of years? For the last two

[*Mr. Morgan.*

years, we have been informed from time to time that the information was being prepared and eventually would be disclosed. It has not been disclosed. I feel like putting up a vigorous protest if the Premier will not give that information. If he does not intend to give it, let him say so straight out, and we shall know exactly where we stand. We are being put off with the reply, “The information will be disclosed in due course,” and equally frivolous answers. Resolutions which have been carried by this Chamber are being treated with contempt. We are sent here by the people, and we have a right to get information. If there is any information that the Premier thinks should not be in the possession of members other than Ministers, let him tell us so. I think it is his duty to let us know whether he does or does not intend to disclose the information.

I want a reply to that question now, and I hope the hon. gentleman will be courteous enough to give me a direct answer.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): The information to which the hon. gentleman refers is being compiled, and, presumably, it is not yet complete. The details have to be collected from each of the various departments, and, when they are completed, I hope to be able to place the information on the table of the House.

Mr. GREEN (*Townsville*): I would like the Premier to give some information as to the reason for this increase in the vote for “Incidentals and Miscellaneous Expenses” for this year as compared with 1914-15. The present vote is £6,000, which is £500 less than the vote last year, but an increase of 100 per cent. compared with 1914-15. Perhaps some expenditure is going on in connection with the item that we are not aware of.

Hon. W. H. BARNES (*Balimba*): While appreciating the answer given by the Premier to the hon. member for Murilla, I want to follow up the question raised by the hon. member. I quite recognise that the Premier might say that we should tackle each department, and that he should not be held responsible offhand for what occurs in other departments. The hon. member for Murilla asked a question relative to this matter on 6th July last, and the Premier replied, “The information will be supplied as early as possible.” This question has been asked repeatedly. If it had only been asked this session for the first time, hon. members on this side would certainly have no cause for complaint at the delay that has taken place; but the fact remains that, either intentionally or otherwise, the information has been kept back, whilst every opportunity has been taken of laying on the table of the House particulars with regard to the expenses of ex-Ministers belonging to another Administration. I have already drawn the attention of the Committee to the fact that I have tried on several occasions to get this information. I have already stated that I have written to the Auditor-General, and that the Auditor-General replied to my letter in the way that I expected he would reply. I then went and asked for the information from the Treasury Department, and I received from that department a letter furnishing me with the particulars of expenses which I had incurred myself, which particulars I already had. I took care before I left

office to see that I had copies of all the expenses incurred by me in connection with my administration.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman must have been suspecting something.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If I suspected something, my intuition was perfectly correct. I am not supposed to be very suspecting by nature; but recent events have shown that I must have had some intuition with regard to what this Cabinet would do. I ask the Premier how the vote of £6,500 last year for "Incidental and Miscellaneous Expenses," was spent? I want further to ask him how much his own expenses were in connection with his trip to the old country: how much his own expenses were in connection with motor-cars, in so far as his own department is concerned? I think we have a right to know what the hon. gentleman's expenses for the financial year ended 30th June, 1922, were in connection with motor-cars. I venture to think that the Premier would insist on this information being supplied if he were sitting on this side of the Chamber and there had been so much discussion in this connection, and if he had had as many refusals to give information as we have had. I appreciate the fact that the hon. gentleman says that he is going to hurry up the production of the information, although there is nothing very definite about it. We have had the notice of motion given to-day which means that very early we shall be sitting two days in one, so to speak; and will it not be the easiest thing in the world for a Government who are being pushed for time, apparently, to say that they have not had time to prepare the information, and we shall find ourselves going out of session without getting the information? Therefore I propose, as we come to every department, to seek to get from each Minister particulars as to his expenses in connection with motor-cars, &c. For the time being, I ask the Premier what his own expenses have been, and I hope he will furnish that information.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillogoc*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat appears to be very suspicious as regards hon. members on this side.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am afraid there is need for it.

The PREMIER: I venture to say that not many other members of the Denham Administration, before leaving office, gathered together scraps of information relating to their expenses. I never previously heard of such a thing as a Minister who was going out of office taking a copy of details relating to his own expenses as Minister and hearing it up all this time. I do not know whether the hon. member thought that this side would make an assault on his character as Minister.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have been criticised.

The PREMIER: I do not think the hon. member has been criticised in regard to his expenses.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Let us have your expenses so that we can make a comparison.

The PREMIER: I do not know what the hon. member hopes to gain by that. Suppose my expenses have been more than his, will he then make an attack on me? It seems to

me that the hon. member cannot get anywhere in that way. If hon. members ask for information, and get information, in regard to Minister's expenses with a view to distorting or misrepresenting that information, it seems to me that the Committee will not get anywhere. The hon. member for Albert was rather ill-advised last session when he made a foolish attack upon the Attorney-General.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I was attacked first, and I did it in my own defence.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is wrong in saying that he was attacked first. I remember distinctly the hon. member referring to what he rather vulgarly called "Johnny's Jazz."

HON. J. G. APPEL: I did not do so.

The PREMIER: The hon. member was very angry when details of his own expenses were given.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I was attacked, and it was my duty to defend myself.

The PREMIER: It is always the right of an hon. member to defend himself.

Mr. KING: It was another hon. member altogether who referred to "Johnny's Jazz."

The PREMIER: If that is so, I apologise to the hon. member. At any rate, it was some hon. member on the Opposition side. Some hon. member opposite was ill-advised enough—I thought it was the hon. member for Albert, but I have apologised for that mistake—to make an attack on the Attorney-General with reference to his trip, apparently because his own Ministers were faulty in that respect.

It seems to me to be a very petty attitude for Opposition members to be constantly complaining about Ministers incurring expenditure in necessary travelling. The heads of all Administrations have recognised the necessity of allowances being made to Ministers when travelling. Ministers are required to travel in order to get a full knowledge of their departments, to broaden their experience of the State, and travelling adds to their experience and usefulness as Ministers. A Ministry, representing, not Queen street, but Queensland as a whole, finds it necessary for its members to travel. When affairs have taken me to country districts on many occasions the people in these districts have been glad to receive a Minister, and have never deprecated the idea of Ministers travelling. They always welcome the visits of the Ministers, whatever their politics may be. The hon. member for Townsville has asked for particulars of the items of expenditure in connection with the vote of £6,000 for "Incidentals and Miscellaneous Expenses." This covers a very wide range of incidental expenditure which was more or less unavoidable. No doubt, it is higher than it was some years ago. Last year the actual expenditure was £5,700, made up of numerous items, such as expenditure incurred in connection with the recent visit of the British Empire Exhibition; the salary of Mr. Bolger, Parliament House—I think he is the stenographer appointed to assist hon. members with their correspondence—£238 15s.; allowances to various officers of the department for extra work done by them; allowance to Mr. Mathieu, a blind man, of £1 a week; allowance made to Mrs. C. Nash, the widow of the discoverer of Gympie, of £1 a week; Miss Warham,

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

a clerk in the office, gets an allowance of £30 a year, but I cannot say what it is for. Then there is expenditure on books and newspapers which are purchased by the department. There is an item of £30, being an *ex gratia* allowance paid to Mrs. Lance Brown, a woman who was in distress, and which was well justified. There were certain amounts paid to various local bodies, such as schools of art, which were in difficulties, in one or two cases owing to the destruction of their buildings by cyclone. Two State funerals took place during the year, and there were wreaths supplied in connection with other funerals; expenditure on legal opinions obtained by officers of the staff; petty cash; donation to the Petric Memorial Fund; annual contribution towards the cost of the secretarial work in connection with the Premiers' Conference; expenditure in connection with functions held during the year in which the department participated; stamp account; sundry expenses, including the passage from London of an officer in the Agent-General's office. There was a donation to the Toowoomba band fund, a donation to the Maryborough Eisteddfod, repairs to the Government House motor-car, cleaning of the Public Library, and other incidentals; telegrams, £210; telephones, £57 1s. 9d.; travelling expenses, including my own, regarding which hon. members on the other side are showing quite an inordinate amount of curiosity, £821 12s. 2d. My expenses in connection with the tour I made in Western Queensland amounted to £22 9s. 10d.; my tour in [4 p.m.] North Queensland, £40 18s. 3d.; Melbourne and Sydney, £129 0s. 9d.; Premiers' Conference, £94 4s. 2d.; Sydney, £53 12s. 3d.; Warwick, £7 2s. 9d.; and my recent Northern tour, £458 18s. 2d. That made a total of £821 12s. 2d. altogether for travelling expenses. Some hon. members may consider that the expenditure in connection with my Northern tour is altogether beyond a fair thing. If they are of that opinion, then it is an entirely erroneous opinion. If hon. members think that in travelling as I have done during the year my travelling expenses are some kind of supplement to my salary, then I want to assure them that I make no profit whatever out of my travels. (Hear, hear!) As a matter of fact, every time I leave Brisbane on a Ministerial tour I am really out of pocket. I am not complaining of that. It is quite true that I draw £2 2s. per day sometimes, that sometimes it may amount to more than that, and sometimes to less than that. I do not tie myself down to any definite amount. I draw the actual amount of out-of-pocket expenses incurred. In regard to the tour I made to North Queensland, I may say that I occupied six or seven weeks, and it enabled me to cover a very large extent of country. I went to the North and returned overland down the coast. I came overland from the Atherton Tableland pretty well all the way to Townsville, and then down to Rockhampton along the route of the North Coast Railway. I also went up the Dawson Valley almost as far as Taroom and back again. Tours of that kind cannot be done without the expenditure of money. I am sure that no hon. member will urge that a Minister should pay his out-of-pocket expenses out of his salary. If a Minister had to pay his own out-of-pocket expenses, he would have no remuneration at all.

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.

It is only fair that a Minister should charge his out-of-pocket expenses to his department. All the expenses that are charged in connection with these tours are not incurred by the Minister himself. There are steamer fares, coach fares, and incidental expenses, all of which are charged to the tour, but the Minister's actual expenses are only a medium of the actual cost of the tour. There are always others whose expenses have to be paid as well. A Minister travelling in Queensland, in carrying out the ordinary courtesies which are a recognised practice, invites the member of the district through which he passes to accompany him, and it is only fair, if the member does accompany the Minister, that his out-of-pocket expenses should also be charged to the department. I do not want hon. members to think that the money is distributed in the form of largess or anything of that sort. If I asked any of the members for the Central district to accompany me on the Dawson Valley trip, I had to provide them with means of conveyance, and I had also to pay their hotel bills. In that way the actual cost of the tour mounts up. I want to assure the Committee that, if members are under the impression that this money is paid to the Minister, they are under an entirely erroneous impression. In many cases when a Minister travels he is out of pocket. There may be a suggestion that Ministers can somehow draw mysteriously from the department without disclosing any details, or that they can cover up the details in some way. Nothing of the kind can happen. In each of these cases where I have travelled throughout Queensland and elsewhere the exact details are given. The details are all given, and are open to the inspection of the Auditor-General and his staff. The Auditor-General would soon call attention if there was any irregular expenditure. I may say that the Auditor-General and his inspectors have done that in the past—not in connection with any irregular expenditure, but they have called attention to expenditure which might seem to be beyond a reasonable amount. That has not happened in my own case, but it has happened in the past, where the Auditor-General has pointed out that the cost of a tour has seemed to be beyond the limit. However, the Auditor-General and his inspectors have access to all the details, and they examine all the vouchers. The Auditor-General is quite at liberty to comment on anything he finds, and, as a matter of fact, he would comment in his annual report if he found anything irregular at all. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. KERR (*Enquiry*): It has been usual in connection with previous Estimates to discuss the question of immigration on the vote for the Agent-General; but we find now that there is an arrangement with the Commonwealth, and the Agent-General has nothing at all to do with immigration. The only department which is now concerned with immigration is the Chief Secretary's Department, and so the opportunity of discussing this matter may not be missed. I think that we might discuss it on this vote.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not wish to restrict hon. members, but sometimes an arrangement is made between the leaders of respective parties and the Minister in charge of the Estimates where a subsidiary item may be discussed on the vote for the Chief Office. If there is no such arrangement made, I cannot permit hon. members to discuss any

question until we come to the vote in which it is included.

Mr. KERR: I do not think that any arrangement has been made to discuss all questions on the first vote for the various departments, but immigration is dealt with by the Chief Office in this department, and I consider that we should be allowed to discuss it on this vote. Owing to the arrangement with the Commonwealth, the Agent-General has nothing to do with immigration now, and the only thing that Queensland has to do with emigrants is when they arrive in the State.

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. gentleman wishes to say anything about the nominated system of immigration, he will be quite in order in saying it on this vote, because that system is connected with the Chief Office of the Chief Secretary's Department.

Mr. KERR: I am going to deal with the question of the administration and the Premier's attitude towards immigration, and whether we are getting sufficient immigrants in Queensland or not. That is a matter that comes under the Chief Secretary's Department. I may point out that on 5th July last I asked the following question of the Premier:—

"Has he any knowledge that an immigration consultative committee, composed of Agents-General of the several Australian States, has been formed in London? Has he seen any reports of such meetings, and are they available to members? How often has this State been represented at such meetings by the Queensland Agent-General personally?"

The Premier's reply to that question was "No." That meant that he had not seen anything in connection with the matter, and he had no information regarding immigrants so far as this State is concerned. One of the resolutions agreed to at the Premiers' Conference held in July, 1920, was that the Commonwealth should have full control of immigration overseas, and that the Agents-General of the several States should form a consultative committee in London. If such an important matter as immigration is having attention in London, then the Premier should have full knowledge of what is happening there, and all the information at his disposal should be available to hon. members. It seems to me a most extraordinary thing that the Premier is not aware of the existence of this consultative committee in London. However, I think the time is opportune for the Government to state their policy in regard to immigration. We know that from time to time questions, and indeed the whole subject of immigration, have been sidetracked.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to point out to the hon. member that at this stage he will be in order in dealing only with the nominated system of immigration, which is controlled by the Chief Office; but discussion on the general question of immigration would hardly be in order. On page 109 of the Estimates, he will find the vote for immigration generally.

Mr. KERR: I have been through the Estimates and seen that vote, but I wish to point out that it is merely a sub-department of the Chief Secretary's Office, and the matter I am dealing with is the attitude of the Premier on this question, and it would not be right

for me to discuss his action on the vote for the Immigration Agent. I want to read an extract from a conference on immigration between the Prime Minister of Australia and various State Premiers and Ministers—

"Mr. THEODORE: Yes, we have plenty of land suitable for cotton-growing in the Central district, near Rockhampton and Capella, and in the Emerald district and the Dawson district, land now held under pastoral leases which would cost less than 10s. an acre to resume, and, probably, only about 5s. on the average.

"Mr. COYNE: It would depend on the terms of the leases.

"Mr. THEODORE: Yes, we have millions of acres of Crown lands and land held under grazing leases, which would be suitable for cotton-growing."

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot permit a general discussion on the question of immigration. There is in the vote really no item dealing with the subject to which the hon. member can direct his remarks; but in view of the fact that the Chief Secretary's Department deals with the nominated system of immigration, I have permitted him to proceed to discuss that question. But, if he is going to discuss the general question on this vote, I shall have to stop him.

Mr. KERR: I think you are right, Mr. Kirwan, but I am not prepared to lose the opportunity, and I feel confident that a general discussion has been permitted on this vote year after year. That is confirmed by "Hansard." If it does not come under the Chief Secretary's Office, and you will point out where it does occur, I shall be quite willing to restrain myself till then.

The CHAIRMAN: I have pointed out the vote on page 109 of the Estimates.

Mr. KERR: I hope you will allow me to proceed with reference to the nominated system, which has not been a success, any more than immigration generally. Whereas in the two years 1912-1913 Queensland was receiving something like 22,000 immigrants, in the years 1919-1920 we received only 10,000, and in the Treasurer's tables it is shown that, on the average for the last four years, only £1 per head was found by the State, whereas in 1912-1913 the expenditure from revenue alone was £54,000, and in 1914-1915, £260,000. No one will say that the immigrants we got in those days have gone back on the State. The loan money spent on immigration has given the State a very good return, and in my opinion it is time Queensland utilised loan money for the nomination of immigrants, or paid their passages, if necessary, and for their settlement subsequently. As far back as 1884 over £1,000,000 was authorised from loan money; in 1888, £250,000; in 1890, £200,000; and in 1913 there was a loan authorisation of £975,000. There is only one thing that can be said—that the Government have not been prepared to bring immigrants into this country. The Premier is restricted from bringing nominated immigrants or others by the plank in the fighting platform of the Labour party.

Now, I want to refer to the scheme of the Prime Minister for financing immigration.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will not be in order in discussing any other aspect of the question than that dealing with nominated immigrants, and I hope he will keep to that.

Mr. Kirwan.]

Mr. KERR: You are confining me very closely to the nominated system. The vote is applicable to the whole question of immigration.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member is not getting a wrong impression. I do not wish to restrict the discussion, but in discussing the Estimates the hon. member and every other hon. member must connect his remarks with some particular item in the vote before the Committee. There is in this vote no item that allows a general discussion of immigration; but, by reason of the fact that the nomination of immigrants is controlled by the Chief Secretary's Office, that branch of the question may be dealt with on this vote, and for that reason I have permitted the hon. member to raise a discussion.

Mr. KERR: Nominated immigration comes under the Chief Secretary's Office and other immigration likewise. However, in view of your ruling, I shall content myself with saying that the Premier in his speeches seems to be in favour of immigration generally; but his actions, in which he has been backed up by outside authorities, have been restricted with regard to both nominated and other forms of immigration.

Question put and passed.

AGENT-GENERAL FOR THE STATE.

The PREMIER: I beg to move—

“That £10,997 be granted for ‘Agent-General for the State.’”

The actual expenditure last year exceeded the appropriation by £2,609, but it is anticipated that the amount asked for this year will be sufficient. As hon. members will see, the staff is being reduced from twenty-four to eighteen. The staff has been up to thirty, a fact which, to a large extent, was brought about by work caused during the war. A great deal of work was done for our soldiers, and many savings bank transactions took place. The Imperial Government took advantage of the experience of Sir Thomas Robinson, when he was Agent-General, and the services of the Queensland staff were availed of in that respect, but we have now been able to bring the staff down to reasonable limits.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I would like to know why there has been no reduction of 5 per cent. in the salary of the Agent-General, as there has been in the case of other public servants. When the Salaries Bill was under discussion on the second reading—we had no opportunity of discussing the clauses in Committee, because discussion was stifled and the measure was rushed through—the Secretary for Railways said that the reason why there was to be no deduction from the salary of the Agent-General was because he was under a special agreement. I asked at the time what was the distinction between a special agreement, so far as the Agent-General was concerned, and an agreement registered in the Court of Industrial Arbitration, so far as the police magistrates were concerned.

The PREMIER: An industrial agreement has a definite term.

Mr. VOWLES: It is due to the Committee to have information regarding the position of Mr. Hunter. Questions have been asked regarding the matter, and we have been told that the information would be given at the proper time. Are two salaries being paid? We also would like to know whether there

[*Mr. Kerr.*

is any truth in the rumour that Mr. Fihelly is about to retire from the position of Agent-General; and, if so, what are the intentions of the Government with regard to his successor—more particularly in view of the fact that we passed recently a Bill dealing with primary production. Is it the intention of the Government to consider the appointment of some person who can fill the bill as the agent overseas of the Council of Agriculture? We have been told by the Premier that the staff has been reduced from twenty-four to eighteen. Notwithstanding that, it will be noticed that the item “Contingencies” shows an increase of £795. I would like to know if there is anything covered up in that—any damages, or any arrangement with Mr. Hunter in connection with his retirement. On 7th July, 1922, the hon. member for Wide Bay asked the Premier—

“1. What is the total expenditure (apart from salaries) incurred by the Government consequent upon the appointment of Mr. Fihelly to the position of Agent-General?”

“2. From what date did Mr. Fihelly commence to draw the salary of the Agent-General?”

“3. On what date did Mr. Hunter's salary as Agent-General cease to be paid?”

“4. For what period was Mr. Hunter appointed as Agent-General?”

“5. Did he receive any compensation upon the loss of his appointment?”

“The PREMIER replied—

1 to 5. The information will be given to the House at the proper time.”

This is the proper time, and I ask for the details now. On the same date the hon. member for Toowoong asked the Premier—

“Will he lay upon the table of the House the papers dealing with the resignation, deflation, or otherwise, of the late Agent-General (Mr. Hunter), and the appointment of Mr. J. A. Fihelly as Agent-General?”

“The PREMIER replied—

It would not be advisable to table these papers, but questions relating thereto will be answered when the Agent-General's Estimates are under consideration by the Legislative Assembly.”

I should like to have that information. We are not asking for it out of idle curiosity. The public, as well as parliamentarians, are anxious to know exactly what the position is.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): First of all, I will give the details regarding the vote for “Contingencies.” The hon. member will notice that we are asking for £5,800. The details are: Advertising, £281; allowances to staff, £1,100; allowance to secretary, £24 19s. 2d.; cables, telegrams, and telephones, £590; cleaning, £148; Executive Engineer and Inspector's expenses, £202; gas, electric light, coal, and water, £271; petty cash, postages, £216; printing and stationery, £144; rates, £836; rent, insurance, and taxes, £1,490; repairs, £51; subscriptions to newspapers and clubs, £95; sundries, £284; total, £5,230.

Mr. VOWLES: How does that item of £1,100 for allowance to staff compare with previous votes?

The PREMIER: I am going to refer to that; it touches the question of what is to

be done in connection with the Agent-General's staff in the matter of a reduction of salaries. The hon. member must recognise that the staff necessarily must be dealt with on a different basis from the Queensland staff; it always has been the case. Whereas the various Arbitration Court awards in Queensland are based upon the Queensland cost of living, it would not be fair to apply that basis to a staff which is required to live in London. In London the allowance made to the staff in recent years has been on a much higher scale than the cost of living allowance in Queensland. It will readily be appreciated that, whereas in Queensland the cost of living never exceeded the 1914 figure by more than 90 per cent., in London it exceeded the 1914 level by over 200 per cent. Therefore, the allowance in London had to be much greater than in Queensland. All the Agencies-General in London, including the High Commissioner's office, have had the same experience. When I was in London in 1920 the staff was considerably perturbed because the extra cost of living allowance was altogether too small, and their remuneration was not sufficient for their responsibilities. I went into the question, and subsequently adjusted the matter. In consultation with the Public Service Commissioner here I arrived at the allowance to be paid. The cost of living has been diminishing in London as well as in Queensland, therefore, the Agent-General has been asked to go into the question of allowances and salaries in London with a view to bringing the action there into conformity with what has been done in Queensland; but it will be some time before I hear what is the position in that regard.

The hon. member further asks whether salaries are being paid to two Agents-General.

MR. VOWLES: We want to know what the position is.

The PREMIER: Salaries are not being paid to two Agents-General. When Mr. Hunter was unable to continue, his appointment was terminated, and his salary terminated.

MR. BRAND: Did he get some compensation?

The PREMIER: No compensation was paid to Mr. Hunter, and no compensation has been involved in regard to the termination of Mr. Hunter's appointment. I do not think it would be wise to enter into a discussion of the reasons for the termination of Mr. Hunter's appointment.

MR. VOWLES: It is on the business side that we want information.

The PREMIER: I want to assure the Committee that no compensation was paid, nor was salary paid beyond the end of the month in which Mr. Hunter's services were terminated—I think it was January last.

MR. VOWLES: What about the 5 per cent.?

The PREMIER: That is covered by what I have already said with regard to the adjustments which will be made on receipt of the report for which I have asked with regard to the diminishing cost of living in London. The Agent-General, himself, has been appointed for a definite term—five years—which is the usual term of appointment. His salary will not be diminished except with his consent; in the same way that the salary of any officer residing in Queensland who is subject to a definite contractual appointment will not be reduced.

Any allowance made to himself or his staff resulting from the high cost of living in London will be subject to whatever provision is justified by the reduced cost of living. Hon. members should remember that, although £1,250 per annum is paid as salary to the Agent-General, it is by no means a munificent salary, taking into account the cost of living in London. Some Agents-General have found that it has cost them £600 a year for rent to enable them to live in London. One Agent-General told me that he could not get a house—

MR. COSTELLO: Anywhere in the West End of London.

The PREMIER: This was in Kensington. The hon. member is acquainted with the locality?

MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

The PREMIER: I visited the place: it was by no means a mansion, but an ordinary flat, for which he paid £600 a year. I would rather live in Queensland than in London in those circumstances.

MR. CORSER (*Burnett*): I suggest to the Premier that he should alter the functions of the Agent-General, if his only function is to operate in those matters that have concerned him in the past, and to draw up his annual report.

At 4.30 p.m.,

MR. DUNSTAN (*Gympie*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

MR. CORSER: We were very interested with the last report by the Agent-General, particularly with reference to beef. The Agent-General pointed out that Vestey's Limited had secured from the British Government over £5,000,000 worth of beef, and that later on about 1,000,000 boxes of butter had been released on the market. Both those happenings militated very seriously against the producers in this State. I think it would be a wise move to secure from the Agent-General an assurance that in the future matters of this kind will receive attention which will be helpful to the people of this State. Had the Agent-General made available to Queensland the knowledge that such things were to occur, probably producers might have been able to take some joint action with regard to handling that stuff, instead of allowing it to deteriorate and thus seriously affect producers here. We have complaints arriving in Australia that a large amount of our butter is being recased in Danish boxes and sold as Danish butter. I brought this matter under the notice of the Premier some time ago. It is one function of the Agent-General to look after the interests of the State's producers and to look after the State's products. Every officer connected with our State should take that duty upon himself. We hope to have some new scheme under the co-operative system contained in a Bill recently passed whereby we shall have someone to look after our products overseas. It seems a curious thing that, whilst we have an Agent-General, we cannot get information on these matters.

The PREMIER: The Agent-General made inquiries in connection with these transactions, and the Imperial Government officers told him that he must inquire from the proper Government—that was the Commonwealth Government, who had arranged for

Mr. Corser.]

the export of those articles. During the war the Commonwealth had control of the export of butter and beef.

Mr. CORSER: Yes. One of the greatest troubles of producers is in connection with the control, handling, and marketing of their produce. Whenever produce is handed over to any Government there is always trouble, and, unless the producers can establish on the other side a system to provide for the handling and marketing of their produce, we shall always be in trouble. It is a pity that the Agent-General did not keep in touch with what was likely to happen, so that a scheme could be provided which will prevent stuff falling into the hands of such firms as Vesteys, and prevent large quantities of butter being thrown on to the market in the course of a few weeks.

Mr. COLLINS: In other words, the hon. gentleman wants a socialistic State to come to the rescue.

Mr. CORSER: No; we want control by the producers, which is a long way from a socialistic State. The Agent-General, in his official capacity, could be of very great assistance, and should look after the interests of the individuals exporting from this State, which would be most helpful to the whole State. The hon. gentleman cannot connect that with his narrow ideals of socialism.

Mr. COLLINS: My ideals are not narrow; they are too broad for the hon. gentleman.

Mr. CORSER: They are probably broader than they were; but the hon. gentleman has got a long way to go yet.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. gentleman has a longer way to go.

Mr. CORSER: I would very much like to see a copy of the agreement entered into with the British Cotton Growers' Association by the Premier, which was supposed to be for a term of five years from 1st January, 1920, and which provided for a price of 1s. 6d. per lb. for cotton in the lint. That agreement seems to have vanished. It now appears that it only provides for a three years' guarantee, with a limitation of £10,000, which has now been absorbed.

The PREMIER: If the hon. gentleman will call at my department, he can see the documents.

Mr. CORSER: The first agreement?

The PREMIER: Everything in connection with the matter. The hon. gentleman could have done that at any time. What is he now suggesting?

Mr. CORSER: I am not suggesting anything. On the Premier's return from London he made a statement at a public meeting in Melbourne that the Government had secured an agreement with the British Cotton Growers' Association guaranteeing 1s. 6d. per lb. for a period of five years, and that all railway freights would be paid by the association. That statement appeared in the daily Press, and appears in "Hansard" last session in reply to a question asked by me.

The PREMIER: It was quite correct.

Mr. CORSER: To-day the hon. gentleman contradicts it. We now see that there is a £10,000 limit. That was not stated by the Premier in reply to my question.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was.

[Mr. Corser.

Mr. CORSER: I ask the hon. gentleman to produce the original agreement.

The PREMIER: Why did the hon. gentleman not come to the office and see the agreement?

Mr. CORSER: No mention is made in "Hansard" of the £10,000 limit, nor has any public announcement been made about any limitation. A number of people have made arrangements and have leased areas of land in order to go in for cotton growing, believing that there was a guarantee of 1s. 6d. per lb. for a period of five years. We have learned that the agreement practically expires this year. The £10,000 limit has been absorbed. There has never been any public utterance in connection with that limit, and I challenge the Secretary for Agriculture to produce it. The public have been deceived on that particular point.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was perfectly clear to people of ordinary intelligence.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman is not of ordinary intelligence, and I do not suppose he knows.

Mr. STOPFORD: He is a little above, and the hon. member for Burnett is a little below persons of ordinary intelligence.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member for Mount Morgan does not possess very high intelligence. If the Secretary for Agriculture says that a public statement has been made, I ask him to show it.

Mr. TAYLOR (Windsor): The explanation that we have had from the Premier with regard to the late Agent-General, Mr. Hunter, is untimely, and it is unfortunate that we had not that explanation sooner, when certain questions were asked. I looked upon the appointment of Mr. Hunter as Agent-General as a good appointment. The Premier has informed us that Mr. Hunter is not drawing salary or compensation. Under the regrettable circumstances which caused his breakdown, I would not complain if he had received compensation. I think that while he was representing Queensland as Agent-General, he did very good work for this State. Under the circumstances, I am rather surprised to hear that he is not receiving anything in the way of compensation.

If the reports that are appearing in the Press are correct and the present Agent-General contemplates resigning his position, I would like to know what really is the position of the State in regard to the expenses incurred in connection with Mr. Fihelly's removal from Queensland to London. When the late Agent-General, Mr. Hunter, went to London the expenses incurred were between £1,600 and £1,700. Surely, if an Agent-General is sent to London to represent the State, and after he has been there eight or nine months he becomes dissatisfied with the position and wishes to come back to the State, he should refund the expense the State was put to in connection with his removal to London. It is not a fair thing that we should have to find several hundred pounds in the way of expenses, and because he finds, after being there a few months, that the job is distasteful to him, we should be out of pocket a large sum of money.

I think the salary paid to the Agent-General is a miserable salary. I have said on one or two occasions, in discussing this

vote, that I do not think £1,250 is anything like sufficient for a man efficiently filling that position. I would like some explanation from the Premier as to what the position really is.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillogoi*): I do not think there is very much in the rumours that have been circulated about Mr. Fihelly being discontented with his position and that he contemplates returning to Queensland. He has given me no hint whatever that he finds the position distasteful or uncongenial. I have had numerous communications from him—some personal, but mostly in connection with the business of the State—and I find him apparently taking to the position in a very enthusiastic way. Those communications indicate that he is very keen and alert on the job, and that he is attending promptly to the numerous matters that are communicated to him. He has furnished reports and advices to my department—which have been passed on to the various departments concerned—touching all kinds of inquiries in connection with the interests of Queensland generally. I find him extraordinarily keen on the job, and from my experience of him as Agent-General, I feel bound to say that he is making a success of the position. I do not credit the rumours that have been circulated that he does not intend to remain long in that position. I notice that there was a Press cable purporting to give Mr. Fihelly's own views, which stated that he did not find the place congenial; but I think he must have been referring to the climate and not to the position. I feel perfectly sure that he is going on with the appointment, and that he will continue in the office for the ordinary term.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): I am in accord with the statements made by other hon. members that a salary of £1,250 for a man occupying the position of Agent-General at home is quite insufficient. At the same time we are in considerable doubt as to what other allowances are made to the Agent-General. For instance, we find an amount of £5,400 is provided for "rent, printing stationery, and incidentals." Very likely a fair proportion of that sum goes in allowances to the Agent-General.

The PREMIER: I will give the Committee the details if desired.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It would be very interesting to have the information, because it is really impossible to criticise the ordinary salary of the Agent-General unless we know what extra allowance is made to him. The Premier made reference to the high rental charges in the old land, and I can well believe that a man occupying the position of Agent-General cannot live in a back street. If he is to represent Queensland fairly and efficiently, he must keep himself well in line with the Agents-General of the other States, otherwise Queensland will suffer. I am inclined to believe that a fairly large sum over and above the £1,250 is allowed by way of expenses. Perhaps there is a specific sum allowed.

The PREMIER: The hon. member surely is aware that there is a rental allowance?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: We are getting information as we go along.

The PREMIER: Surely the hon. member knew that?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I quite imagined that that would be the case. However, it would appear from the discussion this afternoon that hon. members are in ignorance as to what further sums are allowed to the Agent-General by way of expenses.

The PREMIER: There is a £500 rental allowance, and the Agent-General gets actual out-of-pocket expenses when he is travelling. Those are the only allowances.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That is interesting; but some men are not as capable as others of controlling travelling expenses.

The PREMIER: The average amount of travelling expenses incurred by the Agent-General does not exceed £50 a year.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That is infinitesimal; and if Mr. Fihelly succeeds in limiting his expenses to a small sum like that, he is certainly setting a wonderful example compared with the expenses of some Ministers in Queensland.

The PREMIER: The Agent-General has very little occasion to travel.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: A certain amount of travelling should be undertaken. There are other ports besides London, and we hear frequently of the opportunities offering for business in Liverpool and Manchester. That should necessitate the Agent-General visiting those places in order to make full investigations and ascertain whether markets other than the London markets are open to our products. If the Premier would let us know what the Agent-General's expenses were last year under the various headings, then we would be in a position to form a fairly accurate idea as to the actual expenses of the Agent-General.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I would like the Premier to give the Committee some information as to what the Agent-General really is doing in Great Britain; also whether the monthly reports are kept up. Last year I made the suggestion that the Agent-General be asked to supply monthly reports for publication through the Press as regards the demand and the prices ruling for Queensland products, such as butter, cheese, meat, etc. That suggestion was thought to be so good that the Premier adopted it, and for some time we had monthly reports from Mr. Hunter, which were published in the Press.

At 4.50 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Kirwan, *Brisbane*) resumed the chair.

Mr. MORGAN: That seems to have stopped since Mr. Hunter became ill, and we know little or nothing of what has really happened since. I would like to know if the Premier will begin to get this information again, so that the people outside will know what is going on. I think the information should be circulated through the Press, so that we may know exactly what is happening in regard to markets in Great Britain and other centres. Unfortunately, our beef is not selling very well in Great Britain at the present time, and we have very conflicting reports from the old country. I saw a statement in the Press by the Minister in Charge of State Enterprises that Queensland beef was selling as high as 11d. per lb. in England.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That is right. The Australian meat trade ought to be organised on the other side. You ought to send trade organisers over there.

Mr. Morgan.]

Mr. MORGAN: I quite agree with the hon. gentleman; but the point is, who is going to commence the organisation? Should it not be the work of the Government to lead in that direction? Should not the Agent-General draw up a business-like scheme, in connection with which we could discuss what would be best to be done? It is all very well for the hon. gentleman to state in the Press that that is what should be done.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: As a matter of fact, the Government have intimated that any endeavour to organise the meat trade of Queensland will be assisted.

Mr. MORGAN: Why not lead in assisting the industry?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Do you want the Government to do the whole thing?

Mr. MORGAN: No, not altogether. Why should the Government not prepare a scheme, and then ask the meat producers to approve of it?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That is well worthy of consideration.

Mr. MORGAN: We all know that something should be done, and we ventilate our opinions in the Press; but nobody is doing anything. We want someone to take a lead. The Government should take the lead in this matter. We want someone to say, "Here is a scheme," and to submit that scheme to the people concerned for approval.

The PREMIER: We have suggested this to the cattlemen and graziers, and have undertaken to discuss such a scheme, but I have heard nothing from them. It is primarily their business.

Mr. MORGAN: I am sorry they have not done anything. I could give information to the Committee showing that we are not getting a fair deal for the cattle which are being sold to freezing works under proprietary control.

The PREMIER: There are too many middlemen.

Mr. MORGAN: Unfortunately, the cattlemen have not been organised as they should have been. The wool people, who control the sale of wool, just put enough on the market not to glut the market, and obtain a fair price for the wool. The butter people control butter in the same way. The wheat people control wheat, and put on the market the quantity which will enable the producers to get what they are entitled to. The beef people are the only ones who are not organised; we are a disorganised rabble. We are wholly and solely at the mercy of the people who have been fleecing us for a number of years. We passed recently a Bill to organise the primary producers, and I hope the measure will have the effect of doing that, and I will assist all I can in that direction. The primary producer will then get a fair price for his products. We do not want to form a ring and make the consumer pay exorbitant prices; but we say that the consumer should pay a fair price. We say that, if it costs 25s. per 100 lb. to produce fat cattle, we should at least get 25s. per 100 lb.; but, unfortunately, we are not getting anything like 25s. per 100 lb. now. We are not getting more than 12s. or 13s. per 100 lb. for beef that is costing us 25s. to produce.

Mr. COLLINS: You are coming on very nicely.

[Mr. Morgan,

Mr. MORGAN: It is a matter in which I take a keen interest. Those concerned in the production of wool, wheat, butter, cheese, and bacon control those industries to-day; and we should have control of meat, but, unfortunately, we have not been organised. Only 19 per cent. of the beef killed in Australia goes outside the Commonwealth, and the Australian market is governed by the price of that 19 per cent.: 81 per cent. of the beef is used in Australia. This 81 per cent. should govern the price, and not the small amount of 19 per cent. that is sent out of Australia. Unfortunately, we are in the position that there is no one to lead us. I should be glad if the Minister in Charge of State Enterprises would endeavour to get a report from the Agent-General as soon as possible as to the advisableness of establishing a depôt in Great Britain, so that we can supply the distributing agents in Great Britain with Queensland frozen meat. We will gladly assist in a scheme of that kind. Although the Government may not represent us politically, we are quite broad-minded enough to know on which side our bread is buttered, and we will jump at the assistance of the Government in this direction. That would not only assist us, but it would help the State stations, which are the largest cattle properties in Queensland to-day.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: It would be a very good thing for the State stations.

Mr. MORGAN: The Auditor-General's report shows that it costs the State stations 21s. a year for each head of cattle, so that the State cannot rear cattle cheaper than the ordinary individual, if as cheaply. If the State stations sell their cattle which are costing 21s. a year a head to produce, at 12s. or 13s., they are naturally going to be at a considerable loss. I know that at the present time the State stations are taking advantage of the high prices ruling in Sydney, and are not sending their cattle into the Brisbane yards, where there is a glut. Owing to there being no control we have been sending lots of from 1,300 to 1,600 head of cattle periodically for the last nine months to the Brisbane yards, and the private butchers—and, no doubt, the State shops also—have made greater profits than ever before, and have been charging exorbitant rates. The State butcher shops will perhaps show a big profit; and, if they do, we can imagine what the private butchers will do, because it will be admitted that they can run their shops much cheaper than the State butcher shops.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: A butcher running his own shop with the assistance of a man and a boy can naturally conduct his business cheaper.

Mr. MORGAN: I quite agree with the hon. gentleman. Here in Brisbane I suppose there are twenty or thirty places, each of which treats only a few cattle, and they all slaughter their own cattle.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: There are more than thirty.

Mr. MORGAN: Well, there ought only to be one place to treat all the cattle required here. Why cannot we have up-to-date abattoirs in Brisbane to deal with all the stock required for the Brisbane market?

If we had public abattoirs, it [5 p.m.] would cheapen the cost of handling, and that would mean cheaper meat for the people, while it would

give a better return to the producer. That was the scheme of the Government at one time, and we thought they were going to undertake that, but, unfortunately, they did not. If the Government had gone in for State abattoirs instead of opening the State butcher shops, it would have been very much better for everybody.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MORGAN: I am sorry I got away from the subject of the Agent-General, but it is all wrapped up in his department, because we want him to do something to help the meat industry. Before Mr. Fihelly left Queensland he said that he was not going to attend public banquets in London, and it was not going to be an ornamental position, but he was going to be a real live Agent-General, who was going to be more like a commercial traveller for Queensland. That is just what we want. We do not want an Agent-General making after-dinner speeches and guzzling champagne, no matter how pleasant it may be to the individual. We want a live, up-to-date commercial traveller. We want him to get all the information he can about our markets there, and we do not want that information pigeon-holed, but we want it distributed as quickly as possible. We want it sent out to Queensland and distributed through the Press, so that those who live 500 or 600 miles from Brisbane will know what is happening in the Agent-General's Office. That information should be made available to everybody, and should not be supplied merely to the Minister.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Any general information which I have received from overseas is always given to the community.

Mr. MORGAN: I admit that the hon. gentleman has given a lot of information to the Press, but I would like to see more information given with regard to our markets. We saw in the paper the other day where our best Australian butter was marked as Danish first-class, and the second-class butter was marked as Australian first-class.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: I have seen that done in the old country myself. I have seen the Australian butter turned out on a slab and sold as Danish butter. I do not know if that practice is carried on now.

Mr. MORGAN: I think it should be the duty of the Agent-General or his officials to discover the persons who do these things, and institute prosecutions against them. There must be a law in Great Britain to provide for the prosecution of people who resort to those practices. If there is no law, then I am sure that, if representations are made to Great Britain by the different Australian Governments, then the Imperial Government will authorise a Bill to go through Parliament to enable us to prosecute such offenders. Why should our good Australian butter be sold as Danish butter; and why should our good Australian beef be sold as having come from the Argentine, or Canada, or anywhere else? When Australia produces such a good article as we do, we should get the full credit for it. There is no better beef produced in any part of the world than that produced in Queensland. The beef we produce in different parts of Australia, fattened on the natural grasses, has been proved to be equal to the best beef in any other part of the world. I hope the Minister will give full instructions to the

Agent-General to be sure and let us know all that is happening in connection with markets on the other side.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I have listened to the hon. gentleman with a good deal of interest. He has put before the Committee some ideas of a constructive character which must impress every member. I wish to say something in connection with the organisation of the meat trade in Great Britain. I quoted figures quite recently, and I also gave a table of prices dealing with the Australian meat industry, and showed there was a great disparity between what the producers in Queensland received for their meat and the price at which the meat was sold to the consumers in Great Britain. I have also pointed out in the Press from time to time the necessity for better organisation in Great Britain regarding the markets overseas to which we send our products. I have in mind the example that was set by such firms as Nelsons and the River Plate Meat Company, and other large meat concerns handling frozen meat in Europe. Years ago there was a tremendously strong prejudice amongst the British people against frozen meat, which affected our markets in Great Britain. The firm of Nelsons, which is an Argentine firm, recognised this prejudice against frozen meat, and took steps to deal with it. They opened shops throughout England and Scotland, and in a short space of time there was a shop in every town of any importance. In that way Nelsons were able to supply their frozen meat direct to the consumers at about half the price of the home-fed products. They had expert salesmen also drawing the attention of customers to the advantage of frozen meat and the way it should be properly treated, in the way of cooking and so on, and in that way the commodity was carried right into the homes of the people. That could be done equally as well with the produce from Queensland. I have discussed the matter with a large number of people who are acquainted with this subject, and they are satisfied that therein lies our salvation, so far as the meat trade is concerned. Everyone recognises the tragedy from the State point of view of the present position of the meat industry. If we could find markets, it would be profitable to everyone engaged in it, and would be the means of assisting the unemployment problem. If the meat industry is carried on to its full capacity, it means the employment of a large number of men directly, and a large number indirectly. It means the employment of men on the stations, men on the railways, men in the meatworks, men on the wharves, and men in the ships, all handling that product; so that any scheme of a constructive character that can be put forward should be entertained by this Committee, and should be put into operation.

I know that the scheme will have to be submitted to those interested. Personally, I think that, if we organised the trade ourselves, we could sell at 7d. or 8d. per lb. to the consumers instead of 11d., and still give the producers here about twice what they are getting at the present time for their cattle. Something should be done by the graziers, and the Government have intimated their agreement with any scheme on sound lines that is likely to assist. I think something could be done by imposing a levy of, say, 1s. or 1s. 6d. a head on cattle, by which, in the course of time, a very large fund could be accumulated.

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

which would enable us to start something in this direction. If it were understood by those persons in Great Britain who are handling the trade to the detriment of our interests that Queensland and Australia generally had a definite scheme of this nature in view, and were in earnest in putting it into operation, adjustments might be made which would result in increased prices. I believe, as other hon. members have suggested, that the British Government should be asked to come to our assistance. During the war the producers of Australia did not get anything like the prices for their produce that those of the Argentine and other countries got. Queensland meat was reserved for war purposes at low prices, thereby enabling the Argentine people to get more control of the English market than before. And in dealing with this question the fact cannot be overlooked that the majority of companies operating in the Argentine are largely British companies. I remember seeing about eleven years ago some figures given in the British House of Commons to the effect that the dividends paid to British shareholders from investments in the Argentine amounted to something like £150,000,000, and that sum must be much greater now, indicating that large financial interests in Great Britain would oppose any attempt by the British Government to give us a preferential tariff or other advantages. However, that should not deter us from making representations in that direction.

The remarks I have made with regard to meat apply also to other products. I mentioned, by way of interjection, that I had seen Queensland and Australian butter sold as Danish. At that time, some years ago, the Pure Food and Drugs Act dealt with the standard of purity of products exposed for sale. The Queensland butter, of course, coming up to the high standard set, could compare with Danish butter, but after the box was thrown away and destroyed there was no protection of this State's interests. The only remedy is that we should have our own trade organisations overseas following the butter through the various channels to where it is retailed.

I think it is a scandal that, although Australia is part of the British dominions and produces goods of very excellent quality, the home markets have been glutted by the produce of other countries not within the Empire, to the detriment of Australian producers. The remedy lies in our own hands. If we organise our own production properly and have our own trade representatives in every market where it is proposed to dispose of it, then we can control the sale of our product and follow it through all channels. I think something along these lines can be done. Take Borthwicks here. We know that they have been able to run longer seasons than other meatworks simply because they are able to dispose of their products through a firm who have shops in every large city in Great Britain. I commend the hon. member for Murilla for raising this matter, which is of tremendous interest to Queensland, and I think all interests should get together and decide upon a scheme whereby our selling organisation may be improved, and in improving that improve the standard of production in our State.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): I was very pleased to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Murilla, and to note that a Minister of the Crown sees some good in them. I think we

have not had altogether a fair deal, considering the quality of our produce sent to England, whether meat, butter, or cheese. I am quite in accord with the hon. gentleman referred to in saying that a great deal has to be done by the men engaged in the industries by the appointment of able men to see that their interests overseas are watched in a more competent manner. To a large extent we depend on our Agent-General to do this work, and in that respect the salary of £1,250 does not call for any remark, since the man goes from here and we know his capacity. But, considering the amount of good we should be able to get from this department overseas, the salaries paid to some of the officers are woefully inadequate, because we should have men there of very great ability and integrity, so that we can be sure they will have a knowledge of the whole of the business. If you think you can get men at £400, £500, or £600 with those qualifications, I think you are very greatly in error. I hope the day will come when this department will be reorganised, and we shall have some officials on the staff of much greater capacity than in the past, so that very much greater use may be made of their services overseas.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): I would like to say a word or two in regard to opening up trading places in Great Britain. That is a very good proposition. I remember that, when the American meat companies started to send meat to England in about 1902, they were in somewhat the same position as the Australian companies are in now, and they received perhaps a third of the value of their produce. They opened up meat shops in most of the large cities in England.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: At the present time they have shops in every centre of population throughout Great Britain.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Australia has no other course but to follow in those steps, else a good deal of the Australian meat will continue to find its way into those shops and be sold as American meat. A good few years ago American bacon was nothing like as good as the English and Irish bacon. Every week thousands of tons of American bacon, packed in salt—not cured—were sent to the English and Irish factories, cured there, and sent back as best English or Irish bacon. I was in the service of the Midland Railway Company, in their shipping department, for seven years before I came to Australia. I have seen invoices come from American houses consigning the bacon to the factories in England and Ireland; and the same bacon went back cured, wrapped up in canvas bearing the imprint of best English or Irish bacon. That is what is being done now with Australian meat and butter. With the Minister, I believe we could bring about a revival if we had something on the same lines as the old Meat and Dairy Act, which has been inoperative for ten or fifteen years. Several meatworks and butter factories were built under that Act. The idea was that there should be a levy of perhaps a few shillings on all cattle-owners for every 100 head of cattle, and that money was loaned out at a low rate of interest for business purposes. All that money was repaid, and when it was no longer required for building factories and meatworks the fund was closed and the money repaid to those who had

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contributed it. The Secretary for Agriculture probably will agree that there is a good sum which has not been claimed.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I think there is some.

MR. BEBBINGTON: I contributed a fair amount which I did not claim; and a good many more people, I presume, are in the same position. Having that money in hand enabled meatworks to be built up. Some of our earlier dairy companies were also built up from that fund, which served a very useful purpose. Something of that kind could be brought into force again.

Question put and passed.

AUDIT OFFICE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

“That £15,123 be granted for ‘Audit Office.’”

There is a small decrease in this vote, brought about by adjustments of salaries. Practically all the other items remain as they were, except that there is an increase of £100 on the vote for “Travelling Expenses of Inspectors.” The actual expenditure last year on that item was £2,700; and £2,600 is now being asked for.

MR. VOWLES (*Dalby*): Will the Premier give us some information regarding the Auditor-General’s report? It seems that we are going to have a rush, with two days crowded into one—judging by the motion of which notice was given to-day. The members of the Opposition are at a very great disadvantage in having very few departmental reports, which we should have to enable us to criticise the different departments. The most important, of course, is the Auditor-General’s report. Next to that is the report of the Commissioner of Trade. I notice that that officer has been down South in connection with the Fruit Conference; that means unnecessary delay in the presentation of his report. We shall be placed in the position that we shall simply have to speculate and deal at haphazard with the figures. It is only a fair thing that we should get all the information which is available.

THE PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): It is impossible for me to say when the Auditor-General’s report will be available. The date when it is usually presented to the House is, I think, towards the end of October. I do not suppose there is any use in looking for it earlier than that time.

MR. G. P. BARNES: Will we be sitting then?

MR. VOWLES: We are not going to get it.

THE PREMIER: I do not know whether we shall be sitting at the end of October; but, judging by the amount of business which is on the sheet and which yet has to be introduced, probably we shall be. I cannot give any undertaking regarding the presentation of the Auditor-General’s report. In that respect we do not differ from many other Parliaments in Australia. The Commonwealth Parliament never gets the Auditor-General’s report during the session immediately following the conclusion of the financial year; it is usually presented somewhere about the following February. There is one

way in which we could be sure of getting the Auditor-General’s report before the Financial Statement is discussed or the Estimates are passed, and that is by altering the date of the termination of the financial year, or altering the usual date when Parliament opens. In no other way can it be done. If the House met later and sat later—and nearly all members object to sitting during the summer months—we would be assured of having the Auditor-General’s report.

MR. VOWLES: We prefer to sit at such time as will afford us opportunity for debate.

THE PREMIER: Members object to sitting after Christmas, and that is what would be entailed. In England they get over the difficulty by concluding their financial year in March. Their session is prolonged considerably beyond that date, and the audits and everything else are available. If we had a financial year terminating about the end of March it would meet the case, but I do not know any other reform which would bring about what the hon. gentleman desires.

It is not necessary, however, to have the Auditor-General’s report to have intelligent discussion or to give intelligent criticism of the finances. Information is available to hon. members through various sources. If hon. members show sufficient diligence, they can get that information—sufficient to criticise or discuss the finances of the State. Some hon. members do not want this information for the purposes of criticism; they simply want to get the details which the Auditor-General brings out, and distort them—or, at any rate, use them—to aid them in carrying on discussion. The Treasurer’s Financial Statement shows every detail of expenditure and receipts. The monthly Treasury returns, the quarterly returns, the public balances, the expenditure from Loan Fund, the transactions of the Trust Funds—all these, including the Statement of Accounts by the Treasurer, are sent on to the Auditor-General and form the basis of his criticism or discussion. All that information is in the hands of hon. members. If further details are required, they can be made available to hon. members. I think that sufficiently detailed information relating to the finances of the State is in the hands of hon. members to enable them to carry on a reasonable discussion and a criticism, if they so desire it, of the finances. Complete dependence upon the Auditor-General’s report argues a lack of critical faculty on the part of hon. members.

MR. VOWLES (*Dalby*): The Premier might just as well argue that we should not have an Auditor-General’s report.

THE PREMIER: No; he reports upon the accuracy of the accounts.

MR. VOWLES: What we want to attack is that accuracy. We are placed in the position that we cannot get information; we ask questions, and answers are refused to us; we make statements regarding things as we believe them to be, and we are side-stepped. The only opportunity we have is one like this; and we get it in passing, without any details, in a discussion on a vote that takes about half an hour.

[5.30 p.m.] We are told that, if the Premier knew that these matters were coming forward, he would have had available the necessary details. We do get a slight insight into the truth occasionally when

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we get the Auditor-General's report containing his criticism of the various departments. It is all very well for the Premier to talk about the Treasurer's monthly statements; they are a matter of figures. We know that in connection with some of the departments there have been shortages, and there has been mismanagement in others. The only way we can get to the bottom of things is by intelligent criticism gathered by reading the criticisms of the Auditor-General on the various departments. To take a case in point. Did not the Auditor-General tell us straight out that the report of the Commissioner for Trade was not a fair report?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: He never told us anything of the kind.

Mr. VOWLES: Did he not say that the figures did not disclose a proper balance, and in connection with State stations, where the shortage was shown as only £58,000—speaking from memory—it should have been £191,000? The Auditor-General is the watch-dog who looks after all the departments. Unless we can get his report, we cannot criticise the Estimates in the way they should be criticised.

Question put and passed.

COMMISSIONER OF PRICES.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

“That £2,498 be granted for ‘Commissioner of Prices.’”

The reduction in the vote is brought about by a reduction in the items of advertisements, printing, and incidentals.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I think it is time that this Committee seriously considered whether it is necessary to continue the expenditure in connection with the office of Commissioner of Prices. The amount voted is £2,498, and to my mind the office is not showing any results.

Mr. COLLINS: It is showing good results.

Mr. VOWLES: I would like to refer to the opinions of hon. gentlemen who have occupied prominent positions in the present Government, in connection with the advisability of fixing prices during normal times. The Secretary for Agriculture, on 16th September, 1915, said—

“I maintain that to attempt to fix prices by proclamation in normal times is unsound and unscientific, and is going to discourage production.”

Surely we are approaching normal times.

Mr. HARTLEY: No.

Mr. VOWLES: If the hon. gentleman's criticisms were good in 1915 when the war was in progress, how much more should they be applicable to-day, when the war is over and prices are beginning to come down to their proper level. The Governor, in his Opening Speech on 30th July, 1915, said—

“The want of effective machinery to protect the community from persons who contrive unduly to inflate prices and to amass large profits out of necessary commodities makes it incumbent on my advisers to seek your authority to regulate trade, and to cope with trusts and combines and for further extension of public ownership and establishment of State enterprises. When by law rapacious ex-

ploitation becomes impossible, the purchasing power of the wage-earner will be increased and the general community benefited accordingly.”

That is a very nice conglomeration of words with very little meaning in them. The late Mr. Ryan, at the Exhibition Building, on the 25th August, 1915, is reported as having said—

“The greatest factor of all had been in regard to the cost of living. He stated emphatically that the Denham Government was to a great extent responsible for the rise in the cost of commodities in Queensland.”

Mr. Fihelly, the late Treasurer, at Spring Hill, on 15th May, 1915, said—

“We could safely drop the idea that the war was the cause of dear living, and those capable of a little intelligent thought could only conclude that we were at the mercy of the food gamblers and speculators.”

That gentleman stated that the war was not responsible for the dear living, but that the responsibilities were on the Denham Government. Surely that Government has been long enough out of existence! The war is now over. One Minister stated that it was unscientific and unsound to continue the fixation of prices. In the face of the arguments of hon. members opposite, why should this office be continued? When prices are fixed it is generally to the disadvantage of the suburban sellers, with the result that the person selling the same commodity in the city is placed in a much better position, and has a better chance of selling. Only quite recently the prices of beef and mutton were fixed for Maryborough and Bundaberg. I am at a loss to understand how there can be such a disparity in the prices, as the distance between the two places is only about 60 miles.

Mr. HARTLEY: Perhaps the invoices were better faked.

Mr. VOWLES: I am afraid the hon. gentleman dreams about faking. The prices are—

	Maryborough.	Bundaberg.
Rib roast	4	3½
Top side	5	3
Silver side	6	4½
Sirloin roast, 3 lb. or over	7	5
Sirloin steak... ..	8	5

Mr. HARTLEY: What is the difference in the freight on the stock between Maryborough and Bundaberg?

Mr. VOWLES: Will that make a difference of 3d. a lb. on the beef?

Mr. HARTLEY: Nearly all the cattle for Bundaberg come from the Central district.

Mr. VOWLES: The difference between the two places is only 60 miles, and the difference per lb. in the price of beef consequent on the railway freight would only be a fraction of a penny, and not 3d. a lb., as is the case with some of the prices. When speaking on the last occasion in connection with this matter, I pointed out the disparity in prices between Dalby, Oakey, and Toowoomba, and I showed that Dalby, which is in the heart of a producing district, was paying a higher price for mutton and beef than

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Toowoomba, and that Oakey was paying a less price than Toowoomba. In Toowoomba the private shops were charging the general public a less price than the State butcher shops were able to charge. There is something radically wrong with the fixation of prices. People should be allowed to compete amongst themselves. It would then be a case of the survival of the fittest. I believe to-day that a fight is going on in connection with the prices in the city, and it is the general public who benefit by such a fight. The butchers should be allowed to settle their own prices, and I think it will be found that that will work out profitably. Prices are very nearly normal now, and the time has gone when there should be any necessity to fix them. The system was first introduced because it was said that trusts and combines were rampant throughout Queensland, and that huge profits were being made by companies and individuals. When a commission of inquiry was asked for to prove any of these things, it was very carefully avoided by the Minister concerned.

Mr. FORDE: Do you think the price of raw cotton should be fixed at 5½d. per lb.?

Mr. VOWLES: The price of raw cotton is fixed in order to encourage production for the purpose of export. Prices should be allowed to find their own level; and, when you do that, you will get better results.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): We had before this House recently a Reduction in Salaries Bill, and although I do not agree with the proposal to take away the automatic increases, I would point out that in this vote there is an increase of £20 provided for the secretary to the Commissioner of Prices. We also find that there is a reduction of £600 in the amount required for "Advertisements," and also a reduction of £600 in the amount for "Printing and Incidentals." Those reductions need some explanation. If the Government can carry on during the forthcoming year with £600 less in connection with each of those items, then there must have been a good deal of excessive expenditure in the previous year.

The PREMIER: The full amount appropriated last year was not expended.

Mr. KERR: That may be the explanation. There is another point that strikes one when looking at this vote. It is acknowledged, from the amount of money asked for, that this department is not a success, and is unnecessary. From the Treasurer's tables, we find that the amount appropriated in 1920-1921 for the "Commissioner of Prices" was £4,135; in 1921-1922 the amount appropriated was £3,742; and for the present year we are asked to vote an amount of £2,498. If those figures prove anything, they prove to this Committee that this department is unnecessary, and I hope to give some reasons why it could very well be done away with at the present time. We know perfectly well that price-fixing was not limited to this State. It seems to have originated at a conference between the Commonwealth and State authorities at the beginning of the war, and the War Precautions Act was passed to provide for some hold over people who were likely to make excessive profits. That was quite reasonable. In 1919, Victoria introduced a Necessary Commodities Control Act, in order to take control of price-fixing when the Federal Government gave up control, so far as commodities were concerned. In the first

instance, Victoria appointed a Commission of three. Later, they reduced the powers of the Commission, and subsequently they wiped it clean out.

Mr. HARTLEY: And up went the cost of living.

Mr. KERR: If that were so, the argument that I propose to propound would be quite useless. I propose to show that in Victoria, where they have no Price Fixing Commissioner, the decrease in the cost of living has been greater than it is in Queensland.

Mr. FORDE: That is not so.

Mr. KERR: I would ask hon. members opposite to refute my statement by figures. I am basing my figures on the value of the £1 in 1911, which is the basis adopted by "Knibbs." That is the only basis he could adopt.

Mr. HARTLEY: Show the decrease in the prices of commodities since 1919.

Mr. KERR: According to the Commonwealth Statistician, in Victoria goods which in 1911 cost £1 cost 34s. 10d. in 1921, and in 1922, cost 31s. 4d.—a decrease of 3s. 6d., as compared with 1921. In Queensland, goods which in 1911 cost £1, cost 36s. 3d. in 1921 and 28s. 7d. in 1922—a decrease of only 1s. 8d. That shows that in Victoria the general decrease in the cost of living was 1s. 10d. greater than it was in Queensland, where there is a Commissioner of Prices. I am taking groceries and food only, because, leaving out the question of meat, the average cost of living is very high in Queensland. It is the low price of meat that has brought it down in Queensland.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That is not fair. Meat is the main article of food.

Mr. KERR: Let me take groceries and food alone, and see how the figures compare. In Victoria, taking groceries and food only, goods which in 1911 cost £1 cost 28s. in 1921, and in 1922 cost 31s. 6d.—a reduction of 6s. 6d. The Queensland figures for the same periods were 36s. 3d. and 32s. 3d.—a reduction of 4s. That means that the price of groceries and food in Victoria, where they have no Price Fixing Commissioner, has decreased by 6s. 6d., while in Queensland, where we have a Commissioner of Prices, it has only decreased by 4s. I am taking the years 1921 and 1922, because price-fixing, which was in existence in Victoria in 1919 and 1920, has been wiped out. How is it possible for the Commissioner of Prices, with a staff of one inspector, a secretary, one typist, and a messenger, to fix the price of a hundred different items in seventy-six country towns in Queensland? It is impossible for him to do it, because freight, overhead charges, and the cost of manufacture fluctuate from month to month; yet, in those seventy-six towns he has taken the power, through the "Gazette," to reduce or stabilise the prices of a hundred different commodities. The position is a hopeless one, and totally impossible. There is another side to this price-fixing. Is not some of the unemployment due in a degree to the fact that factories are not being established in Queensland? In confirmation of that I would quote the report of the Commissioner of Prices.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: How can it be a deterrent when, as you say, the prices are lower in Victoria than in Queensland?

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Mr. KERR: I am not talking about prices. I say it is a deterrent in regard to industries coming here. We know that, in regard to the goods we get from the Southern States, the firms there charge in their invoices the price they want, and do not consult the Commissioner of Prices about it. All the Commissioner can do is to take the invoice price, and add freight and other charges, and say to the trader, "You can charge so much." If the office of Commissioner of Prices was abolished to-morrow it would not make the slightest difference to the State, as is proved by the statistics in Victoria. The report confirms the fact that industries in this State are very much concerned with the Commissioner of Prices, no matter how small the factories may be. The report states—

"In October last, Messrs. McArthur, Limited, of Sydney, moved for an injunction against this State enforcing the provisions of the Profiteering Prevention Act of 1920 in respect of the regulation of interstate trade, and by a majority the High Court decided in favour of the plaintiff company."

We were unsuccessful, and, in my opinion, fortunately so, and I hope it will always be so when an attitude is taken up like that of the present Government in regard to free competition. Prices will find their own level much quicker under free competition and without any interference by the Government. The manufacturers down South can send their goods to this State, and charge their own prices in the invoice without any control by the Commissioner; whereas, if they were established in this State, the Commissioner of Prices would control them, and, as they may not get the same return for their capital as they are getting down South, the same incentive to progress would be non-existent. The fixation of prices retards industry, because manufacturers here are not permitted to earn the same margin of profit as those down South. I am not considering income tax and other extraneous matters. Men who would otherwise be likely to come here remain out of the State because of the fixation of prices. They would rather have agents or offices in the State for the sale of their goods than manufacture them here. Take, for instance, the manufacture of shirts, singlets, and things of that description, which are all supposed to be regulated by the Commissioner of Prices. In fixing the price of those articles, does the Commissioner take into consideration the one hundred and one overhead charges and the rates and taxation paid? I say that he does not go into any of those factors; and the sooner the office of Commissioner of Prices is eliminated the better it will be for the State. I sincerely trust that the Premier will take the opportunity of going through the various Acts of the Commonwealth at an early date to find out what damage this system has done, and to ascertain why the Commonwealth Government have repealed this particular portion of the War Precautions Act. If he does that, he will come to the conclusion that the Commissioner of Prices is useless in this State.

I would like to know why discrimination is made in regard to a certain officer in this vote, and to have an explanation from the Premier in regard to the reduction in advertising, printing, and incidentals.

Mr. MORGAN (*Merilla*): I am one of those who think that the time has arrived

[*Mr. Kerr.*

when the whole of this vote should be wiped out, as I do not think the Commissioner of Prices is serving any good purpose at the present time. If he were able to fix prices of articles in connection with which the public are likely to be fleeced, there would be some reason for his continuance in office; but unfortunately—whether it is the policy of the Government or not—there are many industries and businesses at present in which exorbitant prices are being charged, and the Commissioner of Prices does not see his way to interfere with them.

The PREMIER: Can you give any instances of that?

Mr. MORGAN: Take the licensed victuallers in Brisbane, for instance. Before the war, the hotels were charging 5s., 8s., and 10s. a day, and I suppose the highest price was from 12s. 6d. to 15s. a day. During the war, when prices went up and living was dearer and wages increased, the licensed victuallers increased their charges, and nobody objected. They raised the tariff from 5s. to 10s., and from 15s. to £1 ls. a day. Meat is now cheaper than it was before the war, and the prices of vegetables and groceries have gone down. Recently the basic wage was reduced, and that applies to hotel employees. One publican told me that it meant a reduction to him of £8 2s. a week.

The PREMIER: Was there any application made to the Commissioner of Prices?

Mr. MORGAN: Yes, there was an application. I approached the Commissioner myself on behalf of the travelling public. I have noticed that the Commissioner, in connection with certain country hotels, such as in Iffracombe, for instance, has fixed the tariff at 8s. a day, or 2s. a meal, and 2s. a bed. What is happening here? Prices are becoming so high that it will be almost impossible soon for people to stay at a hotel. It is the landlord who is benefiting by these high prices. In connection with the getting of a renewal of a lease, in one case the goodwill was put down at £10,000 or £12,000. That happens because we give the licensed victuallers a monopoly. When exorbitant prices are charged in other industries, other businesses come into competition, and prices keep down owing to that fact; but we, unfortunately, give the existing hotelkeepers a monopoly. We know that there has been a considerable reduction in connection with the carrying on of hotels, more especially in regard to the price of food.

The Commissioner of Prices does not always take into account the charges made by many different businesses. He has not been consistent in that matter. If we are going to have a Commissioner of Prices, then he should treat all businesses

[7 p.m.] alike. I do not see why one business should be allowed to profiteer and charge exorbitant prices at the expense of the public, while other businesses have their prices fixed at such a low rate that they are hardly sufficient to meet overhead charges. Look at the charges made by some of the licensed victuallers in Brisbane and some of the coastal towns. Numerous letters have appeared in the four principal papers published in Brisbane complaining about the charges made by licensed victuallers. During the war period, when, perhaps, it was necessary that these prices should be charged to meet the increased cost of living, it was all right; but it is only

reasonable that they should bring their prices down now, seeing that there is a reduction in all the commodities used by those particular businesses. I was at Rockhampton during carnival week, and some of my hon. friends on the Government side were also there. We all stopped at the one hotel. I had to pay £1 3s. per day, while I understand my friends opposite had to pay more than that.

Mr. RYAN: They charged us £1 3s. 6d. per day.

Mr. MORGAN: Just fancy a licensed victualler charging £1 3s. 6d. per day! It is an outrageous charge to make. If we are to have a Commissioner of Prices, let him fix prices that are reasonable.

The PREMIER: Did you make any complaint to the Commissioner of Prices?

Mr. MORGAN: No. It is not the city people who live in the hotels, but the country people who have to stay in hotels when they visit the city. The travelling public should be protected.

The PREMIER: How is the Commissioner to know of these things unless you tell him?

Mr. MORGAN: There have been scores of letters in the papers pointing out what is happening in regard to the charges made by these establishments. I may say that I did approach the Commissioner of Prices, and asked him if it was not possible to do something in that direction. I saw in the paper where he fixed the tariff to be charged by a hotel in Ilfracombe, and he also fixed the prices for a hotel in another little country town, where he fixed the tariff at 8s. per day. But I notice he religiously left the hotels in the big cities alone. I do not know whether that is part of the Government policy or not. I do not know whether the Government do not want to interfere with the licensed victuallers owing to the fact that the licensed victuallers support them at the present time. They are afraid that they will lose a certain amount of political support if they interfere with the licensed victuallers.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You know that is not the case.

Mr. MORGAN: The licensed victuallers support the Labour party. That has been proved, because figures were quoted and an inquiry was asked for. It was proved that the licensed victuallers contributed to the Labour party's fighting fund. Perhaps the Commissioner of Prices was asked not to interfere with the friends of the Government, so that it would give them a little kudos, and they would help the Government to fight their battle during the election period. That is evidently the policy of this Government. They are prepared to obtain money from certain individuals to help them in fighting their campaign, and so they are afraid to put the Commissioner on their trail. If there is exploitation, stop it altogether; or do away with the Commissioner of Prices. I am in favour of doing away with the Commissioner. He has not served any good purpose. He is certainly lopsided. I do not know whether I can blame the individual himself, or whether he gets instructions from the Government: "Don't interfere with Brown, but do as you like with Jones, because Jones does not support us." At any rate, I am certain that no good purpose is being served by fixing the price of meat. Why control the price when there

are State shops practically all over Queensland? They know the price at which they can sell meat at a profit, and, if the other shops charge higher prices, the State shops will get all the trade. The industry is down and out.

Mr. BRENNAN: It is only a temporary lull, as you know.

Mr. MORGAN: Temporary lull! How long is it going to last? Anyhow, why treat the beef people any different from the rest of the community? In the sale of butter or cheese you have not State shops to control prices, but in all the large towns you have State butcher shops. As a matter of fact, we know that the private shops have been selling meat at a lower price than that fixed by the Commissioner, the Toowoomba shops at considerably less; so what is the good of keeping the Commissioner? Just now there is a scarcity of fat cattle. Owing to the drought they are becoming poorer, and prices are likely to go up slightly, but it will not affect the industry generally. When the drought breaks, prices will come down again. At the present time it is foolish on the part of the Government to fix prices. Take the case of kerosene or petrol. The merchants decide to reduce the price, and two or three days afterwards the Commissioner will fix the price according to the standard determined by the merchants. Then he takes credit to himself for having reduced prices. He sees by the paper that the price of a certain article has been reduced, and promptly agrees to that reduction. How is it that we see that the price of galvanised iron, for instance, has been reduced £4 per ton, and about a week afterwards the Commissioner gazettes a reduction of £4 also? How is it that we see a paragraph in the paper that the price of barbed or plain wire has been reduced £2 per ton in the Southern States, and a week afterwards the price is reduced by that amount here?

Mr. BRENNAN: To stop the exploiter here.

Mr. MORGAN: In all other trades but that of the licensed victualler there is competition. We give him a monopoly by law, and allow him to do what he likes. I am convinced that the Commissioner of Prices has not done his duty in that direction, and the public throughout the State are complaining.

Mr. BRENNAN: Would you dismiss him?

Mr. MORGAN: I am quite satisfied that every penny of the present expenditure on the office would be saved if the Commissioner were put to work that he is more capable of performing. He would then be serving some good purpose. To-day he is not doing good work; he is not earning his salary. He would be earning his salary if he were doing the work which he was performing before he took on this job. This department should be wiped out; we are not getting nearly the worth of the £2,498 expended on it. The Premier is looking for a way in which to save money. Here is a way—put the Commissioner at his old job! I am going to vote against this, because I do not believe in the principle at all.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillico*): The hon. member has been very inconsistent. Half of his speech has been taken up in urging the Commissioner to protect the public against the hotelkeepers, and the balance has been a denunciation of the

Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

Commissioner—that he does not earn his salary, and that this is a useless institution. There is no justification for that criticism.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Why does he not treat all alike?

The PREMIER: I will tell the hon. member, if he has the patience to listen to me. This sub-department is under my Ministerial control. I have found the Commissioner of Prices ready to inquire into every matter brought under his notice, from whatever part of the State the inquiry originates. Those applications come to him from hundreds of places in Queensland, and his time is taken up in investigating them and issuing orders, regulations, and price lists controlling the prices of commodities, where there is a suspicion or direct evidence of exploitation or undue profiteering. That has happened in innumerable cases throughout the State in the last two years during which the Act has been in operation. Hon. members opposite who have spoken so far have put up a plea, not against the Commissioner of Prices, but in favour of the profiteer.

Mr. VOWLES: Nonsense!

The PREMIER: What does the argument amount to? Here is the hon. member for Murilla, who in one breath delivers carping criticism against the Commissioner for not having protected him against a hotelkeeper in Rockhampton, and in the next breath makes an unwarranted attack upon the Commissioner and describes his office as a useless one. The second statement is made entirely in the interests of the profiteer. After denouncing the Commissioner of Prices, when I asked the hon. member whether he brought before the Commissioner a complaint about the hotelkeeper unduly profiteering he said "No; there were letters in the Press."

Mr. MORGAN: I said I did.

The PREMIER: What would be said if the Commissioner proceeded to carry out his functions merely in consequence of letters appearing in the newspapers?

Mr. MORGAN: Why don't you tell the truth? I told you that I had approached the Commissioner.

The PREMIER: The hon. member said, "No; there had been letters in the Press."

Mr. MORGAN: I said there were letters in the Press as well. I said that I had approached the Commissioner.

The PREMIER: I asked the hon. member a direct question. After the hon. member said that the hotelkeeper had been profiteering I said, "Did you bring this before the Commissioner?" The hon. member said, "Well, there have been letters in the Press about it." If the hon. member and others do not think it necessary to submit the matter themselves to the Commissioner, how can they expect the Commissioner to take notice of letters in the Press, which may appear over anonymous signatures? The hon. member says that this office is useless; that it has done no good to the people of Queensland. I will proceed to show that it has, and that it has saved the people an enormous amount of exploitation. It has saved the people from profiteering, concrete evidences of which are in possession of the department, and to which I am going to refer. The hon. member for Enoggera in his speech quoted a lot of figures which were mostly wrong.

Mr. KERR: They were correct.

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.

The PREMIER: The hon. member quoted a lot of figures, the deductions from which were wrong.

Mr. KERR: No; they were right.

The PREMIER: The hon. member said that in Victoria, where there was no Commissioner of Prices, there has been a greater reduction in the cost of living than in Queensland, where there is a Commissioner of Prices.

Mr. KERR: That is so.

The PREMIER: The Profiteering Prevention Act was in force for two years up to March last. The Commonwealth Statistician's figures show that there was an increase in the cost of living in all States except Queensland from January, 1920, to January, 1921, and they show that a decrease took place in the succeeding twelve months. That period practically coincides with the time the Profiteering Prevention Act has been in operation. The Act came into operation in March, 1920. The figures show that in January, 1921, as compared with January, 1920, the cost of living had decreased in Queensland by 6.5 per cent., and had increased in Victoria by 29.9 per cent. Naturally, the following year there was a bigger decrease in Victoria than there was in Queensland, because there had been a 29.9 per cent. increase in the preceding twelve months.

Mr. KERR: My figures are right.

Mr. MORGAN: What is the starting point?

The PREMIER: January, 1920, was the starting point.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman should go back further.

The PREMIER: That was when the Act came into operation, and I am going back to that time. To show how fallacious the hon. gentleman's reasoning was, I will take the two years together during the operation of this Act when prices were under the control of a Commissioner of Prices in Queensland as compared with Victoria, where there was no control of prices. During the two years the cost of living in Queensland decreased 22.9 per cent., and in Victoria it increased 2.8 per cent.

Mr. KERR: That does not alter the fact that during the last twelve months there has been a greater decrease in Victoria.

The PREMIER: The Act has been in operation for two years.

Mr. KERR: That does not alter the figures. My figures are absolutely correct.

The PREMIER: The Commissioner of Prices is performing a very useful and very necessary function in Queensland, and the Government and Parliament would be extremely foolish to abolish the office. If it were not for the making of political capital and the constant attack by hon. members opposite on the Commissioner of Prices and the Act and the system, I would be quite content to allow the office to justify itself.

Mr. VOWLES: The office is only being attacked on the Estimates each year on its own results.

The PREMIER: It is only each year that I have to defend it. If hon. members opposite would not raise the matter, I would permit it to remain without having it drawn into the hurly-burly of party politics. It should be left out of party politics. It is an institution which can be availed of and made use

of by all sections of the community that are being exploited. The Commissioner can act on his own initiative where there are glaring instances of exploitation, but he mostly acts upon applications made to him by consumers, retailers, or wholesalers, as the case may be, and he goes into the matter. Many cases come before him from distant parts of the State. I will give a typical case: An application was made to the Commissioner from the soldier settlers in the Tolga district, who pointed out to the Commissioner that they had to pay the storekeepers 9½d. a loaf for bread, 9½d. per lb. for beef, 7d. per lb. for sugar, 6d. per lb. for rice, and so on. The soldiers said—

"We cannot stop them; they can charge as much as they like, for they know we cannot go elsewhere. We are returned soldiers struggling for a living, so hope you will get us a fair deal."

The Commissioner went into the matter and reductions were made in fourteen leading grocery lines. By these reductions the saving to the average family in this locality would not be less than 6s. per week.

Mr. VOWLES: What year was that?

The PREMIER: That was last year. In a report which I have received from the Commissioner, he says—

"In March, 1920, when the Profiteering Prevention Act came into force, the cost of living was higher, and to-day it is lower in Queensland than in any other State. The following figures are from the Commonwealth Statistician's report, and show the amounts necessary to purchase in each capital town in the months of March, 1920, and June, 1922, what would have cost on the average £1 in 1911—

	March, 1920.		June, 1922.		Improvement in the Purchasing Value of the £1 during period stated.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
Brisbane	40 4	31 11	8 5		
Sydney ..	39 10	33 6	6 4		
Hobart ..	38 8	36 5	2 3		
Perth ..	38 2	36 7	1 5		
Adelaide..	37 9	35 7	2 2		
Melbourne	34 4	33 0	1 4		

Brisbane shows the greatest reduction in the cost of living.

Mr. EDWARDS: Was that when he fixed the price of the farmers' butter?

The PREMIER: The hon. member is the most irrelevant man in the House; but now that he has raised the question I do not mind telling him that the figures set out here show that during that period butter fetched higher prices in Queensland than in any other State of the Commonwealth. For the hon. member's information, let me mention that during the last two or three weeks the milk producers have been approaching the Commissioner to fix the price of milk; the dairymen themselves have been asking the Commissioner to fix the price of milk for distribution in the city.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: The retailers.

The PREMIER: Not the retailers, but the dairymen producing the milk. I am

not saying there is anything wrong about that. It is quite right that he should step in, if he can save the producers from exploitation.

Mr. VOWLES: Do the figures you have quoted take into consideration house rentals as well?

The PREMIER: That is the purchasing power of money. The figures show a decrease in the cost of living. The house rentals are lower in Brisbane than elsewhere.

Mr. MORGAN: Because of the wooden buildings.

The PREMIER: No; because house rent is controlled. The report continues—

"The decrease in the cost of living in each State since the Profiteering Prevention Act came into force in Queensland, is as follows:—

	Decrease.
Queensland ...	21.9 per cent.
New South Wales ...	18.9 per cent.
Victoria ...	11.3 per cent.
South Australia ...	11.0 per cent.
Tasmania ...	9.7 per cent.
Western Australia ...	8.5 per cent.

"The greatest decreases are shown in Queensland and in New South Wales, and in those two States Profiteering Prevention Acts were in operation during the period stated.

"The Commonwealth Statistician's cost of living returns are based mainly on the retail selling price of primary products, the wholesale prices of which are uncontrolled and generally much higher in Queensland than in any other State. The fact that in such returns Queensland is shown as the cheapest living State is due to the reduced costs of distribution between the retailer and the consumer and to the present low prices of meat.

"In addition, the operations of the Profiteering Prevention Act have resulted in saving the consumer many thousands of pounds on other necessary commodities, including drapery, boots and shoes, groceries, patent medicines, building materials, fertilisers, &c., which are not taken into consideration by the Statistician in estimating the cost of living in the various States.

"During the year"—

and this touches the point as to whether the Commissioner performs any useful function or not. If hon. members would study the Commissioner's report to see what he is doing, they would not make suggestions that his office is not a useful one and should be abolished. It should only be abolished if Parliament is prepared to hand the people over to the rapacity of the profiteer.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The Commissioner says—

"During the year a total of 516 notifications and price lists were issued to traders, as against 302 for the year ending 30th June, 1921.

"I estimate the total saving to the consumer through the operations of the Act during the year at not less than £720,000."

Mr. MORGAN: Rubbish!

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The PREMIER: It is all very well for the hon. member, who pretends to represent an agricultural district, to stick up for the city trader who wants to exploit him. The office of Commissioner is eminently justified. Not only are the consumers benefited by the actual prices that are reduced, but, as hon. members themselves have shown, the traders are chary about charging higher prices than what they know the Commissioner of Prices will allow. Therefore the indirect gain to the consumers of this State is enormous.

Mr. MORGAN: Will you explain why the Commissioner has not attended to the licensed victuallers?

The PREMIER: The hon. member is wrong. Where an application has been made, he has fixed the hotel tariffs. The hon. member referred to Brisbane and Rockhampton. What has happened? Accommodation can be got in Brisbane at 27s. 6d. per week and upward.

Mr. MORGAN: Where?

The PREMIER: Not at the Bellevue Hotel—not at the hotel where the squatters stop! And if the hon. member wants to have the hotel tariff at the Bellevue Hotel fixed, it is no use making application, because the Commissioner of Prices is not there for the purpose of fixing or regulating the price of luxuries or "jazz" dancing. (Opposition interruption.) If the hon. member can show that the tariff in the hotels where the commonalty of the people—the workers and the travellers who are out to make their livelihood—are staying is extortionate or inordinately high, or that the tariff charged at boarding-houses is profiteering—if he will bring the evidence before the Commissioner of Prices, no doubt the Commissioner will move; but the suggestion that the hotel tariff at the Bellevue, Lennon's, or the Gresham is too high, is too utterly ridiculous for words. The hon. member for Murilla said the Commissioner watched the price lists of the big firms, and, when they issued a price list for kerosene and galvanised iron, he came along the week after with his list. That shows the hon. member's ignorance of the way in which the Commissioner proceeds. The Commissioner has not in any case issued useless notifications or proclamations. In each case where he has issued a notification it has been with a view to reducing or controlling the price. In some cases the wholesalers, such as Lysaghts, have issued price lists for wholesale prices of galvanised iron and wire and other things of that kind, and the Commissioner has had to come in and fix the retail price to prevent the retailers profiteering when there has been a reduction in the wholesale price; and in each case he has had justification for doing it. The same thing applies in regard to kerosene and other commodities, including fertilisers, and the Commissioner has received the commendations of the farmers for preventing profiteering in the distribution of fertilisers and other things.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!—The thanks of the farmers!

Mr. KERR: I think the disadvantages immensely outweigh the advantage of having the Commissioner.

The PREMIER: That is a different tone from what the hon. member assumed before dinner; he is coming round. The hon. mem-

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ber will find there is justification for what the Commissioner is doing, and for the continued existence of the office.

Mr. KERR: No.

The PREMIER: The Commissioner is a gentleman of ability, and absolutely fair-minded in the conduct of his office.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): The Premier gave us to understand that there is no price fixation unless one makes a complaint.

The PREMIER: I did not say there was no price fixation unless one made a complaint.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The hon. gentleman inferred that no action was taken unless a complaint was made. We know that there are towns just a few miles distant from Brisbane where the prices of meat vary by 25 or 30 per cent., and no action is taken by the Commissioner. Then there are other lines. The hon. member for Stanley quoted a case the other night where a certain machine, manufactured at a cost of £10, was retailed to the farmer at £35. Has the

Commissioner made any inquiry [7.30 p.m.] into that case? No! The Commissioner does not control anything. He just sits in his office, and waits there until someone comes along and makes a complaint. Before hon. members opposite got on to the Treasury benches they always talked about dealing with the trusts and combines. They said they would introduce a Bill to deal with trusts and combines. They have been in power for seven years, and they have never prosecuted a single trust or combine, but have left them to prey on the community, practically far worse than ever they were before.

Mr. STOPFORD: They prevented an increase in the tram fares.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We know that a certain article which costs £10 was retailed to the farmer for £35.

Mr. W. COOPER: What was that article?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It was a farming implement that the hon. member knows nothing at all about. As a matter of fact the Commissioner of Prices merely registers the reductions that are made by traders.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The trader makes the reduction, and the Commissioner registers the reduced price, and then takes credit for having saved so much. The whole thing is nothing but nonsense and a farce, and it always will be so unless it is administered on fair grounds. The Commissioner of Prices should find out the cost of farming machinery, and should not allow an increased price to be charged; yet he lets these articles slip through his fingers without any comment whatever.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I wish to stand by the figures which I previously gave to the Committee. I emphasise the fact that the Price Fixing Commissioner in Victoria was discontinued in 1920.

Mr. STOPFORD: Yes, the figures prove that.

Mr. KERR: I took the figures for 1921, and showed that there was a decline in the cost of living, which in Victoria amounted to 3s. 6d. and in Queensland to only 1s. 8d. in the £1. Also, so far as groceries are

concerned, the decline in Victoria, where there was no Commissioner of Prices, was 6s. 6d., while in Queensland, where we have a Commissioner of Prices, the decline is only 2s. 6d. You cannot combat those figures. The Premier should go into the cost of living before the Government came into power. He will find that the cost of living has receded more in Victoria since 1914 than it has in Queensland. All through, Victoria is in a better position than Queensland. There is a decrease in the amount set down for this department, which shows that the office must be declining. It is a useless office, and it is no use trying to deceive this Committee by saying that the Government are saving thousands of pounds to the community. The Premier quoted figures regarding undertakings in many towns where the Commissioner of Prices has operated. I have a list here containing 134 items relating to the grocery trade. It contains practically everything in a grocer's shop. On the surface of things, can any reasonable man tell me that the Commissioner of Prices has gone through the details mentioned in this list? Has he gone through the details regarding the production of borax, or any other item? We find the Premier claiming that certain prices had been reduced by the Commissioner; but what happens? We know that the price is reduced by the trade, and the Commissioner merely sanctions it. In regard to a household commodity like soap, the manufacturer reduces the price by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bar, and tells the Commissioner. The result is an order in the "Government Gazette," and the next thing is that we hear the Premier saying that the Commissioner has brought down the price of soap. It is utter nonsense for the Government to take credit in this connection. It would take the Commissioner, the inspector, the secretary, the typist, and the messenger a long time to go through this list of 134 items; and that only deals with one trade.

Mr. PAYNE (*Mitchell*): Hon. members opposite may have a right to criticise any Estimate that the Government bring forward.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Certainly, we have that right.

Mr. PAYNE: You have that right, but you have no right to try and hit any officer of the department below the belt.

Mr. KERR: We are not discussing the officer.

Mr. PAYNE: Of course you are. The hon. member for Murilla discussed the officer, and by innuendo and by sneering remarks, intimated to this Committee that the Commissioner of Prices, Mr. Ferry, did not know the way to do these things himself, but was instructed by the Government.

Mr. MORGAN: Exactly. I do not know yet that he is instructed by the Government. Can you tell me?

Mr. PAYNE: The hon. member knows that Mr. Ferry cannot get up in this House and defend himself. The hon. member knows very well that he is an officer.

Mr. MORGAN: Do you mean to say that he has not got his instructions from the Government?

Mr. PAYNE: The Commissioner of Prices fixes the prices himself.

Mr. MORGAN: He gets his instructions from the Government.

Mr. PAYNE: Mr. Ferry is an absolutely fair-minded man.

Mr. MORGAN: The redistribution of seats shows that.

Mr. COLLINS: Innuendoes again.

Mr. PAYNE: The hon. member for Murilla cannot use anything else but innuendoes. I have no brief for Mr. Ferry or for any officer in the department. While the Opposition may be within their rights in criticising the Government, it is not a fair thing to attack officers by innuendo.

Mr. MORGAN: Didn't you criticise Major Cahill, the late Commissioner of Police, after the general strike in 1912?

Mr. PAYNE: Anything I said about Commissioner Cahill I will stick to. (Opposition interruption.)

Mr. KERR: You cannot have it both ways.

Mr. PAYNE: I say the Opposition are not playing the game in getting at an officer when he cannot get up in this Chamber and reply, and when they know that he is only acting within the four corners of his duty. The hon. member for Enoggera quoted figures to show that the cost of living was higher in Queensland than in Victoria; but I think that anyone who looks up "Knibbs's" figures will be satisfied, as the Premier showed, that a family living in Victoria during the past four years would have to pay 22.9 per cent. more to live than a family in Queensland. Why do hon. members want to sidestep these questions?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: You admit that the cost of living had gone up 50 per cent.

Mr. PAYNE: I am admitting nothing; I am pointing out facts. Facts are very awkward things to stumble up against; talk is cheap. Facts are facts, and the fact remains that during the last few years a family living in Queensland lived 22.9 per cent. cheaper than in Victoria. Anyone who advocates the abolition of the Commissioner of Prices is not saying something in the best interests of the people of this State, but is working in the interests of the beef boodlers. Anyone who says that the Commissioner has not during the last two years exercised a control over the cost of living in Queensland is speaking without thought, and does not know what he is talking about. We must admit that it is very difficult indeed for any Commissioner to do the thing perfectly at once. I dare say that the Commissioner, being a fair-minded man and not wanting to hurt anyone, may have been cautious at the beginning; but I am satisfied that, when he discovered that there was anything in the nature of profiteering—it did not matter in what direction—he had no hesitation in squashing it. Then we have had all this talk about fixing the hotel tariffs in my electorate and letting the big hotels in the cities go "not free." What the Premier said is true. People who are overloaded with mousy and like to go to first-class hotels can do so; but in any case, the hon. member for Murilla forgot to tell the Committee that when the charges he mentioned were made it was race and show time in Rockhampton, and that they were not the ordinary prices charged to the ordinary traveller. It was an exceptional time, when the place was crowded out, and the hotelkeeper, like everyone else—he did not care whether you stayed with him or not—took advantage of the conditions to put

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up his prices. I am quite satisfied that, if you go there now you will get your fare much more cheaply than during that time.

Mr. MORGAN: Do you think it fair that he should make such charges?

Mr. PAYNE: No; but how, in the name of common sense, could the Commissioner deal with a matter that happened on three days in a week? They were charging bigger prices than ever before, but how could one expect the Commissioner to go into the matter suddenly? (Opposition interruption.)

Mr. COSTELLO: Prosecute them.

Mr. MORGAN: He knows it is going on to-day in the hotels in Brisbane.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. PAYNE: I am sure that the "Hansard" staff cannot possibly hear what is being said with all this barking of the Opposition going on.

The CHAIRMAN: Order. I hope hon. members on my left will respect my call to order.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PAYNE: I repeat that the hon. member for Murilla, or any hon. member who slanders an officer in any department in order to get at the Government, is not playing the game.

Mr. FORDE (*Rockhampton*): Having listened to the futile criticism of hon. members opposite of the Commissioner of Prices, I wish, as member for Rockhampton, to protest against the suggestion that the position should be abolished. I am satisfied that the Commissioner has done good work. With regard to the statement made by the hon. member for Murilla, complaining about the high tariff at hotels in Rockhampton, I do not know anything about hotels in Rockhampton charging £1 3s. 6d. per day. I know I cannot afford to stay at one of those hotels. The hotel I stay at does not charge more than 2s. per day, and they look after me very well; but if the hon. member for Murilla wants to stay at first-class hotels, where they have the "jazz" bands and beautiful girls to dance with, he must expect to pay first-class rates. It is well for us to glance at the past and see what the Government have accomplished in checking the cost of living since they took office in 1915. Shortly after they came into power they took steps to control profiteering, and in a period of nine months the cost of living was reduced by 12.6 per cent. The Federal Government then, under the same War Precautions Act, by virtue of which they prevented the marine engineers from operating on their banking accounts at the time of the shipping strike, and by virtue of which they enabled the coalmine owners to make a profit of close on £1,000,000 in 1916, took away from the Queensland Government the power to fix prices of commodities, and appointed a Federal Price Fixing Commissioner who was a mere sham. He did not do any work at all: he practically sat in his office and gave the profiteers a free run. When the Commonwealth took that power from the Queensland Government the price of soap, kerosene, and other articles went up immediately. Over a short period—between November, 1916, and September, 1917—the cost of living increased by 7.4 per cent. When Mr. Hughes was on his way to Australia from England, he said that, when he got back to Australia, he was going to shoot

the profiteers. When he reached Fremantle he said he was going to fight them. When he got to Adelaide they met him at the boat. At Melbourne he said he would appoint a Commission to go into the matter. Shortly afterwards he was made a member of the Millions Club, and we have heard nothing from Mr. Hughes about the profiteers ever since.

Mr. PEASE: He got £25,000.

Mr. FORDE: That is so. Of course, Mr. Hughes might say that he did not have the power to deal with profiteers. Let me quote one of his own electors—a man whom he elevated to the Commonwealth Arbitration Bench the other day, Sir John Quick. That gentleman published a monumental work of 1,000 pages entitled, "The Legislative Powers of the Commonwealth and States of Australia." In the preface to that book Sir John Quick says—

"Under the existing Commonwealth powers the evils of profiteering could be combated by the following alternative methods:—

1. Taxation.
2. Fixation of Prices.
3. Acquisition."

Notwithstanding that, the Commonwealth Government did absolutely nothing. Why? Because those who were making extortionate profits out of the primary producer and the worker were the friends of the Nationalist party and were supplying the fighting funds with which the Hughes party could regain office.

Mr. COLLINS: And they subscribed the presentation fund of £25,000.

Mr. FORDE: Yes. Although the Hughes Government were prepared to take action to defeat the marine engineers by preventing them from operating on their banking account, they took no action to prevent the profiteers and the big manufacturers charging extortionate prices for farming implements. The fixation of prices is a matter that should be dealt with by the Commonwealth Government. The hon. member for Enoggera had something to say regarding 1920-1921.

Mr. KERR: No, I had not.

Mr. FORDE: "Knibbs's" figures show that in January, 1921, compared with January, 1920, in Queensland there was a decrease in the cost of living of 6.5 per cent.; in New South Wales there was an increase of 11.8 per cent.; in South Australia an increase of 15.9 per cent.; in Tasmania an increase of 16 per cent.; in Western Australia an increase of 16.8 per cent.; and in Victoria an increase of 29.9 per cent.

Mr. FLETCHER: Take September of the same year.

Mr. FORDE: In February, 1921, compared with February, 1920, Queensland showed a decrease of 4.1 per cent.; New South Wales an increase of 7.7 per cent.; South Australia an increase of 14.2 per cent.; Western Australia an increase of 12.9 per cent.; Tasmania an increase of 15.1 per cent.; and Victoria an increase of 25.6 per cent. The Profiteering Prevention Act came into operation—as the Premier rightly stated—in March, 1920. The Commonwealth Statistician's report for that month showed that the increase in the cost of living since the outbreak of war had been greater in Queensland than in any other State, because the power which the Queensland Government had of fixing the price of

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commodities had been taken away from them by the Commonwealth Government under the War Precautions Act. The increase in the cost of living in Queensland up to that time was 86.9 per cent. But after the Commissioner of Prices had been operating the Act for a period of five months Queensland ranked only third, with an increase of 94.4 per cent. since the outbreak of the war, as against an increase in Victoria of 103.9 per cent., and in New South Wales of 98.8 per cent.; so that the influence of the Commissioner was felt almost immediately. According to the Commonwealth Statistician's report, the following amounts were necessary to purchase in the months of March, 1920, and June, 1922, what would have cost, on the average, £1 in 1911:—

—	March, 1920.		June, 1922.		Improvement in the £ during period.
	s.	d.	s.	d.	
Brisbane ..	40	4	31	11	8 5
Sydney ..	39	10	35	6	6 4
Hobart ..	38	8	36	5	2 3
Perth ..	38	2	36	7	1 7
Adelaide ..	37	9	35	7	2 2
Melbourne ..	34	4	33	0	1 4

That shows that, since the Act came into force in Queensland, the cost of living has decreased 21.9 per cent., as against 11.3 per cent. in Tory-governed Victoria—proving that Queensland Government relinquished control, the cost of living. The Commonwealth Statistician's report proves that, when the Commonwealth Government relinquished control, the cost of living was higher in Queensland than it was in any other State in Australia; that to-day the cost of living is lower in Queensland than in any other State in Australia; that, since the Profiteering Prevention Act came into force in Queensland, the improvement in the value of the sovereign, compared with its value in 1911, was more rapid in Queensland than it was in any other State, and the decrease in the cost of living has been greater in Queensland than in any other State. A good deal of that is due to the work of the Commissioner of Prices. The estimate of the savings on the various commodities mentioned during the period ended 30th June, 1920, was £720,000. On bread alone there was a saving of £175,000; on fertilisers to the farmers a saving of £11,000; on drapery, boots, and shoes a saving of, approximately, £67,000; on groceries a saving of £246,000. Those and the other items aggregated £720,000. It shows that not only one section of the people have benefited, but that the whole of the people have benefited; and no one more than the struggling settler, who felt the weight of the extortionate prices levied by the friends of hon. members opposite.

We have heard a good deal to-night about the price of meat being too high. It is as well that we should again get down to facts. We will find that in Brisbane in the State shops the price of sirloin beef is 4½d. per lb., and the fixed price in other shops 6½d. per lb.; the price in Sydney is 8½d. per lb., and in Melbourne 10d. per lb.—good, old Conservative Victoria, where they abolished the Profiteering Prevention Act!

Mr. EDWARDS: Where they buy our cattle.

Mr. FORDE: They do not buy our cattle. In Perth the price is 11d. per lb. Is Queensland's favoured position not due to the

influence of Labour legislation—to the competition of the State shops and the intervention of the Commissioner of Prices? If you go right down the list, you will find that the price is lower in Brisbane than it is in any other capital city in Australia—due to Labour legislation.

In addition, we find that the manufacturers are doing well in Queensland. Everyone is doing well, because the Government believe in giving a fair deal to all, and not in giving all the concessions to a few. In the product of manufacturers in Queensland in 1914, salaries and wages amounted to £4,211,000. The value of the output was £25,400,000. In 1920 the salaries and wages amounted to £6,718,000, and the value of the output to £39,783,000. Although the

world is suffering a period of [8 p.m.] depression, the exports of the Commonwealth show that the Commissioner of Prices in Queensland has not hamstringing production, as hon. members opposite would lead people to believe. We find that last year there was an increase in exports in Queensland of £200,000; in New South Wales a decrease of £2,500,000; in Victoria a decrease of £8,500,000; in South Australia a decrease of £2,800,000; and in good old Tory-governed Western Australia a decrease of £4,000,000. We are told by hon. members opposite that the Commissioner of Prices is levying a heavy toll upon the producers and business men. No; but he is keeping the exploiters of the people in their places—the profiteers and middlemen who are ably represented by hon. members of the Nationalist party, supported by hon. members of the Country party. As a result of Labour legislation and the intervention of the Commissioner of Prices, the people are assisted in putting away a little every week in the Savings Bank that would otherwise go towards paying the exorbitant prices for commodities. The average amount of Savings Bank deposits per head of the population in the various States for the year ended 31st December, 1921, is—

	£	s.	d.
New South Wales ...	50	14	0
Victoria ...	44	15	0
South Australia ...	39	11	9
Western Australia ...	34	0	10
Tasmania ...	34	11	2
Queensland ...	57	11	11

The point is that the workers, the small farmers, and those who have small earnings are able to go along to the Savings Bank at the end of the week to deposit their savings, and the exploiters, who have a free run in other States, are kept in check in Queensland. Hon. members opposite object to the fixation of prices. Are not all pools a system of fixing prices? What about the guaranteed price for cotton for the three years ended 31st July last and for a further three years after 31st July next year? Is that not a fixation of prices for the purpose of stabilising the industry? I fought very hard for a fixed price for cotton-growers, because many of them have been put to considerable expense buying farming implements, and it was necessary that the industry should be stabilised. The Government have done that. The value of the cotton industry to Queensland this year will be well over £1,500,000, due to the Government fixing the price for cotton. What reception did the Premier get when he went to the Premiers' Conference and advocated that a home-consumption price should be fixed for

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wheat? The Premier, speaking at that conference, said—

“With the object of encouraging the wheatgrowing industry during the coming year, I would like to know if the conference will consider the desirability of fixing a home-consumption price for wheat of about 6s. per bushel.”

Premier Barwell, of South Australia, the great advocate of black labour, and who would employ all blackfellows from an imaginary line north of Rockhampton, said—

“Certainly not: as far as South Australia is concerned, I say that definitely regarding a price for wheat.”

Sir Walter Lee, who was then Premier of Tasmania, said—

“Do not mention wheat to me.”

Those Premiers did not want a price fixed. They did not want pools, because they realised that pools interfered with the operations of certain produce merchants, and certain men such as we find opposite in the leaders of parties, in fact, who have made great profits out of the farmers. The leader of the Nationalist party is one of them and the hon. member for Bulimba is another. In all States of Australia we find that the formation of pools mostly interferes with these great merchants, agents, middlemen, and market-riggers. I cannot understand how certain hon. members opposite, coming from country districts, who say that they stand for the interests of the small producer only, can associate with produce-merchant members opposite in every division in this Chamber. Victoria has been quoted by hon. members opposite, and I want briefly to deal with that State. “The Producers’ Review,” which is the official organ of the Queensland Farmers’ Union and the United Cane Growers’ Association, in dealing with the stabilisation of prices for dairy products, states—

“Victoria is the home of Nationalism in Australia. It is also the paradise of big interests and speculators. Everyone knows how Victorian interests have tried to ruin the sugar industry in order to get cheap sugar for their manufacturers. In the dairying industry, it was the Victorians who held up the Massy Greene proposal.”

The Fair Profits Commission was abolished by the Victorian Government in 1921 because the influence of those who were supplying the fighting funds for the Nationalist party in Victoria was too great. They demanded that the Fair Profits Commission should be wiped out, and it was wiped out. Mr. C. W. Campbell, president of the Queensland Employers’ Federation, said that night after night they had come to Parliament House and had seen certain legislation altered. If the hon. member for Bulimba was on the Treasury benches, the Profiteering Prevention Act would be repealed. The workers of Queensland and the small farmers of Queensland know that; the middlemen also know that, and that is why they are going to do all they can to defeat this Government, if possible. They will not succeed, because the people are behind this Government. A recent Victorian Press report states—

“In certain classes of business the power to fix prices and maintain them at a high level is so complete, competition is restricted so successfully and ruthlessly, that whether wages be high or low

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the prices are very much the same. This appears to fairly represent the position in Victoria since the Fair Profits Commission was abolished.”

The profiteers in Victoria are unrestricted in their depredations; they have a free run. The people cannot do anything to hinder them, because they have an unsympathetic Government in power. The people have a Government in power that works in collusion with the profiteering interests. We have heard Victoria quoted as the paradise of the worker in Australia—as the State which holds out great inducements to the people to go there because, as they say, there is a sane Government in power. I find the Melbourne “Age” of the 3rd May, 1922, commenting on the high cost of living, says—

“The situation is actually worse in regard to milk.”

The retailers have all the profit, and the producers get very little. The “Age” further says—

“No less scandalous is the condition of affairs in the meat business. The consumer is still compelled to pay famine prices for his beef and mutton, although wholesale rates are just about half what they were twelve months ago.”

It is not the producers who get the profit. Further on the “Age” says—

“With the approach of winter an early increase in the cost of firewood may be expected. There are few sections of traders who do not take advantage of any and every opportunity of extorting a bit more money out of the public.”

Mr. J. JONES: Like your Government!

Mr. FORDE: No; this Government have helped the people. This is what the “Age” also says—

“Taking all these facts together, the ordinary householder can see little cause for gratification in the existing state of prices. He is fleeced right and left, and has not even the scantiest basis for optimism as to the future. And since it is everybody’s business, and therefore the business of no one in particular, things may be expected to drift on endlessly in the same old way.”

That shows that, when the Fair Profits Commission was abolished, the exploiting middlemen were given a fair run, and the workers and small producers in Victoria are in a very bad way. Rather than have the farmers paying extortionate prices for their fertilisers; rather than have the workers paying higher prices for their meat, groceries, and commodities, I say, keep the position of the Commissioner of Prices intact and allow him to go on with his work, and, if possible, enable him to make provision for cheaper farming implements for the small producers.

At 8.15 p.m.,

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has followed the very bad example which the Premier has given to-night; he has been playing to the gallery.

Mr. FORDE: He has been telling the people the truth.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I want it to be clearly understood that I am not making any comment whatever in connection with the

Commissioner of Prices. The position as to whether price-fixing is right or whether price-fixing is wrong, is perfectly clear, and it is not a question of any individual. I want to be very careful in any remarks I make that I do not for one moment associate the gentleman who occupies the position of Commissioner of Prices with any criticism that I make in regard to the vote. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat is like a man who is drowning who grasps at the last straw. I am sure it must have appealed to you, Mr. Kirwan—though I noticed at one stage that the music of his voice seemed to be sending you to sleep—(laughter)—you will have noticed that at one stage he tried to beat the drum to rally the workers outside. He said that the workers of Queensland would understand—if he had said some of the ladies at Rockhampton, including an ancient lady sixty years of age, I would have understood, too. What is the position in regard to the workers of Queensland? In every union and in every organisation there is a feeling of intense dissatisfaction in connection with this Government, and a strong desire that they may have the opportunity at the earliest possible moment of giving the Government their dismissal. That is the truth, and the drum has been beaten to-night. Some of the arguments which the hon. member used are absolutely without any foundation whatever.

Mr. FORDE: They are perfectly true. I quoted facts all the time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member dealt with some products, but more particularly did he deal with meat. He referred to Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. I say deliberately that, if he chose to use the same argument with regard to other lines, he would find that in Queensland prices are higher—not because ordinarily Queensland is dearer or cheaper, as the case may be, but because of the conditions which exist throughout Australia. Let me use one illustration in connection with price-fixing. What is the position to-day in regard to potatoes? Unfortunately the Queensland crop has been practically a failure this year. Now what happens? Two things happen. There is a State Produce enterprise, and I absolutely state this fact—that the State enterprise, like other produce enterprises, at the present moment is having to import many lines into Queensland. They cannot help it if they are to continue in existence.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: What is wrong about that?

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is nothing at all wrong about it, but they came into existence to deal only in Queensland produce. I am absolutely right when I say that in Queensland to-day potatoes are £4 per ton dearer than they are in Victoria, simply because, unfortunately for us, our crop has been a failure. My judgment is that price-fixing, ordinarily, is a huge blunder and a mistake. What has happened in regard to price-fixing? Very frequently the restraints in connection with trade produce higher prices rather than lower prices, because people are afraid to import and to touch things lest they may find themselves in a peculiar position, and, as a business man, I deliberately state that in the past price-fixing has been responsible for higher prices and not for lower prices. I make that statement deliberately to-night. I notice the hon. member, when he was speaking, referred to the

ex-Treasurer. At any rate, whatever duty the ex-Treasurer had to perform in connection with this State, it was honourably performed.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: We have had the Premier to-night absolutely playing to the gallery in connection with price-fixing. The hon. gentleman dealt with the question of rentals. What is the position to-day? He associated an Act of Parliament brought in by this Government with the lower rentals which prevailed in Queensland. If he will go back for four or five years before the Labour Government came into office, he will find, when he looks through the records, that Queensland has always been the lowest in that regard. The Government which occupied the Treasury benches at that time, and who were absolutely in sympathy with the workers, brought in a Bill by which the workers were enabled to get workers' dwellings. That is why rents are cheaper and conditions better in Queensland in that regard to-day, and hon. members opposite know that. Talk about playing to the gallery! It seems to me that the attitude of the Premier has been followed by the hon. member for Rockhampton, in order to get certain things into "Hansard," and make the people believe that they are out to assist the workers. The worker knows better than that. The Government think that by making promises at an election time to the worker—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am connecting this matter up with price-fixing. The Premier referred to hotels where "jazzing" is carried on. I know nothing about that. I am not one of those who "jazz," but, if the truth is known, not once or twice only has the Premier been amongst those who "jazz."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Can you "jazz"? (Laughter.)

HON. W. H. BARNES: I should be just about as heavy a "jazzier" as the hon. gentleman, though I think I would be a little more nimble than he would be. (Laughter.)

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the hon. member connect his remarks with the vote?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I was pointing out that the Premier introduced the question of "jazzing" when replying to the hon. member for Murilla. I am not in agreement with the hon. member for Murilla that price-fixing in any form should be carried on by the Government.

Mr. FORDE: Do you believe in wheat pools?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I believe it would be a great blessing if the hon. member who interjects immediately got married. (Laughter.) What a squabble there would be amongst those who would be left! It does not seem to me that the interests of Queensland are served by fixation of prices. The whole tendency of the debate on the opposite side has been an apology for the hotelkeeper in not fixing prices. The Premier said they have no right to fix prices for the "jazz chap."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He did not say that.

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HON. W. H. BARNES: He said they had a right to look after the hotel where the working man stayed; but it did not concern them a bit about where the "big swells" were. The Government are out to talk to the country through this system of price-fixing, which, as they show, is a diminishing quantity. There was another attack made in this debate upon a man with whom many of us have differed—Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth.

Mr. FORDE: The premier middleman and exploiter.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The fact that the people of Australia believe that Mr. Hughes has done such good service for Australia by presenting him with £25,000 is an eloquent testimony to their estimation of the man. The service which Mr. Hughes rendered to the Empire in a time of struggle was not the service rendered by the hon. member for Rockhampton.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am connecting this up, because it was introduced in debate before you took the chair, Mr. Pollock.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I would remind the hon. member that I am in the chair now, and I will not tolerate a discussion on that subject.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have just about finished. Price-fixing has been something which has, on the whole, been detrimental to Queensland; and let me say that in connection with the Government of Australia, the name of Hughes will live for ever. (Government laughter.)

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I am surprised at the arguments used by hon. members opposite. Earlier in the evening the hon. member for Murilla argued very strongly that the cattle producers of the State should get 25s. per 100 lb. for their cattle.

Mr. MORGAN: I did not say that.

Mr. COLLINS: In speaking on this vote, the same hon. member said that the office of the Commissioner of Prices should be abolished.

Mr. MORGAN: I did not say you should fix the price of cattle. I stated what they could be produced for.

Mr. COLLINS: On the one hand, the hon. member asked the Government to make arrangements in Europe so that the cattlemen could get a good price for their cattle.

Mr. MORGAN: I said a living price.

Mr. COLLINS: Later on the hon. member said he did not believe in having a Commissioner of Prices, and that he believed the office should be abolished. In other words, the cattlemen want the Government to do something which will give them a good price for their beef.

Mr. MORGAN: That is not price-fixing; that is the market price.

Mr. COLLINS: But the hon. member does not want the Commissioner of Prices to stop the exploitation of the food of the people here. That is contradictory.

Mr. MORGAN: Not at all.

Mr. COLLINS: I am one of those who believe in price-fixing, and have never hesitated to say so from the time the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Bill was brought

in. I say that everyone should be paid for his labour, and you can only do that by fixing the price of the product. I am one of those who believe that every one is a consumer, therefore he ought to be a producer; and, if he is not a producer, he is of no use on this planet. Hon. members opposite are inconsistent about price-fixing. They want this Government to assist in getting the Commonwealth Government to fix a price for their sugar, which is a right thing to do, and they want the Government to assist in fixing the price of their wheat, butter, cheese, and other commodities, which is a sound principle, inasmuch as it is giving to the producer the values of his products. It is also right that the Government should appoint a Commissioner of Prices, who should be enabled to say to certain merchants who are carrying on business, "You shall not be allowed to exploit the masses of the people by charging them more than they should be charged." There is nothing wrong in that proposal; it is only a common-sense proposal. The world is going to move on, in my opinion, in the direction of price-fixing. Members of the Country party are very inconsistent. If they want a good price for their products, they should also see that the people who consume the products get a fair deal, and not allow a few people to get wealthy. We know how big fortunes are built up by merchants or exploiters in connection with the exchange of commodities between the producer and consumer in Australia. The Commissioner of Prices is here to stop the building up of those large fortunes by fixing prices of commodities. The fact that we have a Commissioner of Prices in existence has a moral effect upon those who sell the different commodities which people have to use. Even if he does not fix a price, the fact that traders know he is there stops them from charging the prices they would charge if he was not there. The Commissioner of Prices has saved the State, not only hundreds of thousands of pounds, but perhaps millions of pounds, since he was appointed. I do not want to go to Victoria for my arguments. We are doing very well in Queensland. We are leading the way in the Commonwealth, and we ought to be proud we are living in Queensland, and that we have a Labour Government who have placed on the statute-book a measure to stop the exploitation of the masses of the people. In regard to the fixing of the price of fertilisers, I had a request from the Bowen farmers to try to get that done, and the price was fixed. The farmers of Bowen thanked me and one of them sent me a letter, from which this is an extract—

[8.30 p.m.]

"Sir,—I am only an ordinary working farmer, and I would like you to give us some assistance in something as you have been helping us a little in the past."

Here is a working farmer who admits that we have done something.

Mr. MORGAN: Very little.

Mr. COLLINS: Is it not better to do a little than to do nothing? When the hon. gentleman's Government were in power they did nothing to save the people from being exploited. We did something, and we get the thanks of the workers and the farmers also, because they recognise that something is being done to stop the exploiting class from becoming millionaires. We know how the

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exploiting class became millionaires in the United States, and, as our population increases, we should have millionaires in the State of Queensland if we did not introduce legislation like this and have a Commissioner of Prices to fix a fair price for the consumers.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): During my absence from the Chamber I understand the leader of the Opposition made some reference to a speech made by me at the Trades Hall in reference to price-fixing. It is not the first time that that speech has been referred to, and I make no apology for what I said on that occasion. We all know that speeches have been made by other Labour men besides myself, and they have been quoted by the Press, but they only refer to that portion of the speech which suits them. I have no need to apologise or to make any defence of price-fixing, nor do I make any apology for what I said on that occasion. What I said was said at a time and place which I thought justified my saying it. I was speaking to the representatives of workers in the Trades Hall at their annual gathering, and I will quote what I said as reported by the "Daily Standard." It is not all that I said, but it is a good report of what I said on that occasion. Speaking on the power of money, I said—

"All that the Commonwealth Government needed to do was to place private banks in the same relationship to the Commonwealth Bank as were private banks in England to the Bank of England. When the nation controlled the monetary system it controlled every industrial monopoly in the land, but before this came about they must first get a Labour Government in power in the Commonwealth. (Applause.) In his book, 'The Money Power,' Frank Anstey had said: 'This group of speculators (financiers), properly designated and distinguished as the money power, controls the whole mechanism of exchange, and all undertakings in the field of industry are subject to its will and machinations. It wields an unseen sceptre over thrones and populations, and bloody slaughter is as profitable to its pockets as the most peaceful speculation. No nation can be really free where this financial oligarchy is permitted to hold dominion, and no democracy can be aught but a name that does not shake it from its throne.'

"Mr. J. Bryan (New York) said: 'The money power preys upon the nation in times of peace, and conspires against it in the hours of its calamity. Conscienceless and compassionless, it enervates its votaries, while it impoverishes its victims. It can only be overthrown by the awakened conscience of the nation.' Another authority stated: 'Finance is the arbiter of war and peace, the master of despotisms, the unseen power in democracies.' This power would have to be dealt with before much genuine progress could be made."

Then, in regard to price-fixing, my remarks are reported as follows:—

"VIEWS ON PRICE-FIXING.

"His views on price-fixing differed from those held by other members of the party. During the war most Governments had

found it necessary to prevent increased profits being made, and only on the previous day the Government had found it necessary to take action to prevent Mr. Badger from getting more out of the public by increased tram fares than they thought was warranted. (Applause.) At the same time, he regarded price-fixing as only an expedient, and economically unsound. They should keep in mind the objective of production for use, and not for profit, and while they had production for profit, price-fixing might operate to the disadvantage of both producer and consumer."

I make no apology for saying that, because in my opinion that was an obvious truth. St. Augustine said—

"He that conceals a useful truth is equally guilty with a propagator of an injurious falsehood."

I quite agree with that. I want to quote from Professor R. H. Tawney, who says—

"The first safeguard against exploitation of the consumer by the producer is to turn all men into producers. Till that is done it is useless to preach the 'claims of society,' because there is not one society, but two—that of those who live by labour and that of those who live on it. Confront producer with producer, and they will be in a position to hold each other in check. Hence the importance of extinguishing functionless property. To put it otherwise, if the 'consumer' is to be protected, one must get rid of consumers who are not producers."

Until we have all the farmers and all the workers organised in Queensland, when the farmers will see that they get reasonable prices for their products, and the workers will get returns they are entitled to—until these organisations are able to settle the difference between their different sections—price-fixing is necessary as an expedient. I am fortified in my remarks by the report made by the leader of the Labour party in South Africa, who was a member of a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the cost of living in South Africa. He pointed out that almost every step taken to restrict profits and prices gave rise to all sorts of other difficulties, the effect of which, in some cases, might be even more undesirable than the original position. He pointed out that this was particularly so in regard to primary products. I contend, with regard to fixing prices in Queensland, that the operations of the Commissioner of Prices for the last year have been in the interests of the farmers and workers of this State.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: As has been pointed out by the Premier, no less a sum than £720,000 has been saved to the people of Queensland by the operation of price-fixing in this State. I want to ask the members who claim to represent the farmers if they object to these items. I am going to read out the savings of the different items dealt with by the Commissioner during the year. The saving in bread to the consumer of Queensland amounts to £175,000. I want to know if the so-called friends of the farmers and workers object to that. After the farmer

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has been paid his price for wheat, and the miller has been paid his price for flour, is it not fair for the Commissioner of Prices to say to the baker, "You shall not charge the people an exorbitant price for bread"? The saving in flour amounted to £25,000; the saving in meat amounted to £70,000; and the saving in groceries amounted to £245,000.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Most of those were reduced before the Commissioner reduced them. All he had to do was to register them.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This is not the first time that that statement has been made in this Chamber, and there is some truth in it. The reason is obvious. It is impossible for the Commissioner to arrive at his decisions without making full inquiries. Immediately he starts to make inquiries, the people concerned know what is coming, and in many cases they reduce the price before he gives his verdict. Again, a policeman is not judged by the number of prosecutions. In some towns there are not any prosecutions, but at the same time the officer is doing good work. The value of such an officer in this State is quite apparent. His services have been of great advantage to the farmers and workers of this State, and there is no justification for the criticism levelled against him at all. The saving in drapery amounted to £67,000 a year, and the saving in fertilisers to £11,000. Will the friends of the farmers have anything to say about the amount saved in the price of fertilisers? For patent medicines, fuel, timber, galvanised iron, tram fares, and other commodities there was a saving of £126,000, making a total saving to the people, owing to the work of the Commissioner of Prices, of £720,000 for the year. With regard to tram fares, action was taken two days before Mr. Badger was going to raise the tram fares. I personally consulted the Crown Law Office, and the Cabinet found that we had sufficient information to satisfy us that Mr. Badger was charging sufficiently high tram fares. The Commissioner of Prices was asked to take action, which he did, with the result that the people of Brisbane have been saved £50,000 in tram fares alone. I want to know if the metropolitan members object to the action taken by the Commissioner of Prices on that occasion. The criticism levelled against that officer is most unfair. My opinion is that he is carrying out important duties as an impartial Commissioner of Prices, and he is a very capable and honourable officer. Any man who takes advantage of parliamentary privilege to abuse an officer who carries out his duties as conscientiously as Mr. Ferry does is not fit to sit in this Chamber.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumbidgee*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat might just as easily have put his hand in his bag and brought out figures to show that the Commissioner of Prices has cost Queensland just as much as his own figures show he has saved Queensland. There is only one item in his figures on which you can depend—that is, the tram fares—and the Government could have done that without the aid of the Commissioner at all, just in the same way as they passed the Proxy Voting Bill or altered the Constitution of Queensland. There was no need to spend thousands of pounds to regulate tram fares. Nobody in his senses will advocate that price-fixing as a principle will accomplish all that hon. members opposite claim for it. They know

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that it is impossible to regulate prices. The producer and the consumer would act so contrary to one another that it would be impossible. It never has been done, and it never will be done. The whole thing is absurd, and hon. members know it is absurd. They know that every attempt to regulate prices is a sop to a certain class—sometimes the workers and sometimes the farmers. All these things are only temporary. It was only the war that warranted the fixing of prices.

Mr. COLLINS: They had to socialise things to carry on the war.

Mr. WARREN: Socialism only makes war on its victims. Socialists never get into real war, because they have not the courage of their convictions. The Government are telling the worker that they are doing something for him, and they are telling the producer that they are doing something for him. How can they be doing something for the two? The thing is absurd. They cannot be working for dark and for light at the same time. The two things are as opposite as day and night. As primary producers, we should get as much as we possibly can for our produce; but we do not believe that that is going to be obtained by price-fixing.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What about the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act?

Mr. WARREN: The price of sugar-cane is altogether different. It is entirely on its own, and the price is fixed solely because of the white Australia policy. We must have sugar produced in Australia, and it must be produced by white and not by coloured labour. Sugar was being produced by black labour, but the Commonwealth decided upon a white Australia, and those coloured people were sent back to their native islands. We found the growers were not getting sufficient to pay them for producing sugar. Consequently, that Act came into force. But are we going to raise the price of butter to such a height that it will be possible for the producers to make money out of the industry and to put something aside, as the Premier said the other night? The Government have no more intention of doing that by fixing the price or by other Government action than they have of going to heaven or the other place. Hon. members opposite know that the best thing for the worker is cheap and abundant food. They have studied the subject more than any other class of persons, and they know the story they advance is mere humbug. The only way in which the farmer is ever going to get anything out of it for himself is by establishing his own industries. At present the people are being starved off the land.

Mr. FORDE: Hundreds of them are going on the land in my district.

Mr. WARREN: The Government are practically driving people off the land, and the Commissioner of Prices is doing nothing to make the lot of the people on the land more attractive. If the price of butter were fixed at a level which would enable a farmer to make a living, it would be 10s. instead of 2s. per lb.

Mr. FORDE: They should get more for their cream.

Mr. WARREN: That is a nice admission.

Mr. FORDE: The "dry" shareholders are making the profits now.

Mr. WARREN: If the Commissioner is not doing any good for the farmer, what good is he doing? I dissociate myself from any personal attack on the Commissioner: I am referring to him as the instrument—as a branch of this department. Is he doing any good for the man on the land?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, what about fertilisers?

Mr. WARREN: He is sending fertilisers out of the country, he is fixing the price at such a figure—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You believe in the profiteer.

Mr. WARREN: No, I have always stood out against him. The hon. member is one who supports the profiteer. Everybody knows that the Commissioner of Prices is doing nothing to put men on the land, but is doing everything to drive the men off the land.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a deliberately untrue statement.

Mr. WARREN: It is the hon. gentleman who is making the untrue statement. What primary product has the Commissioner dealt with that has resulted in putting something into the farmer's pocket? He has not fixed the price of anything which has given him one penny extra.

Mr. FORDE: Fertilisers and galvanised iron.

Mr. WARREN: He is making it almost impossible for the farmer to get fertiliser. It is better for the meatworks, which are producing the only fertiliser which can be used in any quantity without destroying the land, to send it to Japan rather than have it used in Queensland.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not right.

Mr. WARREN: It is too true; yet it is far preferable to buy fertiliser from the meatworks than to allow it to go out of the State. We want all the fertiliser we can possibly get in the fruit districts, but we want it at a reasonable price. The only way is to stop its exportation and keep the meatworks going full swing. Price-fixing might be good as an emergency measure, but it not suitable in practical politics.

Mr. PAYNE (*Mitchell*): In telling the Committee that the members on the Government side were not sincere, the hon. member for Murrumba thought he had done something very good. The hon. member mentioned that he belonged to the primary producers. He is the class of man who "farms the farmer."

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WARREN: I pay more wages than you do.

Mr. PAYNE: He is the class of man who, having a dairy farm, has an unfortunate family working the greatest possible number of hours, while he reaps the benefit of the sweating of women and children.

Mr. WARREN: That is a deliberate lie.

Mr. PAYNE: Yet he has the cast-iron front to rise and say that he is a farmer.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Murrumba to withdraw the statement "That is a deliberate lie."

Mr. WARREN: I withdraw, in deference to your wishes, Mr. Pollock, but the statement is untrue.

Mr. PAYNE: Has the hon. member for Murrumba denied that he is working a dairy farm on the share system—that during the last twelve months he has had four or five different families on that farm?

Mr. WARREN: I have had only one.

Mr. PAYNE: I will take the hon. member's word that he has had only one. The hon. member tries to tell this Committee that he belongs to the primary producers. He is the class of man that the Labour party for all time has been trying to get rid of.

Mr. WARREN: That is quite true.

Mr. PAYNE: He thinks that, by speaking in innuendo and throwing stars across to this side, it is going to have an effect on the workers of Queensland so far as the Labour Government are concerned. I do not mind such men saying what they like about what the Labour Government have done, because I know very well that the average intelligent worker of Queensland knows without anyone telling him what the Labour Government have done for him during the last seven years.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I rise to a point of order. Has this anything to do with the vote?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member for Mitchell to confine his remarks to the vote under discussion. I have already allowed him considerable latitude.

Mr. PAYNE: So far as the Commissioner of Prices is concerned, the hon. member for Murrumba mentioned that he was not giving the cream producers a fair deal. As a matter of fact, neither the Commissioner nor the Government had anything to do with it. The co-operative dairy company at Caboolture and the big co-operative companies all over Queensland recently decided to give about 7d. or 8d. per lb. for the butter-fat contents while butter was 2s. a lb. We have heard a lot of talk about butter during this debate. As a matter of fact, it was the co-operative companies throughout Queensland that reduced the price of the butter fat content. I mentioned the matter to the manager of one of the biggest butter factories in Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: What is his name?

Mr. PAYNE: The manager in Caboolture said they had given more for the butter-fat content for some twelve or eighteen months previously, and when they manufactured the butter they did not get as much as they had given for the cream; consequently the producers had to suffer a slump. The Government had nothing to do with it.

Mr. MORGAN: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. PAYNE: I know full well what I am talking about. The co-operative butter factories in Queensland have regulated the price of cream. Can the hon. member deny that? If the co-operative concerns made a blunder in giving a big price for the cream, it is their own lookout. I resent very much any Opposition member hurling insults and slurs at Labour men, saying that we are not in earnest. If they have no other argument, they had better remain in their seats.

Mr. Payne.]

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumbidgee*): The hon. member for Flinders has made a personal attack upon me, and an untrue attack. There was not one word of truth in his statements.

Mr. PAYNE: Are you not working a farm on shares?

Mr. WARREN: I am not working a farm on shares.

Mr. PAYNE: Have you never done so?

Mr. WARREN: I have not worked a farm on shares for 12 months.

Mr. PAYNE: Simply because the grass is so bad that your cows have gone dry. (Loud laughter.)

Mr. WARREN: That shows the kind of twister that the hon. member is. I pay my dairy farmer £4 per week. I question whether the hon. member ever paid £4 a week in his life—or £4 in all his life.

Mr. PAYNE: I have paid £10 a week in wages.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WARREN: I do not wish to have any debate with the hon. member about what he has paid. I am quite willing to [9 p.m.] get a reference from the man working for me, if there is any necessity for it. The hon. member for Mitchell backed up everything I said with regard to price-fixing with respect to farmers. He said that it was the butter factories which were fixing the price.

Mr. PAYNE: I did not say anything of the kind. I said that it was the butter factories that regulated the price for butter fat content.

Mr. WARREN: That is exactly what I say. The hon. gentleman is not big minded enough to follow the logical reasoning of my argument. The butter factories are not responsible for the price. They are compelled, because of other circumstances, to declare a price which they would not otherwise declare.

Mr. HARTLEY: What are the other circumstances?

Mr. WARREN: The market value.

Mr. HARTLEY: Because they paid too much a year ago over in London.

Mr. WARREN: The world's parity governs the price. The Government have power to fix the price of butter for home consumption. They have fixed that price, and, what is more, they have confiscated the farmers' butter, with the result that the farmers have lost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Mr. W. COOPER (*Loswood*): The hon. member for Murrumbidgee has tried to mislead this Committee in connection with the fixation of the price of butter-fat for the producer.

Mr. WARREN: Butter-fat?

Mr. W. COOPER: Yes, what would the hon. member call it? When the Government relinquished the control of price-fixing of butter, the Queensland Dairy Company at Booval gave the farmers 7d. and 8d. a lb. for their butter-fat at the same time the price of butter to the consumer was fixed at 1s. 7d. per lb. Is that so?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No.

[Mr. Warren.

Mr. W. COOPER: If the hon. gentleman says that is not so, he does not know what he is talking about. The balance-sheet of the Queensland Dairy Company at Booval discloses that they had to reclaim a certain amount of money from the producers which was over and above what they had received for the butter. They did that in order to make up the difference between the amount paid and the amount realised by the factory. That applied to every factory throughout the State. When the Commonwealth Government were supplying the Imperial Government under contract at 27s. per cwt. the producers of Queensland were getting a higher price for butter-fat than any other State of the Commonwealth. Under the price-fixing system in Queensland 26s. per cwt. was paid to the producer.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): We have heard a good deal of "Yes-No" argument this afternoon.

Mr. W. COOPER: It has all come from hon. members opposite.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member who has just resumed his seat will be replied to very effectively by his own words from "Hansard." The Secretary for Agriculture started to take me to task in connection with a quotation from his speech of two years ago. He said on that occasion that price-fixing was economically unsound. While he still adheres to that position, he gives some sort of an explanation which I venture to say no one else but himself would understand.

Mr. COLLINS: All intelligent hon. members understood it.

Mr. VOWLES: Then I am sure the hon. member for Bowen would not understand it. The hon. gentleman started to confuse himself by starting off by telling the Committee that he could justify his advocacy of "production for use and not for profit."

Mr. COLLINS: Is not all production for use?

Mr. VOWLES: I cannot understand the scientific way the hon. gentleman is trying to turn those words. The representatives of country districts look at it in only one way. Socialisation of industry means production for use. The people in the country want to get a fair return for their production for the benefit of the people in the city, the same as the workers in the city desire to get a full return for the work that they do. I think that it was Josh Billings who said "Figures never lie, but some liars often figure." We have heard figures quoted to-night by the Premier and the Secretary for Agriculture. The Premier, in order to prove certain statements, once more quoted Knibbs's tables. I told him that he was confusing the matter and that he was not fair to the Committee, because he was introducing into the argument the question of household rent, which every child knows has, for many years, been to the advantage of Queensland, because the cost of building here is much less than in New South Wales, where they are constructing stone houses as against wooden houses constructed here. The Secretary for Agriculture, by way of justifying the price-fixing legislation and his department, started to point out that £750,000 had been saved to the people of Queensland by price-fixing. He might just as well have said £7,750,000, because he gave his own figures, estimated it

in his own way, and came to his own conclusions without any basis at all; and, when he was challenged, he pointed to the fact that the Government were able to show that on fertilisers there had been a saving of something like £10,000 to the consumer. That proves that what has been said by hon. members on this side in respect to the effect of the fixation of price of fertilisers is correct—that the producers of fertilisers are exporting their product out of Australia to the detriment of the farmers. They are getting a better price abroad than they are permitted to receive in Queensland.

The PREMIER: Why did the farmers ask for the price to be fixed, if that is the case?

Mr. VOWLES: The whole thing is economically unsound. If the fertilisers are sent away, the farmers' lands are suffering in consequence. The position should be reviewed.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not an argument against price-fixing. That is an argument against the Commonwealth Government allowing the fertiliser to be exported.

Mr. VOWLES: We have no power to control the Federal Government or to prevent any exportation. In one breath we have the Secretary for Agriculture saying that this department has been responsible for a decrease in prices, and then we have other hon. members on the other side saying that the reason why State stations have been a failure is because of the loss of market, and the tremendous slump in cattle, which is the aftermath of war. They state that there is a surplus of stock because there is no inducement for exportation. I admit that at the present time there is a shortage of killable cattle, but until recently there was a tremendous number of cattle in Queensland being sold at any price at all, because people had to get rid of them. As a natural sequence the price of cattle dropped from the grower right down to the butcher and the consumer, and the Government now turn round and tell you in one breath that they are losing money on the State stations as a result of this misfortune, and in the next breath they tell you that there is a decrease in the price of meat because it has been reduced by the Commissioner of Prices. How ridiculous! If these are the only arguments the Government can bring forward for retaining this department, then it is a very poor compliment indeed to the department.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): A member of Parliament wants to have a very good memory. The hon. member for Rosewood, when speaking in 1920, said—

"He did not think a fair price had been fixed. The primary producer, during the past five years, had not had a fair deal, not only from the Federal Government, but also from the State Government. He was at the Rockhampton Labour Conference in 1916, and he had opposed price-fixing under any consideration so far as dairying was concerned."

Yet to-night the hon. member made quite a different statement in regard to fixing the price of butter.

Mr. PAYNE: No.

Mr. MORGAN: In 1920 he stated that he did not believe in price-fixing. He also said

that the farmers had not got a fair deal from this Government, and only recently a circular was issued by two gentlemen who have recently become the friends of the Premier—I refer to Mr. Harris and Mr. Purcell, who are directors of a large co-operative company on the Downs, and who are hand in glove with the Premier in connection with his agricultural scheme. These gentlemen issued a report last year showing that, owing to the action of the Labour Government, the dairy farmers had lost £250,000 as a result of price-fixing.

Mr. PAYNE: No.

Mr. MORGAN: You cannot make a statement one day and then contradict it another day. The hon. member for Rosewood made one statement in 1920, and now he endeavours to turn round and contradict it; but his speech was reported in "Herald" for 1920. For five years the Labour Government have not been giving the primary producer a fair deal. If we recognise the principle of price-fixing, why not be fair all round? Why should it apply only to what may be termed the necessaries of life, such as butter, cheese, bread, etc.? It is just as important to fix the price of boots. What has the Commissioner of Prices done in regard to fixing the price of boots? It is just as important in regard to other articles. I say the Commissioner of Prices has not been consistent.

The Premier tried to draw a red herring across the trail when I referred to the prices charged by city hotels. The hon. gentleman referred to leading hotels where "jazz" evenings take place. I believe it is illegal for a "jazz" party to be held in an hotel. I suppose the Premier has attended more "jazz" parties than I have. I have never been to a "jazz" party at a hotel in my life, but I notice in the social columns of the Press that the Premier has been present at "jazzes," so evidently he can speak with authority. I do not intend that the hon. gentleman shall in any way misquote what I was referring to. The Premier has quoted certain figures, but I am doubtful whether he can name one hotel in the city of Brisbane where board can be obtained for less than £2 2s. per week.

The PREMIER: I say I can.

Mr. MORGAN: I know that in what may be called second-class hotels, or third-class hotels, board cannot be obtained at the price quoted by the Premier. It may be possible to obtain board at the rate quoted in boarding-houses, but country people who come to Brisbane for a week or two cannot get into boarding-houses.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him by the Standing Orders.

Mr. WALKER (*Cooroora*): As a good many hon. members have spoken to-night in connection with the butter industry, it is only fair to say that two years ago the Government did not give us a fair deal, but the Commissioner had nothing at all to do with the question for some considerable time. I am surprised at the want of knowledge on the part of some hon. members on the Government benches in regard to the butter industry. Some hon. members have spoken about "dry" shareholders.

Mr. FORDE: There are "dry" shareholders in connection with the Rockhampton butter factory.

Mr. Walker.]

Mr. WALKER: The amount of money they get can only be interest on the capital invested, and that would not amount to a ten pound note in a year. We know that some months ago reclamations had to be made. In other words, we had to pay back money that we received. That was due, not to the fault of the dairy companies in Queensland or to the fault of the farmers in Queensland; it was due to the Imperial Government setting free large stocks of cold storage butter of an inferior quality, which was sold at a considerably reduced rate. Naturally, we had to make good that money; but to talk about sixpence or sevenpence per pound for butter is ridiculous. At the present time, the company that I have the honour to be connected with paid 2s. 10½d. on last month's supply, for the simple reason that the butter realised a much higher price than the amount advanced. The dairy farmer to-day is making particularly good money, not through the Commissioner of Prices at all, but as a result of the high prices, and owing to the fact that we in Queensland are organised to such an extent that we were able to form a Queensland pool. Prior to that we had a Queensland and a New South Wales pool, and we were able to control prices for the benefit of the farmers. In fairness to the Commissioner of Prices, I wish to say that he realised, probably owing to the error he made some years ago, that we desired more generous treatment, and he did not interfere in any shape or form.

Mr. HARTLEY: The factories only paid 6d. or 7d. per pound six months ago.

Mr. WALKER: That was last January, when we had so many complaints with regard to the small price paid; but since then butter has realised more than the agents advanced, and we have made back payments to such an extent that one company paid a little over 3s.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member know that the suppliers to one Rockhampton factory asked the Commissioner of Prices to endeavour to award back pay to them?

Mr. WALKER: Yes, for the simple reason that, if the company at Rockhampton had followed the Premier's advice—I think the hon. member quoted my company when he was up there as having made back payments to those who supplied the article—they would have been doing the correct thing in the interests of the shareholders, because a company which does not give back pay is cheating the small man who goes through a dry period out of a certain money. For instance, a man may be a dairyman to-day and in three months' time he may be out of the industry. The butter which he supplies may realise a high price, and he is entitled to have the back pay even if he is a non-shareholder. That should be the law, and a company should be compelled to make that payment, but it should not be left to the will of any company. I just mention these phases of the question so as to have a correct report in "Hansard" in regard to the butter industry. The statements made to-night are wrong, and may mislead those people who are looking to Queensland as a place to settle in. The dairy companies in Queensland do not want price-fixing at all, and the Commissioner of Prices has realised that from the fact that he has not interfered with our business.

[Mr. Walker.

We are well able to control our particular business. If the Commissioner finds that we have become a monopoly, no doubt he will step in.

It is only fair to say that the Commissioner has done an enormous amount of good in connection with the bacon industry. When he found that we were not getting a fair price for our bacon, after we had interviewed him he immediately raised the price, showing that he is sympathetic in that direction.

The PREMIER: Hear hear!

Mr. WALKER: I take it that the duty of the Commissioner of Prices is not only to fix prices, but more particularly to interfere in connection with exploitation. I was against price-fixing at one time, but since the war I believe price-fixing has done a fair amount of good. If we see anybody taking advantage, or a particular producer not receiving a living wage, we should draw the Commissioner's attention to it. I believe that when we get back to normal conditions the services of the Commissioner of Prices will not be required, because the competition will be so keen in every industry that there will be no occasion for it. There is nothing better than competition to bring the price of every article down to its fair level.

I recognise that with regard to the meat trade great harm has been done to small men by price-fixing, and they have not received proper consideration. I know butchers who kill three or four bodies a week. Local conditions alter the aspect of affairs, and those men cannot live under the prices ruling to-day. Other men in Brisbane may be killing ten or twenty bodies a week. If the Commissioner had got a little more local information with regard to those individuals, he would have been more fair to them. At the present time they are not making what they have a right to make. You have to take into consideration not only the price ruling in Brisbane, but the convenience which these men are extending to customers by saving them from having to send miles for meat and having to put up with bad meat.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*): I was very pleased to hear the broad-minded remarks of the hon. member for Cooroora, whose remarks are always appreciated by the Committee. The hon. member said that the law should be altered with regard to what we call deferred payments to suppliers of butter factories. At the Southbrook factory there was a supplier called Cumiskey, who supplied butter fat to the Southbrook co-operative factory, and then left that factory and went to the Wyreema factory, which was a private concern. He foolishly left the co-operative factory. The directors of the Southbrook factory declared dividends, but called them deferred pay, so as to save income tax, and cut out this man, who supplied a good deal of fat to the factory, out of which they made butter to supply the English market. He could trace every ounce of his butter fat in the butter in that factory, and the directors, being annoyed with him, were in a position under the law to declare a dividend against the interests of this cream supplier. The hon. member for Cooroora wishes the law to be amended so that directors will not have the

power to deprive any supplier of these payments, and I support him in that. I was interested in the Southbrook case. We won the case in the police court, and it went to the District Court, and that court held that the directors had power to ignore the rights of the suppliers of cream and do as they liked.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member will connect his remarks with the vote.

Mr. BRENNAN: Hon. members opposite endeavour to draw me off the subject. The hon. member for Rosewood was quite consistent and logical when he said, in 1920, that he did not agree with price-fixing. To-night he complained of the method of the directors in paying out certain amounts to the producers, and later having to recover from the producers money they were not in a position to repay.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I am surprised at the remarks of Opposition members in connection with price-fixing. They complain about prices being fixed in connection with produce, but we never hear them complain about prices being fixed when workers' wages are being reduced. They are quite willing that workers' wages should be reduced. (Opposition dissent.) We find that wages have been reduced, but hon. members opposite are quite satisfied with that kind of price-fixing.

Mr. VOWLES: Did you not support it the other day?

Mr. GLEDSON: I have never supported the reduction of wages.

Mr. VOWLES: Yes you did, by 5 per cent.

Mr. GLEDSON: I want to show the people of Queensland who are their friends, and refer to what is being done in Victoria at the present time by the so-called friends of the farmers. How are they getting on in Victoria? On taking up yesterday's "Queensland Times" I find these words—

"POLITICS AND BUTTER.

"When Labour votes were predominant in Queensland politics, little consideration was shown by the Government to the man on the land. Now the boot is on the other foot, and the politicians are currying favour with the farmers. The butter committee in Brisbane is maintaining the wholesale price of first-grade butter at 224s. a cwt., in addition to which 1s. 6d. is charged for each box. This is equivalent to more than 2s. a lb., and compares with 187s. a cwt. for choicest butter in Melbourne, or about 1s. 8d. a lb. It was expected that the Brisbane quotation would have been reduced last week. That was not done, however, but it is generally considered in the trade there that the price is too high. Retailers especially are becoming nervous owing to the discrepancy between State and London prices. According to latest advices from Brisbane, weather conditions in the dairying districts are unchanged; but, despite the dryness, an increase in production of butter is reported from all centres. Arrivals at Brisbane are now at their lowest, but a surplus is available for export."

We find the hon. member for Drayton and others, in 1919-20, complaining about the attitude this Government took up to prevent the middlemen sending away butter to Victoria and other places and obtaining big prices for it, and then raising the price in Queensland. They prevented one shipment of butter going away which would have meant £9,000 out of the pockets of the people of Queensland, and which would have gone into the middlemen's pockets.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Nonsense.

Mr. GLEDSON: All we could get at one time from the hon. member for Drayton was, "Give us London parity, and we will be quite satisfied." They do not want London parity now, but they say, "Give us the price they are getting in Melbourne." Now they are getting 4d. or 5d. per lb. over the Melbourne price, and still they complain they are not getting a fair deal. They have been left alone and are getting a fair deal. Directly the industrial workers take up the same attitude, and say, "We have a committee which has decided on fair wages, and we are going to have these wages," hon. members opposite complain about it. They use every method—military methods and every other kind—to try and get

[9.30 p.m.] the men to accept a lower wage. Now we want these men to be consistent. First they say they want London parity, and then later on they say they do not want London parity. One day they want the price ruling in Melbourne because it is 4d. or 5d. better than the Queensland price, and then, when the price drops in Melbourne, they do not want the Melbourne price. Let them be consistent. If they say the same thing to-day, to-morrow, and next day, we know they are honest. But when they keep changing their views and show they are not consistent, we know they are only trying to fool the farmers and consumers in Queensland. What I have quoted gives an idea of what they are getting under the Nationalist Government in Victoria for their butter. So far as the Queensland consumers are concerned, the Commissioner has prevented them from being exploited by the people who buy the butter and send it to Victoria, and then have it sent back here to be sold at the fixed price.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): The hon. member made a mistake when he said the profiteer was making £12,000 or £15,000 out of the butter, because in Queensland there is only one dealer that has any private interests in a butter factory in Queensland.

The PREMIER: But there are agents and dealers.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: But they only get a commission.

Mr. W. COOPER: What commission do you pay?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Two and a-half per cent. No one can maintain an office under that commission. The co-operative companies know that. No co-operative company is foolish enough to allow the private speculators to make a lot of money out of their butter. If they did, they would not deserve the confidence of the suppliers, and they would not be re-elected as directors. We are not out to cut down the worker's wages. We want him to get good wages, so that he will be able to pay a fair price for our foodstuffs.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bebbington.]

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The other night the Secretary for Mines said that in the coal industry there were too many coalminers engaged in the industry, and it was necessary to fix a price for coal, so that the men could earn a living wage in two or three days.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said that the hewing rate was fixed so that a man could earn sufficient in two or three days to keep him for a week.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Yes, he has to earn a week's wages in two or three days. I will show the interest that this Government take in the primary producers by quoting a question which I asked in this House on 1st September, 1915. On page 501 of "Hansard" for that year I asked the Premier the following question:—

"Seeing that the Price Board fixes a maximum price on dairy produce, will he give instructions to the board to fix a minimum price which will give those engaged in the industry a living wage."

To that the Premier replied—

"The Chief Secretary has no power to give any such direction."

The Commissioner has power to fix the price, yet the Premier said he had no power to give him instructions or to allow him to fix the price. Then, on page 403 of "Hansard" for the same year, Mr. Foley made use of the following words:—

"When I came here, butter was 2s. 1d. and 2s. 2d. per lb. in Brisbane, and in less than a week after the Government started operations it was 1s. 11d. per lb. If the hon. member had a big family like I have he would know what it meant to have 2d. per lb. taken off butter."

(Laughter.) Then, on page 81 of "Hansard" for the same year, we have the following—

"Mr. STEVENS (*Rosewood*): Is it a fact that the Government purchased 225 boxes of Maleny butter from the Farmers' Co-operative Distributing Company at 196s. per cwt. net ex store?"

"The Premier: Yes.

"Mr. STEVENS: Has the butter been sold by the Government?"

"The Premier: Yes.

"Mr. STEVENS: To whom, and what was the price realised?"

"The Premier: One hundred boxes have been sold to McKeever and Company, Melbourne, at 220s. per cwt. f.o.b. Brisbane; the remainder has been utilised by Government departments."

McKeever and Company sold this butter shortly afterwards at 232s. per cwt. If it had been left to the co-operative companies to deal with in their own way, they would have managed their business a great deal better than the Government did, and they would have got more for it.

Question put and passed.

INTELLIGENCE AND TOURIST BUREAU.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*) moved—

"That £2,740 be granted for 'Intelligence and Tourist Bureau.'"

[*Mr. Bebbington.*

Mr. FORDE (*Rockhampton*): Before the vote goes through I want to say a few words in regard to the publication of a new booklet on Central Queensland. The last booklet was published in 1914. Great developments have taken place in Central Queensland since then, and the statistics contained in that book are to-day out of date, particularly in regard to land settlement and the industries which are being carried on in that part of the State. For instance, to-day cotton is one of the chief industries in Central Queensland. There have been thousands of acres of additional land thrown open for settlement. No mention is made of it in the present booklet on Central Queensland. Many parts of the district in 1914 were undeveloped, and to-day they have been developed to an advanced stage, and intending settlers cannot place any reliance on the out-of-date book that is at present issued by the bureau with regard to Central Queensland. I will show the wonderful progress made in one industry alone—namely, the cotton industry.

At 9.40 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. FORDE: The year before last in the Dawson Valley district cotton was grown on only 250 acres, whereas last season cotton was harvested from 2,500 acres, and in Central Queensland next season cotton will be picked from approximately 60,000 acres. The result of this progress has been that there is a great demand for land in Central Queensland. People are going there from different parts of Australia, and it is necessary that they should have an up-to-date booklet on the district. I would also urge that a separate booklet be prepared on the Dawson Valley, dealing specially with the cotton industry, and giving particulars as to the land suitable for cotton-growing, the details of the guarantee, and so on. I think another booklet might be prepared on the Upper Burnett lands and the Callide Valley, dealing with the different kinds of soils and crops for which they would be suitable, whilst a special booklet might be published on the Dawson Valley water conservation and irrigation scheme. The Premier was good enough to give Central Queensland members an opportunity of going with him over the wonderful lands that are to be opened up by the Rannes to Castle Creek branch railway and the further branch to Delusion Creek. Such a booklet would be very helpful and would advertise the wonderful opportunities which Central Queensland affords to intending settlers.

I am pleased to notice that an additional £1,000 is placed on the Estimates for advertising Queensland. I am one of those who believe that we do not spend sufficient in advertising our State and its wonderful resources and the assistance we give to intending settlers. The additional £1,000 will be money well spent. I am only sorry it is not more. My experience in meeting settlers from other parts of Australia and putting before them the opportunities we give to settlers is that many of them are induced to go to Central Queensland. If we had up-to-date literature and statistics to give them, we could get a considerable number of additional settlers. We might take a leaf out of the book of the authorities in America, who spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in advertising, their watchword being that they should boost their wonderful resources and get the right people there. We should boost our country more, and teach other people

what we have in this State, and the ready assistance we are prepared to give them. Too often do we find misrepresentation and abuse of Queensland, too many people are ready to defame the State. I believe there is scope for a good journalist to write up Queensland and her wonderful potentialities.

I must at this stage congratulate Mr. T. C. Troedson on the excellent work he is doing. I had the opportunity of travelling round with the British Empire Exposition Mission and meeting Mr. Troedson at different points, and he is the right man in the right place. I notice that a sum of £3,000 is put on the Estimates for preliminary expenditure in connection with that exposition. I am pleased to see that, because I had the opportunity of accompanying the mission to Central Queensland and showing them what we produce, and pointing out our various industries and taking them through our cotton lands. They were greatly impressed, and will go back to the other side of the world and speak of Central Queensland in a very favourable manner.

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out to the hon. member that that item is under the head of "Miscellaneous Services."

Mr. FORDE: Yes, but the officer in charge of the Tourist Bureau took that mission up there. They did very useful work, and they will make Queensland and Australia better known to the people on the other side of the world. I have to ask that the Sydney branch of the Intelligence and Tourist Bureau be brought up to date. I again urge that the booklets I have mentioned should be published. I want up-to-date information, and more money spent in advertising the wonderful resources of Central Queensland and the opportunities we afford to intending settlers, because we want hundreds and hundreds more on the land growing cotton and making Central Queensland the true cottonopolis of Australia.

Question put and passed.

MUSEUM, BRISBANE.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—
"That £3,054 be granted for 'Museum, Brisbane.'"

Question put and passed.

PUBLIC LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—
"That £1,782 be granted for 'Public Library of Queensland.'"

Question put and passed.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—
"That £6,988 be granted for 'Public Service Commissioner.'"

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): There is one matter in connection with which I would like to make a passing reference. We have had a report from the Commissioner, but I find in it no table of officers appointed under the special provisions of the Act without examination. I think we should have that information. Ordinary members of the public service must qualify by examination, and we should know exactly for what reason any others have been appointed and the qualifications they have. It cannot be a very large

table. The Public Service Commissioner has to carry the burden of many of the sins of omission and commission of the Government, of retrenchment, of victimisation, and so on, and I think the Government should take their share of the responsibility.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): It is becoming more difficult each year to prepare an intelligible table showing the admissions to the public service that are not made by way of examination, because the conditions are governed by awards and industrial agreements. Last year there were practically no admissions to the clerical or professional divisions of the service on certificates showing there was no one in the service capable of filling the position. For that reason no special mention of it has been made in the report.

Question put and passed.

THURSDAY ISLAND.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—
"That £281 be granted for 'Thursday Island.'"

Mr. GREEN (*Townsville*): Have any better facilities been made for shipping at the port of Thursday Island? For some time past that Northern outpost of Queensland—one of our most important outposts—has been practically deprived of shipping facilities because there has not been sufficient lighting in connection with the port, and many oversea vessels lie outside and do not go into the harbour—a harbour which is quite safe and which is capable of holding the largest shipping that comes to Australia. Certainly, it is a small centre, but it is capable of a great deal of development in connection with the various products that are found on our northern coastline from Thursday Island down to Cape Capricorn. We could work up a very fine export trade in those marine products. Last session I asked the then Treasurer (Mr. Fihelly) whether anything could be done, and received what to a certain extent was an evasive reply. It would be to the advantage of the State and to the credit of the Government if they would make that an important shipping port by providing an opportunity for oversea vessels to enter.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I am afraid I cannot throw very much light on the subject. The matter has not been brought specifically before my notice, and no protest has been made to me in recent months.

Mr. GREEN: I spoke on the matter last year.

The PREMIER: I was not aware of that. There was a difficulty some months ago. The Thursday Island people were unable, through inadequacy of shipping, to get certain goods carried to Thursday Island. An arrangement was made on one occasion to have a vessel call there. The Eastern vessels call there for their own convenience—replenishing their water supply and other matters—and in that way the Thursday Island people are pretty well served. With regard to the expansion of the industries that are being carried on with Thursday Island as a centre, very considerable progress is being made at the present time, and I have heard no criticism whatever.

Question put and passed.

Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

“That £37,525 be granted for ‘Miscellaneous Services.’”

There are some changes in this vote. The subsidy for the steamer service between Brisbane and the Gulf ports, which was arranged the year before last, still stands. The appropriation asked for is the same as that asked for last year. Although a lesser amount was actually expended last year, it is expected that the full amount will be expended this year.

“Advertising the State” is increased by £1,000, because it is intended to do a little more advertising in an endeavour to resuscitate the tourist traffic to North Queensland.

Expenditure for the benefit of returned soldiers and cost of services rendered to patriotic funds has been reduced to £20,000. Last year £45,000 was appropriated, but only £31,000 was expended, and it is a diminishing obligation. It is expected that £20,000 will be quite sufficient to meet the requirements of the year.

We are asking to be provided with £2,525, which is Queensland's quota towards the appointment of a Trade Commissioner in the East. All the mainland States are participating in that.

The preliminary expenses in connection with the British Empire Exhibition will absorb £3,000. Queensland's quota will probably run into anything up to £15,000 by the time the exhibition is over, but only £3,000 will be required during this financial year. That exhibition, hon. members no doubt are well aware, will be held in England in April, 1924. All the States and the Commonwealth are participating. The cost to the Commonwealth will exceed £50,000. It is understood that it will result in very good advertising for Australia. All the dominions are participating.

We are asking for £1,000 to provide for the expenses of a Royal Commission to inquire into further sugar-mill sites in Queensland. There is no necessity for me to dwell upon that beyond saying that the Commission will require to go into the question of the location of the most suitable sites for the sugar-mills that undoubtedly will require to be built—at least one.

Mr. GREEN: Are you throwing over the old Commission's report?

The PREMIER: No. The last Commission's report was made in 1916, if I remember aright. On account of the rapid development of North Queensland, it is necessary to get the latest advice before we commit ourselves to the location of the sites. Considerable development has taken place in the last six years in North Queensland, and it is well to have further inquiry, more especially as new districts are asking that they shall be selected as the sites for the sugar-mills. I do not say that that will lead to the abandonment of the recommendations of the previous Commission. The Commission will probably be on the same basis as the last Commission. It will consist of a police magistrate as chairman—perhaps Mr. Harris, Mr. Dean, or one of the police magistrates who can be allotted to that work—with Mr. Salisbury, Lands Commissioner, who is well acquainted

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with the Northern coastal lands, and Mr. Easterby, who is a well recognised authority upon sugar culture.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): This vote is of great importance. The money spent in connection with subsidising a steamer service to the Gulf is necessary and money well spent.

We want to make the North [10 p.m.] attractive, and to preserve the White Australia policy, and, therefore, we must give the people there access to the necessities of life. I remember the history of the “Douglas Mawson.” The State enterprise in that connection has been a huge failure, and now we have to fall back on private enterprise and subsidise it. There is an increase of £1,000 in connection with advertising the State. I would like to draw the Premier's attention to certain articles which appeared in the “Daily Mail,” and I would also like some information with respect to our old friend Mr. Randolph Bedford. The “Daily Mail” of 9th November, 1921, states—

“OFF TO AMERICA.

“MR. BEDFORD'S TRIP.

“Is he on Government Duty!

“The statement that Mr. Randolph Bedford, M.L.C., and Miss Harrie Nowland, two journalists, had received commissions on behalf of the Government to undertake State publicity work in America was referred to Mr. Gillies (Acting Premier) yesterday.

“Mr. Gillies said that Mr. Bedford had left Brisbane on Saturday for Sydney en route to America. He knew that he had had a talk with Mr. Theodore recently, but could not say if he had a commission on behalf of the Government on the lines suggested.

“Mr. Gillies did not know, either, if Miss Nowland had a commission.”

On the following day the “Daily Mail” contained this paragraph—

“QUITE WRONG!

GOVERNMENT COMMISSION DENIED.

“Mr. Randolph Bedford was with the Premier of Queensland (Mr. Theodore) in Sydney to-day, when the suggestion that the Queensland Government was despatching publicity agents to America was mentioned to them. Mr. Randolph Bedford said there was nothing in the statement.

“The suggestion that Mr. Randolph Bedford had a commission from the Queensland Government is quite wrong, Mr. Theodore said, ‘it is also wrong to say that anybody at all has such a commission. Mr. Bedford will leave for America soon on a private mission, and I have asked him to inquire into a certain matter.’”

I am very anxious to know what the item of £2,000 for advertising the State last year comprises. I want to know, in particular, whether Mr. Randolph Bedford did get any payment for publicity work on behalf of Queensland while he was in America or elsewhere, and also what the lady mentioned in the same paragraph received. Mr. Randolph Bedford, while he was here as an M.L.C., received certain payments which were always covered up. We could never understand why

he was here. He was a journalist imported from New South Wales, and appointed to the Upper House with apparently no occupation to follow save that of a journalist.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He was an old North Queenslander.

Mr. VOWLES: He was in North Queensland many years ago. He came into Queensland, and disappeared as suddenly as he came. While he was here he received certain fees for publicity work for the Government.

The PREMIER: He received money from the Nationalist Government for publicity work, &c.

Mr. VOWLES: I do not care whom he got it from. He received fees even after there had been a denial that he was receiving them. In this article it is denied that he is a publicity agent for Queensland. All I want to do is to find out the truth. What did he get? Was he a publicity agent? What fees did he receive, and what were his particular functions? What does this article refer to when it says that he was to inquire into a certain matter on behalf of the Queensland Government? Knowing Mr. Randolph Bedford, as I know him, I am certain he would not be doing that for nothing.

The vote for the Royal Humane Society of Australasia and the vote for the Royal Society of Queensland are the same. The expenditure for the benefit of returned soldiers is a diminishing quantity, and only £20,000 are asked for this year, as against £45,000 last year. The Premier did not give us any information as to the expenses of the Commonwealth Prickly Pear Board, for which purpose £2,000 are asked. The same amount was voted last year, and I would like to know if that is a recurring expenditure. I would also like to know how much of last year's vote was utilised in connection with the services of the board. I notice also that there is an amount of £2,525 for the expenses of the Australian Trade Representative in the East. I understand that is in accordance with an arrangement between the Commonwealth Government and the various States; the Commonwealth Government bears a proportion of the expense and the States bear their proportion on a per capita basis.

There is one item that seems a rather strange one, and that is "Allowance to the Lieutenant-Governor, £950." Probably you, Mr. Kirwan, heard a certain gentleman who occupies that position to-day state a few years ago, from the very spot on which I now stand, that the position of Governor was an effete one and quite unnecessary. How times have changed! Here is a Government to-day, which is supposed to be practising economy, making provision for £950 per annum in the nature of an annuity for the future for a gentleman who occupies a position which is a sinecure. In the past it has been customary for the Chief Justice of the State to carry out the functions of Lieutenant-Governor.

The PREMIER: No—not Lieutenant-Governor. Sir Arthur Morgan occupied that position for several years.

Mr. VOWLES: Perhaps not in the immediate past, but previously it was customary for the Chief Justice to fill the position of Lieutenant-Governor, and there was no salary attached to the office except that he received half the combined salaries when

the Governor was absent from the State. Where is the necessity for the present provision? Why should the Governor not have the power to appoint a proxy? He might appoint me. He might appoint you, Mr. Kirwan. (Laughter.)

Mr. W. COOPER: There is no fear of him appointing you. (Renewed laughter.)

Mr. VOWLES: I do not think there is. He might appoint me as his adviser. (Laughter.) I do not see how the Government can have the temerity to ask this Committee to vote £950 to provide an annuity for one of their friends, who presumably has carried out his part of the contract—I do not wish to say more than that. I do not wish to attack the Lieutenant-Governor as such; but we know what was the position in the past, and no doubt he is now granted an annuity on account of what he has done; and the Government now ask us to consent to it, in face of the fact that we know this gentleman is over 70 years of age. We know these very gentlemen opposite said that the judges of the Supreme Court were incapable of fulfilling their duties because of their age, and yet we are asked to agree to this vote which is in direct opposition to the principles this Government put on the statute-book—that once a man is over 70 years of age his services should be dispensed with.

The PREMIER: There is no such thing as an annuity provided.

Mr. VOWLES: It amounts to it. Why should they pick on a gentleman who is over 70 years of age, and at the same time dispense with the services of the judges? If it is necessary to practise economy and deduct 5 per cent. from the salaries of struggling public servants with families, and with big responsibilities, why appoint a Lieutenant-Governor? That is one of the items we can economise on. The Government have attacked a whole section of the public service in order to save £15,000. They have disgraced themselves from the fact that they have broken agreements and promises in the past; they have undone agreements which have been registered in the Industrial Arbitration Court; they have done those things which we are told on principle should not be done; they have broken sacred agreements entered into, all in the cause of economy, and yet at the same time, instead of practising economy, they create a post which will be a sinecure.

The PREMIER: Do you want us to dismiss a Lieutenant-Governor who is appointed by the King?

Mr. VOWLES: This very gentleman wanted to get rid of the Governor altogether. If we look at their platform, we find that it includes the abolition of the office of State Governor; yet now they want to create two Governors. I am altogether opposed to that vote, and I am prepared to vote against it.

The PREMIER: Do you know that the Lieutenant-Governor's Commission is signed by the King's own hand?

Mr. VOWLES: I remember Mr. Randolph Bedford saying the same about his appointment to the Legislative Council.

The PREMIER: Mr. Randolph Bedford was not appointed by the King.

Mr. VOWLES: I am opposed to the expenditure of that money, because I think

Mr. Vowles.]

it is unnecessary, and that the money could be better spent in other directions. With regard to the proposed new sugar mills and the Commission to be appointed, I agree that that should be done, and I trust that the Commission will be impartially formed.

The PREMIER: It will be quite impartial.

Mr. VOWLES: I have heard that Mr. Harris is to be the chairman, and I think he is one of the straightest men in the world; but I do not know who the other gentlemen are. I have had letters from Northern people, who tell me that it has come to light that certain people are prepared to sell the areas in which these mills are to be established.

The PREMIER: That is a wild guess.

Mr. VOWLES: I hope it is, because there would be great speculation in land values if that were the case. If we are going to have a Commission, let us have an impartial body. I do not want to see people making money on the sale of property by getting inside information. We know what has happened in the past.

Mr. RIORDAN (*Burke*): I want to thank the Government for establishing the Gulf steamer service. The Government got a great deal of abuse over their sympathetic treatment of the Gulf people in the past. I remember that in previous sessions, when the "Douglas Mawson" was trading to the Gulf, hon. members opposite ridiculed that arrangement, but the "Douglas Mawson" performed the work for which she was purchased. When the private shipping companies discontinued the Gulf service, the Government came to the rescue and sent the "Douglas Mawson" to feed the people in the Gulf country, who otherwise would have had to go to great expense in getting up their foodstuffs by teams. In thanking the Government for their sympathetic treatment, I am voicing the sentiments of the people in the Gulf country. This is the only Government they have received sympathetic treatment from.

Mr. J. JONES interjected.

Mr. RIORDAN: The hon. member's only argument is repudiation. He knows that a dredge was sent up to North Queensland to open up a port in the Gulf country, but after his friends had taken up land on the Norman river and sold it at an increased value the dredge was quickly taken away. The present Government have been most sympathetic to the Gulf country, and I am sure that in the near future, as a result of that sympathetic treatment, prosperity will be revived. On my recent visit to Normanton and Burketown the residents asked me to thank the Government for their sympathetic treatment of the Gulf country. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): Personally, I am pleased to see this subsidy for the steamer service to the Gulf; but, unfortunately, I cannot agree with all that the hon. member has said about the unsympathetic treatment extended by former Governments towards the North. I think that past Governments have shown the North great consideration.

Mr. RIORDAN: No one up there noticed it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I think that the traffic to the North should be maintained, but I do not think that the hon. member is right when he speaks of the criticism from this side. The criticism in regard to the purchase

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of the "Douglas Mawson" was in regard to the amount paid for the vessel, and not because it was purchased to keep open the traffic with the North. The Government paid a considerable amount more money for the "Douglas Mawson" than was justified. Everyone on this side agrees that it is an absolute necessity to maintain the communication with the North.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: We know that for years past the population of that part of the State has been dwindling, but it was not the fault of any Government that that state of affairs arose. Circumstances have arisen which have made it difficult for men to hold their own in the North and make a satisfactory living in the various pursuits in which they were engaged. If the payment of this subsidy will make the conditions better for those living in the North, then no one will be more pleased than members sitting on this side of the Chamber. Apart from party politics and party interests, we are all here for the interests of the State, and we all want to see the State progress and prosper. We want to see the North filled with a white population, and we want to see that the population there shall be maintained in the best comfort that can be provided for them. Personally, I look on the people in the North as heroes and heroines. They are right away from all the social comforts which we enjoy in the South. They are battling against long odds in endeavouring to keep their end up, and, therefore, they are deserving of every possible consideration which this Government or any Government can give them.

Mr. COLLINS: They are away from all the evil influences of city life.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is quite evident that since the hon. member for Bowen has come down to Brisbane the city influences are getting the better of him. When we hear of him coming out of the Queensland Club smoking a big, fat cigar, it is quite evident that the hon. member has fallen away from grace. (Laughter.)

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I rise to a point of order. It is untrue to say that I came out of the Queensland Club smoking a big fat cigar, as hon. members know that I never smoke. (Renewed laughter.)

Mr. TAYLOR: I have no wish to offend the hon. member for Bowen. There are other items in the vote which call for criticism. One is the amount paid to the Prickly-pear Investigation Board. It would be interesting to know what we get for that money. We know that the prickly-pear can be destroyed; but if it is going to cost ten times more than the land is worth, it is a very difficult proposition indeed. It would be interesting to know if any advancement has been made in these investigations, or whether we are gaining any knowledge which we did not previously have in this matter. Then we come to the investigation of the proposed unification of the railway gauges. I assume that that is in conjunction with the Commonwealth authorities.

The PREMIER: A Royal Commission.

Mr. TAYLOR: I know there is no vote this year, but I was anxious to know how it was conducted.

I believe in having representation of Australian trade in the East; but if you go back and trace the history of the various Government representatives to Eastern countries,

you have to write across it the one word "Failure." My opinion is that a real good hustling commercial traveller sent to represent Queensland would do more good than any Government representative, no matter how able. The trouble about the Government representatives in the past has been that they have not been good, hustling travellers. We simply got the usual long Government reports, and that was about the sum and substance of the results. I do not know what amount is involved in this case, or whether all the States contribute.

The PREMIER: All the States are contributing, and £12,500 is the cost.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is a pretty tall bill to pay for one man.

The PREMIER: More than one man.

Mr. TAYLOR: I suppose he has some officers associated with him. I suppose that if he gets an order for anything, it will be divided up amongst all the States; but if we had a representative of our own, I believe we would get better returns.

Then there is a sum of £950 as "Allowance to the Lieutenant-Governor." I am thoroughly opposed to that appointment. It is a pernicious principle to provide positions of this kind for members of Parliament or for members when they go out of Parliament. The principle was condemned by the Premier and his party when in opposition, but immediately the opportunity comes along they do not hesitate to make similar appointments. I suppose that, in addition to the salary of £950, if the Governor is away and the Lieutenant-Governor has to act, he will get a considerable proportion of the present Governor's salary in addition.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is wrong.

Mr. TAYLOR: Do I understand the Premier to say that, when the Lieutenant-Governor is acting in place of the Governor, he will get no more than £950?

The PREMIER: The hon. member is wrong in the statement he made.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am not speaking against the gentleman who has been appointed; but in several instances lately the Government have introduced this principle of perquisites for their friends.

The PREMIER: There is no justification for that statement at all.

Mr. TAYLOR: The hon. gentleman allowed certain perquisites to be retained by members of the Legislative Council after the abolition of that Chamber. The principle is a bad one, and it should be cut out.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: I am totally opposed to this appointment or any appointment of the kind being made.

The PREMIER: The appointment was made two and a-half years ago by the King.

Mr. TAYLOR: The hon. gentleman made it.

The PREMIER: No, I did not.

Mr. MORGAN: You advised the King.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is all very well for the Premier to say that the King made the appointment. Who asked the King to make it?

The PREMIER: The Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Mr. TAYLOR: Who asked him?

The PREMIER: The Governor.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Who advised the Governor? (Laughter.)

Mr. TAYLOR: The Premier is trying to justify a certain act which he does not believe in, although he is responsible for it. He is endeavouring now by quibble to get out of it and justify what he knows is wrong in principle.

The PREMIER: I am not quibbling, and I do not desire to get out of my responsibility.

Mr. TAYLOR: We have nothing to say against the provision of £3,000 in connection with the British Empire Exhibition. We want to see our State fully and properly represented at that exhibition. I think the amount which the Commonwealth are voting is about £25,000.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Commonwealth Government are providing £115,000.

Mr. TAYLOR: We feel sure that this money will be well spent in advertising Queensland in Great Britain, where we desire to be advertised as much as possible. We are anxious to see a stream of immigrants coming out to Queensland and Australia to fill our empty spaces and assist in the development of this great State. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done, and the greater the number of people from our own Empire that we have assisting us the better it will be for us and for the Empire. The last item is "Expenses of Royal Commission to Inquire into the Necessity for Additional Sugar Mills." We are not against that. I hope the Commission will not be one of parliamentarians.

Mr. COLLINS: What is your objection to parliamentarians?

Mr. TAYLOR: I think there are men outside Parliament who could do the work far better, so far as inquiring into public matters is concerned. When members of Parliament are appointed to these Commissions, there is a certain amount of influence brought to bear upon them by their friends and others; they are not free men, as are individuals who are not responsible to electors.

Mr. HARTLEY: You mean that you cannot pull them as easily as you can private individuals?

Mr. TAYLOR: Any Commission should be entirely free from Parliament or parliamentary influence. I think that the local authorities in the sugar-growing areas will be able to give valuable information to a Commission as to whether there is necessity for such mills; so that, when they are erected, they will be in the best possible location and will assist in the development of the particular areas in which they are located, as well as increase the value of the sugar industry.

At 10.30 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN said: Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307, I will now leave the chair and make my report to the House.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

The resumption of the Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.

Mr. Kirwan.]