

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 1922

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

"We, Morgan Lane and Ellis Murphy, legally qualified medical practitioners, hereby certify that the Honourable William McCormack, member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Cairns, is in such a state of ill-health, through no fault on his part, that he is unable, and in our opinion will, during a period of two weeks from the date hereof, be unable to attend any sittings of the House without gravely endangering his health.

"Given under our hands, at Brisbane, this nineteenth day of September, 1922."

"MORGAN LANE,

"A legally qualified medical practitioner.

"ELLIS MURPHY,

"A legally qualified medical practitioner."

"To the Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

"I, William McCormack, member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Cairns, hereby notify you that I have endeavoured to secure, and, through no fault on my part, have failed to secure a 'pair' during the period of two weeks from the date hereof; and I hereby further notify you that I desire to vote as a member at every sittings of the House and of every Committee of the Whole House by means of a proxy—namely, the Honourable Edward Granville Theodore, member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Chillagoe, or, if the said the Honourable Edward Granville Theodore is not present, by another proxy—namely, the Honourable Alfred James Jones, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Paddington.

"Given under my hand, at Brisbane, this nineteenth day of September, 1922.

"W. McCORMACK.

"A member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland for the electoral district of Cairns."

TUESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER, 1922.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Marcc*) took the chair at 11 a.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 2.

ASSENT.

The SPEAKER: I have to report that I have this day presented to His Excellency the Governor Appropriation Bill, No. 2, for the Royal Assent, and that His Excellency was pleased, in my presence, to subscribe his assent thereto in the name and on behalf of His Majesty.

At a later hour of the day a message was received from His Excellency the Governor conveying His Excellency's assent to the Bill.

APPLICATION TO VOTE BY PROXY.

The SPEAKER: I have to announce that I have this day received the following medical certificate from Drs. Morgan Lane and Ellis Murphy, and a notification under the provisions of the Legislative Assembly Act Amendment Act of 1922 from the Hon. W. McCormack:—

"To the Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

[*Mr. Fletcher.*

DECLARATION BY MR. SPEAKER.

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the requirements of the Legislative Assembly Act Amendment Act of 1922, I declare that I am satisfied that the matters stated in the notification received by me this day from the Hon. W. McCormack are true.

UNIVERSITY SITE BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. J. Huxham, *Buranda*): I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to make provision for the enlargement of the University site, and for other consequential purposes."

The demand for an enlargement of the University site has been before us for some time. The "consequential purposes" referred to in the motion refer to an additional strip of land one chain in width for road purposes.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to by the House.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I beg to present the Bill, and move—

“That the Bill be now read a first time.”

Question put and passed.

The second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

WATER POWER BILL.

SECOND READING.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): The object of this Bill, as I explained when it was initiated in Committee, is to develop water power in Queensland. One must realise that the industrial progress of this State is bound up with the obtaining of a plentiful supply of cheap power. At one time it used to be considered that that country became industrially greatest which had the most extensive resources of coal and iron, and to that we might add to-day that country which has great resources of cheap water power. It is significant that the countries which in recent years have most developed their industrial resources have been countries which have done so as a result of the development of water power and the establishment of hydro-electric schemes. I need only refer in passing to the industrial development which has taken place in Norway, Canada, and some of the States of America, and in Tasmania, in our own Commonwealth. Take, for example, the development in Canada. I noticed recently in one of the engineering reviews that 90 per cent. of the industrial power used in that dominion is developed from water. Then we know the number of industries which have been established in Tasmania as a result of the development of hydro-electric power.

In 1920 a survey was made of Queensland by Mr. Crowley, the consulting engineer for water power purposes. He reported on certain areas which he considered eminently suitable for the development of water power, referring more particularly to the Barron and Tully rivers, Mount Spec, Middle Creek, in the Mackay district, and the Dawson area of the Fitzroy. I would point out that those areas are capable of developing a plentiful supply of power, and I wish to quote passages from Mr. Crowley's report—

“I recommend, as the best proposition of its kind in Australia, the utilisation of the Barron Falls; this source of power is capable of producing from 2,000 to 10,000 horse-power—2,000 horse-power in the driest season and 10,000 horse-power in normal seasons. The stabilising and increase of the capacity can be accomplished by constructing a dam above the falls, again at comparatively small cost, owing to great natural advantages. The construction of a dam would not only greatly increase the horse-power available throughout the year, but would also provide a magnificent lake at Kuranda, which would greatly enhance the beauty of this highly attractive tourist resort.

“The site is an easy one to develop on account of its being so close to the coast

and the town of Cairns; the cost of the transmission line will be very small, and the cost of extending the line down the valley to Babinda will probably be much less than the cost of special plants down the coast.

“If action is taken to utilise this power in the sugar-mills of the district, it would enable them to double their capacity at practically no increase in the cost for power.”

“Then the question of starting other industries must be considered, such as caustic, alkali, paper mills, reduction works for the treatment of our vast mineral resources, all of which, and many others, with cheap power available would be successful, and would rapidly transform this portion of the State into one of the greatest manufacturing centres in the Southern Hemisphere. The initial cost of installing the necessary plant at the Barron Falls to develop—say, 40,000 horse-power, owing to the great natural advantages, would be very low per horse-power developed. This all-important phase of the proposition is vital to the success of any hydro-electric proposition; in this case, all the factors being advantageous and favourable, success is assured.

“The Barron River Scheme is so simple that there is no question about it except the one of cost, and that can be determined after the site is surveyed and investigated in detail. There is no problem whatever connected with the engineering side of the work, and there will be no difficulty in disposing of the current when it is available.”

That report is very illuminating with regard to the possibilities of the Barron River. The report then goes on to deal with the Tully River and Mount Spec, and the possibility of the development of Middle Creek in the Mackay district in connection with the supply of electric power to the sugar-mills of that area. We also note that in the Dawson and Fitzroy Rivers and other areas in the South there are great possibilities with regard to the supply of cheap electric power. The Bill provides for the creation of Water Power areas and the conditions governing them: it sets that out in detail, and in that respect can be gone into fully when we are in Committee. When such Water Power areas are created—the interests of local people, of course, naturally being conserved in connection with the survey and utilisation of those areas—Hydraulic Authorities can be established which will operate under the provisions of Orders in Council, in the same manner as Electric Authorities are created under the provisions of the Electric Light and Power Act of 1895. Those Hydraulic Authorities may be constituted in different ways. The Secretary for Public Works for the time being can be constituted a Hydraulic Authority if it is thought desirable by the Government of the day to enter into a proposition which has State significance, and which is to be considered something in the nature of a State undertaking. On the other hand, they may be solely appointed by the Government by nomination, or solely elected by the electors on the parliamentary franchise—in the same manner, for example, as the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. If a large area shows possibilities of great development, it might be considered

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

necessary by the Government of the day to establish a Hydraulic Authority elected on a democratic franchise. On the other hand, the Authority may be partly elected and partly nominated by the Government. The powers and duties of these Water Power Boards are fully set out in the Bill, and loans for their development may be made by the Treasury.

It is well to mention at this point that these Hydraulic Authorities will be governmental or local governmental in their operations; that is to say, we consider that it is not desirable that resources such as water resources should be left to development by private enterprise. We say that those resources and the development and supply of energy therefrom should be made, so far as is possible, a local government function, owned by the people themselves. One can recognise the reasons for that, the chief being that it is desirable that power be supplied as cheaply as possible. It is not intended to make them highly profitable concerns; the desire is to develop those resources in such a way that industries may be established and supplied with electric current at the lowest possible rate. The Bill provides for the necessary survey of all the resources of the State. It provides for the creation of water power areas. Then, if it is considered desirable that a practical scheme be entered upon, an Order in Council is granted and the Hydraulic Authority is set up. I have outlined the main provisions of the Bill. It largely deals with details of a technical and engineering nature, and can be regarded more as a Committee Bill than as a measure for full discussion at this stage, and consequently I content myself with moving—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I think we are all agreed that better facilities should be offered for the utilisation of our water powers in Queensland. At the present time we have legislation dealing with the question in some minor detail under the Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilisation Act of 1910. Since that Act was passed a good deal of money has been expended in various districts in Queensland, in surveying what might be regarded as sites suitable for the purposes dealt with in the Bill before the House. That work is being carried out, more particularly in the North. I do not know anything about Middle Creek, but I know that the Barron River, the Tully River, the Dawson River, and the Fitzroy River all lend themselves to the creation of water power areas for the purposes suggested in the Bill. I do not altogether believe in tying up the water rights to be dealt with only by the Government and local authorities. In many instances local authorities are disinclined to develop their areas. They are somewhat timid about the expenditure of such a sum of money as would be involved. In the event of those local authorities after a reasonable time refusing to avail themselves of the opportunity of utilising their water power, then private individuals should be given an opportunity of investing money and developing the district. There should be no hard and fast rule. There should be a loophole providing that, under certain conditions, when local authorities are disinclined to take advantage of their rights, private enterprise should have an opportunity of carrying out that development.

[*Hon. W. Forgan Smith.*]

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Where the local authorities are disinclined to act, Hydraulic Authorities will be specially constituted.

Mr. VOWLES: That will mean the borrowing of money from the Government for the purpose of carrying out the work. I think the limitation of private enterprise is one of the factors causing unemployment in Queensland. I do not think it should be limited any further than is necessary. I believe in keeping public utilities for the public; but if the public are disinclined to control them, then, under proper safeguards, private enterprise should be allowed to carry on work which will develop the country and give a considerable amount of employment. I know that is against the policy of this Government and more particularly with regard to the supply of electric current. During the war money could have been expended and development could have been accomplished, but the Government would only issue Orders in Council to the local authorities interested. In the town which I represent we had considerable delay in connection with the matter. First of all, the money was not available, and secondly, when we wanted to constitute a local company, the Government would not give their sanction. As time went on, the cost of material increased, and when it became apparent that the work had to be undertaken, it was found that the work cost nearly 100 per cent. more than it would have cost if the money had been available when the Government were first asked to sanction the scheme. I do not blame the Government, because it was during a war period, but I use that as an argument to show that when the money was available, the people interested were not allowed to carry on as a private concern, and the benefit of that utility to the public was lost, and work which would otherwise have been created was also lost. I hope that condition will not arise under this Bill. I do not believe in these monopolies. This is something on the lines of the Government policy in connection with the boring for oil. It should be made open so that the people interested may be able to spend money and create employment.

Mr. W. COOPER: You are against the "Golden Casket."

Mr. VOWLES: Does that create employment? However, we are not dealing with the "Golden Casket." We are dealing with something of great importance, and something which might create a good deal of profit to a large number of people if we can get this cheap power which will create industries such as is the case in Tasmania, and also to a greater extent in Japan and America. If we can get these authorities going in Queensland where we have no water power at present, it will be a good thing for the State, and the sooner it is put in operation the better. I have nothing more to say on the second reading, but when the Bill gets into Committee, I shall probably have a good deal to say.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

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

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

Clause 3—"Interpretation"—

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I rise to protest against rushing the Bill through

in this way. It is only making a complete farce of legislation. The Bill has only been handed to us this morning, and we are asked to rush it through Committee immediately.

Mr. GLEDSON: The Bill has been in your box for the last fortnight.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is most unusual to ask us to proceed with a Bill of this importance immediately after the second reading is passed.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: You should have protested before the Speaker left the chair.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I recognise that I should have raised the point then. It seems to me that this clause, which is the machinery clause, has to do with quite a number of things. It has to do with the "Authorised officer" and that Authorised Officer, I take it, is to be an officer of the Hydraulic Engineer's Department.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: No, an officer of the Hydraulic Authority established under the Act. The Hydraulic Authority will be a similar body to the Electric Authority under the Electric Light and Power Act.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It seems to me that you may have some very great difficulty in securing a competent man to undertake what is a new departure in connection with Queensland industrial life. I recognise that, generally speaking, under the Electric Light and Power Act there has been a direct influence on the part of the officers of the department. There has been an officer to direct the work, at any rate to supervise what was being done by these authorities to which the Minister referred.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: That would still operate.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I take it that Mr. Deshon, or someone else connected with the Hydraulic Department, will supervise in this case.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: It will be Mr. Greer, in the Works Department.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Mr. Greer, I believe, is a very competent officer; but, all the same, it is absolutely essential that there should be someone who is thoroughly competent in charge of operations under this Bill. I speak with some little knowledge of the electric lighting authorities around the city of Brisbane, as I am a member of one of those bodies. Most laymen will admit that we have a great deal to learn in connection with electric lighting in the suburbs of Brisbane. The fact remains that we are practically tied up largely to the man who is at the head of the business, who understands all the various terms which to a layman seem very confusing and are not easily understood. I take it that, in connection with this clause, it is essential to see that the necessary provision is made in the direction I have indicated. It seems to me, also, that there are other matters which call for very great care. I take it that there must be some mutual arrangement between the local authorities and the Water Power Board: otherwise, I am certain, matters will not move along as sweetly as they ought to do. I notice that the Minister representing the Crown may, by Order in Council, be authorised to act as—

"A Water Power Board constituted under this Act, for a water power area."

I would like to ask at this stage if the Minister is going to exercise a supreme control over this particular authority, or whether he will act merely in an advisory capacity?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: He will act in the same capacity as he acts in under the Electric Light and Power Act of 1896.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is very largely in an advisory capacity.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: Under the Electric Light and Power Act of 1896 the Secretary for Public Works for the time being has certain powers conferred upon him by the Orders in Council which are granted. This will be worked in a similar way.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I take it that in the case to which the Minister refers, as soon as the financial obligation is a thing of the past he will cease to exist so far as the water authority is concerned. For illustration, take the Brisbane Tramway Trust Bill. I take it that when the payments under that Bill are all made the Government will cease to have any control whatever, either in regard to representation or otherwise, and I take it that, in the present case, once payments are completed the Minister will cease to exist so far as this particular authority is concerned.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: The Hydraulic Authority established under this Bill will have complete control over its own business, subject to the provision of the Order in Council bringing it into being.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That, of course, is a roundabout procedure, but I can quite understand it. I take it that the provision is that, as soon as the authority has been completely established financially, the Minister will cease to have control. Am I right in assuming that?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: He will continue to have control so far as the powers conferred upon him under the Order in Council are concerned.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I want to be quite clear as to how far those powers go under this particular clause. I hope the Bill will prove a very great success, and that the undertaking will prove all that is desired.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): The point raised by the hon. member for Bulimba is undoubtedly an important one. The hon. member raises the point as to whether the Minister will exercise any power after the indebtedness of the hydraulic authority is wiped out. The point I wish to make is that the Secretary for Public Works for the time being will represent the public interests in connection with all these enterprises. Orders in Council will be granted to the Hydraulic Authorities in the same way that Orders in Council are granted to Electric Authorities under the Electric Light and Power Act, and the Minister will continue to exercise the powers conferred on him by the said Order in Council. When an Order in Council is granted under the [11.30 a.m.] Electric Light and Power Act, the authority then operating has full control of its own business, subject to the conditions of the Order in Council. Assuming that the public who are buying light or power from the Hydraulic Authority or the Electric Authority have any grievance,

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

if they complain to the Minister that the authority is not operating within the ambit of the Order in Council, then the Minister has certain powers which he can use in the public interests, and can see to it that the Hydraulic Authority or the Electric Authority carries out the functions for which it was brought into being. Take, for instance, the position at Southport. I have arranged for a deputation for Thursday of this week from the Southport Town Council and Chamber of Commerce. They complain that they are not getting the treatment that they have a right to expect under the Order in Council granted to the Electric Authority. I do not know whether that is the case or not, but, if such Electric Authority is not carrying out its business subject to the terms of the Order in Council, then the Minister in charge of the Department of Public Works has power to call upon the Electric Authority to do certain things which are prescribed in the Order in Council. The Minister will see that that is done. If the Electric Authority under such conditions defies the Order in Council, and defies the authority of the Minister, then power is given under the general Act for the Governor in Council to revoke the Electric Authority. The same state of affairs will exist in regard to a Hydraulic Authority which is established to distribute electrical energy. If a sugar-mill which receives electric power from an Electric Authority finds that it cannot carry on its business properly because it is being charged unfairly, or if anyone feels that he has a grievance against the authority, it is only right and proper that there should be someone to investigate their complaints, if necessary, and to make any adjustment. All these things are set out in the Orders in Council granted under any scheme. I am pleased to say that it is rarely that it has been necessary to exercise any of the powers contained in Orders in Council under the Electric Light and Power Act; but it is necessary for the Government of the day to have some authority to see that Electric Authorities carry on their business in the public interests and in the way set out in the Order in Council.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I notice the definition of "undertaking" reads—

"Undertaking" includes all works and operations necessary and incidental to the carrying into effect the objects of a Hydraulic Authority."

I presume that different schemes will be carried on in the same water area. For instance, in connection with an irrigation scheme, the water will be dammed up in the river, and it will be used for irrigation purposes. I suppose it is intended to use the same water for providing electric power. In such a case, will the two authorities concerned work in conjunction, or will there be one authority dealing with electric power and another dealing with irrigation? The bulk of the water may be required for irrigation purposes, and I would like to know the method the Minister proposes to adopt for adjusting the cost when the water is used for supplying electric power and when it is also used for irrigation purposes. In connection with the Tasmanian scheme there is no question of irrigation, but in Victoria in connection with the Goulburn Valley irrigation scheme a small portion of the water is used for supplying electric power. There is

[*Hon. W. Forgan Smith.*

no provision made there for apportioning the cost for electrical power, because the whole scheme was put forward as an irrigation scheme. We are going in for a scheme in the Dawson River, and I presume that it will be a double-barrelled scheme to provide both for irrigation and for electrical power. I would like the Minister to give us some information as to how he proposes to apportion the cost in that case. If the whole cost is to be put on the people who are using the water for irrigation, then it will make a considerable difference to them. It should also make a difference to them if part of the cost is to be borne by those who are using the water for electrical power. There seems to be no method by which the cost can be apportioned. If there is a sufficient body of water, and it is used for both purposes, then it should considerably reduce the cost for irrigation. I understand that there are several schemes being put forward purely as irrigation schemes; but where the water is to be used for electrical purposes also, and where a conflict is likely to arise between the dual authorities, I would like to know what method the Minister has adopted for dealing with it.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: The point raised by the hon. member for Aubigny is an important one. The information in connection with this question is meagre. The hon. member apparently has an idea that, if water power areas are established where irrigation areas are already established, then they may act to the disadvantage of the irrigation scheme. There is no intention of interfering with the irrigation scheme. The two schemes can be carried on in conjunction one with the other, and one will help the other. One can readily understand that, when water is impounded and held for irrigation purposes, the people supplied with water will have to carry the cost of impounding the water and transferring it to the various areas of land to be irrigated. If, however, the water is used for electrical purposes as well as to supply industrial plants, then there need be no conflict of authority. There will be one source of supply, and the one scheme can help the other. It is perfectly obvious that, if a general scheme can be brought into operation, it will be better from an irrigation point of view than from an electrical point of view. I think that deals with the point raised by the hon. member. The rights of people in irrigation areas are fully conserved in the Bill.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): There is another point in connection with the duplicate schemes. For electrical purposes there must be a continuous supply available for the people using it. If there is an irrigation scheme and an electrical scheme as well, it may happen that in a dry time the people using the water for irrigation purposes will suffer, because their supply will be curtailed.

Mr. GLEDSON: The water used for power purposes will be used afterwards for irrigation.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member has not appreciated my point. Water is not required for irrigation purposes all the year round, but water is required for power purposes all the year round, and it is quite possible that in a dry time—the very period when water is needed for irrigation purposes—it might be desired that it should be cut off to supply power.

Mr. GLEDSON: It must be used all the time for power purposes.

Mr. MOORE: That is just the point. It is just possible that a large supply may run to waste at a period of the year when it is not required for irrigation, simply because it is required all the year round for industrial power purposes.

Mr. GLEDSON: You can get over that by having two dams. That is a matter for the engineers.

Mr. MOORE: If we are going in for duplication of dams, one above and one below the power station, the difficulty may be overcome, but there is no doubt that there is a risk that water needed for irrigation purposes may have to be used for the generation of electrical power.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): The maximum capacity of any electrical scheme will depend on the minimum supply of water. As the water supply varies, it is only natural to assume that no engineer would build a plant requiring continuously the maximum supply of water available at any one time. He would take the minimum supply of water available as determining the capacity of the plant. Suppose that the supply varied between quantities capable of giving 5,000 and 10,000 horse-power at different times of the year. It would not be safe for him to work on the basis of water giving 10,000 horse-power; he would have to work on the minimum of which he was absolutely certain.

The point raised by the hon. member for Aubigny—that insufficient water might be available for both hydro-electric and irrigation purposes—is also a detail which will have to be dealt with by the competent engineers. If a supply of water is not considered sufficient to justify the erection of both a water-power plant and irrigation works, it will be a matter for consideration for what purpose the supply shall be utilised. Of course, the points raised by the hon. member are very interesting and have a bearing on the Bill, but really they should have been dealt with on the Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilization Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I should like a little explanation from the Minister of the definition of "person"—

"'Person' includes corporation, company, association, syndicate, firm, partnership, and local authority."

Does that mean that it will be competent for the Minister, by Order in Council, to give authority to a private syndicate or company of investors to carry out such work if they are willing to put their money into it?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: No. That is not covered by the definition.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I would like to raise a point in connection with the definition of "Works" on page 3, on which the Minister touched incidentally. I refer to the danger of divided control. The Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilization Act is administered by the Treasury, and it seems that the Treasury is the proper department to control this business. The Minister, in reply to the hon. member for Aubigny, said that there is no danger of using water for the dual purpose when there is not enough.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: That is common sense.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I admit that that is so, but the Minister has overlooked the fact that to-day one may find a water supply which is used for all purposes. I am quite sure that hon. members representing Western constituencies know that under the Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilization Act very great exception was taken by station-owners to the testing of bores, which, they said, caused trouble with the flow. Quite apart from that, the opinion was held that a bore which will give so much water to-day will later on give only a diminished quantity. I remember a conference not many years ago some of the members of which inquired what the explanation really was. That will be one of the troubles in Western Queensland. It seems to me that this clause may place in the hands of the Department of Public Works a power contrary to the best interests of the State as administered by the Treasury, because I take it that it is essential not to interfere by means of any of the schemes initiated under this Bill with the artesian and subartesian water supplies of pastoral properties. I think that this Bill and the other Bill I have mentioned should be administered by one department. I do not say which is the correct department, but my own impression is that the Treasury should control irrigation and bores. The officers who have had control of this business have been brought up in the Treasury, although I admit that they could be transferred. However, without in any way stressing which is the right department, I urge that there should not be divided control, in view of the great bearing this subject must have on the development of the State. For that reason I impress on the Minister the importance of looking at this particular phase of the matter.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): Will the City Electric Light Company be a purchasing authority under the jurisdiction of this measure?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: No; it is under a different Act.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): The appointment of a Hydraulic Authority appears to me to be a weakness in this Bill. This measure will control hydraulic power and provide for the generation of electrical energy.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: The Hydraulic Authority in this instance will be an authority dealing only with that business.

Mr. HARTLEY: The Bill lays down the method of control for irrigation purposes and the creation of electrical energy. It seems to me that the definition should be altered to make possible the creation of a separate department. If the development of irrigation and hydro-electric schemes is to proceed, it is quite evident that no one of the existing departments will be able to control the business. A new department should be created, having properly qualified officers both from the hydraulic and electrical standpoints.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): The hon. member for Bulimba has raised the question of the difficulty that may arise from overlapping between this and the subdepartment of the Treasury controlling water supply generally. The definition of "Works" here means works under this Act only—that is to say, works that will follow as the result of a water power area being created and the establishment of a Hydraulic

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

Authority to exploit the resources of that area; so there cannot be any danger such as that to which the hon. member refers. The point raised by the hon. member for Fitzroy and by the hon. member for Bulimba regarding the necessity for having proper and efficient control and for preventing overlapping, is one which will have to be gone into. The hydro-electric schemes are so important that full investigation will have to be made before any enterprise is launched. We do not want to enter on any scheme for the utilisation of water that will "peter" out in a year or two. The whole thing will have to be properly reviewed from an engineering standpoint by men having the necessary knowledge. Naturally, in all those matters Ministers and Governments will act in accordance with the advice of those who have the necessary knowledge.

It is not necessary to place in the Bill the provision advocated by the hon. member for Fitzroy. If the Government find it necessary to establish a special sub-department to control the business effectively, that can be done as a matter of administration. The Bill largely is of an experimental character, and consequently has to be elastic in order to provide for meeting contingencies such as those referred to by both hon. members. There is ample power to create any sub-department and to obtain the best and most expert advice and reports before proceeding to engage in any enterprise.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I think we all agree with the Minister that a good many difficulties may arise in the future. It will depend upon the wisdom of the Hydraulic Authority, and more particularly its advice, whether trouble will arise from the divided authority referred to by the hon. member for Bulimba. We shall have two departments, controlled by two Ministers, each of which will be seeking to get the best results it can—one from water conservation and irrigation and the other merely looking for electric current and power generally. Unless we are very careful, we are going to come to grief between the two. It is only natural that each department should favour schemes which suit its own purposes. The success of the scheme will depend largely upon ample supplies of rain water. Tasmania and other places derive their water from the snows, which can be depended upon. Even at the Barron Falls droughts prevail at times, and the supply of water is reduced to a minimum.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The streams will be impounded.

Mr. VOWLES: The capacity of the stream will regulate the power, and that capacity is dependent on the season. It seems to me that, unless the Hydraulic Authority works on the minimum supply or, at any rate, something approaching the minimum, over a series of years, it is likely to strike trouble. I admit that we are dealing with probabilities, and that these are matters purely for experts. I fear the most from

[12 noon] divided authority. We know there is rivalry between Ministers regarding the expenditure of money. If we are going to have one department looking after power, and another administering irrigation, it is only natural that each should want to get the best results, and between the two we may have very bad results.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*): The points raised are interesting. The Minister has assured us that there will be no divided

[Hon. W. Forgan Smith.

authority. Neither will there be. I think that under this measure the Treasurer will be able to give the power himself. The Bill provides, in subclause (3) of clause 6—

"Every order constituting an area shall—

(a) Define the boundaries of the area;

(b) Describe generally the scheme proposed to be carried out and the principal works proposed to be constructed;

(c) State the sources from which the water supply is to be obtained, and, if deemed necessary, the quantity of water to be taken from each of such sources within a given time, when there are more than one, and the seasons at which it is to be taken."

Subclause (3) conflicts with the Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilization Act of 1910. The Bill further provides in subclause (2) of clause 8—

"Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act or any other Act, the Treasurer may from time to time—

(a) Make any adjustment which he considers necessary to be made with respect to the term or terms of any loan or loans to the Board, or the calculation of interest thereon, or with respect to any other matter requiring adjustment."

The Treasurer has power to make any adjustment with respect to any other matter requiring adjustment. The Bill further provides, in subclause (1) of clause 12—

"The Governor in Council may, from time to time, make regulations providing for all or any purposes, whether general or to meet particular cases

(i) The manner of doing or performing any act or thing under or for the purposes of this Act, and the time when or within which it shall be done or performed."

I do not think there is any divided authority.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): The Minister says that action will be taken to provide uniform control. In the damming of our streams we have to bear in mind the possibilities of utilising that water for agricultural purposes. I think that the Department of Public Lands should also interest itself very largely in connection with a matter which the Premier stated would probably be rectified by this Bill—I refer to the noxious weeds along the banks of streams. In the past there has been no definite understanding as to the duties of holders of land alongside such streams. An application was made by me to a past Administration to define what those duties were. It was really not until this Government came into office that a decision on the matter was given, and it was contrary to the best interests of the holders of the land adjacent to the stream, and certainly militates against their success and against the chance of clearing the noxious weeds. As a result of that decision, the holders were made responsible for the clearing of noxious weeds down to the edge of the rubble, sand, or gravel. I hope the Cabinet will consider this matter, and, if there are going to be any funds, that such funds will be appropriated for the purposes of keeping those areas clean and

removing responsibility from the shoulders of the landholders, particularly those selectors who are compelled to clear prickly-pear at a cost of £30 to £40 an acre. This is a very serious matter in the pear-infested areas.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The hon. member said that there would be no clashing between the different authorities. I understand that this Bill is for the one purpose of dealing with water power, and has nothing to do with irrigation at all. The Minister mentioned the Dawson River irrigation scheme. This Bill provides that an Order in Council shall define the boundaries of an area. I understand that under that irrigation scheme the boundaries have already been defined, and now this Bill constitutes another authority to deal with any irrigation area that may be created. I cannot see where the apportionment of the cost of the work is going to be adjusted at all. The hon. member for Toowoomba stated that the Treasurer could make any adjustment with respect to the term of any loan.

Mr. BRENNAN: "Or any other matter."

Mr. MOORE: That means any other matters affecting light or power, and has nothing whatever to do with irrigation.

Mr. GLEDSON: This Bill only deals with power.

Mr. MOORE: We already have an Act dealing with irrigation schemes, and now this Bill is being introduced also to deal with such matters. If an adjustment is made, what proportion of the cost will be allotted for irrigation and what proportion will be allotted for power? This is a very difficult situation, and will cause considerable trouble in irrigation areas. There will be the cost of water irrigation and the cost of water for power. I cannot see how the question of divided authority is going to be adjusted.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That can be provided for by administering this Act in conjunction with the Act relating to the irrigation schemes.

Mr. MOORE: It seems an extraordinary thing that, when a scheme is sanctioned under one Act, another Bill should be brought in to adjust the cost on a different basis. We are going to have a considerable amount of trouble. The control of irrigation and power and lighting should be under one Act and one authority.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—"Hydraulic Authorities under this Act"—

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I think the Minister stated that the water dealt with under this Bill would also be utilised for irrigation purposes?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: I never said that at all.

Mr. SWAYNE: Does it not deal with irrigation at all?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: No. This is a Water Power Bill.

Mr. SWAYNE: I heard the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme referred to, and I thought that the Dawson Valley scheme was essentially an irrigation scheme.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Of course, it is.

Mr. SWAYNE: Then there will be two authorities dealing with one reservoir. If the water is to be used for both purposes, each

of which is under the control of a separate body, then the two bodies will have jurisdiction over the one reservoir. That is obvious, and for that reason I was going to move an amendment to insert the words "or irrigation" before the word "area" on line 19, page 3. Of course, if the Minister does not intend the Bill to have anything to do with irrigation, then the amendment is not required; but, if the water is going to be used for both purposes under one control—which I think it should be—then the words "or irrigation" should be coupled with the word "power."

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): Members of the Opposition seem not to realise that this Bill is primarily a Bill dealing with the generation of electric power from water resources. In the course of my remarks I referred to the possibilities of impounding water in various areas. It is a necessary condition under any hydro-electric scheme that there shall be a sufficient quantity of water to be impounded so that power can be obtained. In my reference to the Dawson River I showed that there were water resources in that district which are going to be used later on for irrigation purposes. This Bill does not deal with irrigation at all. I pointed out that later on a general Water Bill dealing with irrigation and all that kind of thing will be introduced and dealt with by this House, and any adjustment as between that Bill and this Bill that may be necessary can be made under that Bill. Anything relating primarily to the supply of water for irrigation purposes is quite outside the scope of this measure.

Hon. W. H. BARNES (*Buimba*): I would like to ask the Minister whether there has been any conference between the officers of the Treasury Department and the officers of the Works Department to provide a way out of the difficulty, because it seems to me that clause 4—which is very largely linked with clause 7—gives the Minister complete power. Clause 4 reads—

"Subject to this Act, the Governor in Council may from time to time, by Order in Council, authorise—

(a) The Minister representing the Crown, for any locality in Queensland other than a water power area for which a Water Power Board has been constituted and is acting; or

(b) A Water Power Board constituted under this Act, for the water power area;

to be and act as a Hydraulic Authority under and for the purposes of this Act."

A number of people may say—it may be the local authority—"We do not want this. It is not for our good," and the Minister, if he thinks fit, can say, "You do not know what is good for you. I am going to step in and say you must have it."

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That would not be done.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: That is not an answer to my question. I suppose the present Minister would not make any mistake.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: I make mistakes often, but I do not make the same mistake twice.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The Minister may think, off his own bat, that it would be good to do certain things, while the local authority may not think so.

Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: If the local authority objects to being constituted a Hydraulic Authority, the Minister, if it is thought necessary, will establish a Hydraulic Authority of a special character as set out in the Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That simply means that the Minister may say, "You are wrong and I am right, and I am going to establish a Hydraulic Authority," probably excluding the local authority altogether.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: Assume that it was decided, on the advice of the engineers, that the Barron Falls be utilised for water purposes, and the local authorities within the area said, "No, we don't want it," if the Government knew that certain industries required that power, would not any Government be justified in constituting a Hydraulic Authority in that area?

HON. W. H. BARNES: At this stage I would not say that should be so or not. Clause 4 gives the Minister practically supreme control, and he becomes a kind of Pooch Bah under the Bill. A number of political supporters might pull strings and say, "It is very necessary to do certain things," and the Minister might—although he says he is very firm in these matters—be scarcely able to resist, and he might do something which his judgment might tell him is not really a good thing.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: I would have to be satisfied that the scheme is a good one.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is perfectly certain that this clause, linked up with clause 7 and other clauses in the Bill, is going to give the Minister very great power indeed, and I want to protect the Minister.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: I think the hon. member for Bulimba has been putting up a number of "Aunt Sallies" in connection with this clause for the satisfaction of knocking them down. This Bill does not confer any more power on the Minister than the Electric Light and Power Act of 1896 confers on the Minister, and it is necessary that that power be there so that, if necessary, the Minister can use it in public interests. This clause provided that the Minister for the time being may be constituted a Hydraulic Authority for any given area. I pointed out in my second reading speech that that would be so in cases where the scheme was considered to be of a State-wide character. There are schemes which can be regarded as of national importance, while other schemes can only fittingly be regarded as of importance to a particular area. Where proposals are of a national character, and affecting the interests of the whole of the State, it might, for the time being, be considered desirable that the Government, through the Minister administering the Act, be constituted a Hydraulic Authority. That is the reason for the clause. Generally speaking, it is not intended that the Minister shall be appointed as a Hydraulic Authority; he will only be appointed in the cases I have mentioned. I believe in boards being appointed to carry on these functions. I do not think any Minister would desire to be created a Hydraulic Authority if there were any suitable local authority in the district, but it is necessary to have this power to prevent a district from being exploited.

Clause 4 put and passed.

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.

Clause 5—"Powers granted to Minister"—

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I would like the Minister to give us some information with regard to subclause (2), which reads—

"Nothing in this Act contained shall be construed so as to constitute any business or undertaking carried on by the Minister under this Act a State enterprise within the meaning or for any of the purposes of the State Enterprises Act of 1918."

Am I right in assuming that the Government are exceedingly desirous to avoid having this thrown upon their hands as an additional State enterprise?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: You are very facetious this morning.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is my duty, as a member, to get all the information I possibly can. Last week I was prevented by a very bad cold from taking part in the debate on the initiation of the measure. It is exceedingly important that we should know whether the Government are fearful, under the Act, of being linked up with another State enterprise in the direction of a water authority, and have inserted this provision to prevent it. Is this provision included to prevent anything like that happening?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): The hon. member for Bulimba has explained that he was unable to be here last week and take part in the debate owing to a bad cold, and that he intends to take full time now that he is well. We are all glad to see him back and restored to health. It is necessary that this subclause should be inserted. The Parliamentary Draftsman pointed out to me that, where the Minister was constituted as a Hydraulic Authority, the State Enterprises Act would apply if this subclause were not inserted.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—"Creation of Water Power Area, etc."—put and passed.

Clause 7—"Constitution of Water Power Boards"—

MR. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): There is rather a big principle embodied in this clause, which provides for the constitution of Water Power Boards. Subclause (e) provides that a board may be constituted—

"By the election of the members of the board by the electors of the area entitled to the parliamentary franchise."

We may take it, I think, that unfortunately owing to natural conditions it will be more costly to provide water power in Queensland than in the countries mentioned by the Minister when moving the second reading. He quite rightly drew attention to the great utilisation of water power in Norway, Canada, and other countries.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: And New Zealand.

MR. SWAYNE: The power is obtained very cheaply there, through the huge accumulation of snow which takes place during the winter, which is melted when the warm weather comes on. I believe that in California during a drought some rivers will be fuller owing to the heat melting the snow up in the ranges. We have facilities which lend themselves to

the development of water power here, but nothing like the countries mentioned; but whatever advantage we have in that way we shall probably have to incur a considerable expenditure in the way of artificial reservoirs and dams. In Tasmania there are great natural advantages. Although there may not be large bodies of perpetual snow in the ranges, still there is a large natural reservoir on the top of a mountain. We have not got anything like that here. A large expenditure of money will have to be incurred, and I suppose that, in the event of there being any loss, it will have to be made good by special rates, and that all risks will have to be undertaken by the permanent residents. The North will be the area largely used for the conservation of water power. We have the advantage of a wet season there, with running creeks and rivers, which does not obtain in other parts; but even the best of those streams in dry seasons will have to be replenished from artificial reservoirs, which would mean great expense. As a case in point I might mention a stream in my electorate—Middle Creek, close to Finch Hatton—which is in a gorge in the mountains. Unfortunately, owing to the way the work is being rushed, I have not been able to read the report in connection with it, as we have so little time in which to get information on these subjects.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The report was made by Mr. Crowley in 1920, and the local authorities up there procured a copy of his report.

Mr. SWAYNE: I had intended to read that report, but I am only speaking from memory now. The Minister told us that the capital expenditure in that case would be £50,000.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That was Mr. Crowley's estimate, not mine.

Mr. SWAYNE: It is an estimate only. Seeing that a tunnel will have to be driven through a range—I am speaking from memory only—it is very likely that the estimate will be largely exceeded. I understand that a power of only 200 or 300 horsepower will be obtained. It struck me that that would be useful in furnishing lighting power to the sugar-mills, and giving domestic light and similar things; but, after all, the power seems small in comparison with the cost. My point is that those who have to take all the risk should have the election of the Board in their hands. We know that in the North the electoral roll is every year temporarily enlarged during the busy season. Anyone who comes from another State and works in the North for a month gets on the electoral roll. Those people will have power to elect a Hydraulic Authority which may commit the landowners in the district to an expenditure resulting in heavy loss if the venture should prove unsuccessful. I do not wish to speak against the measure in any way. It is time we made a move in this direction; but it should be on just lines. A Water Power Board will have power to make heavy commitments, for which the permanent residents of a district will be liable, and I think the settlement of the question should be limited to permanent residents. I do not think it fair that a large body of nomadic workers should have the power at any time to vote and render the residents in a district liable for any loss which may be involved, and that is a matter which is well worthy of consideration by the Committee.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I think the point raised by the hon. member for Mirani is an important one, and the Minister should give every possible consideration to it. The clause reads—

“(1) The Governor in Council may, from time to time, by Order in Council, constitute a Water Power Board to be and act as the hydraulic authority for any specified water power area.

“The Order shall—

(a) Define the mode of the constitution of the Board.”

Subclause (2) reads—

“(2) A Water Power Board shall be constituted in such one of the modes following as the Governor in Council from time to time by Order declares—

(a) By the appointment of a local authority or joint local authority or a water authority having jurisdiction within the area or some part thereof to be the Water Power Board;

(b) By the appointment of the members of the Board by the Governor in Council;

(c) By the election of the members of the Board by the electors of the area entitled to the parliamentary franchise;

(d) By the election as aforesaid of some members and the appointment of other members of the Board.”

This Bill is to deal with sparsely populated areas. At all events, they are sparsely populated at the present time, and probably will be for many years to come. I think the Minister would be well advised to delete paragraphs (c) and (d). It would be preferable to leave the appointment of the Board to be dealt with as defined in paragraphs (a) and (b). No doubt quite a number of persons will be permitted to exercise the franchise, and, as they will be travelling about from one area to the other and not settled in the locality, they will have little or no interest in the matters to be considered by the Board.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The Minister has not given attention to a matter that affects a large section of the people. These Boards will borrow large sums of money. There is no protection for the ratepayers, and no provision whereby a poll can be taken of the people responsible for the repayment of the money. A Board can be constituted by the Governor in Council; yet the people living in the area are not going to be given the chance of saying whether they will accept the responsibility or not. It might be a profitable investment for the district or the State, because it will create a certain amount of employment. The Minister says he is not likely to go into a proposition such as this if there is no prospect of success; but we have to remember that the hon. gentleman went in for the State stations. The Cabinet looked on the State stations as certain to be a success, but it turned out that they were not a success.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: No Order in Council was necessary for the State stations.

Mr. MOORE: In that case the general taxpayer has to pay, but in this case the people who own the land in the locality concerned will have to make good the loss. The hon. member for Mirani pointed out, and

Mr. Moore.]

the Minister agreed with him, that the estimated cost cannot always be taken as authoritative.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: We would not take it to be authoritative. The Bill provides for an investigation first, and then for the creation of a water board area. If, on the representations of the experts, it is deemed advisable to establish a Hydraulic Authority, then it will be done.

MR. MOORE: That is all very fine from the Minister's point of view, but I want to know how the property of the people in the area is going to be protected. The Minister says the experts will go into it, and they may say that the scheme will be profitable; but the people living in the area are not given any chance of taking a poll to decide whether they are willing to accept the liability. The Local Authorities Act provides that the people concerned can ask for a poll to be taken when a large sum of money is to be expended, and we should have the same provision here. Under this Bill the Minister himself can appoint the members of the Hydraulic Authority, but their liability will rest with the ratepayers in the area. Why should they not have some protection? It is quite possible that the scheme will be for the benefit of the district, but the ratepayers should have an opportunity of deciding by a poll whether they think it is for the benefit of the district or not. Considering the enormous liabilities which the ratepayers may be responsible for, they should be given some say in the matter. We have had experience in connection with the Inkerman irrigation scheme.

MR. COLLINS: What is wrong with the Inkerman irrigation scheme? There is nothing wrong with it at all.

MR. MOORE: The hon. member for Bowen should not be so peppery about the Inkerman irrigation scheme. We have a perfect right to criticise every irrigation scheme in Queensland, if we wish to do so. I was going to point out the enormous increase in the estimate for the Inkerman scheme as compared with the original estimate. It cost two or three times the original estimate, and it is quite possible that schemes carried out under this Bill will cost two or three times as much as the estimate. The people concerned should therefore have some protection. It is an absolute absurdity to ask people to sign a blank cheque—as a matter of fact they are not even being asked to do it, because the Governor in Council has power to undertake a scheme without consulting the people concerned at all. If the local people do not appoint a Board, then the Governor in Council has power to appoint it and carry out the work, and the people who live in the district have to shoulder the responsibility. I do not think that is a fair thing. It is only fair that the provision in the Local Authorities Act should apply in this case, and the ratepayers should be allowed to say whether they are in favour of incurring the responsibility for the undertaking.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): The hon. member for Aubigny has raised an important point. I certainly agree with him that the people in the district should have the right of taking a poll, especially as it is provided in paragraph (c) that the Board may be elected by the electors of the area entitled to the parliamentary franchise. I

[*Mr. Moore.*

endorse the remarks of the leader of the Nationalist party in regard to the deletion of that paragraph. The people living in the locality have to carry the financial liabilities, but they may have no right of saying whether they are agreeable to undertake that liability or not. We are following the position which exists in connection with the Brisbane Tramway Trust Bill in that it is not proposed to ask the people of the locality for their decision. The hon. member for Aubigny is quite right too in stressing the financial aspect of the matter, which we all know is the crux of the position. Some of us who have been Ministers of the Crown know that proposals have been made which have only been carried out for perhaps two or three times the original estimates. We will all agree that a great deal depends on what the actual cost of any venture is going to be, and that should be known as nearly as possible before embarking upon it. I have in my mind's eye an enterprise—not a water enterprise—which is much on the lines I have indicated.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: The ratepayers would not bear the deficiency.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Where is the money to come from?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: I will tell you.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I shall be very pleased to hear the explanation of the Minister, but I was under the impression that the residents in the district will have to pay. Am I wrong in making that statement?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: Yes.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Am I to suppose that the State will have to make up the deficiency?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): Hon. members who have spoken on this clause seem to be labouring under the impression that any loss will be made up by a rate under the Local Authorities Acts. That is not the position at all. A local authority will not be called upon to make up any deficiency of that kind. Hon. members will find in clause 8 provision that the Treasurer shall, first of all, advance loans for certain purposes under the Bill. If the Board defaults in making the payments provided for by the Treasurer, he may put in an official receiver, who will levy on the funds of the Hydraulic Authority until the debt is liquidated.

MR. FOWLES: The clause does not say that at all.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: The local authority will not be called upon to make up any deficiency. Moreover, it must be understood by hon. members generally that no Government will take a leap in the dark in the establishment of hydro-electric schemes. They will be established only after the possibilities of success have been thoroughly examined, and if it has been found that sufficient consumers of energy are available. For example, nobody would establish a scheme without first of all estimating the amount of power that could be developed and the number of consumers of energy. These are the most important factors for consideration. Nobody would erect a plant in some remote district where no industries were prepared to make use of the energy; and the rates of payment will be fixed so as to pay for the cost of establishment, and, in the event of default on the

part of the Hydraulic Authority, the Treasurer will protect his interests, as I have said.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I have been at a loss to understand the meaning of clause 8, and the explanation given by the Minister is, of course, satisfactory that the people affected are the consumers, both of power and water, and that they will have to pay. It appears to me that it is necessary that any scheme of this kind should not be entertained unless it will be self-supporting. I take it that is what the Minister means.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Yes.

Mr. VOWLES: I cannot find in clause 8 anything which says that. It provides that the Treasurer shall cause to be published a statement showing the amount of money overdue, and goes on to say—

“If thereafter on the thirtieth day of April or the thirty-first day of October respectively any part of such money so overdue and in arrear remains unpaid, the Treasurer may, by notification in the *Gazette*, appoint a receiver to collect on his behalf and pay to the Treasury all or any moneys from time to time due and owing to the Board to the amount stated in such notification.”

The only construction to be put upon that is that the receiver shall have the same power as a receiver under the Local Authorities Acts—that is, to collect arrears of rates from the individual ratepayers. It seems to me that the clause can only be construed to mean that such a receiver can collect only amounts actually owing by consumers for water or power. The intention may be to the contrary, but I cannot see that the clause bears the construction outlined by the Minister. It is very vague at present, and I hope that, when the clause is under discussion, that point will be considered by the hon. gentleman. I can understand that where a Board is working under an Order in Council, fixing maximum rates of charge, and the Board has not reached that maximum, the Board may increase the rates to make up the shortage and provide better for the future. It could easily happen, in respect for instance of a scheme such as that in which the hon. member for Bowen is so interested, that a water power scheme was over-capitalised because it had cost about three times the original estimate, and that consequently the rates of payment would have to be increased to a very considerable amount, and the cost of supply might even exceed the maximum provided in the Order in Council.

Mr. FLETCHER (*Port Curtis*): I understand that the consumer is expected to pay for any arrears due to the Treasury.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Yes.

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not know that we are going to get consumers of electrical energy under such terms, because they would never know where they stood. If the Hydraulic Authority did something unwise, or made miscalculations, or conducted its affairs in an unbusinesslike manner, the consumers would have to pay for everything. I dare say the consumer would not object to paying any arrears for the actual consumption of the power, but to provide that he shall pay for the loss on the general scheme is most dangerous. Some amendment is required to clear up that point, because it is too

indefinite and places on the consumer too much responsibility. Supposing the consumers could not pay, it would be a loss to the State. So it really comes back to the question of its being a State enterprise in a sense. Before any undertaking of this kind is launched, the fullest inquiries will have to be made for safeguarding every avenue and preventing any loss to the State.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The State Government pay any loss incurred in connection with the Tasmanian scheme.

Mr. FLETCHER: The State Government will have to pay here.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: According to their reports, there is always an initial loss. Later on, when there is a sufficient number of consumers, that is obviated.

Mr. FLETCHER: Tasmania, possibly, is better situated than we are; they have advantages which we have not.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: If it is not a good proposition in any of these water power areas, the enterprise will not be gone on with.

Mr. FLETCHER: The closest investigation will have to be made, because any loss will fall on the State. There will have to be some amendment to safeguard the consumers' interests.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: What amendment do you suggest?

Mr. FLETCHER: To define exactly what consumers are to pay. If they are to be responsible for the general mismanagement of the Water Power Board, you are not going to have anyone taking the thing up.

Clause 7 put and passed.

Clause 8—“*Loans to Boards*”—

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I would like to know if the Minister is going to adopt the suggestion I made a moment ago, and make the clause more definite? It seems to me to be vague.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): The question raised by the leader of the Opposition is a very important one. I recognise that the matter has to be made perfectly clear. The clause provides—

“(1) Subject to this Act, the Treasurer may, from time to time, advance to a Board out of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, such sums of money on loan as are required for the construction of any works which, under this Act, the Board is authorised to construct.

“Every such loan shall be for a period of thirty years from the date of the first advance in respect thereof, and shall bear interest at a rate per centum per annum to be fixed by the Governor in Council, and shall be liquidated by the payment to the Treasurer by the Board, on the first days of January and July, respectively, in every year, of such sum as will enable the said loan, with interest at the said rate, to be repaid within the said period, and such sums shall continue to be payable until the total amount of the said loan, together with the interest accruing thereon, have been so paid.”

It will be seen that it is intended to make the enterprise self-supporting. The clause goes on—

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

"(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act or any other Act, the Treasurer may, from time to time—

(a) Make any adjustment which he considers necessary to be made with respect to the term or terms of any loan or loans to the Board or the calculation of interest thereon, or with respect to any other matter requiring adjustment;

(b) Permit the Board to pay off the whole or any portion of the moneys advanced at any time before they become due, and in such case the Board shall be entitled to a proportionate rebate of interest to be adjusted by the Treasurer.

"(3) In the months of February and August, respectively, in every year, the Treasurer shall cause to be published in the 'Gazette' a statement showing, with respect to the Board, the amount of money which is then overdue and in arrear, and also the total of the principal sum then remaining unpaid.

"If, thereafter, on the thirtieth day of April, or the thirty-first day of October, respectively, any part of such money so overdue and in arrear remains unpaid, the Treasurer may, by notification in the 'Gazette,' appoint a receiver to collect on his behalf, and pay to the Treasury, all or any moneys from time to time due and owing to the Board to the amount stated in such notification.

"Thereupon, such receiver shall, from the dates stated in such notification until the amount aforesaid has been collected, be the only person legally entitled to receive the revenues of the Board, and shall have all the powers of the Board with respect to the making, collection, and recovery of charges and other moneys, and shall be deemed for the purposes of this section to be a public accountant within the meaning of The Audit Act of 1874 or any Act amending or in substitution for that Act."

There, again, the Treasurer's interests are safeguarded, and it is provided that an enterprise will be called upon to pay interest and redemption for itself. The provision in respect of the appointment of a receiver is a drastic power that will be used only if a drastic remedy is required. Supposing, for example, an Electric Authority is established under this Act, after full inquiry has been made into the possibility of a hydro-electric scheme being a success. A loan is advanced by the Treasurer and the enterprise is launched. A charge will be made by the Electric Authority that will enable it to pay interest and redemption. It is only in cases where default is made by the Hydraulic Authority—where it is not managing the business properly, or where there is some other reason—that those drastic steps will be taken.

The hon. member for Port Curtis has raised the point that the consumers' interests need to be safeguarded. Certainly there is that need, and it is being done in the same way as is done at the present time with any form of Electric Authority. If the hon. member cares to look up the Electric Light and Power Act, or any Order in Council issued thereunder, he will find that an Electric Authority has power to make a charge which

[*Hon. W. Forgan Smith.*]

will enable it to pay the interest and redemption on the capitalisation. That is only fair and just. Under the Gas Act provision is made whereby a gas enterprise is enabled to fix a charge sufficient to pay interest and redemption on the capitalisation or pay a fair dividend.

Mr. FLETCHER: It is only in the event of the whole undertaking being a failure.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: Naturally it would be a charge on the whole State—that is the view I take of it. It is only natural that that should be so in a case of this kind; because, as has been mentioned by some speakers, the consumers might be some considerable distance from the water that is used for the purpose of generating electricity. It would be grossly unfair to establish an authority which would have the power to rate the landowners in the particular area where there was no light at such a figure as to make up for an insufficient charge on the consumers of electricity. The same principles will be observed in the carrying out of this as in the carrying out of the Electric Light and Power Act. At least every week I have under my consideration matters affecting the Electric Light and Power Act. If any hon. member cares to read any of the Orders in Council granted to any particular individual, company, or local authority, he will find that an Electric Authority is constituted and its powers are defined under an Order in Council. That Order in Council provides that a rate shall be fixed which will enable the Electric Authority to carry on the enterprise successfully. That is only right and just. No one who has any common sense will establish an Electric Authority unless there is a reasonable chance of success. No one asks for an Order in Council for electricity in any given area unless there is a reasonable chance of a sufficient number of consumers being in that area. Under this

[2 p.m.] scheme the local authorities will not be called upon to contribute anything from the rates. The enterprise is one in which the Treasurer will make advances. If there is any default in the payment of interest and redemption, the Treasurer may appoint an official receiver to carry on the business and collect the moneys due to the Government. The enterprise is intended to be self-supporting. I do not think it would be a fair thing to impose a rate on ratepayers within any given area. Any large industrial undertaking that may be established under the Bill will be regarded more as a national undertaking. This provision can be regarded as an additional safeguard—that full investigation will be made before any money is advanced or any scheme launched.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I think we are all glad to have the explanation from the Minister with regard to liability of the ratepayers in a particular area. When the Minister, by way of interjection, stated that the loss would have to be made good by the users of the power we wondered what he really meant. I take it that, after a concern has been running twelve months and it makes a loss of £1,000 or £1,500, there will not be any retrospective levy made on the users of the power.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: No. The scheme will be carried on in the same way as electric lighting companies carry on their business.

Their rates are so fixed as to enable them to pay interest and redemption, and, if they find on any year's trading that the charges are too low, they can approach the Minister and ask for authority to make a higher charge.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am quite satisfied with that explanation.

Mr. FLETCHER (*Port Curtis*): I quite agree with the Minister that the scheme should be a national undertaking. He stated that proper safeguards would be provided and that proper investigation would take place before any work was undertaken. That seems to be the main point of the Bill. The work should not be undertaken unless it is bound to be a success. There should be no risky undertakings. In order to ensure that there shall be no risky undertakings started, I move the insertion, on line 48, of the words—

“But, notwithstanding anything contained in this Act to the contrary, the Treasurer shall not advance any loan to any Hydraulic Authority for the construction of any works under this Act unless a definite undertaking is first furnished from the consumers within the area that they will consume sufficient power to make such works financially self-supporting.”

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That would tie up the whole Act.

Mr. FLETCHER: I would like to have an explanation as to how it would tie up the whole Act. It will certainly remove the possibility of any venturesome scheme.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: I will take an analogy: If the Windsor Town Council asked for a loan for the purpose of supplying electric current in that area, would you ask the council to give a definite list of the number of consumers before the Treasurer would advance any money?

Mr. FLETCHER: In that case the local authority would give an assurance, and, no doubt, it would have consulted the persons who were going to use the power in the area and received some undertaking from them. The local authority would not give a definite undertaking that the scheme was a good one without having first discovered that the people would use the power.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: First of all, we would have to be satisfied that there was a demand for the electric current.

Mr. FLETCHER: This amendment makes sure that an investigation will be made so that there will be no danger of the State losing large sums of money over these enterprises. A body of men may want to see a district advance, and they may argue that, if they could get a certain amount of money expended on the construction of power works, it will be an inducement for men to establish industries. It might end in disaster: but, if they have to see that there are sufficient consumers available and ready to utilise the power within the area, then all will be well. I would like to ask the Minister whether he has any definite scheme in mind, or whether this Bill is a certain amount of window dressing. I do not suppose he has any definite scheme, unless it is the Fitzroy River scheme at Reckhampton.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: That is a scheme which will have to be investigated.

Mr. FLETCHER: It will come within the provisions of this Bill?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Yes. The Barron Falls will also come within the provisions of this Bill.

Mr. FLETCHER: Queensland at present is not a large manufacturing country, and it is not likely that there will be any developments under this Bill for a great many years except in one or two instances.

Mr. COLLINS: You have no vision at all.

Mr. FLETCHER: It is sound common sense. There can be no question that there is a possibility of works being undertaken that will end in financial disaster, and it is with a view to safeguarding that possibility that I have moved the amendment, and I hope the Minister will accept it.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): The amendment simply embodies a practice which has been in common use in connection with other industries in which a large amount of State money has been involved. In the construction of sugar-mills, some assurance is always given that there will be a sufficient number of suppliers of cane to the mill before any risk is taken. It seems to me to be sound business that some safeguard of that kind should be embodied in the Bill. I was pleased to hear the Minister say that the ratepayers in any area will not run any risk in connection with these projects. At the same time, I trust he will realise the necessity for very careful estimates being made both in regard to the cost and also in regard to the power that is to be sold. We know, unfortunately, how far out estimates sometimes are. I have in mind a railway in my own electorate which two or three years ago it was estimated would cost £27,000, but the actual cost was something like £52,000. The success of an undertaking under this Bill will be contingent upon reliable estimates being made. If an estimate of £50,000 is made and arrangements are made to start the undertaking on that basis, and it costs £100,000, it will result in a dislocation of the arrangements as to the cost of the power to be supplied. We require far more careful estimates to be made than those which have been made in regard to most of our State enterprises. The amendment of the hon. member for Port Curtis would safeguard the interests of the State.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I cannot see that the hon. member for Port Curtis and the hon. member for Mirani have brought forward any arguments to justify the Minister in accepting the amendment. The clause under discussion provides for the making of loans to Water Power Boards. In the first place the Government—and all concerned—have to be satisfied that there is a reasonable chance of success before a Water Power Board is created. The amendment would block any work at all from being done unless financial success was assured. Who is to be the judge as to whether financial success is assured or not?

Mr. FLETCHER: It means that the consumers must be there. You are not taking any risk in connection with the matter.

Mr. GLEDSON: I do not know what the hon. member has in his mind with respect to consumers. Take the project spoken about as being the first hydraulic power scheme started in Queensland—that is at Mount Edwards, in the Fassfern district,

Mr. Gledson]

where the new railway line is being built. There is an ideal site there which has been surveyed, and which is looked upon as the coming scheme for the generation of electric power, not for the Fassifern district alone, but for the whole of Southern Queensland. Suppose a Water Power Board was appointed, and it made provision for the building of the necessary dams and works to supply the whole of Southern Queensland with cheap water power for lighting and other purposes, who is going to say who are the consumers, and who should give the guarantee that the undertaking will be financially successful from the start? When people have been afraid to launch out and make improvements for the future, there has never been anything achieved. If we accept an amendment like this, there will never be any progress at all; there will never be a Water Power Board appointed. In the first place, a Water Power Board would not be appointed because no board would undertake to go round before operations are started and ask the consumers to give a guarantee that they will use the power. No Government would be worthy of the name of a Government which simply made provision for consumers already in the district. No Government would be worthy of being called a Government which only made provision for the people here now. Everything that is being done, including legislation, and everything else, and every scheme put into operation is intended to make provision for the future. We want to do something that we have not done in the past. What is the use of introducing a Bill if it is only to do something that we have done in the past? We want to increase our power and provide cheaper power for industries in the future. There are very few industries carried on by electrical power to-day. That is because we have not got cheap electrical energy, and power cannot be obtained at a reasonable cost. That is where private enterprise has failed, although hon. members opposite are always lauding private enterprise up to the sky. Private enterprise has had seventy years' work in Queensland building up these schemes, and has failed to give the people of this country cheap energy. I saw a letter in the paper this morning with reference to the Sherwood council supplying electric current to the ratepayers in that area at 7d. per unit. The writer was a resident of Graceville, and he complained of the action of the Government in allowing the council to charge 7d. per unit. The Government gave the council the right to buy the electric current in bulk and distribute it for 7d. per unit. A little further along we have the Ipswich district, where a private company operates, and charges 8d. per unit, which is 1d. more than the Sherwood council charges. The meters belonging to the private company sometimes register double, and in that case you have to pay double. I had a meter at my place which registered double. It practically registered 1 unit per day. After having had it for twelve months the company removed it and installed another meter, which registers only half a unit per day. So they practically did me out of a half unit of current each day. In addition, I had to pay 1s. 6d. per month for meter rent. That is the private company which is supposed to do such great things. We do not want this amendment in the Bill at all. We want to supply cheap energy to the

[Mr. Gledson.

people so that we can compete with other companies. We want to see more industries started, and we want to give them every encouragement. There is a proposal to obtain current from the Barron Falls. It is not merely intended to light the town of Cairns with electric light, but the idea is to supply electric power wherever it is wanted, and start manufactories and industries in the vicinity of the Falls. It is only by supplying our people with cheap electrical power that we shall be able to compete with other countries. I think the amendment will retard progress in Queensland, and I hope the Minister will not accept it.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): It does not matter what distance the electrical current has to be conveyed; evidently people who live 20 miles away must only be charged at the same rate as those living near the power station. The hon. member for Ipswich referred to the Mount Edwards scheme, which is purely an irrigation scheme. There is not a tremendous volume of water there. It is all a question of guarantee. If it is found that the number of people in the area will not take sufficient water to provide sufficient revenue, then it is going to cost more money.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Suppose that, when they set out to get that information, it is discovered that the number of people who agreed to take the water is not sufficient to make it a success, what would happen then? The people will not go on with the scheme.

Mr. MOORE: If there will not be sufficient water revenue, then they will not go on with it. In the same way, if there are not sufficient users, they will not go on with it. The amendment merely asks that there shall be a guarantee that a sufficient amount of power shall be used to pay for a Sinking Fund on the outlay. By so doing, we shall protect the scheme and the Government, because provision is made that, if a sufficient amount is not used, a water rate will be levied on the irrigable land in the area. There should be no discrimination between the supply of water and the supply of power. If a sufficient number of users of water is not available, the scheme should not be proceeded with, unless the people are willing to accept the responsibility of paying a rate in the event of a deficiency for the advantage of having the water there if they want it, and the same principle should apply to power. I do not think there is anything unreasonable or objectionable in the amendment. As the Minister stated, the State will be responsible for any loss in the end, and the amendment is only a way of safeguarding the interests of the State and of the taxpayers of the State. I cannot see that the amendment will destroy the value of the measure, and I think the Minister will be well advised to give further consideration to it.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I do not propose to accept the amendment of the hon. member for Port Curtis. As I have already pointed out, ample safeguards of the public interests are provided. The Minister for the time being may authorise a thorough investigation of any areas likely to be suitable as water power areas, not only as to the power resources of the area, but also as to the possibility of supplying sufficient consumers with the power when generated. There has often been a great

deal of controversy regarding electric schemes. Some people think that water schemes are always cheaper than power plants such as gas works or something of that kind. That does not always follow. Water-generated power is cheapest only where a sufficiently large supply is generated, where it has not to be carried too great a distance, and where the available consumers require a sufficiently large quantity of the energy. An Order would never be issued by any Minister or Governor in Council with a modicum of common sense unless those requirements had been satisfied. The clause, in the first place, provides—

“Subject to this Act, the Treasurer may, from time to time, advance to a Board out of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, such sums of money on loan as are required for the construction of any works which, under this Act, the Board is authorised to construct.”

We shall be able to safeguard ourselves there. The Minister decides upon a water power area. Then we decide that a Hydraulic Authority shall be established. It must have authority to establish certain works. None of those authorities will be constituted without there being justification for it, no matter to which party they belong. Treasurers do not go round looking for places to lend money to. Any semi-public body that comes to the Treasurer for a loan has to submit a sound financial proposition. Consequently, the method now proposed not only is not necessary but imposes too onerous restrictions. Take, for example, the Cairns hinterland area. It has been argued for many years past that an ample supply of power could be generated to meet the requirements of the whole of that district both in regard to light and power, and undertakings could have their capacity doubled at the existing cost. It is further pointed out that, if a cheap supply of power were available in that district, other industries might be established which at the present time are not sound propositions. The logical conclusion from the hon. member's amendment is that no enterprise should be established unless it is absolutely certain that there will be a sufficient number of customers who will absorb a sufficient quantity of power. If that were the principle upon which all people acted, there would be no enterprise in the community. Before anyone would start a store he would need to be assured of a sufficient number of people being prepared to spend so much a month. If any business man went looking for such an undertaking, no enterprise would be started. All that can be expected is that there are sufficient safeguards under the Bill so that no enterprise will be started unless there is ample and full justification for it—that justification being established by an inquiry by experts into the scheme.

Mr. FLETCHER (*Port Curtis*): I am sorry that the Minister will not accept the amendment. If proper investigation is made in every instance, and it is found to be a perfectly sound scheme before being launched, there is no need to have this provision. But many enterprises have been embarked upon and schemes undertaken which have proved absolutely unsound—so many indeed that they have shaken the financial stability of this State.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: You may say so, but you cannot get people to pay any attention to you.

Mr. FLETCHER: When you get underneath the surface, the financial position is most deplorable. It was with a view to minimising the possibility of any heavy losses under the operation of this measure that I moved the amendment. If the Minister undertakes that there will be competent inquiry to see that there is every chance of financial success, that is all that is necessary.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Every proposal that is submitted to the Treasury for a loan is properly inquired into by men competent to make the inquiry.

Mr. FLETCHER: The Minister cannot deny that there have been tremendous losses through ill-digested schemes having been undertaken. The State is staggering under loan expenditure which does not provide any revenue. We want to avoid the possibility of anything of that kind under this measure. This is a perfectly sound amendment, safeguarding the financial position of the State.

Amendment (*Mr. Fletcher*) put and negatived.

Clause 8 put and passed.

Clauses 9 to 14, both inclusive, and the schedule, put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

The third reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS INSURANCE BILL.

INITIATION.

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

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to make provision for the insurance of unemployed workers and for other ancillary purposes.”

The object of this Bill is to provide means whereby workers will be insured against periods of unemployment. Payments will be made to prevent people becoming destitute during periods of unemployment [2.30 p.m.] over which they have no control.

All workers who come within the ambit of the Arbitration Court will become insured persons—that is to say, any male or female over eighteen years of age working under the conditions of an Arbitration Court award will become insured persons under this measure. The State, the employers, and the employees will each be levied upon to provide a fund from which benefits will be available.

Mr. T. R. ROBERTS: Will they contribute equally?

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: They will each contribute one-third. Under this scheme a fund will be created which will be contributed to in the way I have indicated. A six months' period will elapse before payment will be made from the fund. That will enable the fund to accumulate, and will enable the scheme to be put on a proper basis. Only the insured persons will be entitled to benefit under the fund. By that means we shall ensure the solvency of the fund. The employers will be called upon to contribute for the employees whom they

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

engage. Regulations will be drawn up setting out the basis on which those contributions will be made. An Unemployed Council will be established, comprising the Secretary for Public Works, the Director of Labour, and the Registrar for Friendly Societies, one representative from the unions of employees, and one representative from the Employers' Federation. Those five persons will constitute the Unemployed Council. It will be their duty to administer the fund and carry out the various duties set out in the Bill. The Bill also endeavours to a large extent to minimise the dangers of unemployment by regularising the amount of available employment in various portions of the State, as far as it is possible to do that. That is the general outline of the scheme. The Bill is devised with a view to meeting a situation which I consider it to be the duty of every Government to meet. In a country such as Queensland, where employment is to a very large extent of a seasonal nature, men are unemployed during certain periods of the year—a fact over which they have no control. It cannot be considered a desirable thing that men, who through no fault of their own are unemployed, should become destitute as a result. Consequently, the scheme is one that should commend itself to Parliament, and should commend itself to the people generally. The Bill is not of a Utopian character, but is of a practical character, and can be put into operation at an early date with a reasonable chance of success. I venture to say that, when it is put into operation, it will go a long way towards mitigating the amount of suffering that takes place in the community at the present time as a result of unemployment.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I remember some years ago that, when the Bill that was referred to as the "Loafers' Paradise Bill" was before this House, the Opposition would not subscribe to the principles contained in that Bill, and moved certain amendments which apparently the Government are now adopting. The scheme suggested by the amendments moved at that time proposed to introduce the German scheme or the old country scheme, where the State, the employers, and the employees each contributed one-third to a fund in the same way as is provided in the Bill. I was rather surprised to hear the Minister state that the fund will have a general application. The principle laid down in the German scheme, or the old country scheme, is that the members of the various guilds or crafts confine the participation in the fund to the members of the particular guilds or crafts.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The fund in Great Britain at the present time embraces pretty well everybody, just as this Bill does. I am referring to the 1920 Act.

Mr. VOWLES: That might be so under the 1920 Act, but it was not so under the Bill that we debated previously. The members of the various unions or crafts subscribe to a provident or insurance fund for the benefit of their own members.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Many of the organisations have out-of-work benefits of their own.

Mr. VOWLES: Under the scheme I refer to payments are made direct by the employers.

[*Hon. W. Forgan Smith.*]

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Payment is to be made by the State, by the employers, and by the employees. The employers are called upon to pay the employees' contributions, too. They will make a deduction from the employees' wages.

Mr. VOWLES: We are told that one of the persons requiring special consideration is the seasonal worker. When wages are being fixed in the Arbitration Court, if it is seasonal employment the wages are fixed at a specially high rate, and now the Minister talks about that man, who gets an exorbitant rate of wage during the time he is working, getting assistance from this fund during the off-season. He is to be kept out of this fund when he is not working. That does not seem to be fair.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: I do not follow your reasoning.

Mr. VOWLES: When the shearers or cane-cutters go to the Arbitration Court their wages are fixed on the basis that theirs are seasonal employment—that there are so many months in the year when they cannot get work—and, as a result, when they are working their rates are exceptionally high.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Are you asking that such men should not come under this scheme?

Mr. VOWLES: If they are going to come under it, it is very unfair to the men whose wages are not fixed on the same basis. If a man is in constant work all the year round and another man gets a rate of pay which is supposed to be equivalent to a full year's pay although he actually works six months in the year, surely that ought to be taken into consideration when you are arriving at the basis of contribution to the fund. One man will be constantly going on to the fund at the cost of the other man. That is rather a matter for Committee, but it seems rather strange that the question has not been taken into consideration. I sincerely trust that in these other matters referred to there is nothing of a Utopian nature. I hope the Bill will not be drastic. We all admit that it is necessary to make some provision for unemployment; but we contend that the Government are very largely responsible for unemployment at the present time.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The Government you supported years ago contemplated introducing an Unemployed Workers Bill.

Mr. VOWLES: In those days an amount of only £5,000 was spent in connection with relief to unemployed workers, whereas this year over £170,000 has been provided. If the consolidated revenue is going to be relieved of that amount, and one-third is to be borne by the employers and one-third by the employees, the consolidated revenue will be so much the better off. We do not object to an Unemployed Workers Insurance Bill, provided it is a reasonable one; but, if there are going to be objectionable features imported into the measure, then we must object to it. That is the attitude the Opposition will have to adopt.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I am quite in accord with the views of the leader of the Opposition in regard to this Bill. If the Bill is going to be for the benefit of the people and works out in the direction indicated by the Minister, we are prepared to support it, but not if it has associated with it a number of the objectionable clauses which were included in the Bill of 1919. I would

like the Minister to say whether there is a clause in this Bill similar to the clause in the 1919 Bill which specified that, if an employer made over a certain amount of profits, he had to invest a certain proportion of the profits in enlarging the scope of his business or else to invest the money in Government debentures.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: This is practically a new Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR: That does not answer my question. I would like the hon. gentleman to give an assurance that there is nothing of that kind in the proposed measure, because I certainly will oppose anything of that nature. Hon. members on this side are just as anxious as hon. members opposite to see that everyone is employed, and we all hope that, as a result of this Bill, we shall be able to find employment out of the funds to be created, so that real permanent developmental work will take place. We do not want to see anyone walking about receiving money from the fund to be created under this Bill in a State like Queensland, where there is any amount of work waiting to give employment to everyone in the State. We hope that, when the Bill becomes operative, the Government will so direct their activities that there will be real developmental work carried out. I have no sympathy with the farm idea that we had in the last Bill, because it is one of the poorest forms of labour in which we could engage the unemployed. The Government propose to enter largely into water conservation schemes and other such activities, and let us direct the energies of the men who will have to accept employment under this measure in the direction of developmental work which will be for the good of the community for all time.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): I trust that this Bill is quite a different measure to the one initiated by the Government in 1919, and I hope that it is taken to a large extent from the British Unemployed Insurance Act of 1920. So far as the Minister has outlined the Bill, it seems to me that it has been largely copied from that Act.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: It is a better Bill than that.

Mr. PETRIE: I hope it is. If it is not a better Bill than the one initiated by the Government in 1919, I am afraid the hon. gentleman will have a very hard time in getting it through this Chamber. There is no doubt that this question of unemployment is a very serious one and one that should be dealt with, and the sooner it is dealt with the better. I think that an unemployed workers' insurance scheme is a very good way of overcoming the difficulty, and I am glad to know that under this Bill the Government, the employers, and the employees are to contribute equally. That should be very satisfactory, but, if there are any drastic clauses such as that mentioned by the leader of the Nationalist party in regard to forcing employers to invest a certain amount of their profits in enlarging their business or to invest in Government debentures, we will certainly oppose it. I am glad to have an assurance from the Minister that no such clause is included in the Bill. However, we shall have a better opportunity of discussing the Bill at the second reading stage, and I therefore do not intend to take up any further time at present.

Mr. T. R. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): After listening to the Minister when intro-

ducing the Bill, we can congratulate ourselves on his advocating certain alterations of the disastrous Bill which came before the House in 1920. We have still to recognise, however, that this legislation will have the same effect as the previous Bill, inasmuch as, until the other States come into line with us, the Bill will be a handicap on some of our industries. The reason I rose to speak was because I was not certain who are to come under the Bill.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Any worker operating under an industrial award of the Arbitration Court will be an "insured person," and only "insured persons" will be entitled to the benefits of the Bill.

Mr. T. R. ROBERTS: That is one of the weaknesses I can see, unless the Government have in their minds the bringing of the agricultural industry under the Bill. There is a large number of men engaged in agricultural work who have not up to the present been subject to Arbitration Court awards. I feel very much for those men if they are not going to get some benefit under an unemployed workers' scheme like this, but I do not feel inclined to advocate their going to the Arbitration Court. Naturally, I view the measure with some apprehension so far as they are concerned.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The scope of the measure can be extended.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoong*): I remember taking an active part in the opposition to the "Loafers' Paradise Bill," as it was termed at the time it was introduced, and I am glad to know from the Minister that he is not prepared to adopt the principles enunciated in that measure. In that measure the whole burden was placed upon one section of the community. I think it a very great pity that the Government could not have brought sufficient influence to bear upon the Commonwealth Government to introduce such a measure as this.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: It really ought to be a Commonwealth measure.

Mr. MAXWELL: I am coming to that point. As you are going to tax an industry to the detriment of that industry, there will be the difficulty that certain industries will be taxed to bear the burden of unemployment, while in the other States there is no such measure in operation. At present industries have to carry more than they can bear, and to tax them still further will make it a very tough proposition to carry on. I realise that this problem of unemployment deserves every consideration, and we should try to solve it. There is another aspect of the question—that is, relating to the unemployable; but I do not propose to go into that matter now, as I shall have an opportunity of doing so on the second reading. If the Government had tried to induce the Commonwealth Government, or the Governments of the other States of Australia, to introduce a similar measure, so that each State would be under the same conditions, it would have been far better for Queensland. This Bill is going to be detrimental to our industries in Queensland, and I hope the Minister will try to persuade the other States to take the matter up, or, failing them, to get the Commonwealth Government to deal with it.

Mr. FLETCHER (*Port Curtis*): I understand from the Minister that the Bill provides for the regularising of industry.

Mr. Fletcher.]

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: To prevent unemployment as far as possible by regularising employment.

MR. FLETCHER: I would like to ask the Minister what he means by that?

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I do not think that I would be justified at this stage in entering into a discussion of the various clauses of the Bill; but what I meant by regularising employment was this: We know that certain industries require large numbers of men at certain periods of the year. Other work can be done by those men during the slack period of the year. In the sugar districts it would be absurd for the local authorities to be employing men in local work when the workers were required in the sugar industry. We have power under this Bill to advise local authorities when local works should be gone on with.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a first time.”

Question put and passed.

The second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the Workers' Homes Act of 1919 in certain particulars.”

This Bill does not involve any new principle, or amend any principle contained in the existing Act. We merely desire to make the

[3 p.m.] machinery of the Act more work-able. We provide for a twenty-five years' loan instead of a twenty years' loan, as laid down in the principal Act. We also provide for monthly payments in advance instead of weekly payments, and there are several other small amendments in the Bill to remedy the defects in the existing Act. It is intended to go on with works under this scheme at an early date, and the sum of £50,000 has been placed on the Estimates for that purpose.

MR. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I would like to take the opportunity at this stage of inquiring whether a promise made by the Premier, Mr. Theodore, in 1917, has been fulfilled. In explanation, I might point out that last year I drew attention to the reply given to a question of mine by the hon. gentleman in 1917. The question that I asked the Treasurer, Mr. Theodore, was—

“1. Are holders of sugar workers' blocks able to borrow money either from the Agricultural Bank or the Workers' Dwellings Branch for the erection of their dwelling-houses?”

[*Mr. Fletcher.*]

“2. If not, and the tenure of these blocks prevents such loans being granted, will he endeavour to arrange with the Secretary for Public Lands such a tenure as will enable them to borrow either under the Agricultural Bank Act or the Workers' Dwellings Act money for such purpose, or in some other way arrange for it to be done?”

The Treasurer, in reply to those questions, said that the holders of those blocks were not able to borrow at present, but the matter would be considered if an application for an advance was made to the Commissioner of the Queensland Government Savings Bank. Applications were then made for blocks, and the Commissioner, in reply, stated that he anticipated being in a position to deal with the applications very shortly, and had advised Messrs. James Pearce and Thomas Hastie accordingly. Nothing, however, has been done up to the present. Now that we have got this Bill before us, I suggest that we should enable these holders of sugar workers' blocks to erect homes.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: This Bill does not deal with that situation at all.

MR. SWAYNE: I suggest that an opportunity might be given to the holders of those workers' blocks to obtain homes of their own, especially as the Premier promised in 1917 that something would be done.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: This is an entirely different Act. We are not amending the Savings Bank Act at present.

MR. SWAYNE: I think I am quite in order in suggesting what should be included in this measure.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: We are amending the Workers' Homes Act.

MR. SWAYNE: The question of unemployment crops up in every measure that we have before us. I suggest that the people I refer to should be enabled to borrow money to erect homes of their own. When I asked that question I wanted them to get permission to borrow under the Workers' Dwellings Act.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would point out to the hon. gentleman that the question he is now raising has to do with the Workers' Dwellings Act. This Bill proposes to amend the Workers' Homes Act, which is an entirely different measure.

MR. T. R. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): The Minister said that he was not amending the principal Act, but was making it more liberal for persons to take advantage of the Act.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: We are not amending any principle.

MR. T. R. ROBERTS: This Bill was introduced by the Premier, and, judging by the remarks he made on that occasion, it is a different measure to what we expected. I understand that it is to assist workers to get homes. If that is so, I welcome it. I do not think it will be availed of to any extent, because we have to recognise that it is a costly proposition for the average wage-earner to get a home at present.

MR. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I was referring to the question of the holders of sugar workers' blocks being able to take advantage of this Bill to get homes of their own. They

should be allowed to borrow money under this Bill.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH: This Bill does not deal with that question at all.

MR. SWAYNE: There is nothing to prevent the Government from extending the provisions of this Bill to include those who hold sugar workers' blocks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. I would point out to the hon. member that this Bill deals with people who are landless. It only applies to those who have no land at all.

MR. SWAYNE: The question in my mind was whether it could not be extended to include sugar workers' blocks, because a promise made years ago with respect to those blocks has not been carried out.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

THE CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

HON. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*): I beg to move—

"That the Bill be now read a first time."

Question put and passed.

The second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

BARALABA-CASTLE CREEK RAILWAY.

APPROVAL OF PLAN, ETC.

COMMITTEE.

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

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*): I beg to move—

"That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Mount Morgan Branch Railway from Baralaba to Castle Creek, in length 52 miles 51 chains."

The passing of this resolution will forge another link in the Government's policy of encouragement of population, land settlement, irrigation, and production. It is an indication that the Government intend to continue their policy of developing our rich natural resources, their policy of decentralisation, and their policy of seeking to stem the tendency to drift to the towns. I think those are very laudable objects of which all members of the Committee will approve. I mentioned last week other phases of the Government's policy in relation to these very important problems. There is the Burnett scheme and the North Coast Railway completion scheme, making available rich sugar lands and the erection of more sugar-mills, and the great agricultural organisation scheme.

This railway is necessary to enable the Government to inaugurate and develop a great water conservation and irrigation scheme in the Dawson Valley. It is a scheme which will mean much to Queensland and to the whole of Australia. It will enable settlement to proceed apace and wealth and production to increase. When completed, it will be one of the largest in Australia, and even one of the largest in the world. That

is our claim, and it is no extravagant claim, and we look forward to the completion of the scheme with confidence and without fear of any opposition. This railway must be justified as part of a water conservation and irrigation scheme, and the motion must be construed as wide enough to enable me to deal with it as such, because without that scheme the construction of the line for which I am seeking approval could not be justified. Obvious advantages will accrue from the construction of the line in other respects, but the main advantages of it will arise from its being essentially part of a water conservation and irrigation proposal, and, that being so, I would like to make reference to the recognition of the importance of water conservation and irrigation in other parts of the world.

As hon. members know, in the United States of America, in India, in Egypt, and elsewhere millions of money have been spent on water conservation and irrigation, and millions of people have been settled upon irrigated lands, and hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of products have been obtained from the lands. The history and romance of water conservation and irrigation in other countries of the world is a fascinating and valuable subject of study, but time will not permit me to do more than hint in passing at what has been done in other countries. I would like to quote a paragraph which appeared in the Brisbane "Telegraph" of 29th March last—

"London, 29th March.

"The House of Commons has passed a resolution approving of the raising in the United Kingdom of a loan of £150,000,000 for railways and irrigation in India."

That indicates the importance that is attached to this subject in other countries. Coming nearer home, we have Renmark, Mildura, and Yanco—all settlements which have made progress, and which have been assisted in their inauguration and development by the able and versatile pen of the late Right Honourable Alfred Deakin, whose writings, based upon his study of the question and his powers of observation, did much for irrigation in Australia. Before referring to Queensland, I might be permitted to quote one or two brief extracts from the Commonwealth "Year Book" of 1920, on page 450 of which I find the following:—

"Active operations were commenced in 1887, since which date marvellous progress has been made, instanced in the fact that, originally used as a sheep run and carrying one sheep to every thirty acres, the dried fruit harvested from 13,000 acres in 1920 was valued at £1,238,373 gross.

"The Renmark Irrigation Trust was established in 1893 on similar lines to Mildura, but on a smaller scale. The area of settlement is 21,000 acres, the area under irrigation being 5,364 acres. There are also 1,000 acres under crop for hay. The dried fruit packed for 1920 was 2,500 tons, green fruit 5,000 tons, and the gross value of the production for the year exceeded £235,000. The population of the town and settlement is 4,000."

Let us assimilate the eloquence of these figures. Mildura originally carried one sheep to 70 acres. Now the value of the crop off 13,000 acres is over £1,238,000. The area under irrigation at Renmark is 5,364

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

acres, the population is 4,000 persons, and the value of the production exceeds £235,000 a year.

Those figures are very interesting and, I think, very convincing in a discussion on such a resolution as I am inviting the Committee to vote upon, because the question is one of water conservation and irrigation.

Coming to Queensland, I recollect that, when I first entered this Chamber, the late Sir William MacGregor was Governor, and he emphasised the value of irrigation as the foundation on which the future of Queensland would depend. He said that there never had been a country where schemes of water conservation and irrigation could be carried out more satisfactorily than in Queensland; and our own experience and observation confirm the importance which he so eloquently and forcibly assigned to irrigation, not only because of his great learning and reading, but also because of his natural ability. Here in Queensland we have periods of drought, and naturally our thoughts turn to the problem of minimising, if not entirely eradicating, the effect of those disastrous occurrences. Further, we yearly import into Queensland many thousands of pounds' worth of products which could well be grown within the limits of our own State, and because of all these facts the motion I am moving will, I am sure, receive the commendation and endorsement of hon. members of the Committee.

I would like in passing briefly to touch upon the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme itself, and to give just a short outline of what it involves. The immediate scheme involves the construction of a temporary dam at Castle Creek, 53 miles from Baralaba, and, in addition to that, a dam at Delusion Creek. Those two dams will furnish the foundation of the immediate scheme. The complete scheme is a big one and a progressive one, but the dam at Castle Creek will make available over 5,000 acres for irrigation, and will also enable settlers to be settled and revenue to be secured while the bigger scheme is being developed. The completed scheme involves, in addition to the railway from Baralaba to Castle Creek—a distance of 53 miles—a railway from Castle Creek to Delusion Creek—a distance of 25 miles, or a total of 78 miles. In addition to the dams at Castle Creek and Delusion Creek, there will be a big dam at Nathan's Gorge, named after our present Governor. Those three dams, together with the canals and regulators, will form the basis of this great scheme.

Honourable members conversing in loud tones,

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I appeal to hon. gentlemen to conduct their conversations in a lower tone. I hope they will obey my request. While we may be able to go out and seek temporary relief, the members of the "Hansard" staff have to be alert at their duties from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., and I trust that hon. members will assist the staff and endeavour to lighten their duties. (Hear, hear!)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The area of land that this great scheme will make available is considerable. Until the behaviour of the dam is thoroughly tested and more scientific evidence obtained as to its power and capacity, 100,000 acres will be made available for irrigation purposes; but the Department of Public Lands estimates,

as the result of its survey, that over 300,000 acres will ultimately be available for irrigation purposes. Of course, that will not be used immediately the Nathan dam is constructed. In addition to the irrigable land, the Department of Public Lands estimates that approximately 1,000,000 acres of non-irrigable lands will be made available within a 15-mile radius of this railway. That is a very important fact. We have seen the rapid growth of the cotton industry in the Dawson Valley district, and the making available of so much extra land within a reasonable distance of railway communication will give a tremendous impetus to cotton growing and allied industries in the Central district.

One could go on for a long time emphasising the virtues of this great scheme. Without using extravagant language, one can say that it certainly is a wonderful scheme. It makes the imagination reel to attempt to describe the wealth and magnitude of the possibilities of this Dawson Valley water conservation and irrigation proposal. It reminds me of a few lines from Dante. During my studies of that poet many years ago, I read of the spirit of Beatrice leading Dante through the wonders of heaven and his saying—

"Oh, speech! how feeble and how faint art thou

To give conception birth!"

Speech is too faint and too feeble to explain the wonders of this great scheme which we are developing in the Central district. I am certain that hon. members who have not already visited the Central district will agree with my remarks when they visit that district. They will feel that words are ridiculously inadequate to express proper appreciation of this wonderful scheme, which has been highly spoken of, not only by the experts who have been up, but by public men who were able to appreciate such schemes even though they might not have technical knowledge.

Hydro-electric possibilities have been mentioned in Committee this afternoon in connection with another measure. That is an important phase of this scheme in the Dawson Valley. The supply of cheap power will be an important factor which, I believe, will be realised before many years pass as one of the results of this great scheme. It has been suggested from time to time that the Dawson Valley country is subject to flooding. According to the best possible reports that can be obtained, there is no serious danger in that direction. There have been floods in the Dawson Valley district, a very serious one occurring thirty years ago. When a flood of that nature engulfs the Dawson Valley, the whole State is engulfed, so, really, it is not an argument against the Dawson Valley scheme, because the same possibilities are latent concerning any other scheme that may be put in operation.

Mr. BERBINGTON: The only argument is the cost of doing it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The cost will be fractional compared with the added value to the land as the result of the construction of the railway and the development of this scheme. I think I shall be able to satisfy the hon. member on that point.

Mr. BERBINGTON: What about Inkerman?

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Inkerman is a commendable phase of the Government's policy.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You are easily satisfied.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. Does he know what it costs to water Mildura?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No land can carry the rents you put on after irrigation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I want to remind the Committee that the cost of irrigating Inkerman—

Mr. BEBBINGTON: £7 an acre.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member does not know anything about irrigation proposals. Does he know what it is costing in Renmark?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I do.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He does not, or he would not make the remark he has made. I have the figures, which indicate that the cost at Renmark and Mildura runs up to £30 an acre for water, yet the hon. member for Drayton makes a stupid remark about £7 being an unbearable burden.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: So it is.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In country like Inkerman, where they grow rich cane and have valuable land, what is £7 an acre compared with what can be secured from the land? It is comparatively light. It is not a question of what it costs to get the water; it is a question of what the land produces after it is watered. The hon. member who talks glibly about £7 an acre will be surprised to learn that at Mildura and Renmark it has run up to £30, £40, and even more.

Let me proceed from the point at which I was interrupted. I want to quote from the report of Mr. Deshon, the Hydraulic Engineer, on this important question of flooding. He says—

“The fact that, during high floods, the Dawson River flats are liable to immediate inundation might be considered a detriment to the scheme. A flood similar to that of 1890 occurring with the reservoir nearly full would probably, in spite of large sluices, cause inundation, but ordinary floods, in my opinion, can be regulated, and any risk of flooding the farms averted.”

That opinion of the Hydraulic Engineer is supported by eminent authority, and hon. members can secure the information from the reports which are available.

Legislation will be introduced by the Premier later empowering the Government to appoint a trust to control this scheme as well as other irrigation schemes in the State.

The scheme of control will be such [3.30 p.m.] as, I think, will be satisfactory to hon. members opposite as well as to hon. members on this side. An experimental farm will be founded, and the best use to which land can be put will be ascertained. The size of the areas will be satisfactorily determined, and other information will be secured.

The railway proposal aims at the construction of the line from Baralaba to Castle Creek, a distance of 53 miles, at an estimated cost of £471,000. I want hon. members to note particularly that that sum includes the cost

of the telegraph system, survey, and rolling-stock, and not the construction of the line only. A lower estimate has been given for the construction of the line only.

Mr. FLETCHER: What was the estimated cost of construction? Was it £250,000?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No. The first rough estimate was £350,000. The estimate of £471,900, as given by the Commissioner for Railways, is an estimate to cover the telegraph system, survey, and rolling-stock. Other estimates have been given, but this is a reliable estimate which has been carefully worked out. The Public Works Commission gave an affirmative report in connection with the construction of the line. A committee was appointed by the Railway Department, by the Department of Public Lands, and the Treasury Department in collaboration, and that committee also approved of the construction of the line. Its report is embodied in the report of the Public Works Commission. In addition to that, the Railway Commissioner has reported favourably, and his report, in conjunction with the other reports, furnishes valuable information. I presume hon. members have studied those reports. It is intended later on to construct a line to Delusion Creek, the survey of which has already been authorised. That shows that the Government are not going on in a half-hearted or a piecemeal way. We are going to carry the scheme right through without undue interruption and without undue delay. The Commissioner for Railways, in his report on the proposal, stated—

“As settlement proceeds business will increase, and with irrigated areas under cultivation this railway should before long carry a heavy traffic, which will materially assist other sections of our lines. . . . I anticipate that shortly after completion the line will earn about £7,000 per annum. . . . The cost will be about £6,400 per annum. . . . If an extensive irrigation scheme be carried out simultaneously with the building of the railway a very large area of good country will be closely settled and be highly productive. I recommend the building of the line.”

The route has been a contentious matter, but careful and exhaustive inquiry has been made, with the result that the line will be commenced from Baralaba rather than from Rannes. All the experts who have investigated the matter have agreed on that. The reports seem to be of a unanimous nature. The reasons in favour of Baralaba as a commencing point are—

1. Shorter and cheaper construction;
2. It will serve country on both sides of the river;
3. It will eliminate the building of an unnecessary branch line from Banana to Moura;
4. The line is not likely to suffer any material damage from the highest floods;
5. It will enable the spread of prickly-pear to be more effectively coped with.

Mr. PETERSON: Did the Public Works Commission go over the route?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I understand they investigated the country. The hon. member for Mount Morgan, the

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

Premier, and myself, with His Excellency the Governor's party, went over the country carefully.

Mr. PETERSON: Did you go over the railway survey?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not over the whole line of survey. In a case like this it is not so much a matter of Ministers or members of Parliament relying on their own judgment. The Public Works Commission takes evidence from land experts and hydraulic experts.

Mr. PETERSON: Did the Public Works Commission go over the surveyed route?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members have the report of the Public Works Commission. The Commission, in addition to its own observations, called railway experts, land experts, and hydraulic experts, and, as a result of that evidence, the Commission unanimously endorsed the Baralaba starting point. Rannes was suggested, and I specially submitted that question in the first place to the combined committee. I would not allow any one department to determine that question. I asked the combined committee representing the Department of Public Lands, the Railway Department, and the Hydraulic Department, to meet and discuss the question of the route, which they did, and, as a result, they recommended Baralaba as the starting point. Subsequently, the Public Works Commission endorsed that recommendation, and it has been endorsed by Inspecting Surveyor Amos. This scheme is primarily and essentially a water conservation and irrigation scheme. To build the line from Rannes would mean that a line would be constructed extending away from the irrigation area—the hon. member for Normanby admitted that himself. He admitted that the Baralaba starting point was the better for an irrigation scheme.

Mr. PETERSON: Yes.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The scheme is not being carried on because of any political necessity to get men into the electorate?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A suggestion like that is unworthy of any hon. member. In connection with every line of public works policy that we have attempted, we have had the same cowardly and mean jibe thrown out. The same jibe was thrown out in connection with the Burnett scheme. It was said that it was a vote-catching scheme. The same was said when we pushed on rapidly with the construction of the North Coast Railway and when we commenced other schemes. Can a Government not do anything without the suggestion of party political influence and political advantage being made? We have commenced very big schemes which will have a far-reaching effect on the destiny and welfare of Queensland. Whenever we have attempted such schemes we have received the same jibes. It is pleasing to state that men in very high commercial positions have approved of the Government's schemes from time to time, and have not made unworthy suggestions like that which has been made by the hon. member for Drayton.

Mr. CORSER: No one has ever said that the Burnett scheme was a vote-catching scheme.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The suggestion has been made, and there is not the slightest justification for it. The

Dawson scheme is one of water conservation and irrigation. If that is so, then the better commencing point is Baralaba. That has been agreed to by the hon. member for Normanby. If the scheme is not going to be a water conservation and irrigation scheme, then the railway is not justified. The route from Baralaba will lead to the heart of the irrigable country, whereas the line from Rannes would lead out of the irrigable areas and would mean that a branch line would have to be constructed. It would be unsatisfactory from the viewpoint of the Railway Department to have to operate the two lines, and it would also mean unnecessary over-capitalisation.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That is what I meant. The railway route was selected because it leads to the centre of the irrigation scheme.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think that anyone can question that the Baralaba starting point is more satisfactory than the Rannes starting point. The hon. member for Drayton referred to the cost of the scheme. On the present estimate I do not suppose the whole scheme will cost more than £2,000,000, but the added value of the land will be at least £10,000,000. It has been placed as high as £20,000,000; but, on a conservative estimate, the added value to the Crown lands as a result of the construction of this scheme will be £10,000,000. Mr. Partridge has been appointed a commissioner to inquire into the scheme, and he will correct the various estimates that have been made. At all events, many millions of pounds will be added to the value of the lands in that district by the construction of this scheme. I remember the late Sir William MacGregor mentioning on one occasion that an irrigation scheme in Egypt which cost £3,000,000 paid for itself in three years.

Mr. FLETCHER: The Yanco scheme will never pay.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: One cannot say that definitely, because of the substantial increase of the value of the irrigable land as a result of that scheme. In California and other countries arid deserts have been transformed into gardens of beauty and productiveness, and the added value has been as high as £160 per acre. In India and in other countries the same enormous increase in the value of land has resulted from the construction of irrigation schemes and the necessary railways.

Mr. DEACON: Is the necessary water available in the Dawson?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That question has been thoroughly gone into, and it is estimated that there will be sufficient water to satisfactorily irrigate large areas when the dams are completed. When the scheme is completed probably 4,000 or 5,000 settlers will be able to secure living areas, and afterwards, with the 100,000 acres of irrigable land and the extra 200,000 acres which may subsequently be irrigated, and 100,000 acres of non-irrigable land, it will mean that up to 20,000 settlers will ultimately be established in that Dawson Valley country. This is part of our great public works policy which is going to enable us to build up a big agricultural population, and, in addition, secure an enormous increase in the value of the land. There are a good many products that we import that we can well grow for ourselves, but there is an enormous export market available, too. There is hardly any limit to

[Hon. J. Larcombe.]

the wealth-production possibilities of the State of Queensland. The Under Secretary for Public Lands pointed out that, so far as the non-irrigable land is concerned, there would be an added value of £2 to £3 per acre. In other countries the added value of land has been from nothing up to £200 per acre. Therefore, we see the enormous elasticity for estimate there is without unduly expanding the estimate.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I thought your idea was to give us cheap land?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: So you will have cheap land. The remark of the hon. member for Pittsworth reminds me of the name of the Einstein theory—relativity. What is the meaning of cheapness? Is it not a relative term? If you can get land at £5 or even £10 per acre and secure £20 per acre from the produce of that land, it is cheap land.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: You only think this can be done.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: By taking the statistics in connection with Mildura, Yanco, and the irrigation schemes of other countries, there is no doubt that in time good returns will be secured. Although there may be no actual profits for a number of years on the money required to build the railway, we shall, as a result of the increased value of the land, get back an enormous amount more than we spend on railway construction.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Over a period of fifteen years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Over a period of fifteen years we shall be getting back a large amount.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You will hardly make a start in fifteen years. It will be a burden on the ratepayers for twenty years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What about Yanco?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Yanco is a big burden on the ratepayers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Although there may be no immediate profit as a result of the Yanco scheme, look at the amount of land made available for settlement; and look at the settlement it has been able to absorb. Settlement is one of the great problems in Queensland, and if we are going to demand that every fraction of a farthing we spend is going to return us a profit in the first year, we are not going to do very much. The hon. member for Pittsworth will agree that this scheme will pay indirectly.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: That is what we always argue—that you never give country railway lines a fair go.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have given them more than a fair go compared with other States and other countries. There has been no increase in railway rates and fares in Queensland for nearly three years; in fact, there have been many reductions in freights and fares, and the country lines have benefited greatly as a result. Our main lines pay well. If we were to increase our fares and freights in order to show a profit on the railways, it would be the country lines that would suffer. Rightly understood, there is no such thing as a loss on the railways, because the producers have the money in their pockets, which otherwise they would have to pay out in increased fares and

freights. According to the evidence placed before me week after week and month after month, the producers are immeasurably better off as a result of the construction of railways. Farmers have told me that the construction of a railway means an increase of £3 or £4 per acre in the value of their land within a comparatively short time. I would ask the hon. member for Pittsworth to read the reports of the Public Works Commission. I was one of the original members of the Public Works Commission, and we took evidence throughout the greater portion of Queensland, and that was the evidence tendered to us at that time—that there would be an increase in many instances to the value of non-irrigable land to the settler of from £3 to £4 per acre from the construction of a railway.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Take hard facts.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If it were not for the Government's generous policy in relation to fares and freights, half the people in Queensland would have been in the cities to-day. The fact remains that the percentage of persons in the cities in Queensland to-day is lower than the percentage in the other States, where there is no Labour party in power.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: How is it that the country shows a decrease in population?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct. If the hon. member looks at the electoral rolls for 1921, before the redistribution took place, he will find that there had been a great increase in country districts as compared with 1915. Anticipating that the contention would be raised, I went into the matter, and I find that in three or four electorates, such as Normanby, Herbert, and other country districts, there has been a substantial increase of electors. It is no use the hon. member for Pittsworth attempting by interpolation to argue that the country rolls show a decrease under this Administration. On the contrary, they show a substantial increase, and my statement can be borne out by reference to the rolls.

Referring to the question of the added value of land, I heard a statement some time ago to the effect that the added value of land in Victoria alone had been £9,000,000 in a comparatively short period as the result of irrigation schemes.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: A lot of those values were false. They cannot pay them to-day, and they are going bankrupt because they are paying too much.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The values are based upon what the land is bringing on sale in the open market, which is a very fair test.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No; they were based on war prices.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is correct. I have been there and I have gone through the whole matter.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: To sum up, the railway and water conservation and irrigation scheme will have the cost paid for many times over as a result of the added value of Crown lands. Fortunately, the State has a large area of Crown lands in the Dawson Valley district, and will therefore benefit through this scheme.

I desire, in conclusion, to mention the visit

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

of His Excellency the Governor, Sir Matthew Nathan, to the Dawson Valley district and his inspection of the great dam which bears his name. His Excellency takes a very laudable and commendable interest in the scheme. He has high qualifications for judging such schemes, and he was very enthusiastic about the undertaking; and so was the Premier, who accompanied his Excellency, and who has taken a very keen interest in the scheme for some years past. For a long period the Premier has been responsible for the making of the necessary surveys and calculations, and has also personally visited the district, and we owe a personal debt of gratitude to him for the interest he has taken in this scheme.

On 30th May last the "Daily Mail" published a very interesting and appreciative report of the Governor's visit and of the scheme generally, and a lot of valuable information can be secured from the report in that issue. The public bodies in Rockhampton, including business men of high standing, issued a pamphlet in which they outlined the value of the scheme and its great possibilities so far as the very important phases of State policy which I have mentioned are concerned. They have no doubt there as to the soundness of the scheme. All those who have made the necessary investigation are highly impressed with the scheme and its possibilities to the Central district and the State generally. The Nathan dam site is a wonderful dam site.

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: Did you say it was a wonderful dam site? (Laughter.)

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As the Premier said, it was the best dam site he had seen in his life, and he was not using profane language either. (Laughter.) I think there is ample justification for the motion. It is necessary to give authority to the Government to construct the railway, which will ultimately lead to the development of the scheme I have mentioned. It is a scheme which will make available enormous areas of land for settlement, which will cause the population to increase, and the expenditure will be recouped over and over again from the added value of Crown lands. I am certain that the Committee will never regret giving its approval to the motion.

MR. PETERSON (*Normanby*): I intend cordially to support the motion moved by the Secretary for Railways, who has not exaggerated in one detail the magnitude of the scheme as far as it pertains to the damming of the Dawson River. I have continually advocated in this Chamber the advisability of going in for irrigation schemes. I realise that in a drought-stricken country such as Queensland is in some seasons we should be in a position to meet those conditions by having scientific control of the water which now largely runs to waste. I am no judge as to the cost of the scheme, but, whatever the cost may be, it will be passed on to the settlers whom we wish to go there. I hope that the Minister will endeavour to provide that the very best and up-to-date appliances are used in the construction of this railway, and thus minimise the high cost which now prevails in connection with railway construction. Without reflecting upon the hon. gentleman or the officers of his department, I think it will be conceded that we have a great deal to learn in the direction of expedition in connection with railway construction. Whether our rail-

way engineers are provided with up-to-date appliances or not, I am not in a position to say. Speaking with regard to some of the railways which were constructed in my electorate, while the engineers and the men were good, the methods at their disposal were not of the best. Seeing that the Minister has admitted that the cost of the scheme will practically amount to what the value of the land will be, that cost will be handed on to the settlers. I plead with the Minister to see, as far as lies in his power, that the railway shall be constructed in the most expeditious manner consistent with getting the best value for the money spent. A few days ago I was in the Rannes district, and I found that, instead of steam ploughs being in use, the pick and shovel were still in vogue. If you are going to continue on those lines, you are making these railways an expensive problem, and that will be reflected in the cost of the land. I believe in irrigation schemes, and I think the Government will never regret constructing this railway for the purpose of making a huge irrigation area there. I do not know whether the Minister's optimistic remarks about its being the greatest irrigation scheme in the world will come true.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: One of the greatest, I said.

MR. PETERSON: Let it be our objective to see that it is constructed in such a method that it will redound to the credit of the Government, and give to the settlers concerned land at the lowest possible price. In December, 1920, I spoke in this Chamber on the advisability of going on with the Dawson Valley project as against the Burnett proposal. The reason why I supported the Dawson Valley project as against the Burnett proposal was because there was some specific reason given for irrigation in the Dawson Valley. It was discovered that the catchment area in the Burnett scheme was insufficient to enable enough water to be conserved to irrigate the holdings below the proposed dam, consequently that scheme faded away as an irrigation project. I sincerely hope that this scheme in the Dawson Valley will not be allowed to fade away for the same reason, and that it will not be found afterwards that there is nothing in the project. In December, 1920, I spoke in favour of the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme and the construction of a railway there, and my arguments were based on a little pamphlet issued by the Water Supply Department of Queensland. On page 11 of that pamphlet, Mr. Crowley, who was appointed by the Premier some years ago to go thoroughly into this matter, not only on the Dawson but on other rivers of Queensland—and this is the consensus of his opinion—makes the following remarks:—

"DAWSON RIVER SCHEME.

"A survey was commenced in May, 1920, on this scheme, to date the largest proposal in Queensland, on which two survey parties are engaged, one above and the other below the dam site, situated 50 miles below Taroom by road, and approximately 50 miles following the River.

[4 p.m.]

"The catchment area above the dam site is 9,000 square miles, and an average annual run off of 300,000 acre feet would,

[*Hon. J. Larcombe.*

from river gaugings, appear to be assured. This is sufficient to irrigate 100,000 acres."

Immediately they advocated the scheme in this Chamber, the first thing the late Treasurer, Mr. Fihelly, did was to get some other engineer to show that Mr. Crowley was absolutely wrong. He did that in order to make me look stupid in the eyes of the people of Queensland in regard to the Dawson Valley. That was why this other gentleman was brought in. I will take the two reports to show how contradictory experts can be. Let us look at the report issued by Mr. Fihelly when he was Treasurer. This is what he said about the Dawson River scheme—

"The estimates of the combination irrigation and hydro-electric scheme are valueless, being based on an insufficient water duty and a run-off from two to ten times as large as the actual from year to year would seem to be."

Mr. Eklund, the late hydraulic engineer, was the engineer whom the late Treasurer got to report on the matter, and he says that Mr. Crowley's report is not justified. I hope Mr. Eklund is wrong, and I trust that Mr. Crowley is right; but it is time that we had a discussion on these matters so that we can see if the experts are speaking the truth, or whether they receive instructions as to how they are to report. Mr. Eklund says in his report—

"Mr. Morrison's assumption of 30 per cent. run-off has, since the date of his observation, been found to be unduly large. I might explain that Mr. Morrison was the officer who inaugurated stream gauging in this department under Mr. Henderson, and his first figures would cover a very short period. The Murray River is not comparable with the Dawson; the former is snow-fed, while the Dawson River catchment consists largely of low, sandy tabieland. The erratic behaviour of the Dawson is shown by the records of the stream gauge at Taroom as follows."

Then he gives a lot of information about stream gauging, and goes on—

"The discharge last July varied from 9 to 7 cubic feet per second and was certainly not 30 cubic feet per second, as stated.

"A 250 horse-power turbine would require a flow of 54 cubic feet per second if worked continuously under full load for eight hours or 66 per cent. load for twelve hours, with a working head of 20 feet and sufficient storage to give twenty-four hours' supply."

Then he goes on—

"I have no hesitation in saying that the dry season flow is nothing like 54 cubic feet per second."

There you have the Government Hydraulic Engineer disputing the figures of Mr. Crowley. We have got to find out which is correct. I ask the Minister to try and give the Committee that information at a later stage and let us know which expert is correct. Then Mr. Eklund goes on—

"From the history given above, we see that construction work can be carried on from 1st April to 30th November with

the possibility of one moderate flood about mid-winter, and records show that under the proposed scheme there would be sufficient water to run the turbines one shift for two weeks during 1915, three during 1916, two during 1917, not at all during 1913, and for one week during 1919, without depending on more than twenty-four hours' storage."

Although it is in my own electorate, I ask which expert is speaking the truth. The time has come when every hon. member has a right to question the views of the experts. As a layman, I am inclined to believe that Mr. Eklund's criticism of Mr. Crowley is not correct. Those who have lived in the district for a long time, especially those who have been as far as Cracow, have assured me that Mr. Crowley's estimate is absolutely correct. Consequently, I quite concur with the Minister in regard to what he says about the scheme. All the same, I would like the Minister to let the Committee know which expert is right. I say that Mr. Fihelly issued that circular in order to make me look stupid for advocating the Dawson scheme and to endeavour to get the scheme turned down. However, I am pleased to see that the Premier, after looking at the reports, used his own judgment and decided to go on with the Dawson River scheme. I am satisfied the scheme will be a success, and it will be the cynosure of all eyes in the Commonwealth. I am sure it will attract scolders to this State from all parts of the Commonwealth. Mr. Eklund, in a further criticism of Mr. Crowley, makes use of this statement—

"Before it is possible to consider a hydro-electric proposal from a watershed of this nature 'summation curves' compiled from the observation and records of many years would have to be made out.

"The estimate of the cost of the scheme appears much too low."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The information you are looking for is contained in the report of the Public Works Commission in the evidence given by Mr. Shaw.

Mr. PETERSON: I quite agree with the hon. gentleman; but he cannot get away from the evidence of contradiction between the two particular experts I have referred to. There is another matter which I am interested in in connection with this proposal. This railway will serve to combat the spread of the prickly-pear. We have heard members of this Chamber get up and say that something should be done towards stopping the spread of the prickly-pear. There is a lot of rich, arable land which will be served by this railway, all of very high quality, particularly for irrigation purposes, and, unless the pear is arrested at the earliest possible moment, it will greatly interfere with this scheme. If the pear is not coped with, it will be a great loss to Queensland. Consequently, if for no other reason than that we shall be able to save to the State many thousands of acres of land, I shall support the building of this railway. I hope the Minister will endeavour to get the Department of Public Lands to throw open blocks of land for the men engaged on the railway construction work. This suggestion was made by the hon. member for Mount Morgan the other night, and I cordially concur in his remarks. While the men

Mr. Peterson.]

are engaged in railway construction work the land adjacent to the railway should be cut up into blocks so that these men can have their wives and families there. If this is done, they will be able to build up a little competency for themselves in the shape of irrigation farms. If the Minister can do this, he will be providing areas for a deserving class of workers. At the present time they are living in tents. They do not get the accommodation but which private enterprise is forced to provide, but have to live in tents. If these blocks of land could be set apart for them, it would be a magnanimous action on the part of the Government. No doubt they will have to become members of the union, but I do not think the union will object to national development in this way.

There is another matter I wish to refer to in connection with the report of the Public Works Commission. I may tell the Minister that I am supporting the proposal he is bringing forward, but I have something to say about the proposed starting point. We have had evidence submitted to us that the best starting point is Baralaba. In my opinion, and in the opinion of old residents, Baralaba is not the best starting point. I submitted a petition to the Minister, and he has courteously replied to the people who forwarded me the petition. I submit that their information is perfectly sound and correct. The route from Baralaba goes through pear country, dense brigalow scrub, and inferior country, as compared with the route from Rannes; and, no matter what development may take place at the top of the irrigated area, I am afraid that, with the heavy rains we get sometimes, the farms of the unfortunate settlers will become endangered. Consequently, I think it would have been wiser to start at Rannes, skirt the whole of that flooded country, and go over what are known as the chalk ridges, which Mr. McArthur pointed out in his report as the best route. That report, which I have here, distinctly stated that the route starting at Rannes was the best, because it went over the best country. There is nothing against the proposal from that point of view, and, further than that, by taking the railway traffic through Baralaba, you are inflicting an extra 44 miles, or thereabouts, of carriage on the settlers of the irrigated area for the term of their natural life. From Baralaba to Delusion Creek you are practically skirting the banks of the river and making a right angle of the railway, with the angle at Baralaba. If a map could be exhibited, hon. members would see at once what I am driving at.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are wrong. I have had that report specially analysed and investigated.

Mr. PETERSON: The hon. member may have had it analysed, but if he will permit me to show him on a map what I mean, I think that he will agree that I am perfectly correct. At any rate, my argument is not going to alter the scheme. The Government have decided to go from Baralaba. They say that all their experts have recommended that route, and I am merely showing what Engineer McArthur said, and I am advocating that route to save those people 22 miles of carriage each way.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That route would handicap the people in the irrigated area.

[Mr. Peterson.

Mr. PETERSON: The settlers in the irrigated area will have to go to Baralaba, and that length of line from Rannes to Baralaba entails carriage for 22 miles each way that each settler will have to carry for the term of his natural life.

Mr. STOPFORD: You are talking about the Delusion Creek settlers. What about all the people in the irrigated area up towards Baralaba?

Mr. PETERSON: I have already explained before the Public Works Commission why the railway should not go from there. The hon. member may be right, but I have a right to advance my opinion. Even if the view of the hon. member for Mount Morgan is correct, it simply means that the settlers on the lower area will be suited by the Baralaba route, whereas the bulk of the settlement will be from Castle Creek on.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why should the Moura people have to go to Rannes?

Mr. PETERSON: It is shorter for them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. PETERSON: All I know is that you are compelling the settlers to travel through Baralaba to Rannes from now on. However, it is no use labouring the point. I desire to say, in conclusion, that I hope the Minister will get on with the railway at the earliest possible moment, because land settlement is urgently needed in Queensland, and any land settlement scheme—particularly when served by water which practically assures it of success—is worthy of the earnest and sincere support of every hon. member. Consequently, I have much pleasure in supporting the proposal.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): The report of the Public Works Commission has been available to every member of the House, and expresses the opinion of every member who signed it. The hon. member for Normanby, in giving evidence before the Commission—which he had a perfect right to do as the representative of the district—expressed an opinion based upon a report which Engineer McArthur had made. I want the Committee to realise that similar opinions would probably have been expressed by the other engineers had they considered the scheme at that time; but in 1915 there was no talk of any Dawson Valley irrigation scheme, and the Baralaba line had not been built. The Barnett scheme had not been launched at all. Engineer McArthur, in making his report on the data available, based his opinion on the fact that by starting the line from Rannes you served an existing town, Banana—a factor which every engineer and the Public Works Commission must take into consideration—but since Engineer McArthur gave his decision the whole aspect of the matter has changed. The question is no longer merely of local interest as one to develop pastoral activities. It has become portion of a huge national project, which demands attention from a totally different angle. I have here the map attached to the report of the Public Works Commission, from which hon. members will be able to see the part coloured green, which will be brought under irrigation, and the red line as recommended by the Commission. That line will touch the largest part of the area affected. Under the proposal suggested by the hon. member for Normanby, the line would start from Rannes away to the east, altogether remote from the area of land to

be brought under intense cultivation. Another point is that the building of the Rannes-Monto line brings the line suggested by Mr. McArthur close to the vicinity of a railway that is under construction to-day. The report quoted by the hon. member, no doubt, represented the honest opinion of the engineer on the data available at the time, but the Public Works Commission were guided by the evidence of a committee representing the Railway Department, the Department of Public Lands, and the Water Supply Department. Mr. Sexton, in giving evidence, said, in reply to a question by me, that that committee unanimously decided in favour of the Baralaba route. Mr. Amos, whose name has figured in every report submitted to Parliament on the question of railway construction for many years past, not only advocated the building of a line from Baralaba, but definitely stated that, from further information obtained since Mr. McArthur made his report, it is hoped to be able to bring into the operations of the scheme a large area on the western bank of the Dawson. These are matters which had the attention of the Public Works Commission. As the Secretary for Railways stated, under the scheme outlined by the hon. member for Normanby we would need to have a branch line from Moura to Banana merely to serve a very old township which has made very little progress, and which I think will disappear when the new townships spring into existence as the scheme comes into operation. I think any well-advised person who reads the report will recognise that the Commission were guided by the experts on this particular point, and, as it was a matter of national importance, we did not seek as much local evidence as we do when various routes are occupying the attention of different sections of the community immediately concerned. On this occasion we had before us the result of months of inquiry from departmental officers. I feel sure that, based on the evidence contained in this report, to give benefit to the greatest number of people who will settle on the land as the result of this big scheme, the route tabled should command the support of every hon. member.

Mr. FLETCHER (*Port Curtis*): It is regrettable that, in days gone by, the port of Gladstone was not recognised. In the interests of Central Queensland and of the settlers there, in the interests of economical working in every sense, all the railways of Central Queensland should converge towards Gladstone. It has the best harbour in Queensland, containing plenty of deep water. Its foreshores are available for the best factory sites, and it is splendidly situated for the building of a big city. Yet we see it to-day absolutely neglected—a harbour fitted by nature for the use of shipping, of which no use is being made. If hon. members look at the map, they will see that the railways of Central Queensland wander all over the country, instead of concentrating on Gladstone. If a railway had been developed from Gladstone down the Calliope Valley, it would have served the northern end of the Upper Burnett, touched upon the Callide Valley coalfield, run right through the irrigation area, and then could have shot off south, gone through Taroom to Miles, or connected up with Roma. On the north it could have branched off to Springsure. You would have had a network of railways converging on Gladstone, with the lowest possible mile-

age and the least expenditure. In every way it would have been better than the present system. Unfortunately, we have to deal with things as we find them. It is a great pity that lines have been built for political purposes, which have rendered necessary a very much greater haulage, and consequently larger expense for the settlers in Central Queensland. We have the Rannes line going into the Burnett, and the extension of the Baralaba line is to go through Rockhampton—the port authorities of which have to charge from 5s. to 6s. per ton on all produce inward and outward to enable them to get anywhere near paying their way; and even with these charges they are unable to pay interest or redemption at the present time. They owe the Government something like £400,000, and it seems to me that they will never be able to pay that back under present circumstances, and the further they go the greater are the financial difficulties which they encounter.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Wait until Gladstone commences its big harbour scheme, and it will require a big loan.

Mr. FLETCHER: Gladstone can charge 1s. per ton harbour dues and wharfage and pay its way, as against 5s. and 6s. charged by Rockhampton. So little money has to be spent because the natural advantages are so great. What a handicap it is on the settlers of all these areas to pay those extra harbour dues and wharfage. Had some foresight been displayed in the developing of the country, a great deal of expenditure would have been avoided, and everyone would have been very much better off. If you had a line from Calliope down the Callide Valley into the heart of the irrigation area, the distance would be, roughly, 110 miles. Taking the centre of the irrigation area, from Baralaba to Rockhampton is approximately 125 miles—a difference in favour of Gladstone of 15 miles. If you took the produce to Port Alma—and undoubtedly it would have to go to a port—it would mean 160 miles, or to Gladstone it would represent a total of 195 miles. It can be seen what extra haulage is necessary by having to take the produce to Port Alma—160 miles—instead of directly into Gladstone—110 miles.

I am not advocating that a line should be built from Gladstone in place of this one, but it might be possible, as the scheme develops, to build the Callide Valley line, or else build a line junctioning between Mount Morgan and Rockhampton on the one line, and between Bajool and Rockhampton on the other line—cutting off, possibly, 30 miles. With the settlement of 5,000 settlers in the irrigation area, it is likely that that expenditure would be justified in course of time. There is not the slightest question that Gladstone is destined to be the port for Central Queensland. You cannot hold it back. Nature made it for the use of shipping, and, with the artificial port of Rockhampton getting into more trouble as years go by, what can be more certain than that Gladstone will be the port in the future and that the produce from this irrigation area will go there? It is unfortunate that produce has to make the circuitous route necessary to-day to get to Gladstone.

After studying the report of the Commissioner for Railways on the route to be traversed by this line, it seems that, if you can be guided by expert views, Baralaba is the best route. I followed the argument

Mr. Fletcher.]

of the hon. member for Normanby and the hon. member for Mount Morgan—there is reason in both their arguments. The line from Rannes, probably, would be shorter, but it would not touch the whole of the irrigation area; as the hon. member for Mount Morgan pointed out, the settlers close to Baralaba would not have easy access at all. The advantage of the Baralaba route is that it traverses the whole of the irrigation area.

Mention has been made of flooding. I have heard from residents of the district that very great difficulty will be experienced in connection with floods; but, according to reports of the experts, there will not be any great danger, except from very heavy floods; and even then they think that the country will be inundated only for a short period.

I am in favour of the irrigation proposal. Of course, it is a vast scheme and will take a tremendous lot of building up. I do not propose to deal with it to-day, because the Premier intends introducing a Bill which will enable us to deal fully with that subject.

I have a distinct objection to passing this railway to-day, for the simple reason that the irrigation scheme cannot be developed for some considerable time, and we have so many projects on hand. We shall have directly so great an area available for settlement that I want to know where the settlers are to come from. We have no immigrants coming into this country; the policy of the Government is avowedly against immigration except in regard to bringing a few boys.

The PREMIER: Last year there were from Victoria and New South Wales 4,000 arrivals in excess of departures from Queensland to those States.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is a natural increase in population. To settle the vast areas we are now proposing to develop we must have an extensive immigration scheme, because the natural increase of population will not be sufficient.

At 4.30 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307, and of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 30th August, I shall 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 a later hour of the sitting.

QUESTIONS.

IRRIGATION POSSIBILITIES OF BARKER AND BARAMBAH CREEKS.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Yanango*) asked the Treasurer—

“In view of the fact that stream gaugers have on several occasions been working on Barker’s Creek and Barambah Creek (South Burnett district), will he have a report furnished relative to the data collected and the possibilities of these streams for irrigation purposes?”

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

“A Bill providing for the construction and management of irrigation works will shortly be introduced, and, when it

[*Mr. Fletcher.*

becomes law, a Commissioner will be appointed under the Act, and he will inquire into all proposals which give promise of being successful irrigation schemes.”

REMISSION OF RENTS OF AGRICULTURAL AND GRAZING SELECTIONS; PENALTY FOR LATE PAYMENT OF RENT.

Mr. COSTELLO (*Carnarvon*) asked the Premier—

“Referring to his answer to a question asked by the hon. member for Burnett on 20th July, 1922, relative to the remission of leasehold rents this year, and to his remarks on this subject on 12th instant—

1. How many applications for remission of rent or for extension of time for payment of rent this year have been received—(a) agricultural selections; (b) perpetual lease selections; (c) prickly-pear selections; (d) grazing selections?

2. Under the above headings—

(a) In what number of cases this year has extension of time for payment of rent been granted?

(b) In what number of cases has penalty for late payment been reduced?

(c) In what number of cases has penalty for late payment been wholly remitted?

(d) What is the total amount of all such remissions of penalties?”

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

“An examination of the registers discloses that a considerable number of applications were received for extensions of time to pay rents and for remissions or reductions of penalties. All such applications were given sympathetic consideration, extensions of time being granted for different periods, in some cases up to 31st March, 1923, and, when the circumstances warranted it, the penalties were either reduced or wholly remitted. Many of the applicants expressed their willingness to pay the penalties prescribed by law in the event of the department acceding to their requests for extension. To give accurate information, as detailed in the question, would necessitate a careful examination of every separate entry in the registers of selections and of the incoming letter register, also computations in each individual case of the amount of penalty involved. This would occupy the services of several officers over an extended period.”

AMOUNTS RECEIVED FROM SALES OF FREEHOLD LAND PRIOR TO 30TH JUNE, 1915.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“1. What amount has been received during the years ended 30th June, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, and 1922, respectively, as payments for freehold land sold prior to 30th June, 1915?

“2. Have the amounts so received been paid into the consolidated revenue? If not, to what fund have such amounts been paid?”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS of the Secretary for Public Lands (Hon. J. H. (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Koppell*), in the absence of (Hon. J. H. Coyne, *Warrego*), replied—

—	Total Amount received.		Amount paid into Consolidated Revenue.		Amount paid into Loan Account.		Amount paid into Public Estate Improvement Fund.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
"Year ended 30th June—								
1915	30,182	12 8	1,178	18 6	28,978	16 3	24	17 11
1916	18,420	2 7	622	18 10	17,792	7 11	4	15 10
1917	16,537	17 2	402	14 1	16,099	11 9	35	11 4
1918	14,895	7 7	319	17 1	14,575	10 6	..	..
1919	13,340	0 8	492	19 3	12,847	1 5	..	..
1920	15,980	16 6	405	18 6	15,584	18 0	..	..
1921	11,859	19 6	273	6 3	11,586	13 3	..	..
1922	7,967	2 2	552	17 6	7,414	4 8	..	..
Total	£120,163	18 10	£4,249	10 0	£124,879	3 9	£85	5 7"

REFERENDUM ON BANANA POOL.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"In reference to the referendum on the question of a compulsory banana pool—

1. How many ballot-papers were sent out to the growers?

2. How many were returned?

3. What was the total cost of the referendum, including salaries and allowances of all persons engaged on this work?"

The Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*), in the absence of the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*), replied—

"1. 2,217.

"2. 1,165.

"3. Printing and stationery, £8 3s. 2d.; postages, £39 2s. 2d.; clerical work (compiling roll, despatching ballot-papers, receiving and counting same), £28—total, £75 5s. 4d."

ciations have been formed in the district organised under the Council of Agriculture by Mr. H. McAnally?

"2. What is the total number of members of such associations?

"3. Does Mr. McAnally's employment as an organiser exclude him from other employment?

"4. What amounts have been paid to 31st August, 1922, to the organisers of districts Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 13, 14, and 15? To what persons were such payments made, and for what periods, respectively? What are the areas of these districts?"

"5. Did Mr. J. Purcell visit Atherton and other parts of North Queensland on the business of the Council of Agriculture? If so, what (a) salary, (b) expenses, and (c) allowances was he paid for that trip?

"6. What is the total amount of (a) salary, (b) expenses, and (c) allowances paid to Mr. J. Purcell to date for work done by him for the Council of Agriculture?"

WORK AND EXPENSES OF ORGANISERS UNDER PRIMARY PRODUCERS' ORGANISATION ACT.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS (*Pittsworth*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"Has he made inquiries relative to the matters dealt with in paragraphs (2) and (5) of my question of 7th instant, and can he supply the information required?"

The Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*), in the absence of the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*), replied—

"The answer to paragraph (2) of the 7th instant is that Mr. McAnally attended the Royal Commission in Toowoomba on five days, for which period he had leave of absence from the Council of Agriculture. No payment was made to him by the Royal Commission. To question (5) the answer is that the department has no official information regarding the circular in question, nor has any cost been incurred for printing or posting such private circular."

WORK AND REMUNERATION OF MESSRS. MCANALLY AND PURCELL IN ORGANISING FOR COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURE.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS (*Pittsworth*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"1. How many local producers' asso-

The Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*), in the absence of the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*), replied—

"The answer to this question is contained in the reply to the honourable member on the 12th instant."

REFUND OF LAND TAX.

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

"1. As section 7, Income Tax Act (1915), provides for deduction of land tax from tax levied on income from agricultural or grazing pursuits, will he have a review of land and income tax returns of persons who were entitled to have claimed such land tax deduction from income tax?

"2. Will he, after such a review has been made, make a refund to those who may have paid land tax which, under section quoted, they were entitled to have claimed as a deduction of income tax?"

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

"1 and 2. I have already replied to questions asked in respect to this matter. Any taxpayer entitled to the deduction, but who has not taken advantage of this provision of the Act, should apply to the Commissioner for a refund of the tax overpaid."

EXTENSION OF CANE CULTIVATION IN GIN GIN DISTRICT.

Mr. CATTERMULL (*Musgrave*) asked the Treasurer—

"1. Seeing that a Royal Commission has been appointed to inquire into the necessity for additional sugar mills, will he instruct the Commission to inspect and report on the land at present not under cane but within a radius of 12 miles of the existing Gin Gin Mill?"

"2. In the event of a favourable report being received as to the suitability of this land for canegrowing, will he take steps to provide rail communication, so that the cane produced may be delivered to the Gin Gin Mill, and thus keep this mill fully supplied?"

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

"1. This matter does not come within the scope of the Commission's inquiries.

"2. The question of adequate cane supplies for Gin Gin Mill is an old standing source of anxiety, and has been receiving consideration for some time past."

EFFECT ON POLITICAL SITUATION OF WAR IN NEAR EAST.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*), without notice, asked the Premier—

"Has the hon. gentleman seen in this morning's paper a statement that the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, Mr. Hughes, stated that, if war took place in the near East, the Nationalist party would have a better opportunity of getting back into power at the next election?"

(Laughter.)

The PREMIER replied—

"Yes, I have seen such a statement."
(Renewed laughter.)

Mr. T. R. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*), without notice, asked the Premier—

"Has the hon. gentleman noticed the contradiction in the Press this afternoon of the statement attributed to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, Mr. Hughes, that a war in the near East would enhance the Nationalist's chances at the poll, and an admission that it was a statement of the Melbourne correspondent of the Sydney 'Morning Herald'?"

The PREMIER replied—

"I have not seen that contradiction, but I take the hon. member's assertion to be correct. It only indicates what I have previously asserted that you cannot place any reliance on the Tory newspapers."

(Government laughter.)

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Forty-sixth report of the Secretary for Public Instruction for the year 1921.

GOVERNMENT MOTOR-CARS.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) laid on the table a return showing the number of motor-cars owned by the State for the years 1914-1922.

BARALABA-CASTLE CREEK RAILWAY.

APPROVAL OF PLAN, ETC.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

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

Mr. FLETCHER (*Port Curtis*): One of the objections we have to the railway at the present time is that no adequate arrangements have been made to provide sufficient settlers to settle the very large areas that are available for settlement. If we take the railway construction works going on in Queensland to-day, we find work proceeding at Rannes, Mundubbera, Many Peaks—all in the Upper Burnett—on the North Coast line, north of Townsville, on the line between Mackay and Townsville, on the Murgon to Proston line, and on the Mount Edwards line. Those lines will open up a very wide tract of country that has to be settled, and it must appeal to the Minister that it is economically wrong to have so many lines proceeding at the same time when it is quite apparent that we shall be unable to settle the areas along those lines for many years to come. With regard to this proposed railway, nothing can be done until the irrigation works in the Dawson Valley are well in hand, and, when the Secretary for Railways refers to the enhanced value of that land, he can only mean the enhanced value of the land when it is ready for settlement, which will not be for some years to come. In the Upper Burnett there is room for some thousands of settlers, and to-day the Government are resuming a very large amount of country and paying compensation to the lessors for it. It is quite wrong, I contend, for the Government to do that, because it would have been quite sufficient if they had resumed the land as it was required, instead of which they propose paying between £200,000 and £300,000 in compensation, while it will be some considerable time before the land is occupied. Interest will have to be paid on that expenditure for compensation, and it will be a loss to the community. Something like that is going on all over the country, and we are getting into a very bad financial position. At present it looks all right on the surface, but in a couple of years we shall be facing an annual interest bill of something approaching four and a-half millions, and there will be no adequate increase of revenue for many years to come to meet that interest bill. There has been a vast expenditure of loan money, and there is no commensurate return from that expenditure. I am not against the building of this line in due course when everything is ready for it, but I am against building it now at an expenditure of £400,000, when no revenue will accrue from it for many years to come. I do not know how we are going to meet our heavy financial commitments. I contend that the proper course to adopt is to concentrate on the one scheme until it is well on its way to completion, and then start other schemes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We must settle our lands.

Mr. FLETCHER: I recognise that, but you will have a tremendous area which will be available for settlement, and where are the settlers to come from to take up such a large area? I am quite in favour of this scheme at the proper time; but I am against the expenditure of the money at present, when no return will come from it for years. You cannot develop and settle the Upper Burnett and carry out this irrigation scheme at the same time. Then there is land at

Clermont and North Queensland waiting to be settled. I do not know what we are going to do. Unless the Government attempt to carry out a big immigration scheme and go in for settlement on a large scale, we are going to get into a quagmire of debt, and we shall not be able to meet our obligations. I contend that it is wicker to think of going on with this scheme in view of our financial position. When we have the Burnett scheme well developed, we shall be able to concentrate our attention on this irrigation scheme. The Minister has enough intelligence to recognise that it is unwise and unsound to go ahead with this work.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not.

Mr. FLETCHER: There are several other schemes developing, and, with such a paucity of settlers, we cannot settle all the proposed areas for many years to come.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a new argument.

Mr. FLETCHER: You are not taking any steps to get settlers. The financial obligations will overwhelm us before we can settle the land in question.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The people will come when we can give them land for settlement.

Mr. FLETCHER: Of course they will come, but they will not come in sufficient numbers to settle these areas. The hon. gentleman knows that under our Elections Act anyone coming to the State can be put on the roll after he has been in the electorate for one month, and, if he goes to any other part of the State, he is kept on the roll for that electorate. Men from Brisbane and other places go into railway construction camps in country electorates, and in many cases it suits the Government policy to have these works started in quarters where it helps them politically.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct.

At 4.55 p.m.,

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

Mr. FLETCHER: The economic position is very unsound, and the Minister must see it. Why was there such great haste to have the surveys made and the scheme reported upon?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The scheme has been going on for years.

Mr. FLETCHER: It is a good project, and in course of time it will be completed, and I am in favour of it; but the Government will either have to neglect the Upper Burnett scheme or the scheme under consideration; they cannot develop both as they should be developed at one time and meet our financial obligations.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are twin proposals.

Mr. FLETCHER: They are twin proposals politically.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And economically too.

Mr. FLETCHER: Not economically; they should be undertaken at different times. The Government are only concerned about getting back into power at the next election. The object is to capture the Normanby seat.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. FLETCHER: The Minister's denial carries no conviction and his face betrays him, and he knows that what I say is perfectly correct.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. FLETCHER: Hon. members opposite are selfish. They desire to remain in power, to retain their seats, but they do not look ahead and consider the welfare of the people of the country—because it is the people and the workers of the country who will have to pay for this bad management.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Normanby is supporting it.

Mr. FLETCHER: Of course—he cannot do otherwise; but I say that this scheme should be deferred until the Government have the Upper Burnett land settlement scheme well under way.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are selfish.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am not selfish. Having started the Upper Burnett scheme, the Government cannot desist from it; but they can defer the building of this line if they have any consideration for the people of the State. We shall probably have to face a deficit of £1,500,000 in a couple of years; and no country can go ahead on those lines. No power on earth can stop the depression which will be caused in this country through this unwise expenditure of loan money on unproductive works. There has been a great deal of money spent on unproductive works. This line in due time will be a good scheme; but what is going to happen in the meantime? The Government should proceed with the Burnett scheme and make it self-supporting before they start with this proposal. That is the curse of politics in this country to-day—everything is done for the sake of securing a political advantage. The reason why the Gladstone Harbour has never been developed is because of the selfishness of members and others interested in Rockhampton in refusing to recognise the needs of the future. What a great country Central Queensland would be if we had all the railway lines there converging into Gladstone! When we look at the new railways which are proposed in that area, we see the tremendous disadvantage that we have to labour under through the neglect of Gladstone. It is all due to a desire to secure political advantage. This line should not be supported at the present time, as it is proposed for one reason alone—that is, to defeat the hon. member for Normanby. The Government do not care a scrap what the financial position will be in a couple of years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a highly incorrect statement.

Mr. FLETCHER: It is not. If the hon. gentleman will give me his definite assurance that he will not build this line for two years, I will give him my support.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You want me to "go slow"?

Mr. FLETCHER: I want the hon. gentleman to build one railway at a time. How are we going to meet our deficits?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: By getting more population and giving them land to settle on.

Mr. FLETCHER: I say again that the financial position of the State is very serious, and it is going to get more serious as years

Mr. Fletcher.]

go on, through the wanton extravagance and unwise expenditure of public money. This railway, with others, will eventually pay its way and be an asset to the State, and by increasing land values it is warranted; but it is wrong to build it now, because this is not the right time. This line is brought forward for one purpose alone—that is, to win the Normanby seat. It is a wicked proposal, and one that should not be supported by the Committee.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I am very disappointed on listening to the remarks of the Minister introducing this railway [5 p.m.] proposal, because he did not foreshadow some scheme by which he intended to settle the Dawson River area.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That will come under the Irrigation Bill.

Mr. CORSER: Irrigation alone does not make men go for the land. The hon. gentleman should outline his proposal.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will be outlined in the Irrigation Bill scheme.

Mr. CORSER: It will be outlined in the scheme until the election is over. It is only a scheme. What we want is a land settlement policy.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You will have it.

Mr. CORSER: I know we shall have it, because hon. members opposite will not be there, and we will carry it out.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have been here for seven years.

Mr. COLLINS: Did you see the result of the by-election in connection with the Townsville municipality?

Mr. CORSER: That was a very small affair. We have the hon. member for Townsville sitting on this side. We have had no scheme outlined by the Minister in connection with the proposed settlement of the Dawson Valley land. Instead of calling it a railway proposal, the hon. gentleman should call it the "Peterson Eviction Bill." It seems strange that the Minister did not foreshadow any land settlement proposal in connection with the Dawson Valley. We have had a scheme established in connection with the Burnett land, and it looks as if it is going to be starved for want of settlers and for want of a policy. The Burnett system was established at a cost of £2,500,000, and here we have a proposal for another £2,000,000, with no policy whatever outlined by the Government. The Minister says that we shall get settlers from the other States. Surely we are not going to boast about taking settlers from New South Wales and Victoria! That may be all right from a Queensland point of view, but we must remember that we are Australians, and we should help to settle Australia; and we can do that by settling our own lands ourselves and providing people for ourselves. We should settle our own lands by going in for a vigorous immigration policy. We can do that by bringing white settlers from the other side of the world. But we have heard nothing of any proposal to bring settlers here in connection with either the Burnett scheme or the Dawson scheme. The Government propose to settle people on the area between Rannes and Muddubbera, and between Monto and Many

Peaks. Millions of pounds are being spent on that scheme, and the Government are pushing on with the building of the different railways required. Now they are introducing another railway proposal to open up more lands for settlement. I say that we should have the Government policy laid down for us while we are dealing with this proposal. What do we find to-day in connection with some of the settlers in the Burnett district? We find a number of them in the Land Court to-day, and they will be there for the next few weeks. We know that a lot of these settlers are being ruined at the hands of the Crown. They have been given notice to quit. It applies to selectors from Eidsvold to Camboon, and from Camboon to Walcha. A lot of the land in the Burnett district is first-class agricultural land, and there is a lot of second-class agricultural land. There is also some first-class grazing land, but the reports furnished by the Department of Public Lands show that there is a lot of second-class grazing land. Why do we want to victimise the people who have made their homes there? People have been making their livelihood there, and we are resuming their land and only awarding them a few hundreds of pounds. These men have put thousands of pounds in work into their holdings, yet the Crown only provides them with a few hundreds of pounds by way of compensation.

Mr. COLLINS: You are always sticking up for the squatters.

Mr. CORSER: The squatting class that the hon. member refers to consists of individuals, and I stand here to protect them. They are a section of our people who have a right to get justice. If the Government are going to seize their land, then we have a right to see that they get justice. They are mostly grazing farmers in that area—some of them returned soldiers, who bought their grazing farms at the top of the market. Yet they have had their selections seized by the Government, who offer only a few hundreds of pounds' compensation instead of thousands.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member for Burnett in order in discussing a matter that is now before the Land Court?

Mr. CORSER: Action is being taken now to secure to the Crown lands that are now occupied by grazing selectors, although the Government have no policy whatever for settling those lands. I know lots of people in the State who are prepared to take up some of the Burnett land, but the Government will not make it available. Yet to-day we have the Minister introducing a railway proposal which involves a cost of £2,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do you say this railway proposal involves a cost of £2,000,000.

Mr. CORSER: The justification for the railway is the irrigation scheme. It is all included in the one proposal, and it will cost £2,000,000. The Minister gave that information himself in introducing the proposal. I have no objection to the settlement of those lands. We know quite well that, when the Government started the Burnett scheme, they had a proposal to dam the canyon in the Cania Gorge. They proposed to dam the waters in Three Moon Creek. Now they find that they have not got

[*Mr. Fletcher.*]

enough money to go on with that proposal. Why do they not properly develop the Burnett scheme before going on with any other? Is there any ulterior motive which prevents the Government from going on with the Burnett scheme and finishing it? What the Government should do is to build the railways into the Burnett district, open up that country, and let the settlers have the land at an early date.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are doing that.

Mr. CORSER: You are pushing on the railway and putting men on the land, but you have no policy with regard to bringing people here to settle on the land. Until you have a solid, sincere immigration policy these new settlements are going to be a failure.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Once the lands are made available we shall get the settlers.

Mr. CORSER: What is the good of opening land for settlement when you have no policy to get people here ready to go on to those lands? I know Queenslanders who have tried to get blocks of land in the Upper Burnett, but they could not do so. Why is that? We know that the Land Court is reviewing many blocks now. I know that many hundreds of blocks were designed in 1913, yet the people who want to take up land there cannot get a block. The Government are resuming a lot of second-class grazing land before they have got any settlers to go on those areas. It would be far better to settle the land in different parts and deal properly with it, instead of throwing the whole lot open in one huge lump. We should go in for immigration and get settlers from home. The whole thing wants to be remodelled from a non-political point of view, and we want to get the best men in the State to handle it. If this railway is wanted, then it should be constructed. The reports quoted by the Minister say that it is warranted; but we want some better system of control to enable us to settle people properly on the land.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are getting it. We have appointed a Commission.

Mr. CORSER: The Government have appointed a Commission after they have carried out a scheme to resume practically the whole of the holdings in the Burnett and deprive income taxpayers of their holdings. There is no doubt a very great amount of good land on the route of this proposed railway, as on the route of the other railway; but why not resume for the present only those areas which are going to be most beneficial and open up the scrub lands from which nobody is getting any revenue to-day, make them payable propositions, give water to every settler and those conveniences which we know from experience a settler wants, give them decent homes and provide them with wire and stock to enable them to send away some dairy produce in the first year instead of having to wait five or six years? Why not give them something more liberal than the Advances to Settlers Corporation gives them now? It is the desire of most of us in this Chamber to give them something better. Why does the Minister not come along with such a policy and give the best lands to the

settlers to-day, leaving the lands outside to come in later—say, in five or six years?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is the scheme.

Mr. CORSER: Why are the Government resuming land with only five years' lease, 10, 20, and 30 miles from the proposed railway, and people settled on 5,000 acres, which have cost with improvements £1,500 to £2,000. They are sending them out with very few stock and a glutted market, so that their stock cannot be sold. Where could they take them to? They open up land at Normanton, probably as an inducement to those people to go up there. What inducement is there for them to go to Normanton?

Mr. HARTLEY: The Government did not offer those lands for settlement.

Mr. CORSER: I said that they opened up land at Normanton probably with the idea of inducing them to go there. The hon. member cannot twist my words. I say the whole thing needs looking into. We have a big policy of railway construction in agricultural districts, and the people who go on to those lands should have the opportunity to make good any loss, and it is up to us to consider fully this aspect of the case when similar proposals are before us. I am not against this railway. I have been successful in securing something in my district, and I am not going to say that this line should not be built simply because it is not in the Burnett district. If it is warranted, it should be built; but I am disappointed that the Minister did not give some idea of how the Government are going to settle the lands. They cannot settle them all with Queenslanders or Australians. We need a good immigration policy.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When we get the land available we shall get the people.

Mr. CORSER: Over 1,000 blocks have been designed since 1913, and, although the lithographs were actually in the department in 1914, to-day, when a man wants to get one of those blocks, he is unable to get it. Last week I went and asked if we could not possibly get one or two blocks and I was told, "No. Wait until the scheme is complete. We are going to open the lands altogether." If we have the men, why not give them the assistance now, and not throw the land open in one big area so cumbersome that the department will not be able to handle it? Why not put up the land as business men would put it up? I say that we should consider how we are going to settle this land successfully before we authorise the expenditure of another £2,000,000 on a scheme which the hon. gentleman cannot say is going to be a success, because the Government have not the necessary land settlement policy.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): If settlers upon some of our lands are going to be treated similarly to a friend of mine who has communicated something to me to-day, I think it would be better, in the interests of the community, not to encourage settlers to come to our State at all.

Mr. COLLINS: I thought we were dealing with the Baralaba railway.

Mr. MAXWELL: So we are, but we are talking about settling people on our land and giving them every facility to make good.

Mr. Maxwell.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must deal with the question before the Committee.

Mr. MAXWELL: That is what I am proposing to do, but I am going to show that it is necessary to offer every encouragement to our people in the form of water conservation and otherwise to make that settlement a success. I have here information that some men who had given up professional careers in the city to go on the land in the Central district purchased a windmill and pumping plant in Rockhampton in July last for £205 4s. 8d. net, prompt cash on receipt of invoice. The plant had to be sent to Yamala, and they were called upon by the Railway Department immediately to pay £16 7s. 2d. railage on 3½ tons from Rockhampton, a distance of 152 miles—which works out at £4 11s. 9d. a ton. I hope that people settling on the land to be opened up by this railway will not be treated like that.

Mr. COLLINS: You would complain next day about the railways not paying.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. member has said that on various occasions, but it is absolutely necessary that every encouragement should be given to the man on the land, and this is not the way to do it. I bring this before the notice of the Minister now, because this is my only opportunity to do so, and I hope he will go thoroughly into the matter and search his department and ask himself whether £4 11s. 9d. per ton is a fair charge on a man who is trying to make his living on the land and provide water for his stock.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): I am afraid that what I said at the beginning of this session is correct—it is most unfortunate that it is so—that it is costing this State millions of pounds in order that the Government may have a chance to get back to power at the next election. Open threats have been made against the hon. member for Normanby, and Government members have asserted many times that means would be found to put men in his electorate before the next election who would outvote the farming community.

At 5.20 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Here we find them proposing to do that. I am bound to say that the Minister is bringing forward this railway at the present time, instead of going on with the Burnett scheme, as an absolute political necessity in order to win the Normanby electorate. (Government dissent.) I am only going on the evidence furnished by threats which have been made by Government members.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You should stick to the truth.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That is the truth. Threats have been made over and over again against the hon. member for Normanby.

In connection with their Burnett scheme the Government have resumed a good deal of second-class grazing land, which already is occupied by settlers.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that the hon. member is not going to deal with the resumption of land on this motion.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I am dealing with land settlement along the railway which it is proposed shall be built. It is madness to give notice of resumption of second-class land

[*Mr. Maxwell.*]

which already is occupied, because, even after the railway is built, there will be no greater settlement, owing to the fact that the lands are poor grazing land. They ought to have been left in occupation until they were needed.

Mr. PAYNE: Have you been over the route?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I have been over the Burnett and Dawson Valley lands a number of times. Whilst I am not against this railway being built, I think it should be held over until we have first settled the people on the Burnett lands. The principle on which the Government are working in regard to land settlement and the building of railways has been perpetuated from the policy of past Governments. It is a wrong principle. The Government ought to take another plank out of the platform of the Country party. They tried to take part of that platform, but they have only made a mess of it so far. The Department of Public Lands now receives in revenue something like £1,500,000. A good portion of that should be devoted to land settlement. It is wrong to penalise the country districts to that amount, and return nothing to them. When there is an area like this to be resumed for railway purposes, and, as the Minister admits, there are going to be increases in values, that land should be taken out of the hands of the Department of Public Lands and put into the hands of the board or trust which will be responsible for making the works, the extra amount received as the result of increased values being devoted to liquidating the cost of the works. The whole cost of the works is to be put upon the men who are going to occupy the lands. The interest on the cost of irrigation will be charged against them as a water rate.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that the hon. member is not going to discuss irrigation schemes. The question before the Committee is the construction of a branch railway line from Baralaba to Castle Creek. I hope that the hon. member will confine his remarks to the question.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Minister took a long time explaining that the railway was necessary to the irrigation scheme. The money which will be received from the sale of land alongside the railway—

Mr. BRENNAN: It will be perpetual lease.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: As long as hon. members opposite are in power it may be, but we will alter that; we will give the people the freehold of their land. (Interruption.) The money which the department actually receives from the sale of land should be credited to the cost of the works, whether they be railway or irrigation works; but, if the interest and water rates are run up until they are such a burden on the land that the people will not be able to carry it, no settlement will take place.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The Minister should have given a great deal more information before asking us to give him a free hand in building a railway that is going to cost this amount of money. We do not know what the irrigation scheme is going to cost, or what the water they use will cost the settlers. There are large irrigation schemes in Victoria and New South Wales, and in some cases the cost per acre has made farming there unprofitable; and, instead of there being an increase in value placed upon the

land, the value has decreased. In many cases in Victoria the value of the land has decreased owing to the high cost of the water put on it. In some cases it has increased tremendously because previously it had a very low value.

Mr. HARTLEY: What is the increase in the production of the land?

Mr. MOORE: That has to be taken into account also. One thing which has to be considered is what attractions are offered to the settler. He will want to know what is the cost of putting water on the land, what the price of the land is, and what he is likely to produce. If the cost is going to exceed the value of that which he will get off the land, he will not go on it. I think that the Government have their hands pretty full if they are going to complete the Burnett scheme. Every hon. member opposite must recognise that we have any quantity of land along our railways capable of closer settlement which is not being used to the best advantage. I can call to mind some of the best land in Queensland between Roma and Mitchell—beautiful country that can be had to-day at a lower rate than was paid for it thirty years ago. It is right on the railway line.

Mr. PAYNE: What can it be used for?

Mr. MOORE: Anything—grazing—wheat-growing.

Mr. PAYNE: You are not within the rainfall area there.

Mr. MOORE: I think the rainfall there is as good as it is in the Burnett.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Is it private land?

Mr. MOORE: It is private land. It can be purchased to-day at a lesser rate than was paid thirty years ago, with the improvements now given in.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: How much per acre?

Mr. MOORE: Between £1 and £1 10s. per acre. There is plenty of it. When you can get land of such quality, it is an extraordinary thing to go on with a huge developmental policy like this. Railway building has not reached its lowest cost; it is still very high. When that cost has to be borne by the settlers, we should finish one scheme at a time, settle the people on the land, and see what number of settlers we are likely to get. We know that the Burnett scheme has been well advertised. A large number of people in the South will be looking forward to acquiring blocks of land. In a huge settlement scheme we want to see what attraction is going to be offered the settler.

Mr. HARTLEY: There may be a big difference between the Burnett and Dalby lands, but we are dealing with the Dawson Valley Railway.

[5.30 p.m.]

Mr. MOORE: It is a wise policy to deal with one scheme first.

Mr. HARTLEY: You cannot make any comparison between the Burnett lands and the Dawson Valley lands in connection with this matter. The Dawson land is far superior, and you have irrigation facilities.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. gentleman seems to be getting too far forward when talking about irrigation facilities, as the scheme has only just been commenced. It will take a con-

siderable time even after the dam is built before the land can be irrigated. The Government have been booming the Burnett land throughout Australia. Presumably it is good land; the major portion of it can be classed as first-class land.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This is essentially an irrigation proposal.

Mr. MOORE: I am talking about building a railway into an area where we have no irrigation proposal. How do we know that there will be sufficient water?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The work in connection with the conservation of water will go on concurrently with the building of the railway.

Mr. MOORE: Different engineers have furnished different reports. During the past eight or ten years there has been no great influx of settlers into Queensland to take up land—the tendency has been rather the reverse.

Mr. W. COOPER: No.

Mr. MOORE: There are some favoured districts where the rainfall has been particularly good, and where there is a tendency in the direction of closer settlement; but there is a tendency in other districts for people to get off the land. When we consider the question of a big land settlement scheme, it is surely common sense to go ahead with one scheme and finish that and see what success will be attained, see the number of settlers that will be attracted, see whether they are suitable for the work to be carried out, and whether they have sufficient capital to carry on.

Mr. BRENNAN: Does the hon. member not think that we should absorb the unemployed?

Mr. MOORE: If the Minister's only idea is to absorb the unemployed, there are cheaper methods by which it can be done.

Mr. BRENNAN: On reproductive works?

Mr. MOORE: There are projects closer to Brisbane than this.

Mr. BRENNAN: What are they?

Mr. MOORE: The Mount Edwards irrigation scheme.

Mr. BRENNAN: Why not go on with them all?

Mr. MOORE: What is the use of doing that if you have not the settlers to go on the land?

Mr. HARTLEY: What has the hon. member got against this railway?

Mr. MOORE: The scheme is absolutely in the air. There has been sufficient propaganda put forward by the Government to have attracted hundreds of settlers to Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There has been no big scheme like this.

Mr. MOORE: It is not a question of a big scheme. It is a question of the attractive nature of the country and market advantages. There was no big scheme eighteen or twenty years ago when there was such an influx of settlers from the South. People came here because the settlement conditions were attractive, and then they wrote and advised their friends to come too.

Mr. BRENNAN: Do you know that this scheme is bigger than the Burrinjuck scheme?

Mr. Moore.]

Mr. MOORE: It does not matter if it is five times as big.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Did you not vote the money on the Estimates for this line?

Mr. MOORE: That does not matter. This scheme should be held over until the Burnett one is completed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why did you vote the money on the Estimates?

Mr. MOORE: Money is often voted on the Estimates, and then it is deemed inadvisable to use it.

Mr. HARTLEY: What other scheme should be completed?

Mr. MOORE: The Burnett scheme.

Mr. HARTLEY: You believe the Burnett scheme should be carried out first?

Mr. MOORE: The Government started first on that scheme.

Mr. HARTLEY: The Burnett scheme is only a land settlement scheme. This is an irrigation and land settlement scheme.

Mr. MOORE: The Government should know what they will have to charge settlers per acre for water.

Mr. BRENNAN: If we were defeated tomorrow, would you go on with the Dawson Valley scheme?

Mr. MOORE: We would not go on until we had completed settlement alongside the present line in order to ascertain what settlers would come here. You cannot go on with five or six different things together.

Mr. HARTLEY: Your Government passed twelve railways by means of the "gag" in a couple of nights involving an expenditure of £10,000,000.

Mr. MOORE: That was a general scheme for the settlement of the whole of Queensland. If that scheme had been carried out, it would probably have been better for the whole of Queensland; but, unfortunately, different Governments come in and upset these schemes. We should not go on with this scheme when there is the present limited demand for land.

Mr. W. COOPER: There is no limited demand for land.

Mr. MOORE: There may be an unlimited demand for small grazing areas in the Central West, but there is a limited demand for land for farming and agricultural purposes. There is any amount of land available at the present time.

Mr. BRENNAN: Where?

Mr. MOORE: In all parts of the State.

Mr. BRENNAN: Freehold land belonging to the banks?

Mr. MOORE: There is plenty of other land.

Mr. W. COOPER: With no railways leading to it.

Mr. MOORE: It is quite close to the railways.

Mr. STOPFORD: Was it not your policy that railways should precede settlement?

Mr. MOORE: Yes; but I did not say that you should start building railways all over Queensland before you know what settlement will come here.

[Mr. Moore.]

Mr. STOPFORD: Some time ago the hon. member stated that we should go on and build the dam and afterwards build the railway.

Mr. MOORE: I never mentioned that at all. I am saying that it is inadvisable to go on with this scheme until we see what success attends the Burnett scheme. We know that there is plenty of good land in the Burnett district. We should not have two half-finished schemes. There is a lot of vacant land alongside the railways to-day. If the Government can show that they have a guarantee that a certain number of settlers will come here and settle on the land, then I say go ahead by all means.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We will get the settlers once we make the land available.

Mr. MOORE: Other States in Australia have said that. We know the trouble there is in Western Australia to get a sufficient number of settlers to go in for farming.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have no scheme.

Mr. MOORE: Their scheme was approved of by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. BRENNAN: The Commonwealth Government are looking for more war.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The Western Australian Government have no definite scheme like we have. They have no land available like we have.

Mr. MOORE: I am pointing out that the country is not in a position to finance such a big undertaking, and I do not think there are enough settlers available with sufficient capital to go on to the land and work it as it should be worked. We should go on with the Burnett scheme first.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Is it not better to have land awaiting settlers rather than have settlers awaiting land?

Mr. MOORE: We do not want to build a railway and then wait indefinitely for settlers.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: The policy of your party was to put people on the land under the promise of a railway, which never eventuated.

Mr. MOORE: It was not our policy to promise a railway and then build it somewhere else. I admit that certain promises have not been carried out in connection with railways; but that does not justify the Government in building this proposed railway unless it can be shown that they will get sufficient settlers to make it a success.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: In some of your speeches you say we are doing nothing to induce settlement, and then, when we put forward a definite scheme, you oppose it.

Mr. MOORE: I do not call this a definite scheme for settlement. We want to know exactly what it is going to cost the settlers who go on the land. If you have sufficient settlers coming to Queensland to take up land in the Burnett, you know exactly the position you are in, and whether it will be wise to go on with the Dawson Valley scheme. But to go on with two schemes at the same time, when we know there is only a limited number of people of the right kind available for this class of settlement, is a mistake, and the Government would be wise to hold the scheme over until they give the Committee

further information. The Minister may have the information as to what this irrigation scheme is going to cost.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said that it would cost approximately £2,000,000.

Mr. BRENNAN: Would it not be better to finance this scheme than to finance another war?

Mr. MOORE: I am suggesting that the Government should complete one scheme before going on with another. Hon. members know perfectly well what has been going on in Queensland during the last few years, and they know the amount of settlement that has taken place. They know the number of inquiries that have been received in the Lands Department; they know there is any amount of land available alongside railways already constructed; and they know, too, that in many cases freehold land can be purchased for the cost of the improvements. That shows that there is not much demand for land for closer settlement, and, unless there is a demand for it, it is a mistaken policy to build two lines of railway at the one time for the same class of settlement.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is not the same class of settlement.

Mr. MOORE: It is the same class of settlement until the irrigation scheme is in operation and we know exactly what it is going to cost. Further, according to the reports we see in the Press, it is not absolutely certain that there is sufficient water available to irrigate the area required. Then there is the question of the soil. In Victoria, where there are the most successful irrigation settlements in Australia, they have a clayey subsoil, which enables them to put on 2 inches or 3 inches of water, which is quite sufficient. In many places on the Downs, if you tried to irrigate, you would have to put on 20 inches of water owing to the porous nature of the subsoil.

Mr. HARTLEY: This scheme provides for putting on feet—not inches.

Mr. MOORE: In Victoria they provided for feet in the same way, but it is a matter that requires a great deal of expert knowledge. Before we are asked to consent to the construction of a railway for an irrigation settlement, we should have more information given to us, so that we shall know exactly where we stand. It is no good starting a settlement scheme and expecting settlers to come here unless they know the conditions. After all, the nature of the subsoil is a very vital question in connection with all irrigation settlements. I do not know whether hon. members opposite have had very much experience of irrigation.

Mr. BRENNAN: Yes.

Mr. MOORE: I have lived on an irrigation settlement in Victoria, and I have also tried irrigation on the Downs, which I found was a very different proposition. In Victoria there was a tremendous amount of waste and loss incurred before they got an expert from America, Mr. Elwood Mead. People can make just as many mistakes in irrigating as if they had no water at all, and it takes a great deal of expert knowledge to ensure success.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: Defective channelling was one cause of the loss.

Mr. MOORE: Defective channelling was one, but that was one of the smallest faults. We want to know whether the class of soil in Queensland is suitable for irrigation.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: There are quite a lot of important matters to consider in connection with irrigation.

Mr. MOORE: The Minister says there are quite a lot of important matters to consider, and before considering those matters the Government ask us to consent to the building of a railway.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: I said in connection with irrigation; and they will be considered at the proper time.

Mr. MOORE: The proper time to consider these things is before you ask Parliament to consent to the building of a railway.

The bell indicated that the hon. member had exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): It is certainly surprising to note the littleness of hon. members opposite in their criticism in connection with the building of this Baralaba-Castle Creek Railway. Hon. members opposite do not seem to understand that the main object of this line is that a big irrigation scheme can be started and that the railway will have two duties—one to carry material and workmen for the building of the big dam in connection with the irrigation scheme—

Mr. FLETCHER: This does not go near the big dam.

Mr. HARTLEY: I am not going to advocate what the hon. member advocated, the building of the line into the dam—because that is what he did advocate—so that after we built the dam the railway and stations would be about 30 feet under water. I am going to deal afterwards with what the hon. member said, because he said something that was even sillier than any of the many other silly things I have heard him say in this Chamber. The other duty of the line will be to carry the produce from the irrigation area down to the nearest deep-sea port on the Queensland coast. Of course, I know that what is hurting the hon. member for Port Curtis is that the railway will not bring that produce to Gladstone. The policy of this Government is to serve the hinterland of each seaport and give that hinterland access to the nearest deep-water port.

Mr. FLETCHER: This is the direct hinterland of Gladstone.

Mr. HARTLEY: I dare say if you stood on your head it would be. That is the way the hon. gentleman generally looks at things—upside down. The hon. member for Aubigny seems to have some apprehension as to whether the amount of water will be available for irrigation purposes to make this line a success. Any man who has ever been in the Central district and has seen the Fitzroy River in flood would never have one moment's hesitation in saying that there is plenty of water, because in one flood season enough water comes down to provide irrigation for the next two or three years, if it was conserved. In the disastrous flood of 1918, below Rockhampton from the foot of the Berserker Range right across to the foothills of the Crocodile Range—a distance of

Mr. Hartley.]

about 10 miles—was covered with flood water to a depth of about 30 ft. It gives some idea of the tremendous quantity of water which comes down the Fitzroy River in flood time. With an example like that, there can be no apprehension felt as to the quantity of water being available to serve the purposes for which this railway is to be built. With regard to the hon. member's contention that there is no big influx of immigrants, or no evidence of people flocking in droves to Queensland to take up land, we are unable to provide certain classes of land in Queensland for the great number of men who are applying for it. The hon. member's contention that we should start a big immigration scheme and bring a large number of people here to go on the land before we have made land available for them is absurd. What is the use of bringing a number of immigrants to the Dawson Valley if there are no facilities in the way of water, and also a railway on which to send their produce? The object of choosing this route is two-fold—to give the cheapest route for the railway, and provide cheap carriage for the material required for the irrigation dam to serve the people who settle on the irrigation area. For this reason, the route up the Dawson Valley to Castle Creek, where the first irrigation project will be put into force, has been chosen. From the reports of the different hydraulic engineers from Castle Creek it will probably be a matter of transport by the waterway of the Dawson River itself. It would be absurd to suggest that the railway line should go further on, because all the rest of the area is land that will be required for irrigation purposes, and some of it will be inundated at certain times. The route to Castle Creek is the shortest, most practicable, and the cheapest route available. With regard to the quantity of water which is to be conserved by the dam, hon. members would do well to study the figures given in the table in the report in connection with this railway, and to realise that they are offered the opportunity of building a line which will serve the biggest irrigation scheme in Australia.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And it may be the most expensive.

Mr. COLLINS: It is too big for you with your small mind.

Mr. HARTLEY: Even if it is the most expensive, it may be the most profitable irrigation scheme in Australia. In view of the evidence in connection with the Dawson Valley, and the big factor it is going to be in supplying the cotton requirements of England and the Dominions, I think we are justified in assuming that the line will be a success. I wish to quote some figures with regard to the Nathan dam, in order that they may get into "Hansard" and so that the people generally will know what we are asked to do. The report of the Public Works Commission says—

"The size of dam, when considered in relation to storage, compares favourably with other large schemes, as the following table will indicate—"

I am not going to quote the figures in the order in which they are given in the table. I am going to take the largest dam first—

"Elephant Butte, Rio Grande River, North America, storage capacity, 2,500,000 acre feet, and crest length 1,200 feet."

[Mr. Hartley.

I want to compare that first with the Nathan dam—

"Nathan, Dawson River, Queensland, storage capacity 1,300,000 acre feet, and crest length 655 feet."

From the comparison of the crest length of the dam it will be seen that there is not much chance of its being the most expensive in that respect. The next dam quoted is—

"Assouan, Nile River, Egypt, storage capacity 1,800,000 acre feet, and crest length 6,400 feet."

The next in regard to storage capacity is the Nathan dam on the Dawson River, to which we are now being asked to authorise this railway. That has a storage capacity, as I have said, of 1,300,000 acre feet and a crest length of only 655 feet. Certainly, the height of the dam walls is greater than those of the Assouan dam, but it is 120 feet lower than those of the big dam at Elephant Butte on the Rio Grande River in North America. Taking it all round, I think the evidence given in the report proves that the Dawson Valley irrigation dam is a very feasible project, and the estimates show that there is no need for apprehension with regard to the quantity of water available or the cost to those who require it.

There is just one word I want to say in reply to the hon. member for Port Curtis. The hon. member seemed to oppose this proposal because it did not coincide with his ideas as to where the railway should be built from. He said that he was of opinion that the line should be built from Calliope, as by doing so it would save a distance of something like 25 miles.

Mr. FLETCHER: That was if the line had been built from Calliope in the first place—I do not advocate it now.

Mr. HARTLEY: The hon. member is opposing this scheme because it does not go from Calliope, and he said that the line should be built from Gladstone to Taroom, and from Taroom down to Juandah and Miles. Will the hon. member tell me what advantage that would be to the settlement of the Dawson Valley?

Mr. FLETCHER: Because it would only have 110 miles to get to the nearest port, whereas under this scheme it will have 160 miles.

Mr. HARTLEY: It would only have 110 miles to go from Gladstone to Taroom, but that is as the crow flies. If the crow walked and pushed a wheel-barrow, it would have to go 200 miles round because of the rugged nature of the country which would have to be passed through. If the line went in that direction, it would come on to the irrigation area at a right angle. People would have to come from 40 miles away on the lower side of the river, and on the other side of the river people would have to bring their produce in by road or by light tramways a similar distance, and that would increase the cost.

Mr. FLETCHER: You could have an off-shoot from the railway.

Mr. HARTLEY: Not only does the hon. member want a trunk line, but he would want several branch lines in connection with the route that he suggests, whereas by building the line by the route now proposed we go up the valley of the Dawson River and are

right in touch with the land that will be used for settlement and with the terminus abutting on the big irrigation area. The contention

[7 p.m.] Curtis is that, having failed to build the line from Gladstone to Taroom, and then down to Juandah and Miles, the next best proposition would have been to go from Gladstone to the Callide Junction, and thence to the centre of the irrigation area. The hon. gentleman suggested a herring-bone system of railway construction. The main reason why he suggested that was that they could get to Gladstone in 125 miles. I want to point out that the big objection is, as the hon. gentleman admitted earlier by interjection, that it would hit about the middle of the belt of country proposed to be served and settled as an irrigation area. It would also involve an additional railway system, or what I might call a herring-bone system of branch lines up and down the river either way for a distance of, I should say, 20 miles either way. Even then some of the settlers would be far removed from the railway in some instances. We all know that settlers are greatly handicapped when they are removed long distances from railway communication. Under the present proposal, up the valley of the river, just above the edge of the highest flood-level so far as is known, the line will run along what is practically the boundary of the area intended to be settled. In no instance in the proposal outlined to-day will any area of irrigable land be more than 6 or 7 miles from the railway. That is a big consideration to men settling on the land. The hon. member for Port Curtis contends that the railway should go from Gladstone to Callide Junction, so that the produce could go to Gladstone.

The hon. member gave some distances as showing the added handicap it will be to producers in this district by following the route proposed. I do not agree with the hon. gentleman's figures, because I have looked up the distances in the railway timetable. He gave the distance to Gladstone from Castle Creek as 190 miles, but I make it 215 miles, and I think my figures are correct. The shortest route to Castle Creek is the present route to Rockhampton, which means 142 miles of carriage. I think the producers in the country are satisfied when they can get their produce carried to a main centre of population which is also a distributing centre. Their market will be in Rockhampton. To take their produce to Gladstone, an extra 69 miles, would be absolutely absurd. If they want to get to a deep-water port direct, a shorter route would be to Broadmount. I notice that the hon. member did not mention Broadmount, but the distance to that port from Castle Creek would be 163 miles, as opposed to 215 miles to Gladstone. I think those figures speak for themselves, and will convince the Committee that there is nothing in the hon. member's argument in favour of the route of 110 miles, via Callide Junction. And this most important fact must also be borne in mind—that the country, or a great portion of the country, on the route he proposes the railway should take, is very rugged and mountainous, and it would be very costly to build a line through some of those ranges to connect these lands with Gladstone.

I fail to see any reason why we should wait two years, as the hon. member con-

tends, or why there should be any waiting at all. There is no use in waiting, as he and the hon. member for Aubigny said, to see how we get on with the Burnett scheme. The two are absolutely separate and different. The Burnett scheme cannot be compared with the Dawson. The one is a purely land settlement scheme, whilst the other is a scheme of land settlement by providing irrigation facilities, and no comparison can be made on account of the difference in the quality of the land and the area that will be served in each case.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I would like to say that the attitude of hon. members on this side of the House is not that they are opposed to the construction either of the railway or of the irrigation or water conservation works. Both are necessary if we are going to develop the State as we desire it to be developed. The magnitude of this proposal does not frighten me in any way. In fact, if the information in this report is by any means correct—and most likely it is—it is going to assist the settlement of quite a number of persons in the Dawson Valley. I have not had the pleasure of visiting that part of Queensland, but all the evidence that we have had in this Chamber from time to time goes to prove that it has tremendous possibilities. But the question we have to ask ourselves is: "Is this a suitable time to go on with these operations?" Hon. members know perfectly well that we have lost a tremendous amount of money on the railways during the last seven years, and that, if the Estimates which we were considering just a short time ago prove to be anywhere near correct, there will be a further loss by 30th June next of at least £1,250,000. Is it sensible for us to go on in the way we are following at the present time, when we know very well that the land along the existing railway lines has not been opened up as we would like? I do not think we should load ourselves with any unnecessary railway construction unless we are satisfied that, if it is not going to pay, it is going to come within reasonable distance of paying. We have information that this railway is not going to pay for a considerable time, although I think that eventually there will come a time when the railway, in conjunction with the irrigation scheme, will pay. How we are going to finance the two things, in conjunction with the other big railway works which we have in the Burnett area, I do not know. We have had tremendous losses on our railways for some years, and the Government should devote themselves to seeing whether it is not possible to stop those losses, and whether some system cannot be devised by which settlement will be promoted. It seems to me that the only way in which we can make the existing lines of railway pay is by promoting settlement along the lines we already have. We have a tremendous mileage from one end of the State to the other. We on this side are not opposed to water conservation and irrigation. By reason of our not having had such schemes in years gone by we have lost millions of pounds. It is unfortunate that years ago water conservation was not taken up to a greater extent, and that areas which could have been irrigated and provided with water were not so provided. I believe that the expenditure involved in water conservation will

Mr. Taylor.]

come back to the State every time. It is a lamentable thing that, when we get a few months of dry weather, we should suffer to the extent we do. Hon. members on both sides are here to advocate and assist in every way possible the promotion of settlement, the construction of railways, and water conservation and irrigation. Those things are absolutely necessary if we want to see the State develop. But I hold that it is not developing our State to go on losing anything up to £1,500,000 or £1,750,000 on our existing lines of railway. We see what has happened in Victoria since the present Commissioner has taken charge. He has not been in charge very long. He is a Victorian-born man who went to America, gained certain experience, and was brought out by the present Victorian Government. For the year which has just ended, we are informed, the loss on the Victorian railways has been only £19,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Because, he says, of the increased fares and freights.

Mr. TAYLOR: There is no doubt that he has done something in that direction. Are we to go on in the same way in which we have been going—paying out of the consolidated revenue whatever is lost, thus making the general taxpayers bear the burden?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why should they not help to develop the country?

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not call that developing the country. Development should take place along the existing lines of railway.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If you increase fares and freights, you are going to handicap development.

Mr. TAYLOR: If the Government tried to see how far they could further develop areas of land suitable for agriculture and closer settlement along existing lines of railway, probably they would find that they would not have to raise fares and freights. From the increased traffic they would raise sufficient revenue to prevent the enormous losses which we have been having for some years.

Mr. HARTLEY: It would be all right if you could resume land at a decent figure; but you know that you cannot.

Mr. TAYLOR: I think that over the whole of the existing lines we should be able to resume at a rate which would pay the Government and encourage settlement.

I am prepared to accept the recommendations of those men who should know regarding the proposed route of this line. It is not a bit of use having men who, we claim, have special knowledge with regard to what is the most suitable route for the construction of a railway if we are not going to accept the reports which they present. I have sufficient confidence in the men who have prepared this report to believe that the route they recommend is the best route for the construction of this particular line of railway. But I think we are on sound ground in our opposition to going on with this scheme at the present time. Whether this railway is constructed or not, tremendous expansion will take place in the cotton-growing industry in this particular area. The area under cotton is going to be probably doubled or trebled,

[Mr. Taylor.

or probably increased to an even greater extent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This railway will help in that direction.

Mr. TAYLOR: Probably it will. It has been proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can produce cotton and that we can produce it at a good margin of profit while present values are maintained, and probably we shall be able to produce it at a less cost than at the present time. The whole scheme should be very carefully considered by this Chamber. While I believe in the construction of railways and in water conservation schemes, I say we should hesitate before going on with such a scheme as this, and we should devote our energies and abilities to see if we can increase our rural population along the existing railways.

Mr. W. COOPER (Roswood): I have listened to hon. members opposite taking up the stand that it is not necessary to construct this particular line. One reason advanced is because it would go through the Normanby electorate so that the Government might have an opportunity of defeating the hon. member for Normanby because there would be a number of workmen engaged on this line. I do not think there is really any necessity for the Government to construct a railway line to defeat the hon. member, because at the last election the hon. member was returned to this House as a Labour representative by a majority of about 500. I think that majority is still there for any Labour candidate who may oppose the hon. member. Hon. members opposite, particularly the Country party, have always claimed that they are the friends of the man on the land.

Mr. J. JONES: So we are.

Mr. W. COOPER: They have always advocated the policy of railways preceding settlement, yet we find them opposing the construction of this railway for political purposes. They also charged this Government with constructing the railway for political purposes. We can remember men particularly versed in the tactics used by hon. members opposite, who in the past have passed railway construction schemes without any intention at all of carrying them out. The first inquiry that an intending settler makes is whether there are any railway facilities to enable him to bring his produce to market. There are districts in Queensland to-day which are languishing for the want of railways. I can refer to instances where Governments possessing views similar to those possessed by hon. members opposite—reactionary views—have adopted railway construction schemes without any intention of carrying them out. At the time that they were adopted there were hundreds more settlers in that particular district than there are to-day, because the unfortunate settlers went there many years ago to take up land, following on a promise made by previous Governments to construct a railway to that district, but that railway has never been constructed. I am referring to the Lanefield-Rosevale railway.

Mr. BRENNAN: Whose electorate is that in?

Mr. W. COOPER: It is in the electorate of the hon. member for Lockyer. Those men have been treated shabbily in the past, and they have not been given the facilities that they should have been given to get their produce to market; and their sons have found that it was not possible for them to

make a reasonable living because they had to cart their produce too far. This Baralaba-Castle Creek Railway will bring about closer settlement, and hon. members opposite incline to the belief that we shall not have in Queensland sufficient settlers to make this line a payable proposition, and they say they want it deferred for two years. If that land is settled within five years, the Government will be amply justified in carrying out the proposal we have before us, because I am satisfied that, unless we build railways to enable settlers to get their produce to market within a reasonable time, there is no hope of inducing people to settle on the land. The people in my electorate—which is one of the closest settled districts in Queensland—took up land under the most adverse conditions. It was scrub land, and I notice that the friends of hon. members opposite have never taken up that class of land; they were always prepared to take up land on the rolling downs, where there was no hard work to do. In my electorate we have farmers who have not more than 100 acres, and they have reared large families, some of them having up to eight and even ten sons.

Mr. COLLINS: That is where we will get settlers from. Go and do likewise. (Laughter.)

Mr. W. COOPER: I am afraid hon. members opposite have not the vitality. (Laughter.) Those sons desire to go on the land, but there is no place for them except away back from a railway, and it is necessary to construct lines such as the Baralaba-Castle Creek Railway, which is purely an agricultural line, if we are going to develop Queensland. We have to offer some inducement for these men to go on the land; and, if we do not do that, we shall do exactly what hon. members opposite have done in the past—that is, retard progress so far as land settlement is concerned. The Federal Government have instituted a scheme for bringing hundreds—they say thousands—of immigrants to Australia. There is not a particle of use in bringing out immigrants unless we provide the means by which they can settle on the land and have a reasonable opportunity of making a decent living. We have just embarked upon the cotton industry, and I understand from the reports that the land in the Dawson Valley is suitable for cotton; and, unless we provide facilities for getting the cotton to market, we cannot expect men to take up that land for the purpose of growing cotton. If we do not construct this line, we cannot be called anything else but a retrogressive party, and, if there is one thing this party cannot be charged with, it is retrogression. I have been practically all over Australia, and I find that the States whose Governments have constructed railways for the purpose of promoting land settlement are the most progressive States. Queensland has built more miles of railway than any other State in the Commonwealth, and I say without fear of contradiction that Queensland to-day, despite what hon. members opposite may say, is the most progressive State in Australia in the matter of railway construction and in the matter of land settlement, and particularly agricultural settlement. I hope that the Government will be firm in their determination to carry out the programme of railway construction which they have introduced.

Mr. J. JONES: We shall have to charge them with repudiation yet.

Mr. W. COOPER: There is no doubt that, if we do not build this line, you may charge us with repudiation. It ill becomes the hon. member to say anything about repudiation. Hon. members opposite can be charged with repudiation, because on every occasion when an election was looming in sight they went out and told the electors they were going to construct certain railways, but when they were returned to power they repudiated every promise they made. We on this side have promised nothing that we have not carried out. I hope that this railway will be constructed as early as possible.

Mr. VOWLES (Dalby): This proposed line is an extension of the Mount Morgan branch railway from Baralaba to Castle Creek, in length 52 miles, and the scheme connected with it, we are told, is going to cost something like £2,000,000. We know that estimate is indefinite, because to a great extent it is experimental. It is customary to deal with railway proposals on non-party lines, and it is only a fair thing that the reports which have been brought before the Committee from time to time should receive the consideration they are entitled to, and any criticism should be taken in the spirit in which it is given. We start out with a full knowledge, no matter what our views on the question may be, that the Government have decided on this course of action, and the proposal is going to pass whether we like it or not. It is no use hon. members opposite saying that we are showing hostility to the proposal. We are discussing the matter from a public point of view, and asking the Government to take some notice of the arguments we advance. We have to realise, in the first place, that of all the non-paying concerns we have in Queensland our railways are the worst. The accumulated deficits to-day are about £8,500,000, built up in seven years, and in the face of that we are asked to agree to the expenditure of capital which, so far as I can see, will mean incurring further deficits. One has only to look at the railway lines which have been commenced during the term of the Government and which are still unfinished to realise the amount of dead capital there is in Queensland to-day. In one case in particular some railway work was begun in Toowoomba only for one purpose, and that was to return the present member to Parliament.

Mr. BRENNAN: Which member?

Mr. VOWLES: You.

Mr. BRENNAN: It was not in my time.

Mr. VOWLES: It put a lot of people there in your time.

Mr. BRENNAN: No; they all lived in my electorate.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member knows better than that. The fact remains that there was a large sum of money—we are told it was £30,000 or £40,000—expended there, and the works are left just in the condition they were before the election was held.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, because of the Philp delegation.

Mr. VOWLES: You have done nothing since. The same thing has happened in connection with other railway lines which were in progress when the Government came into power. Look at the Munbilla to Mount Edwards line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is almost completed.

Mr. Vowles.]

Mr. VOWLES: But how many years has capital been tied up there earning nothing at all?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As soon as we got funds we started the line. It will be opened in a fortnight.

Mr. VOWLES: Then the same thing applies to the Murgon-Proston railway. Huge sums of money were spent, and before the line was finished operations were suspended and a big amount of capital is lying idle. When we made applications for the construction of railway lines into agricultural areas—lines which have been agreed to by the Public Works Commission as being desirable—and which would run through country which was and still is falling into the hands of the Crown, and which has been taken up by soldier settlers and others, the Government told us that certain railways would be built as soon as the North Coast line was completed. Those promises, of course, have been overlooked; yet we have the hon. member for Rosewood speaking about the broken promises of past Governments. When an election is looming on the horizon we find the Government saying that it is necessary to start, not only one railway, which involves the expenditure of a huge sum of money, but that it is necessary to start two railways, which will necessitate two different plants, and two different costs of supervision, and duplication of expense in other ways.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Are you in favour of this line or not?

Mr. VOWLES: That is not the question. It does not matter very much whether we are in favour of it or not, because it is going to be carried.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no election pending, unless it is a Federal election.

Mr. VOWLES: I think there is a State election pending. At any rate, if you want to put it on record, I am opposed to this proposal. In these matters we [7.30 p.m.] have got to be guided by the reports of our experts. Unfortunately, we have two reports, and they are conflicting. One report goes against the other report.

Mr. BRENNAN: We have the report of the Public Works Commission.

Mr. VOWLES: We have the report of the Public Works Commission, that is the report of laymen based on the evidence that was given before them. They arrived at a decision to the best of their ability, based on the reports of experts.

Mr. HARTLEY: They travelled over the route.

Mr. VOWLES: Yes; and they travelled over many other routes. I ask the hon. member if they are competent to express an opinion on matters such as this?

Mr. COLLINS: Read the evidence of the hon. member for Murilla, and see what he says.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Murilla said it was one of the finest schemes ever inaugurated.

Mr. VOWLES: That may be his opinion, but he is only a layman. We have to be guided by the opinions of experts, and the reports of the Railway Department tell us what is likely to be the earning power of
(Mr. Vowles.

this railway. It is infinitesimal. The Minister tries to bolster up the railway by saying that it should be taken in conjunction with the irrigation scheme, which will put an added value on the land and in that way the revenue will be obtained from the land.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said that the increased value of the land would more than cover the cost of the whole scheme.

Mr. VOWLES: How are we going to get at the crux of the whole scheme? We are going to get a proportion of the revenue from increased rents; but the whole thing is speculative, and we do not know what we are going to do. We do not know where we stand in the matter of immigration. We do not know what settlers are coming from other parts of Australia to Queensland. We have two schemes going. It would be good business to start one of the schemes, and, when we see how that gets on, we can start the other. We can wait and see whether there is a desire on the part of the people to take up land. Let us see if there is any prospect of one scheme being a success before we tackle the other. The hon. member for Rosewood spoke about immigration. What have the Government done so far as immigration is concerned?

Mr. COLLINS: We encourage the native-born.

Mr. VOWLES: Another hon. member opposite talks about bringing immigrants from overseas.

Mr. BRENNAN: Who said that?

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member for Rosewood.

Mr. BRENNAN: He did not.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member for Rosewood talked about an immigration policy and the prospects there were of people coming from overseas. The Government are not in favour of immigration.

Mr. BRENNAN: We allow them to come in in the only possible way.

Mr. VOWLES: I thought this scheme was to absorb unemployment. These schemes are going to cost a huge sum of money, which will mean a bigger interest bill. I would like to remind hon. members that the more money we have to pay in interest the less money we shall have to spend on the unemployed. We are told by the hon. member for Fitzroy that this area is eminently suitable for cotton-growing, and that the railway should be built for that reason alone.

Mr. HARTLEY: I did not say that. I said that was one of the reasons.

Mr. VOWLES: How long are we assured of the success of cotton-growing in Queensland? How long does the guarantee last?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Till 1926.

Mr. VOWLES: Do you expect the railway and the irrigation scheme will be completed by 1926?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The railway will certainly be completed to Castle Creek long before that.

Mr. VOWLES: I venture to say that the cotton guarantee will expire long before any selector in that district will be able to take advantage of it.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It took five years to build the railway to the Bowen Coalfield.

Mr. VOWLES: Hon. members opposite talk about having land for the settlement of our native-born Queenslanders. If you go into my district and go along the Tara extension, you will see where a railway was started years ago with the idea of going on towards Surat. The selectors took up land there, but they have abandoned their holdings and gone back to Victoria. That is a bad advertisement for Queensland.

Mr. BRENNAN: What about the hon. member for Murilla?

Mr. VOWLES: He is one of them. The selectors there were promised a railway, but they got tired of waiting and abandoned their selections. The prickly-pear is now spreading over the country, and it is gradually becoming ruined. The line should have been built if only for the purpose of keeping the pear back. It could have been built for a reasonable cost years ago, and great benefit would have been derived from it. It is the same in connection with some of the land in the Nanango district. Soldiers have gone on the resumptions in the Nanango electorate, and they are tired of waiting for the railway to be built.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Whereabouts?

Mr. VOWLES: Between Bconenne and Bell.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not in the Nanango district.

Mr. VOWLES: It is in the Nanango district. I travelled over that route when the Public Works Commission travelled over it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Don't you think that we should start an irrigation policy in Queensland?

Mr. VOWLES: I do, but we do not want to start two irrigation schemes at the one time. What about the Mount Edwards scheme? We were told that that was a gigantic scheme, but it was only brought forward to dupe the Ipswich electors. Then we had the Burnett scheme brought forward, and now the Dawson Valley scheme. We are going in for irrigation schemes as well as land settlement. We should take one scheme at a time. We have an object-lesson at present in the Burrinjuck scheme. We have also had an experience so far as the expenditure of money in irrigation is concerned in the Inkerman irrigation scheme.

Mr. COLLINS: I was waiting for that. I will reply to that statement.

Mr. VOWLES: It is proposed to go in for an irrigation scheme in the Dawson Valley at a cost of something like £2,000,000. We know what the difference was between the estimated cost and actual cost of the Inkerman irrigation scheme, amounting to something like 200 per cent., and it is not finished yet. I do not care what the hon. member for Bowen says, the fact remains that the cost of the Inkerman scheme has been 200 per cent. more than was estimated. Why go in for two experimental schemes? Why not deal with one and prove it to be a success? If you prove one to be a success, then I would be with you in going further; but, until such time as one scheme has been proved to be a success, we should go slow.

Mr. HARTLEY: Oh! I.W.W.!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a very serious recommendation—to go slow.

Mr. VOWLES: It is a sensible recommendation, because I mean to go slow in the expenditure of money.

Mr. BRENNAN: Who are the Bolsheviks now?

Mr. VOWLES: With hon. members opposite on the Treasury benches £2,000,000 does not matter.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You want to go slow on land settlement.

Mr. VOWLES: I believe in the policy of the Country party so far as land settlement is concerned. We have large areas at present along our existing railway lines awaiting settlement. If we gave facilities for immigrants to come here, we could encourage them to go in for settlement on the land. And we are told that no selection is to be allowed in those areas until the whole scheme is completed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. VOWLES: I understood the hon. member for Burnett to say that he had been to the department on behalf of men who wanted to select land and he was refused. How long is that embargo to remain?

Mr. HARTLEY: They cannot get preferential blocks.

Mr. VOWLES: We are told that men in hundreds and thousands are trying to get selections in the western pastoral areas as grazing farmers. We are told that men want to go on the land now being resumed by the Crown, but that it will not be open for selection. Why is all this money to be tied up and all this development to be checked? Whom are we waiting for?

Mr. BRENNAN: Waiting for the next war.

Mr. VOWLES: I venture to say that the hon. member will not be there.

Mr. BRENNAN: I will not be there. You can take your oath on that.

Mr. VOWLES: I ask the Government not to be lavish in their expenditure on this railway construction at the start. There has been a suggestion—which I hope is not correct—that the reason for the great desire to get on with this particular line is the wish to fulfil the promise made by some hon. members opposite that they are going to get rid of the hon. member for Normanby at all costs. (Government dissent.) That statement has been made in this Chamber, and whether this line is introduced from a desire to bring that about or not I do not know.

Mr. HARTLEY: You know we can get him without that.

Mr. VOWLES: Is this Bill being introduced so that a lot of workmen can be thrust into that electorate in order that they may record their votes at the next election? If that is the intention, it is to be regretted.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct, and it is not a fair suggestion.

Mr. VOWLES: I do not know. Hon. members opposite have said frequently in this Chamber that they would get the hon. member next time. If there is to be a duplication of work in order to put labourers into this area when there is apparently no reason for it, we can put our own construction upon the proceeding. My attitude is that we have to be guided by the experts of the departments. The Government are taking the responsibility. If they can show that there is business in it—they have to carry the burden of the scheme

Mr. Vowles!

in the future—we will support it for what it is worth; but, when the Minister comes along with schemes like this involving the expenditure of so much money, he should have more material at his disposal than he has given us on this occasion. What have we in the way of reports?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The report of the Public Works Commission.

Mr. VOWLES: Which I do not count as more than a snap of the fingers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The reports of the hydraulic engineers.

Mr. VOWLES: Yes, and then you have exhausted the reports of your experts. How are we to come to an intelligent conclusion on these matters when we have the very heads of the departments at variance? I say it is not fair to us. All we can say is that big irrigation schemes in other places, probably more suited than this for agriculture by irrigation, have not been a success.

Mr. HARTLEY: Tory Governments handled those.

Mr. VOWLES: It does not matter who handled them. It is the practical farmer who does the work, and, if he has not been able to make a success of them in other places, is he likely to do it here, bearing in mind that, in view of the heavier cost of construction in Queensland than in New South Wales, he will have a heavier burden to carry—a burden which in some cases is almost a crippler? We are told that in the case of the Inkerman irrigation works the settler will have to pay from £5 to £7 per acre for the privilege of having the water there.

Mr. COLLINS: What is wrong with that?

Mr. VOWLES: It just happens that the land in question is suitable for sugar-cane growing, and will return a big price in comparison with land used for other crops, and so may be able to bear that loading. But the crops which are going to be grown in this area with which we are dealing will not bring the price that cane will bring, and, therefore, the future of the settlement is not assured, as the hon. member thinks.

Mr. HARTLEY: How do you know what crops are to be grown on the Dawson area?

Mr. VOWLES: The only crop we have heard of is cotton.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is one of the least of them.

Mr. VOWLES: Is sugar-cane going to be grown?

Mr. HARTLEY: It will probably be one of the biggest wheat areas in Australia.

Mr. VOWLES: That is not going to bring the same price as sugar, and therefore I say that the margin of cost, if it is going to be anything like the Inkerman scheme, will be such that the producers will not be able to bear it and make their land pay.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*): I think it is very unfortunate that we should have the leader of the Opposition making reflections on public officers. He said that we should not take any notice of any report of the Public Works Commission.

Mr. VOWLES: I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. BRENNAN: He said he would not trust it.

[*Mr. Vowles.*

Mr. VOWLES: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member is deliberately misinterpreting what I said.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member for Toowoomba will accept the denial of the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. BRENNAN: He said he would not take any notice of it; he would not trust it.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must, in accordance with parliamentary practice, accept the denial of the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. BRENNAN: I did not say it, but I do accept his denial, if he says I said it.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member said he would not take that much notice of it, and snapped his fingers.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member said they did not count. He said he did not trust the Public Works Commission. I know an instance where the Public Works Commission did good work for the soldiers. They sat and heard a lot of evidence about the proposed line from Amiens to Stanthorpe, and Amiens to Cotton Vale. The Commission recommended the Cotton Vale line, although great influence was brought to bear to get them to recommend Stanthorpe.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: What influence?

Mr. BRENNAN: The influence was there—vested interests—they are always there. I suppose that is why the hon. member is looking so happy. That railway was built from Amiens to Cotton Vale, and it is a tribute to the Public Works Commission that in a matter on a small scale they did the best thing for the soldiers and got them reduced rates to Brisbane. Great influence was used to get the line from Amiens to Stanthorpe, and against that influence the Public Works Commission protected them. The leader of the Opposition knows nothing about this question. If he had wanted to know anything about the railway, he would have read the report of the Public Works Commission.

Mr. VOWLES: I have.

Mr. BRENNAN: If he had, he would have seen what his colleague, the hon. member for Murilla, said in answer to the hon. member for Bowen—

“You have not been over the proposed route from Baralaba to Castle Creek?—No.

“You have some knowledge of irrigation?—Yes. I was connected with three water trusts in Victoria before I came to Queensland. I was a Commissioner.”

Here is the opinion of an expert—the hon. member for Murilla. (Laughter.) He was a Commissioner of Irrigation in Victoria.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Commissioners often are not experts.

Mr. BRENNAN: The next question is—

“Are you in favour of the proposed irrigation scheme?—Yes. I have looked it over very carefully and read the reports and all other information I could get. I have also seen the country that is likely to be submerged permanently, and I interviewed the surveyors on the spot, and I think it is one of the finest schemes that could possibly be brought into existence.

“You have no objection to the railway?—No. I favour it, and I say that,

no matter what Government may be in power, it is their duty to go on with it as quickly as possible."

Those are wise words from a gentleman who is not always wise. He is an expert on these matters. He has been over the country; he knows it. The leader of the Opposition says that he has not been there. The hon. member for Drayton opposes the line.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Because I have been there.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member for Murilla is a judge of land. Before he said so, the Public Works Commission said that they believed it was all right. The Premier said so. The Government's policy was to investigate. We believe that it is a good thing.

We have heard about the Willowburn construction works in Toowoomba. Those works were started by a Labour Government. Hon. members who have been representing Toowoomba and East Toowoomba for so long had not any considerable amount of money spent in those places. The Drayton deviation was a political stunt for fifteen years. First of all it was suggested that it should be constructed.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I got it the first year I was in.

Mr. BRENNAN: The Hon. James Tormie was returned to five successive Parliaments on the strength of the promise that the Drayton deviation would develop. That is all that has been done in Toowoomba. The Willowburn construction works were started before the election, and before next election I hope that they will be completed. In any case, it would be bad policy for the Government to spend money that would not be reproductive. I believe, and the people of Toowoomba appreciate the fact, that the Dawson Valley is the greatest scheme that has ever been inaugurated in Queensland or in Australia. It is far greater than the Burrinjuck scheme. Just fancy, under this Dawson scheme there will be dammed up two and a-half times as much water as there is in Sydney Harbour! If you told the hon. member for Pittsworth that, he would not be able to appreciate it; he would be able to appreciate more the capacity of a scent bottle. We have no support from the other side for this scheme. They support the spending of money in other directions. Yesterday, the leader of the Nationalist party in the Commonwealth—the Prime Minister—said, "You can have two contingents from Australia; you can have whatever you want; it will be a good thing. Go on with the war in the Near East, and we will be returned to power." That is the policy of the other side; they will find money for destruction—for another bloody holocaust—that is their policy. They do not favour a scheme like this for settling people on the land; they want to settle the people over at Gallipoli again—they want more contingents. It is easier for them to get rid of the unemployed by slaughtering them in another wild escapade of war than by settling people on the land with a scheme such as the Burnett or the Dawson Valley scheme. Our ambition is to see every person in employment. The Government are out for the development of this fair State. We understand that by this land settlement we are going to settle something like 5,000 families by means of irrigation. The leader of the Opposition said that, if we build this line,

it will take years before it will become reproductive. What has he to say about the Rockhampton to Cairns Railway, or the Bowen Coalfields Railway? This Government have gone in for a big, bold policy in such a way as to bring about the settlement of people.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Bring about bankruptcy.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member can call it that if he likes. The war cost Australia £400,000,000. That is a mere bagatelle. Now that we propose to spend £1,500,000 to settle 5,000 people, they all squeal, and say, "Don't settle them so that they can live on the land, but spend £400,000,000 and put them under the earth." It is easier to get rid of the unemployed by slaughtering them in a great war than by developing the country.

We must handle the unemployed question. Unquestionably, we are trying to do it to the best of our ability. This scheme is going to solve the unemployed problem to a large extent. Because we are doing that, our opponents are opposing us—unnecessarily so, because they have no ideas, and are bereft of any schemes for the benefit of Queensland. When we have to sit night after night listening to them stonewalling our most progressive legislation and we have to reply to such nonsense, the electors of Queensland should know about it.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I would not have spoken upon this railway proposal but for the fact of its being linked up with the proposed big irrigation scheme. I am satisfied that, unless the Opposition develop more vision than they have developed during the past seven years, there is a prospect of their remaining in opposition for another seven years. After all, people who cannot see beyond their own backyards—people who cannot grasp the bigness of this State, and the big projects which are put forward from time to time by this Government—are not fit to govern this State, and are not likely to be returned by the people to govern it. What is really wrong with the Government is that in their ranks are men with big minds who see things from a broad point of view—not from a narrow, parochial point of view—men who seek to develop this State, and take as their guide what has been done in other countries.

The Public Works Commission did not say that this railway would pay without the irrigation scheme, because they knew full well that the railway proposal must be linked up with the irrigation scheme. It is necessary

to build this railway to develop that scheme. We all know that the United States have developed largely through irrigation. If you want to see intensive cultivation and close settlement, you have to go to the irrigated portions of the United States to see it. I have in mind the time when Brigham Young pioneered the Salt Lake district. (Opposition laughter.) Hon. members on the other side may laugh, but Brigham Young was one of the greatest men that the United States have produced. He was one of the pioneers of irrigation in the United States. All the historians of the United States recognise that. The district round Salt Lake was one of the pioneering places for irrigation. Friends of mine quite recently visited that part of the world, and they tell me that it is one of the most beautiful cities in the whole world—made beautiful because

Mr. Collins.]

of the fact that the people set out to make the soil produce that which it would not produce without irrigation. The leader of the Opposition went out of his way to drag in the Inkerman irrigation scheme. The hon. member for Drayton is continually raising the question of the Inkerman irrigation scheme in this House, but he does not know whether it is going to be a success or a failure.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is a burden upon the taxpayers.

Mr. COLLINS: I have a letter which I am prepared to let anyone see. It is dated 12th September, and was sent from Home Hill. It states—

“The country up here is beginning to get dry, and a good thunderstorm would freshen things up wonderfully. Am busy erecting fluming; have been irrigating from the scheme's works splendidly; no trouble. You will be pleased to hear—I believe it is quite true—that the block of land close to where the concrete pipe works were to the left of the mill has been sold for £30 an acre, unimproved.”

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Will the hon. member put that letter on the table?

Mr. COLLINS: Of course, I will. (Letter laid on the table.) Does anyone for a moment suggest that land would have realised £30 an acre unimproved had it not been for the Inkerman irrigation scheme? The people recognise the value that scheme will be when it is completed at the end of the year. That has been shown by the fact that land has been sold for £30 an acre unimproved.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And for £40 an acre outside the irrigation area.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member would not be able to buy some of the farms in the irrigation area for £50 an acre. He has only been accustomed to wheat land; he knows nothing about sugar-cane growing. I have seen in the “Bowen Independent” of 5th September where 3½ acres were expected to cut 180 tons, on density returns realising £144 an acre. That is what can be accomplished by irrigation. The hon. member cannot get beyond wheat and potatoes and the milking of a few cows. That is all very well in its way. In connection with the Dawson Valley irrigation proposal, it is estimated that a man will only require 15, 20, 25, or 30 acres. The hon. gentleman knows nothing about that system of farming. He has only been accustomed to his 640 acres on the Darling Downs. The men on the irrigation areas will be able to obtain a livelihood on 15 or 20 acres.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: What is going to be grown?

Mr. COLLINS: All kinds of crops; all kinds of fruits. The hon. gentleman has never thought of that up to the present time.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Where will you get the markets?

Mr. COLLINS: The markets will be here. Hon. members opposite say we have no policy. What policy have they got? One speaker gets up and advocates certain things, and then we wait patiently until another speaker gets up and contradicts what the other has said. That applies more especially to the Country party. Hon. members opposite say that we have no policy with regard

[Mr. Collins.]

to settling the Burnett lands. The people who want land are already in the Commonwealth. Do you think the people in the State of Victoria will be paying £3 to £4 an acre in rent to a private landlord, as some of them are doing, when they know that under our perpetual lease system they can take up our splendid Burnett lands at 1½ per cent. on the capital value, and they can take up our Dawson Valley land when we get the scheme in full swing? I am surprised at hon. members opposite belittling their own State. The leader of the Opposition pointed out that we have a lot of money invested in our railways on which we are not realising interest. Does he not know that quite recently we linked up Mackay with Rockhampton? Does he not know that the Bowen coalfield line has been completed, and will be earning from now on? Does he not know that within twelve months the line between Mackay and Proserpine will be completed, and will also be earning? Does he not know that the other lines being constructed in the North will be earning in a year or so? Does he say that we should stand still and not go on building any more railways to develop the State? I hope the people of Queensland will realise that there is a party opposite with no policy—no ideas—and no broad vision to enable them to develop this State. I must admit that the radical portion—God knows they are conservative enough—sitting on the back cross benches know where they are going, but the Country party do not seem to know where they are going. I am satisfied that they have no vision, and are not fit to govern Queensland, and I am satisfied the people of Queensland will keep them in opposition for the next seven years. (Government laughter.)

Mr. G. P. BARNES (Warwick): Taking the Dawson Valley scheme and the building of this railway together, we have presented to us a very attractive proposal, and, therefore, I am inclined to think that it is not a matter of lack of vision with hon. members opposite, but a matter of having too much vision; in fact, it is a matter of vision and nothing else. It is all very well to have vision and talk about something broad, but we find that, with all the great vision on the part of the hon. member for Bowen, he has his limitations in that he suggests only that the people of Australia will be able to find homes on 20 acres or 30 acres of land. Where is the broadness of vision when we have a land here with about 750,000 people which is capable of holding a great many millions? The vision of the hon. member for Bowen is limited to thinking that we shall be able to gather together from the various parts of Australia just about enough people to settle on this great Dawson Valley scheme. My ideas are very much bigger than that, and I believe we are falling very much below what we should aim at. It is not a matter of finding land for the few people who are in Australia, but we should bend out energies and our intelligence to bringing people from abroad to settle on our lands. But they are not likely to come, because the Government are not prepared to give a man a piece of land that he can call his own. It is an utter impossibility ever to people the lands of this country unless the Government alter their ideas of land tenure. For more than seven years the Government have been in office, and what settlement has taken place during that period? Practically none. They tell us

they have a wonderful vision—that cotton is going to be grown in large areas. They imagine that to be so, but what are they doing to bring it about? We have been told that railways were to be built here and there and elsewhere, and that the land was to be settled; but what have they done? The very thing that the soldier has been fighting for—that he might possess a bit of land of his own—is denied to him.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not right.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: We are not going to succeed in bringing people to the Dawson Valley until we alter our ideas of land settlement. We must do away with the idea of leasehold, whether the land is taken up in 20-acre blocks or in 1,280-acre blocks. The people want that land as freehold—of course we have no right to give any consideration whatever to alienating land in large areas. I want to draw attention to the burden we are going to put on the people. If the Government came down with their full proposal as to how they are going to settle this land, the House would support them; but, when they come down and ask the House to pass a railway in order to serve a certain irrigation scheme which will take ten or twelve years to build, it is an unfair proposition, especially when we find, according to the report of the Commissioner for Railways, that the revenue he expects is £7,000 a year from running two trains a week, and the expenditure is estimated at £6,400. What does that mean? If you get the money at 5½ per cent., there will be a further charge on our revenue of from £20,000 to £21,000. If the scheme were mapped out, as it should be mapped out from beginning to end, then it presents one of the most attractive schemes that has been presented to us; but this Government will never carry out a scheme of that kind. No settlement has taken place, nor is it likely to take place. We should consolidate settlement everywhere we can. I am glad to hear, as the hon. member for Bowen said, that a certain linking up is being done, and that certain railways that are not now earning will be earning, and relief will come in that direction. Let us link up in every way we can.

We have been talking about the Mount Edwards Railway—a dead end there—which can never realise what we expected until a connection is made between Maryvale and Mount Edwards. I was speaking only a few days ago to an agent in Toowoomba, and the cry is, "It is no use selling sheep because you cannot get trucks for them." If we link up our railways, we can use them to the very best advantage. If we could save the 60 miles between here and Warwick, the trucks of the Railway Department would be made available very much more readily. So in other directions by linking up we could make our railways pay. We want to give our fullest and best attention to the railways we have, and to consolidate settlement in every direction. This Dawson Valley scheme is a very fine thing, but we have been talking about these things for no end of time.

Mr. HARTLEY: You people have been talking about them; but we are doing them.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is on paper still; it is all a vision still. Give effect to it. We have a very fine scheme at Mount Edwards that can be put into effect straight away. We have the people settled on the land, and the Government could put it to the test in the twinkling of an eye. Why

not experiment there instead of experimenting in this direction? As an hon. member said this afternoon, we are desperately afraid that this is largely a political move to put people in certain positions in order that they may exercise the franchise. When the Government come down with the complete scheme, I will give it my hearty support; but in the meantime, seeing that we have to judge things not by what they say but what they do, we cannot support it. What they have done they have messed up to a very large extent.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS (*Pittsworth*): Hon. members on the other side wish to insinuate that members on this side of the Chamber are against irrigation. We are not in any shape or form opposed to irrigation; but hon. members will agree with me that the Secretary for Railways said very little, when moving the adoption of this railway, with regard to the success or otherwise of the irrigation scheme which it is proposed to carry out in conjunction with this railway. He left it to the hon. member for Toowoomba and the hon. member for Bowen to talk about irrigation. There was one phase of the question which the Minister touched on. He said that this was going to be a bigger scheme than the irrigation scheme in Egypt. Surely the Minister is not going to compare the irrigation scheme of Egypt with the irrigation scheme which he proposes to bring into being in the Dawson Valley? Does he expect that the same success will result from irrigation here that they have had in Egypt? Surely the Minister will never ask hon. members to believe for a moment that, because irrigation has been so successful in Egypt, the same success is going to follow from irrigation here?

I listened to the hon. member for Bowen in regard to the Inkerman irrigation scheme, which is a pet scheme of his, and I hope that he will not object to my trespassing upon his preserves to a certain extent. After all, the Inkerman scheme is only in the experimental stage. Its success is by no means assured. The hon. member for Bowen spoke about men down South who paid £3 or £4 per acre rent to a landlord. It is going to be as bad as that in Queensland, but the landlord is going to be the Government. The Government get every pound of flesh they can put their hands on; and it is going to be the same with this proposed irrigation scheme. The hon. member for Bowen talks about the rack rents paid in Victoria to the landlords as being a crime against civilisation.

Mr. COLLINS: So it is.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I only hope that the unfortunate landowners who are going to pay £5, £6, £7, or £8 an acre at Inkerman will be as well able to make their living as those men in Victoria are who are paying £5 or £6 an acre to a private landlord. When it comes down to hard facts, we are going to find they are not going to be able, under the Inkerman irrigation scheme, to pay the rates imposed by the Government. The hon. member for Fitzroy mentioned amongst other things that they were going to grow wheat under the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme, and mentioned what they could make from 3 acres of wheat. Can you imagine a man making a fortune on 3 acres of irrigated wheat?

Mr. HARTLEY: Can you imagine him being fool enough to grow only 3 acres of wheat?

Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.]

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: The hon. member for Fitzroy made a special point of the fact that they could grow wheat. Even if they are going to grow 20 acres of wheat under irrigation, the men are going to starve because of the rates they will have to pay under the Government's proposal.

Mr. HARTLEY: What rate will they be asked to pay?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: That is just what we have been trying to get out of the Minister the whole afternoon, but we have not got it. The Minister does not know, but, as he was a member of the Public Works Commission which travelled round the country, he should surely have some idea. The hon. gentleman quoted the success of irrigation in other countries, which I do not think is quite a fair comparison with regard to irrigation in Queensland.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why not?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Because there is not the water supply in Queensland, and never will be. The hon. member for Toowoomba on one occasion suggested that a small irrigation scheme should be started on Westbrook Creek. He even took the late Hon. T. J. Ryan up to have a look at it. The water which was there then has disappeared—there has been no water in that particular creek for three or four years.

Mr. W. COOPER: He meant to utilise the tears of the Opposition.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: After the next election he will be able to utilise the tears of the hon. member for Rosewood. (Laughter.) The point I want to bring up is this: We hear hon. members opposite talking about visions. One of the visions which they have had was the possibility of irrigating a certain area of land on Westbrook Creek. If they had asked the hon. member for Drayton about it, he would have told them that the irrigation of any portion of land along Westbrook Creek was impossible, because nine months out of twelve it is absolutely dry; yet that was one of the visions the hon. member for Toowoomba had. While some hon. members opposite have visions, there are many other hon. members opposite who have dreams, and bad ones at that. This proposal seems to me to be one of the awful dreams which are going to have a very disastrous effect upon the future generations of Queensland. Visions such as this are expensive luxuries. It is all right if you have a vision and you are putting your own money into it, and it does not come off. It is all right so long as you lose your own money, but, it is not right when you have a vision and are going to back it up with a big pile of Queensland's money and afterwards expect the unfortunate people settled on the land to bear the burden, and expect the average taxpayer to make good what they cannot bear, just in the same way as has happened in connection with the soldiers' settlements. If the Minister had considered the question of making our soldier settlements a success, I would have said, "Hear hear"; but how many of our soldier settlements are a success to-day?

Mr. HARTLEY: Nearly all of them. (Opposition dissent.)

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: We have been told that the Dawson Valley scheme is going

[Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.

to be a success so far as land settlement is concerned. Judging the Government on their past performances in regard to land settlement, they cannot effectively promote any land settlement scheme. Take the soldier settlement schemes on the Downs—the Cecil Plains Soldiers' Settlement, the Coominya Soldiers' Settlement, the Beerburrum Soldiers' Settlement, and others—all glorious successes according to the statistics given by Ministers. Some of the rank and file of the party opposite claim that those settlements are a success. Not one of them is a success; and, when the facts are realised, the people of Queensland are going to ask what the Government have done to make land settlement a success. When the Minister holds out to us that it is a wise thing to spend a huge sum of money on the particular scheme he is advocating to-night, it is time for hon. members to pause. As the hon. member for Warwick said, there is the possibility of a very successful irrigation scheme being carried out in the Mount Edwards area, and it would not cost anything like what it is proposed to spend on the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme. The hon. member for Bowen told the Committee that the Public Works Commission did not recommend the railway because they thought it would not pay. They knew it would be a non-paying proposition, but they said it was necessary to enable them to have this irrigation scheme. I am going to ask the hon. member for Bowen if the Public Works Commission ascertained whether the irrigation scheme was going to be a success. He himself has acknowledged that we are going to have one white elephant in the shape of the railway line, which he said will not pay.

Mr. HARTLEY: He did not say that. He said it would not pay by itself, without irrigation.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: It is terrible to see two good old pals like the hon. member for Bowen and the hon. member for Fitzroy at loggerheads on this particular question. The hon. member for Bowen says that he watches us over here, and notices that one hon. member gets up and says one thing and another hon. member says another thing. Let me say that the most interesting character I see in the House is the hon. member for Bowen, and I sit here on purpose to watch him. (Laughter.) I do not like to feel that the hon. member for Bowen and the hon. member for Fitzroy are not in agreement in this respect. The hon. member for Bowen told us that he knew this railway could not possibly pay. The hon. member for Fitzroy now contradicts him, and says that the hon. member for Bowen did not say that it would not pay. Is it reasonable, when we have an opportunity to make an experiment in regard to the possibilities of irrigation at Mount Edwards, that the Minister should spend this huge amount of money on a railway line which the hon. member for Bowen says is not going to be a paying proposition? Why is it that they are proposing to spend [8.30 p.m.] money on this particular line?

Probably they wish to get a certain amount of kudos for having carried it out, and for having performed another splendid work. The Minister and other hon. members opposite travelled through the country there, and they had a vision. The hon. member for Toowoomba had a vision in regard to the railway works at Willowburn. It is more than a vision. If anyone goes

up there now, he will see weeds growing 2 feet high on land on which the Government have spent £30,000. Fancy spending £30,000 in Townsville on land just for the purpose of growing weeds! The Secretary for Railways will admit that such a thing as that is not desirable for Queensland. The Government are engaged on schemes now which have cost in the vicinity of from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000.

Mr. HARTLEY: You ought to be careful or you will have a nightmare.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I sympathise with the hon. member for Fitzroy because he has fallen out with the hon. member for Bowen, and will not be able to sit alongside that hon. member and have his vision. When it comes to a question of expending some millions of pounds on the Dawson irrigation scheme, the hon. member will have his vision again. The leader of the Opposition pointed out that there are thousands of acres—in fact, millions of acres—in close proximity to railway lines, waiting for closer settlement. The Government in years gone by have always talked about closer settlement, and they instituted a land tax for the purpose of causing the large estates to be cut up. Look at the large areas of land we have right alongside the railway lines. Unfortunately, a lot of it is becoming infested with prickly-pear. The Minister talk about the Dawson Valley land being worth from £30 to £50 per acre. It is a wonder that his vision did not make him imagine the price to be £200 per acre. (Laughter.) There are thousands of acres of land in Queensland to-day which are becoming pear-infested, and becoming practically a useless asset to the State, so I urge the Minister to act on the advice of the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. HARTLEY: What is a useless asset?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I strongly urge the hon. member for Fitzroy to have a look at himself in a mirror and tell me afterwards. (Laughter.) The Secretary for Railways knows perfectly well that what I have stated is an absolute fact—that we have any amount of land 15 miles on each side of the existing railways waiting for closer settlement. I could take the Minister out to the Mitchell district and show him thousands of acres of excellent land, ready for the plough, which are awaiting settlement. It is land that will grow cotton, wheat, or maize, and on which dairying can be carried out successfully. Yet nothing is done to make that land available for settlement.

The Government prefer to spend an enormous sum of money on the extension of this railway line. Country members on both sides of the House know that, when they require certain work to be done to the railways in their electorates, they are always told that the country lines are not paying. I do not know if a preference is shown to country members on the Government side, although I do not think that the present Secretary for Railways would show a preference to any hon. member in regard to the needs of his electorate. I know that, when we ask for certain improvements, we are told that our lines show a loss of £9,000 or £10,000, and we cannot get the remodeling of the railway station or the new loading bank that we ask for. Yet we propose to go on with a scheme of this kind. The Government would be well advised if they withdrew this railway proposal for the time being, and let us see how the Inkerman scheme gets on.

The Inkerman scheme is a big scheme, and so is the Mount Edwards scheme. Let us see how we get on with the Mount Edwards scheme before we go on with any more irrigation schemes. When we think of our non-paying railway lines in the country, it should cause the Minister to hesitate. I recommend the Minister to withdraw this proposal, and concentrate on the Inkerman and Mount Edwards irrigation schemes. If he can prove that they can be carried on on a paying basis, then we can go ahead with further schemes. We know that an enormous sum of money was lost in irrigation down South. The Minister knows that quite well. We know that a number of the men who went there first walked out with only their clothes on their backs after having put in a certain period on the irrigation farms down there. The whole scheme had to be remodelled, and then it became successful to a certain extent. The whole question of irrigation in Queensland is one that should exercise the mind of every man in the State. Every hon. member in this House should give full consideration to the necessity for inaugurating a successful irrigation policy in Queensland. But it is unwise for any Government to spend a large sum of money on problematical ideals, because they are bound to prove to be failures. The hon. member for Bowen admitted that this would be a non-paying railway line.

Mr. COLLINS: Quote me correctly. I said it would be non-paying without irrigation.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: The hon. member said that the line would be non-paying—of course that does not matter to the hon. member for Bowen. Afterwards he said that the only thing that would convert it into a paying line would be the irrigation scheme. Suppose the irrigation scheme turns out to be a failure—and, after all, there is no great amount of certainty that it is going to be a success—what then? It may possibly be a success, and it may enable the settlers who go there to eke out an existence; but I believe that hon. members opposite in their present frame of mind, in accordance with their ideals, want to see the man on the land getting more than a mere existence. They want to see men on the land able to make a good living and get a fair price for their produce all the year round; yet not one man over there has made any suggestion or given any consideration to the distribution of the stuff it is proposed to grow, supposing that in the next ten years we increase our production by 100 per cent. If in five years we could grow twice the amount of wheat, twice the amount of foodstuffs that we are growing now, how are we going to dispose of it? Some men have nearly "gone broke" on some of these fruit farms, yet no attempt has been made to show us that the Government are seized with the absolute importance and the urgency of finding markets outside Australia for our product. It is essential, even now, if we are going to increase our production by 100 per cent. within ten years, as I hope we are, that we should tackle the question of distribution; and the sooner we do it the better for all concerned. We see the result of delaying action in regard to the spread of prickly-pear. From year to year we hear people say that the question must be tackled.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will connect his remarks with the question before the Committee.

Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.]

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I am just going to connect them in this way: We have heard for the last few years, from hon. members on the other side, of the absolute necessity of wiping out the middleman.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is nothing in the resolution about middlemen.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I accept your ruling, of course, Mr. Kirwan, but I want to say that the question of distribution is a very important matter in dealing with this irrigation scheme. It is almost as important as the building of the railway, and consequently I feel that I am quite within the scope of the resolution when I say that the Government should consider the question of distribution; and, in doing that, I refer to their well-known antipathy towards the middleman, because I do not want to feel that the Secretary for Railways would reply without giving us an assurance that it is the intention of the Government to assist the sale, through co-operative agencies, of all the produce from the irrigation area which this scheme is going to bring into existence.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I am not going to allow the remarks of the hon. member for Pittsworth to go out to the public at large without reply. I am not going to allow him to put words into my mouth which I did not use. I said that the railway proposal would not be a paying proposition unless it was linked up with the irrigation works, as mentioned in the report of the Public Works Commission. The hon. member wanted to know what crops they were going to grow on the Dawson irrigation area. Mr. Shaw, of the Water Supply Department, who has had experience of irrigation works in other States and is an authority on irrigation, gave this evidence before the Commission—

“What crops do you think would be grown on the irrigated areas in the Dawson Valley?—I would favour tomatoes, onions, potatoes, vegetables, lucerne, and citrus and grape fruits.”

It is just as well to mention that, so that hon. members can recognise that it is not a wheat area under the irrigation proposal. I know wheat is grown by irrigation, and there is land outside the proposed irrigation area which may be suitable for wheat. However, I rose a second time to put the hon. member for Pittsworth right. The railway cannot be discussed in a proper manner unless we link it up with the irrigation proposals, and all through the Commission's proceedings the principal portion of the evidence dealt with irrigation.

The hon. member for Drayton is very anxious to know what is going to be the cost of the irrigation on the Inkerman irrigation area, so I propose to read a letter addressed to me from the Treasury on 14th September, 1922—

“Sir,—With reference to the letters dated 23rd ultimo and 4th instant, addressed to you by Mr. L. M. Osborne, secretary of the Inkerman Farmers and Graziers' Association, Limited, and Mr. F. J. Woods, Home Hill, respectively, relative to the rating of farms in the Inkerman irrigation area during the temporary working of the irrigation scheme, I am directed to inform you that the Treasurer has approved that the basis of rating be 8s. 4d. per acre per month on the area of land desired by the farmer to be watered. It should be understood

[Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.

that this payment is to operate during the period from the first watering until the scheme is handed over to the Board and is irrespective of the number of waterings.

“The abovementioned is merely a nominal rate, and must not be taken as in any way restricting the Board in arranging its policy of charges, after it has taken over control of the works.

“Mr. Osborne is evidently under a misapprehension as regards the Inkerman Water Supply Board. The Board has not been dispensed with, but under the constitution it does not assume control of the works until the latter are completed and handed over.

“Yours faithfully,

“G. L. BEAL,

“Under Secretary.”

The hon. member for Drayton is continually quoting £7 and £8 per acre.

Mr. G. P. BARNES interjected.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member, like the hon. member for Drayton, knows nothing about the value of sugar-cane lands. I quoted here this evening an unimproved value of £30 per acre.

Mr. DEACON: Is it worth £100?

Mr. COLLINS: No. The hon. member may be a very good wheat farmer, but he knows nothing about land under irrigation for sugar-cane. However, that is getting away from the question before the Committee. It does not follow that under this Dawson Valley scheme it is going to cost £5 an acre, but even to-day, under private enterprise, it is costing, so I am informed, up to £5 an acre to irrigate some of the lands on the Burdekin. Very few men in this Chamber know anything about irrigation, because three-fourths of the irrigation in Queensland is carried on between Bowen and Townsville, and we who represent that part of Queensland claim that we know a little about it and the results obtained from it. That is the reason why we are—at least I am—enthusiastic supporters of irrigation. I have seen the crops grown by it in the Bowen district, and I know from what I have quoted from Mr. Shaw's evidence that the irrigation scheme on the Dawson Valley is going to be a success in the long run. It may not be a success immediately, but in time it will be—most things require time—and irrigation is going to help build up this State of Queensland.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): Whether we agree or disagree with these irrigation works, the one thing certain is that they are not going to lighten the burden of the taxpayer, but are going to add to his burdens for at least another twenty years. The hon. member for Bowen admits that the interest on the money for irrigation works at Inkerman alone is £5 an acre at least. The Auditor-General puts it at £7 an acre, so there is a difference of £2 an acre. If we put it at £5 an acre, the land will require to be worth £100 an acre to pay it. That cost does not provide for channels and everything else on the land. I have seen the irrigation areas in Victoria. The water is delivered to the highest portion of the land, and it takes £10 a chain to construct the concrete channels to carry the water. A very big expense is involved in getting water on the land. In the sugar-growing

areas on our northern coast you can see irrigation pipes thrown aside. You might say that hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent in irrigation works, and those works discarded. Only in one season out of three or four do we need irrigation works, so you have to carry that amount of money over a period of three years. If you have a drought every three years, and you are paying £5 an acre a year, there is an outlay of £15 per acre for the utilisation of irrigation for, perhaps, a couple of months. The farmers in the South will have to pay heavy taxes to enable the Dawson Valley to have irrigation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Kcopp*): I desire to make a few observations in reply to one or two of the criticisms which have been levelled against this motion. I would like to start by referring to the references of the hon. member for Warwick and the hon. member for Pittsworth to management and mismanagement. They are a pretty party on the other side to talk about management and mismanagement after their record in Queensland for fifty years. Their mismanagement was of the worst character, and they ought for ever to close their mouths on that subject.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You have wasted as much in seven years as you wasted in fifty years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are not going to solve problems by this ridiculous excitement—by the hon. member rising in his place and defying the Standing Orders. We never hear hon. members opposite lecturing on the solar eclipse, on the Einstein theory of relativity, on the quadrature of the circle, or such subjects. Yet they talk about management and mismanagement! The seven years' record of this Administration is infinitely more favourable than the record of hon. members opposite during the fifty years that they had control of the Treasury benches.

Mr. SIZER: That is your opinion.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is the opinion of the electors. Time and again we have been returned. Time and again we have been told, "Wait for the next election." When it comes, what is the result? We are again returned. That will go on, and on, and on, and hon. members opposite will be crying in the political wilderness for another forty years. I submitted this motion to-day in a non-party spirit—in a spirit of moderation, of confidence, of optimism.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And ignorance.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I was astonished at the result. This great policy, which was laid down on behalf of the Government—this great water conservation and irrigation scheme—has been lauded, not only by the Government, but by the special correspondent of the "Daily Mail," by the hon. member for Murilla, and by the business men of Rockhampton and other places in Queensland. Yet we have this hostile obstruction and this criticism from hon. members opposite.

Mr. VOWLES: I suppose we should not speak at all?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite have a right to express their opinion, and I have the right

to express my opinion of that opinion. These hon. members representing country constituencies—this allegedly Country party—condemn a scheme like this, which is going to make available thousands of acres of magnificent land, which is going to settle thousands of settlers, which is going to increase enormously our wealth-production, and which will have a vital influence on the problems of the State. When hon. members oppose a motion of this character, I am really puzzled and mystified to ascertain why they call themselves a Country party.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Why don't you tell the people that you are going to put further burdens upon them?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: One of the arguments urged by the hon. member for Aubigny was, "Wait until we get the settlers." The leader of the Opposition said, "Wait and see; the time is not ripe; go slow."

Mr. VOWLES: Go slow with your wasting of money, I said.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That argument is urged against every proposition we submit—"Go slow; wait and see; the time is not ripe." That was what the Right Hon. Mr. Asquith said on the outbreak of the war—"Wait and see." Why was he supplanted by the Lloyd George Administration? Because of his "wait and see" policy. A "wait and see" policy is not going to develop this great State; a "go-slow policy" in the matter of land settlement is not going to place Queensland in its proper position in the sphere of the Australian nation.

Mr. VOWLES: It is only another £2,000,000!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will be spent over a good many years; and, as I have already pointed out, will be returned five-fold to the Government in the added value of these lands. We are not going to spend £2,000,000 in one year; we are going to spend money on a scheme which is progressive. We are not going to wait until the whole scheme is completed before we make land available. When the scheme is completed to Baralaba Creek we shall settle hundreds of settlers. While we are continuing that great scheme we shall be getting revenue and providing for the complete scheme which I mentioned this afternoon. The hon. member for Aubigny asked, "Where are the settlers coming from?" Moving round Queensland as Secretary for Railways I have come across young men and women, the sons and daughters of settlers, who ask where they will get the opportunity of taking up land on reasonable terms—strong, energetic young men and women, possessing all the qualifications necessary to make them good settlers and good citizens. When we endeavour to make available to those young Queenslanders the lands necessary to enable them to make a success of their lives and to help the State, we have this obstructive criticism continued from about half-past 3 this afternoon. I do not mind it in a sense. Hon. members opposite have a perfect right to exercise their rights in this Chamber; but I cannot understand the attitude of the Opposition on these big questions of public policy. It was the same with our cotton-growing scheme, with our Burnett and North Coast

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

line completion scheme—there was no sympathy, no assistance given to us; but all the suggestions of party political advantage were urged against myself and against my colleagues.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Because you bungled everything you undertook.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Drayton is nothing but a political bungler. He ought to keep quiet on a question like this. He butts in on every question submitted to this Chamber. He ought to reserve his remarks for butter and cheese—those things to which he has devoted his life. We are acting upon the reports of experts, and it is no good for the hon. member to call those experts bunglers, because they are competent men, who have devoted their lives to water conservation and irrigation and to allied problems. They are well able to advise the Government on a matter such as this.

The criticism has been of a remarkably contradictory nature. The hon. member for Normanby, in whose electorate this scheme will be developed, supported it. One or two others acted similarly, but the majority of hon. members opposite have displayed a spirit of hostility which, I hope, will not be carried to the point of a vote. The hon. member for Warwick spoke about the Mount Edwards scheme and the Via Recta. He would spend £1,000,000 on building the Via Recta, but, because this scheme is going to be inaugurated in Central Queensland he is going to oppose it, disparage it, and attack it.

[9 p.m.] Where is the policy of decentralisation that hon. members opposite talk about? How can you carry it out by having everything centralised in Southern Queensland. Consideration must be applied to Central Queensland and to Northern Queensland. If it is right to advocate the expenditure of £1,000,000 on the Via Recta, surely the Central district has a right to a reasonable amount of expenditure on water conservation and irrigation? The arguments by hon. members opposite are illogical and contradictory to a degree. It is said that we should "wait and see." "Wait and see" how things develop during the next two or three years! The scheme will take years to develop. We cannot materialise the scheme by magic; it must be laid down and developed degree by degree. When this scheme is developed it will eclipse all previous efforts made to develop the Dawson Valley country.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: When the hon. gentleman is eclipsed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Warwick will be eclipsed long before I am eclipsed. I have not been in this Chamber so long as he has, but I have been here a good while. The hon. gentleman is supposed to be a Christian gentleman, but he makes some very unchristian remarks. I do not want to see any one eclipsed in the personal sense, because I think it is very painful. I may wish to see members eclipsed in a political sense, but not in a personal sense. Various arguments have been used that should not have been used in the debate against the adoption of this scheme. It has been argued that we should provide for a big immigration policy before

starting a water conservation and irrigation scheme. Is not this motion the commencement of that necessary immigration scheme? We must provide a scheme, and, if we provide a natural asset and natural advantages, people will flow here according to the natural law that they go where conditions are best. They will flow to Queensland from other States, where land is more highly priced than here, and where conditions are not so favourable, and they will flow from the other side of the world when the land is available and we can accommodate settlers. A remarkable argument has been used to the effect that the Government are making too much land available.

Mr. CORSER: There was no suggestion of that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Aubigny said that we could not accommodate the settlers.

Mr. MOORE: No; I said we should complete one scheme first.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We will carry on concurrently the building of the railway and also the construction of the irrigation scheme. For how many years has this question been debated in the Queensland Parliament and nothing has been done? We have taken action. Hon. members opposite say there is too much radium in our policy. An electric current is running right through our public works policy, and then hon. members opposite say "Wait and see."

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You are not getting any return for your money.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. gentleman cannot buttress and support his statement.

Mr. MOORE: What did the Commissioner for Railways say in his last report?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I can say what the Commissioner said in his speech to the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. MOORE: What did he say in his last report?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He said amongst other things that for the year 1914-15 we had three employees per mile of railway, and in 1921-22 we had only 2.71. That is an indication of management. Yet it has been urged against this proposal by the leader of the National party that there is a railway deficiency.

Mr. MOORE: What did the Commissioner say about settlement and railway construction?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite say that their policy is that railways should precede settlement, and when we attempt to carry out such a policy we have hostile objection urged against this proposal.

Mr. MOORE: What did the Commissioner say with regard to land settlement?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner pointed out that the reason for the existence of the position the hon. member for Windsor referred to is because we have not increased freights and fares in proportion to our increase in working expenses. He shows that the gross revenue per employee is greater now than

under the administration of the Government representing hon. members opposite, and that the number of employees per mile of railway is less now than under that Administration. That is the test. It would be easy to make a profit out of the railways by increasing fares and freights.

Mr. EDWARDS: No.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have not done that. It has been argued that a deficiency is an indication of mismanagement. The number of men per mile of railway and the gross revenue per employee is a good test as to whether the railways are being satisfactorily and efficiently managed. I think that the argument used by hon. members opposite—that we should make provision to ascertain where the settlers are, and that we should make provision to develop a big immigration policy before starting this scheme—is not sound or logical. This motion is the very preparation for the settlement of the land by the sons and daughters of farmers in Queensland, and, when the land is made available by this great water conservation and irrigation proposal, immigrants will come here. Our late Governor, the late Sir William MacGregor, was a constant advocate of a water conservation and irrigation scheme in Queensland. It has been talked of by hon. members opposite; but, when action is attempted, we find the same old obstruction, the same resistance when a proposal is introduced into this Assembly.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: We say that you are everlastingly changing your love.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is wrong. Our love is constant and invariable in a political sense. We are going straight on with the policy we promised when we were returned to power. We are going on with the settlement of our sugar lands and our lands for the cultivation of cotton, and our general policy which means so much for the allied problems of land settlement, irrigation, and production. All these problems are interlaced. They are all indirectly involved in this motion. It has been suggested in a very mean and low-spirited sense that this line is proposed for party political purposes. It was said by Emerson—our remarks of others are a reflection of our own characters. That could be applied appropriately to hon. members opposite.

Mr. PETERSON: The Home Secretary said in Rockhampton that the money would be used to "sink" me.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This line has been under consideration for years, and the hon. member for Normanby knows that.

Mr. BRAND: It has only been brought forward recently.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows that is quite incorrect. If he reads the reports he will see where survey work and necessary preliminary work has been done time and again, and that work has been advanced sufficiently to enable definite action to be now taken. The Rockhampton commercial and business men during the last carnival brought out a special pamphlet booming this great scheme and showing what it would mean to Central Queensland, to the whole of Queensland, and to the nation. But hon. members on the other side condemn any action of the Government for a purely party political advantage.

Mr. PETERSON: I hope you will get on with it as soon as possible.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no doubt about that. This is a link in the immigration scheme. The remarks of hon. members opposite along the lines I have mentioned seem to be a cloak for their own action in showing party political opposition to this motion. They are opposing this motion in a party spirit, and, in order to camouflage their action, they are accusing the Government of party action in introducing the motion.

Mr. BRAND: The Home Secretary suggested it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know so much about that.

Mr. EDWARDS: You cannot get away from the argument that it is a good thing to finish the present railways first.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are finishing railways. That is a variation of the general argument of hon. members opposite. The hon. member for Nanango is not objecting straight out to the scheme, but he says the money ought to be spent somewhere else.

Mr. EDWARDS: I say it ought to be spent in completing the present railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Bowen pointed out what we are doing in that respect. We have completed the line from Rockhampton to Mackay; we have completed the line from Bowen to the Bowen coalfield; we shall in a fortnight complete the line from Mount Edwards to Kalbar, and by the end of the year we shall have the Murgon-Proston line completed. We are fast pushing on with other lines to the point of completion. The present dead capital invested in our railways is no greater under this Government than it was under previous Governments. What was the great cause of the dead capital in Queensland for some years? Why did we have to close down on the Murgon-Proston line, on the North Coast line, and on other schemes? Because of that fiendish, devilish boycott to prevent us getting money overseas. Hon. members opposite may attempt to deny their responsibility for that boycott, but they helped it, and the State suffered in consequence of it, and the Railway Department in particular. We had to close down on many schemes which we would have completed years ago but for that boycott. Generally speaking, the high percentage of dead capital in connection with our railways was caused by the closing-down policy which the money boycott led to; but since we have been able to get money in the American market we have recommenced work in many places, we have completed work in many places, and we are rapidly catching up with arrears of work.

Mr. SIZER: Does that account for hanging up the work at the Ipswich Railway Station?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have pointed out time and again the reason for the hold-up of the various jobs.

Mr. SIZER: Silence on that point.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not silence. We could go on indefinitely discussing these matters.

Mr. SIZER: You would not like to have to reply.

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I would advise hon. members that there is a limit to time, and I want to get through my remarks as quickly as possible. It is puzzling for hon. members on this side of the Chamber to know really what to do to please hon. members opposite. If we have no active policy hon. members opposite howl; yet, if we commence a vigorous policy, hon. members opposite are miserable in their criticism, and they attack the Government. It does not matter what we do, they will hate us politically to the end of the chapter, but we are going on with our policy. We are not going to mould our policy to suit hon. members opposite, because they would attack us for adopting any policy we were prepared to follow, even though it were suggested by the leader of the Opposition. It has been said that we should look after present settlers before proceeding to spend money on new schemes. We are doing both. We are looking after present settlers on the land and we are developing new schemes. Reference has been made to advances to settlers. The present Government, since they have been in power, have advanced to settlers in Queensland £1,750,000. That is a big sum compared to the sum that was advanced during a corresponding period by hon. members opposite. If we look up the Lands Estimates and the Agriculture Estimates, we find abundant proof that the Government are not neglecting present settlers in order to carry out a policy such as we are developing at the present time. We are running them side by side.

Mr. EDWARDS: You sent out the Public Works Commission, and they have approved of quite a number of lines, and now you suggest you are going to build this line first.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Some schemes take a long time to develop, and the question of the relative degree of importance has to be considered. When the hon. member called on me in regard to the Murgon-Proston line, did he not get a favourable reply?

Mr. EDWARDS: Yes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member got the work commenced, and he was very pleased with it at the time. Hon. members are always pleased if we carry out their own personal views.

Mr. BRAND: Don't you think it was your duty to complete that line?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a different viewpoint altogether. Hon. members opposite are quite prepared to express their personal appreciation; but, when it comes to making a political point in this Chamber, they are not prepared to give the credit they are prepared to give personally and individually.

Reference was made by the hon. member for Aubigny to the suitability of the soil. I do not want to refer in detail to the report of the Public Works Commission, but the hon. member for Aubigny will find on page 4 of the report the remarks of Mr. Shaw, assistant hydraulic engineer, and he will find there that Mr. Shaw points out that the soil is of excellent quality, very satisfactory, and much superior to similar soil in other parts of Australia.

Mr. MOORE: I was not talking about quality, I was talking about the quality of the soil for irrigation. Is it porous?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will quote some of the remarks of Mr. Shaw

on this question. I have frequently pointed out that hon. members seem to expect me to give all the evidence that has been given in the reports. I assume, when all these reports are available, that they are read by hon. members and that it is superfluous for a Minister to give the details contained in these reports. Every point that has been raised is replied to in the reports of the Commissioner for Railways, the Public Works Commission, or in that report which was signed by the experts from the Lands Department, the Hydraulic Engineer's Department, and the Railway Department. Inter alia, Mr. Shaw says—

“As the contour survey of the irrigable area commanded by gravitation has progressed, soil samples have been collected and submitted for analysis. Though the chemical constituents differ, some samples being more clayey than others, and the colours are not alike, the results evidence great similarity, and all have been most satisfactory. Where the percentage of clay is somewhat higher, a large proportion of coarse and medium sand insures an open texture, which is confirmed by good capillarity.”

“It is considered by the Agricultural Chemist to be most suitable for irrigation purposes, with abundance of mineral plant foods in readily available form.”

I think that that meets the point mentioned by the hon. member for Aubigny. The soil is good for irrigation purposes. I will quote the rest of the paragraph—

“In comparison with analyses of other Queensland soils, and also of samples from irrigation settlements on the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers, the Dawson River land is easily first—first for silt content, humus, nitrogen, and phosphoric acid, and equal to the best of the others in lime and potash. The clay content is higher than in the Southern soils, but the presence of good qualities of coarse and medium sand ensures an even texture, and a substratum of gravel and sand provides underground drainage.”

Mr. MOORE: That is just where the trouble is. Gravel and sand are two of the worst things you could have in an irrigation area.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do you speak from experience?

Mr. MOORE: Yes, from practical experience.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is a peculiar position if hon. members opposite, who are laymen, are going to put their opinions against that of an expert.

Mr. MOORE: We have practical experience in irrigation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The experts have scientific training, and they absolutely disprove what the hon. member says. Mr. Shaw says further—

“Chlorine is very low both in the soil and the water of the Dawson River, and there appears to be little danger from this source, which has proved a serious drawback to many irrigation settlements.”

The evidence of Mr. Shaw indicates that the soil and conditions generally are more satisfactory in Queensland than in other States where irrigation is carried out satisfactorily.

[Hon. J. Larcombe.]

They are building in the South for the future, and we are building in Queensland for the future. We are responsible to posterity. If we just legislate for the present generation, we should richly deserve criticism later. We are custodians for the future, and have to build in such a way that land settlement and other schemes will be developed so that the State can receive the impetus in relation to population and progress that its great wealth demands. There are several other points that have been mentioned in the debate, but I close with the few remarks that I have made. I am really unable to understand the hostility that is being shown to this policy of decentralisation—to this policy of wealth production, to this irrigation, immigration, and settlement policy, to the different phases of policy which are embraced in this motion.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): Mr. Kirwan—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member should have risen before the Minister replied.

Mr. VOWLES: Suppose he got up before and you did not catch his eye?

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to point out to the leader of the Opposition that I looked round before I called upon the Minister, and I did not notice anyone rise.

Mr. NOTT: I waited to see if anybody got up.

The CHAIRMAN: That is the recognised rule.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I do not rise to say that your ruling is absolutely wrong, Mr. Kirwan, but frequently during the Committee stage this practice has been allowed. Just a few evenings ago I spoke after the Minister had replied. I would ask you to look into the matter and see whether the hon. member who rose is to be deprived of the privilege of speaking on such an important subject. I submit that the hon. member for Stanley was distinctly within his rights in rising to speak. He may, perhaps, have been wanting in thoughtfulness in not getting up before the Minister, but that fact of his not getting up is not sufficient reason why he should be debarred from speaking, seeing that he rose before you put the question. I would ask your ruling on the matter.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): It has been the custom for the Minister to make several speeches during the course of a debate in Committee. If a Minister desires to deprive members of their right to speak, all he has to do is to get up at any time, and that terminates the debate. The Standing Orders were never intended to operate in that direction. I have heard the Secretary for Public Works make three distinct speeches in Committee. Even to-day he made two distinct speeches during a debate in Committee. If a Minister catches the Chairman's eye, is that to debar every other member of his rights? Our Standing Orders state that every member is entitled to speak for twenty-five minutes.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members have not quoted any authority on the point of order. The usual practice, when an objection is taken to a ruling by the Speaker or the Chairman of Committees, is to adduce some authority in support of the objection. On this particular matter, whilst I admit that there is no definite Standing Order, it is

still the recognised rule of the House. If hon. members will jog their memories, they will find that Mr. Speaker Armstrong and the present Speaker have given rulings to this effect.

Mr. VOWLES: Yes, in the House, but not in Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members will recognise that this is practically like a discussion on a Bill. I do not wish to deprive the hon. member for Stanley from speaking, but I would ask hon. members, in fairness to the Minister, to finish the discussion before the Minister replies, otherwise the discussion becomes interminable. I would like to point out that I waited before I called on the Minister—and I think the Minister waited—to see if any hon. member rose to speak. It is hon. members' own fault if they do not claim their right to speak.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Kippel*): I have no desire to deprive the hon. member for Stanley, who is one of the most courteous members, from speaking; but I would like to say that I purposely waited for all hon. members to speak; and you, Mr. Chairman, as you state, would not have called upon me if any other hon. member had been on his feet. We cannot have one rule for hon. members on this side and a different rule for hon. members opposite. I recollect that you called upon the Secretary for Agriculture to resume his seat some weeks back, and allowed other hon. members to speak before the Minister was allowed to reply; no one was allowed to follow him. I am out to assist the Opposition in the protection of their rights, but we ought to stick to one rule all round.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nott.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): On seeing the Minister rise, I did not rise because I considered that he would receive the preference. I would like to say a few words on this important matter of development and decentralisation. I consider that the building of railways and irrigation are two methods of land settlement which are greatly to be commended, as they will make for the development of the State and assist in bringing about decentralisation. The question is whether we can afford to go in for this scheme in the present condition of the railway service and the financial condition of the State. The position now existing should make us very careful in regard to such a large expenditure of loan money. The Secretary for Railways said something about the Einstein theory and the eclipse of the sun, but I think the general public and most hon. members know that the Government, so far as financial muddle, inefficiency, and prodigious expenditure and extravagance are concerned, have eclipsed all other Governments up to the present time. The Secretary for Railways made some reference to the paucity of development owing to fifty years of muddling by previous Governments.

If members of the Committee cast [9.30 p.m.] their minds back seven or eight years, they will see how Queensland was developed, especially in such districts as Cairns, Maryborough, Toowoomba, Townsville, Charters Towers, and other centres. They will understand that in fifty-five years somewhere in the vicinity of £55,000,000 was spent in Queensland. During

Mr. Nott.]

the last seven or eight years £35,000,000 has been spent in Queensland. I would like to know if we have received the same value for the money spent in the last seven or eight years that we received in the previous fifty years.

Mr. COLLINS: Yes.

Mr. NOTT: We have not received anything like value for money expended in the last seven years as compared with the previous period of fifty years. My chief objection to spending a large amount of money on new railways and irrigation schemes is because we have so much unfinished work. Look at the Treasury Buildings in Brisbane. They are not completed yet. The new railway station at Ipswich will be an old railway station long before it is completed. The work at Mayne Junction and Willowburn is also incomplete, and there are many other Government works all in an incomplete state. Our system of railways in Queensland should be completed and linked up into a perfect system before new lines are started. All the lines which are at dead ends should be linked up. We shall then have enough land for settlement to absorb any amount of immigration for the next four or five years, provided the Government are big enough to go ahead with a scheme of settling immigrants on the land. With regard to building new railway lines, I would like to quote from the report of the Commissioner for Railways. He says, on page 15—

“From a national standpoint, and looking to the future, the opening up of the country for closer settlement by new railways is desirable, but from the standpoint of present railway management there can be no doubt that the construction of new lines has outpaced the growth of the traffic.”

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He recommended this line.

Mr. NOTT: That may be; but I can remind the Secretary for Railways that various Committees have recommended a great number of railway lines which were considered to be necessary before this railway was brought in. They are railways which could be constructed at considerably less expense and which would give a quicker money return, which in a State like ours would mean a great deal. We heard the Secretary for Railways talk about the evidence of Mr. Shaw, the expert, and his report on the quality of the soil. I am sure the Minister, as well as members of this Committee, has seen a great number of errors in various expert reports. I cannot do better than quote the soldier settlements. The experts reported that the land was favourable, but we have a number of soldiers settled on areas on which they find it almost impossible to raise one commercial crop. We know the diversity of soil that exists throughout Queensland. In some lands in the Roma district they have wheat and sheep land on which they could produce crops for 10,000 years without manuring, whereas the soldiers are settled on land which will not grow one commercial crop. In regard to irrigation, it is not only the richness of the soil that has to be looked to, but it is more important that the mechanical condition of the soil should be looked to to see if it is suitable for periodical flooding and that sort of thing. There must be a good sub-soil, and the subsoil must be so deep that the soil will not sour. Hon.

[Mr. Nott.

members have referred to the costliness of the Yanco irrigation area in New South Wales. There is no doubt that it has been particularly costly, although the work done there has proved a great lesson for New South Wales and the rest of Australia. The soil there will stand continual flooding without any danger of souring. For that reason it makes that particular locality very safe from an irrigation point of view. So far as irrigation and production of crops there are concerned, the possibilities are very great. At the same time, I think we can get greater value in Queensland from fodder conservation rather than from irrigation. The irrigation schemes in Queensland have been tremendously expensive, and until we can afford it we should not embark on any new scheme. In the present state of the finances we can get a great deal more value for our money by linking up and completing our railway system, and also by a comprehensive system of fodder conservation. In the good seasons we produce more fodder than can be consumed. I agree with the Secretary for Railways that it is a pity that something was not done in regard to irrigation schemes and the locking of our rivers in years past, because it would have given us a good deal of information at the present time. We should not embark on expensive schemes such as are at the present time contemplated. It seems to me that, when the schemes are in working order, it is going to be a very great difficulty to obtain people to settle on the land. It is all very well to say that people will flock to Queensland from here, there, and everywhere; and it is all very well to say that a large number are flocking from the other States at the present time. I am satisfied that before you can induce a number of settlers to come to Queensland you will have to satisfy them regarding the conditions so far as making a living are concerned, and it will be no use settling them on land like we have settled the soldiers during the last six or seven years. If the present railway systems are connected up and made a perfect scheme, I am convinced that there is accessible land for a good many thousands of men adjacent to our present lines without going very far afield.

With regard to the dam site, if the Government intend to go on with relief work, it would be a very great improvement upon the present system of giving relief rations or doles if they sent the men up to build dams or locks on the rivers, and in the case of married men I do not know why they should not pay them one-third of their earnings and send the other two-thirds to their wives and families.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): I do not want the Minister to think that I want to speak merely for the sake of speaking after him. I would hardly like to spend any time in trying to prevent anybody from building a railway. If the country is any good, and there is any prospect of settlement there, I would not like to say that any railway should not be built; but, on the other hand, it may be a burden on the settlers in the district. If the railway is worth building for the sake of the country alone, then build it by all means; but do not add to that something like a couple of millions for an irrigation scheme, for, so far as I know, it is proposed to spend nearly £2,000,000 on blocking up a creek.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You are opposing it.

Mr. DEACON: I am not. I have heard only the evidence given in this Chamber, and it has not been proved that the men who are going to settle there are going to be able to pay for this huge expenditure, though it may be quite possible that they may do so in time. I am quite willing to admit, as the hon. member for Bowen said, that I do not know anything about sugar lands or about irrigating sugar lands; but I understand that this is not sugar land, and that it is going to raise wheat, maize, cotton, and fruit. Well, it will not pay to grow wheat by irrigation—that has been proved in many other places. So far as I understand the position, the rate to be charged will be about £5 per acre. You could not get a return of £5 an acre from good wheat land.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why?

Mr. DEACON: Because it is not in it.

Mr. HARTLEY: You are talking about the Darling Downs, with 13 bushels to the acre. We are talking about 40 bushels.

Mr. DEACON: The hon. member could prove himself by coming on to the Downs and farming a bit.

Mr. HARTLEY: That would be the last place I would go to. I never hear such a lot of moaning as on the Downs.

Mr. DEACON: At any rate, the people in the Dawson Valley do not find it payable to grow wheat. They will not find it profitable to grow maize at £5 an acre, and it has not been proved yet that we are going to make cotton-growing a success under any conditions. It all depends on the world's prices. And there are a great many areas of land close to markets, which it is not necessary to irrigate, on which fruitgrowers tell me it is not easy to make fruitgrowing pay well; and they do not have to pay £5 an acre rent.

Mr. COLLINS: Who pays £5 an acre rent?

Mr. DEACON: I understood the hon. member for Bowen to say it would cost £5 an acre.

Mr. COLLINS: That is for water.

Mr. DEACON: It does not matter whether you pay £5 per acre for land or water, so long as you have to pay it. It is a tax on your land. The Government are not going to supply the water for nothing, anyhow.

Mr. HARTLEY: You ought to be put in Goodna for a month to get sane.

Mr. COLLINS: I said 8s. 4d. per month, or £5 a year.

Mr. DEACON: It may be possible to pay that for sugar land, but it is impossible for wheat land. Hon. members should go up and try to get a living there, then they would know that it was nonsense.

Mr. BRENNAN: Do they not pay £15 an acre on the Downs?

Mr. DEACON: They do not.

Mr. BRENNAN: They did in 1914 for Canning Downs.

Mr. DEACON: They do not pay it for wheat land; they may pay it for lucerne land. We have admitted that those prices are too high.

Mr. BRENNAN: Because the drought has knocked them out.

Mr. DEACON: It does not matter whether you are knocked out by drought or by the financial burdens you have to pay. What

does it matter to a man whether you choke him or knock him on the head? Is it not the same to him? (Laughter.) If the land is good enough to sell to the people without the irrigation scheme, build the railway. There is plenty of land in Queensland needing railway communication on which this £2,000,000 could be spent. We know that the Inkerman irrigation scheme cost more than the original estimate. There is not an irrigation scheme in Australia which has not cost more than the original estimate, and, except in intensive areas, not one is paying. Fruit and lucerne are being grown in special areas, and irrigation is being made to pay.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why cannot they do it on the Dawson?

Mr. DEACON: Where is your market?

Mr. COOPER: You will never get to market until you get a railway.

Mr. DEACON: You cannot put that price on the land and make it pay. Even in the best seasons, when you get water for nothing, it will not pay to have an annual rent of £5 on the land. A drought comes now and again, but this will have to be paid every year whether you use the water or not. The money should be expended to the best advantage on railway construction where we can settle more people. I could show a lot of places in my electorate where railways would pay well, and which cost a lot less than £2,000,000. Some of the best land in Australia is there waiting for settlers, and it should be made available by railway communication.

I think the Minister said that the progress of the State during the last seven years has been greater than it had been for fifty years previously. He can say that, but it is impossible to prove it. The cities were all here seven years ago. All the settlement that now exists, with the exception of that in a few spots, was here seven years ago. What settlement has taken place has been brought about by the people, without any help from the Government.

Mr. STOPFORD: Every mile of railway has helped to build Brisbane.

Mr. DEACON: I quite agree with the hon. member for Mount Morgan. I am glad to see that I have somebody on that side with me.

Mr. W. COOPER: Yet you are opposing the railway.

Mr. DEACON: I am not opposing the railway.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I just want to say a word in reply to what has passed for criticism on the part of hon. members opposite. Only one thing is consistent about it—the inconsistency of the views that they have advocated. They are all in favour of railway construction, but they are opposed to this railway. They would like a railway for irrigation purposes; but, instead of having it in the Dawson Valley, they would like it at Mount Edwards, or some other place in the Southern Division. I can only come to the conclusion that most of them are against the railway because it is not going to bring grist to Brisbane. That seems to be the position of hon. members, who are presumed to be advocates of the interest of the farmers. If these hon. members are not unique in their inconsistency, I do not know who are. The hon. member for Stanley said he did not believe in spending this money on water conservation; he

Mr. Hartley.]

thought it would be too much money to spend on that, but it would be a great thing to spend it in the conservation of fodder and the building of storage and silo facilities. What sort of stupid talk is that? The more fodder we can use the greater will be our wealth production in the way of live stock, sheep, and cattle. The more water there is conserved the more fodder we can produce. In other words, the hon. member objects to insurance in fodder against drought by water conservation, but prefers to store up the fodder against the drought. That is about the best sample of a contradiction of economic factors that ever I have heard from an hon. member. The hon. member for Cunningham said that if this proposal were one merely to build a railway to bring the produce from the land he would support it; but as it is also in connection with the conservation of water he is against it, because it will be too costly to enable the farmer to produce at a profit. There is another absurdity. At the present time this land is productive only on a large scale in connection with grazing interests. With water it can become productive on a much greater scale and for a greater number of people.

When he talks about wheat not [10 p.m.] being grown in the Central districts he shows, although he is a wheat man, that he knows very little about the history of wheat. The country inside and outside of the irrigation area will be first-class wheat country. In the Central district we grew the record wheat crop of Queensland—that was at Gindie—yielding 45 bushels to the acre.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: How many acres?

Mr. HARTLEY: It was a big crop and a big yield. I do not remember the number of acres offhand. I rose to speak because of the miserable insinuation by the hon. member for Warwick that the Government were constructing the railway with the object of winning the Normanby election. The hon. member for Normanby, when he was on this side, advocated this irrigation scheme in most glowing terms. That is the best refutation of that statement.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): Hon. members opposite state that we are opposed to this railway. I am not against it, and from what I have heard from hon. members on this side I know they are not opposed to it. But this scheme means an expenditure of £2,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The railway proposal does not.

Mr. CORSER: This scheme is only the forerunner of further expenditure. The hon. gentleman stated that the railway would not be constructed unless the irrigation scheme was carried into effect, and that will mean an expenditure of £2,000,000. I expressed my disappointment this afternoon that, in introducing a scheme for railway construction involving £2,000,000, no immigration policy or huge land settlement policy was also included to settle men on the big Upper Burnett lands.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This is the foundation of it.

Mr. CORSER: The foundations have already been laid. Railways have been commenced in the Burnett area. There are men in Queensland to-day who want farms, and the Government will not let them have them. In 1913 certain farms were specially laid out, and to-day men are turned away from the

Lands Department because they cannot get farms. The Government want to open this huge territory of millions of acres in one act.

Mr. BRENNAN: They would pick the eyes out of it.

Mr. CORSER: No. The hon. member should know that there were only certain areas designed and handed to the Crown. We want a scheme to provide facilities for the men there, and to provide money to supply them with water. Do not say afterwards that there is no money for water. There is plenty of room there for our own people and for people from the other side of the world. I was disappointed that there was not a huge scheme to bring about prosperous settlement in both areas. The Government are building railways, but they are not showing how settlers are going to have a fair "go."

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to by the House.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 10 p.m.