

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 1923

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

QUESTIONS.

NUMBER AND COST OF C17 RAILWAY ENGINES.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

“1. What number of C17 engines have been built to date?

“2. What was the average cost of such engines?

“3. What has been the cost to 1st September for (a) repairs; (b) alterations, etc.?

“4. Is there any truth in the statement appearing in a letter over the signature of ‘Lcco,’ appearing in the ‘Daily Mail’ of Monday, the 10th instant, page 16, viz.: ‘Look through Toowoomba sheds and see the thousands of pounds rusting after a few months out of the builders’ hands and covered in filth?’”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*) replied—

“1. 66.

“2. £11,165 15s. 2d.

“3. (a) £8,428 18s.; (b) £2,516 3s. 3d.

“4. No.”

QUEENSLAND QUOTA OF COMMONWEALTH GRANT
FOR MAIN ROADS.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“1. What is Queensland’s quota of the Commonwealth grant for the purpose of main roads?

“2. What are the conditions attachable to the grant?

“3. Has the allocation been completed by the Government?

“4. If so, what is the basis of allocation?

“5. If not yet completed, will he consider an allocation to such shires as the

Moggill Shire Council and the Enoggera Shire Council—both such councils having producing centres not connected with the distributing markets by a railway?

"6. Has the allocation to be submitted to the Commonwealth Government for approval or otherwise?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns) replied—

"1. £96,500.

"2. (a) The State contributes £1 for every £1 granted by the Commonwealth; (b) the regulations regarding the disbursement of the grant are set forth in the Commonwealth Statutory Rules, No. 104, 1923, a copy of which is placed on the table of the House for the information of hon. members.

"3. Yes.

"4. In allocating the grant the policy adopted was such as would enable permanent works to be effected on important main roads already approved for construction.

"5. See answer to No. 3.

"6. Yes."

Whereupon Mr. McCormack laid upon the table the paper referred to.

REPORTS ON SITES FOR STATE PLANT NURSERY.

Mr. KING (Logan) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

"Will he lay on the table of the House the reports on the different sites inspected for the purpose of selecting a site for a State nursery?"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, Eacham) replied—

"There does not appear to be any reason why reports of this nature should be tabled, but, for the information of the hon. member, I desire to say that sites were inspected on Woogoompa Island, various sites on Fraser Island, and on Bribie Island, and the present situation on Bribie Island was finally recommended by the Director of Fruit Culture on account of its suitability for nursery purposes, isolation, and because of the fact that it was Crown land."

METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE ACT'S AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, Mackay): I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, 1909 to 1921, in certain particulars."

This Bill is one of eighteen clauses and it contains amendments of considerable importance for the effective administration of the principal Act. The first important clause deals with the necessary protection of the health and safety of workers in reticulation sewers. Under the principal Act that protection is at present only afforded to workers in main sewers, and, when it is remembered that reticulation sewers are often at considerable depth, it will be seen

that it is necessary to protect the safety of the men engaged in that class of work just as it is in connection with main sewers.

Another important proposal is in connection with work carried out by the Board. At the present time property owners having connections to make with main sewers and so on can call upon the Board to do the necessary work and pay for it over a period of years at a fixed rate of interest. The Board has pointed out to me that this imposes an undue drain upon the loan funds of the Board itself; and, when property owners are in a financial position to find the money to do the necessary reticulation themselves, I think they should be called upon to do so. I do not think that property owners who can afford to do the work themselves should have the facility of getting the Board to do the work, probably at a less rate of interest than they themselves get for their own funds. We are providing therefore that only in cases where the Board is satisfied that the pecuniary circumstances of the applicant warrant it, shall these connections be made by the Board, and the rate of interest payable on the cost, instead of being a fixed rate, shall be at the rate which the money is costing the Board. That I consider to be fair. Whatever the money costs the Board will be the rate of interest charged to the owner of the property who gets his premises connected.

Another important clause in the Bill deals with claims against the Board. At the present time men can make all kinds of claims against the Board for disturbance and so forth, and much litigation has resulted. Public bodies of this kind are often looked upon as fair game by people who may desire to get large amounts of money for damages that are more or less real. I lay it down of course that where certain works are carried out in the public interests and disturbance takes place and consequent damage to property, the owner of that property has a right to reasonable and adequate compensation for any damage done by public work of this kind, but everyone will agree that it is not right that impositions should take place. We are providing the conditions under which claims may be made against the Board for any damage done to property by neglect on the part of the Board to safeguard the interests of adjoining properties where work is carried out. Much consideration has been given to the drafting of that clause, and I think the final draft is pretty safe.

Another clause deals with voting in connection with the elections to the Board. It is intended to make voting under the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act compulsory, the same as it is under the Elections Act. Briefly, that covers the main features of the Bill. I will go into greater detail at a later stage of the Bill, but I think I have said enough at this stage to indicate the trend of the Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES (Wynnum): The Minister has furnished the Committee with certain information which I am sure will be acceptable to hon. members. I would ask the Minister whether the Board have asked for the amendment of the Act in all the directions referred to by the hon. gentleman.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not in all the directions; but most of the clauses are brought in at the request of the Board.

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HON. W. H. BARNES: Naturally in the course of administration there are things cropping up from time to time which need amendment. Some of the clauses referred to by the Minister will, I am quite sure, be appreciated by this side of the House. The hon. gentleman made reference to the fact that workmen should be protected in work which was dangerous, and I am perfectly certain that every hon. member on this side will agree with the Minister in bringing in legislation which is going to protect the worker.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: We believe that this the Secretary for Public Works: Dangerous and disagreeable work.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Very often the surroundings are exceedingly unpleasant, and I agree with the Minister that it is dangerous and disagreeable work. I believe that every protection should be given to the worker, and no Government would be justified in not taking the necessary steps to protect those who are engaged in this work.

The Minister also referred to what is proposed to be done to relieve the Board financially. He stated that under present conditions the Board have to carry out on behalf of property owners certain work for which those owners may be able to pay. I think the Minister is asking the Board to enter upon something which will be very difficult of administration, because I take it that the Board are going to be put in a position of having to find out whether John Brown and Tom Jones are able to pay immediately for certain work or not. That may be exceedingly difficult to carry out. I have known cases where men who have had money have been able successfully to hide the fact that they have it, and have been able to evade certain obligations. There are other people who are very sensitive. They would probably be very glad of some relief, but would feel sensitive in regard to asking for consideration. I take it therefore that this is a clause which will require a great deal of wisdom in its administration. I venture to say that it is going to have another effect, and that the members of the Board are going to be approached again and again by people who want terms where cash is demanded. We know what human nature is, and you can depend upon it there are people who will seek, through members of the Board, to get certain concessions granted, and this provision will be found very difficult of administration. I do not think that anyone can cavil at the Board charging a fair rate of interest when carrying out work. If the Board themselves are paying $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for money—I may be wrong in the rate I mention, but probably I am not very far out—they are not doing anything unfair in charging $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for it.

The hon. gentleman said that some people in the community were always ready to rush into litigation against anyone in authority, including the Board. There may be people like that—we know that some people like litigation. Personally, I think that a man who runs after litigation is a fool. My own feeling is that the man who wishes to go to law—with all due deference to the lawyers, who are all very well in their place: there are some lawyers on this side and some on the other side—deserves all he gets in the way of payment of knocks. But there may

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be another side to the question than that mentioned by the Minister. Sometimes a private individual may have a just claim against an authority like the Board, who may not be prepared to do a fair thing by him. Parliament ought to see that the scales are held fairly, and that people who have such claims against the Board are protected.

The hon. gentleman said that there is a clause in the Bill dealing with compulsory voting, which it is proposed to enforce at elections of the Board just as in the case of the election of members of this House. We have not seen the Bill, and I do not know whether very heavy penalties are provided. I know that sometimes the names of people get on the rolls which should not be there, just as some do not get on the rolls although they should be there—perhaps they have been put off by someone else. Whilst we are dealing with this question of the rolls, it is opportune to ask the Minister to see that the rolls used by the Board are absolutely up-to-date, because there is not a roll—I am speaking of the city and suburban electorates—on which at different times the need for revision has not been very great indeed. No man has the right to deprive another person of his vote, and we have to see that the law is carried out as it should be for the purpose of electing the members of the Board. I do not know whether the officers of the Board are going to make provision to see that everybody who is on the roll has an opportunity to vote. We know that there are some people who are very busy.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member will not enter into details of that nature.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am going to sit down when I am quite sure that the Committee have got all the information which they ought to have, and I am particularly anxious that we should get all the information we can in the direction of helping to clean up the rolls and give everybody 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.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) presented the Bill, and moved—

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

Question put and passed.

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

RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Lacombe, *Kippell*): The Bill is essentially a Committee one. It deals with the conditions under which railway workers shall work, and it rectifies anomalies in the existing Act. I do not want to go into unnecessary detail this afternoon, but at the same time, I do not want to be accused of not explaining the Bill, and, therefore, I will endeavour to explain the chief provisions as briefly as possible.

The Bill provides for the right of an employee to appeal to the Governor in Council from dismissal by the Commissioner. The Commissioner has power to dismiss an employee under section 17 of the Railways Act. It is very rarely that he exercises that power, but the employees have asked that this right of appeal shall be established, and as there is no objection on the part of the department, it is included in the legislation that I am now submitting. The general right of appeal is established under the Railways Act, and there is really harmony and consistency in this appeal provision. There is also a provision for the right of appeal to the Governor in Council by employees who desire to appeal against the appointment of a person from without the service. This provision giving the right of appeal harmonises with the appeal provisions under the principal Act. At the present time, an appointment from without the service and without an examination cannot be made by the Commissioner without the approval of the Governor in Council, and this provision is a slight variation of the phraseology of the existing Act.

It is proposed, further, to amend the principal Act by deleting certain restrictions on the right of appeal.

At the present time if an employee voluntarily relinquishes a higher position, and is appointed to a vacancy in the service by the department, no right of appeal exists on the part of the other employees, who in the ordinary course of events had the right of appeal. Therefore, it has been decided to amend the Act so as to construe the appointment of an employee who has relinquished a higher position voluntarily in order to fill another vacancy as promotion. Take the case of an inspector in the far West who desires to become a ganger near the coast. He may voluntarily relinquish his position as an inspector in the far West and become a ganger near the coast. It may suit his convenience to do so. There is nothing substantially wrong about that, but at the same time other employees should have the right of appeal against his appointment should they so desire. The section will be so altered as to construe such an appointment as promotion, and give the employees the same right of appeal that they have now in the case of any promotion.

Mr. KELSO: Do you penalise the inspector later on if he changes his mind?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He commences in the service again as a ganger, and will have to work up again to that position of inspector. It is a voluntary and not a compulsory relinquishment of the position. There is a slight anomaly, as at the present time other employees are debarred from appealing against such appointments.

It is also proposed to prevent the department recharging an employee for an offence that he has already been charged with and has successfully appealed against to the Appeal Board. At the present time an employee can be charged and recharged for an offence.

Mr. ROBERTS: Has that ever been done?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has happened in the administration of the railways. If it only occurred in one instance, there is justification for this amendment. It is contrary to the spirit of

the law to place a person on his trial twice for the same offence. It is the duty of the department to see that all charges against an employee are drawn up properly, and that nothing savouring of persecution is indulged in. If the employee is then exonerated by the Appeal Board, the matter should be finalised, and there should be no continuance of the charge. It has happened in one instance that I know of, but not with the approval of the Commissioner. Immediately the matter came under the notice of the Commissioner instructions were given for the discontinuance of the recharging. This is an amendment that both the Commissioner and Minister approve of.

It is also proposed to give clerical workers direct representation on the Appeal Board. It has been asked for by the clerical employees, and the department has no objection. It is immaterial to the department. It is contended by the clerical workers that at the present time they have no direct representation through one of their own number, or one associated with the clerical organisation, and that if representation is granted to them a more intimate knowledge is brought to bear on the case, and the case is more successfully handled. Therefore, clerical workers and administrative officers will have their interests represented directly on the Appeal Board.

We now come to the question of promotions and interdivisional appeals. The principal Act provides how promotion shall be made, and provides a method whereby employees may appeal against promotions that are made. That right is limited, and does not enable an employee, say, in [4 p.m.] Townsville to appeal against an appointment made in South Queensland for South Queensland. The right of interdivisional appeal does not exist. That is an obvious anomaly. If the right of appeal exists at all, it should exist without the limitation I have mentioned. It is intended to establish the right of interdivisional appeal by the amendment which I am now introducing.

Again, the right of appeal against a transfer where such transfer is made for a disciplinary reason is to be provided for. The department has no desire to see an employee victimised and transferred unfairly without the right of appeal against some alleged charge of which he may not have been guilty. Therefore we are providing that an employee who is transferred for a disciplinary reason shall have the right of appeal. There is a safeguard against unnecessary and frivolous appeals. The amending Bill specifies that the Appeal Board must first satisfy itself that the transfer was made for a disciplinary reason and not for any other reason. If the Board is satisfied that the transfer was not made for a disciplinary reason, then the employee will have no right of appeal. Necessarily there will not be a right of appeal against ordinary transfers which have nothing to do with discipline.

There is a right of appeal provided for in the case of an employee being employed in an acting position. Under the principal Act an employee may be appointed in an acting capacity and may remain so practically indefinitely. That is an obvious anomaly, because the Appeal Board provisions in the principal Act lay down the right to appeal if an employee has been unfairly promoted, and we should not defeat the general provisions of the Railways Act by

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enabling an employee to be placed in an acting position and of remaining there indefinitely. We are establishing the right of appeal against such acting appointments, but we reserve the safeguard that the right of appeal shall not take place until an employee has acted in a position for at least three months. That will enable the department to carry out its ordinary method of temporary appointment and of employing a man in an acting position for a few weeks if necessary without allowing any appeal to the Appeal Board. If there is continuation of the employee in that position for three months, thus giving him an advantage over employees who may be better entitled to the position, then the right of appeal will be established.

Mr. ROBERTS: Will you tell us if there have been any cases of that kind?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are none within my memory just now. As a matter of fact, many of these requests have been made on general grounds by employees, and the department has no objection to their incorporation in the Bill, thus providing for any future contingency.

Mr. ROBERTS: We ought to know whether these cases exist before making any amendment of the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have already mentioned one instance that did not come to the knowledge of the Commissioner where a man was recharged.

Mr. ROBERTS: That is only one case and under different circumstances.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but we do not test a question of ethics by the number of instances. The question is whether it is right or wrong.

Mr. KIRWAN: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES: Can you tell me when a temporary man ceases to be a temporary man?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is a probationary period of six months.

Mr. VOWLES: As a clerical employee?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As employees generally. At the present time that is outside of the ambit of the clause that I am discussing regarding acting appointments. The question of giving appointments to temporary employees is not associated with this Bill.

Mr. KELSO: You are speaking of senior employees.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am speaking of all permanent employees. The employees in acting positions I have in mind are permanent employees.

Mr. KIRWAN: Yes—Acting Traffic Managers and Acting Loco. Superintendents.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not a question of having actual instances of injustice to justify all these clauses that I am now mentioning; claims have been made, and the department has no objection to these amendments. If existing circumstances are sources of irritation, and an amendment of the Railways Act will provide more satisfactory results in the service, I think we are justified in passing this legislation.

Mr. ROBERTS: If such cases do not exist, surely there is no necessity for the amendment!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is quite within the limits of possibility that they may exist and that they have existed. It is many years ago since John Ruskin pointed out that you cannot treat men as pieces of machinery, that you must treat them as human beings. The study of psychology in all branches of industry and life is becoming an important subject, and there is no reason why there should be withheld from these employees the rights asked for in this Bill if they do not interfere with the necessary discipline and satisfactory conduct of the railway service. The Minister and the Commissioner are satisfied that nothing in this Bill will in any way interfere with the satisfactory conduct and discipline of the railway service.

The Bill enables the Railway Appeal Board to grant reasonable expenses to a successful appellant. At the present time the Commissioner allows reasonable expenses to a successful appellant, so that we are simply embodying in the Act a custom which prevails at the present time.

Mr. KERR: There will be more work for solicitors and barristers. Do you mean that provision is being made for a legal representative?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There will be no more solicitors and barristers employed in the future than there have been in the past. I do not see that it will affect that question at all. I think the provision is a sound one; the department has no objection to embodying in the Act a custom that now prevails.

The Bill makes provision for the representation of employees on boards of inquiry. In the case where an employee is charged with an offence, an employees' representative will be permitted on the Inquiry Board. Also where there is an inquiry in the case of accident, and where the employees' interests are likely to be affected, an employees' representative will have the right to sit on the Inquiry Board.

Mr. ROBERTS: There is nothing wrong with that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; I think it is a fair and reasonable proposal.

There are other provisions in the Bill of an obvious nature. One is the substitution of the words "General Manager" for "Deputy Commissioner" in various parts of the principal Act. A reorganisation took place in this respect in 1919, and we are just providing in the Act for the change that took place in that year. I do not think there is anything further of importance that I need mention at this stage. If there is anything that I have omitted, I shall be pleased to give full information in Committee. I beg to move—

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

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I followed the Minister very closely in his résumé of the Bill, and I could not help feeling that the hon. gentleman did not seem to put very much heart into the measure.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no need to rant about a Bill like this.

Mr. KIRWAN: Do you think he ought to explode over such a Bill?

HON. W. H. BARNES: There was no need for him to explode. Before commenting generally on the Bill, I desire to say that anything that has for its object the giving of workers, whether in the Railway Department or elsewhere, their fair rights, will always have the support of this side of the House. We recognise that workers have their right as well as employers or those who are in charge of men.

MR. COLLINS: You have been a long time recognising that.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member knows that such is not the case. Seeing what has been said by the Minister in connection with the Bill, it strikes me that it is in marked contrast to the Palmerston Land Settlement Bill which we discussed last night. In the Palmerston Land Settlement Bill provision is made practically for someone to be absolutely a "Pooh Bah." We have a Commissioner for Railways, and as far as I know, our Commissioner is an excellent man. He is one of the men who have risen in the department, like some others in the department, and is a most worthy officer.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He approves of this Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: He may approve of it or he may not. It does seem to me to be an extraordinary thing that we are paying a Commissioner—I have no fault to find with the salary he is getting, and I want that to be clearly understood—but it does seem to me an extraordinary thing that we pay a Commissioner a large salary for looking after the railways, and then bring in a Bill to-day which is going to clip the Commissioner's wings whether we like it or whether we do not.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct.

HON. W. H. BARNES: What is the use of the hon. gentleman telling us that we are not going to clip the Commissioner's wings?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Does not the present Act provide for appeal courts?

HON. W. H. BARNES: Of course it does, and this Bill goes along the lines of saying that, somehow or other, we have not sufficient confidence in the Commissioner to do what is a fair thing to the employees. That is unfair to the Commissioner. The powers of the Commissioner are certainly to be reduced, and in reducing them the Commissioner himself will not have the authority which he otherwise would have in conducting a big department. The Railway Department is the most important department in Queensland. It is a big spending department; it is a big revenue department; and we are asking the gentleman who is in charge of that department to forgo some of his rights in the administration of his department.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Minister says "No." but it is so. The Minister, in explaining the Bill, stated that persons employed from outside the service and put in the Railway Department, when they wish to appeal, do not go to the Board that is to be constituted under this Bill, but that they will go direct to the Governor in Council.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is where they go now.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is a most improper thing. It opens the door for poli-

tical influence, and for the Governor in Council to be able to override what his manager thinks is a fair thing in the conduct of the railways.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Governor in Council can do it to-day.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am not saying that the Governor in Council cannot do it to-day, but it is highly improper. There should be an Appeal Board covering not only the men employed in the usual way by the Commissioner, but also those who come in from outside, otherwise it is giving certain men an advantage which they have no right to have.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Were you not in the Cabinet in 1914 when that provision was passed?

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is quite possible I may have been in the Cabinet, but the hon. gentleman has been telling us that evolution has been taking place, and I am here to-day not to deal so much with things in 1914 as with things to-day. What is further, in 1914 the strings were not pulled as they are pulled to-day. (Government laughter.) The strings were not pulled as they are pulled to-day, and hon. gentlemen know that such is the case.

MR. HARTLEY: They were a hundred times worse.

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is no doubt that this right of appeal is opening a big door and a dangerous door, and a door which will probably mean no end of trouble. The Bill itself is going to add very considerably to the cost of working the railways. If any man has a just claim, we have a right to stand up and help him, and members on this side will always do that. But this Bill is going to encourage men to make complaints, and we shall constantly be having boards sitting dealing with very unimportant things, and the right of appeal in this case is only playing into the hands of the discontented, which will be altogether an unsatisfactory thing. The Minister said he knew that these things will only operate in a way which will be entirely satisfactory; but they will open the door wide and will operate in the way of creating a machine in the Railway Department. Men will say, "Why should we do our duty? If we do our duty, that duty will be overlooked by the department, because it will be afraid to act, and there will be a movement made in order to upset what we have done." The result generally will be the wiping out of the control which is necessary in a big department. We quite agree with that portion of the Bill which provides that, when a man has been charged with an offence and found guilty and has paid the penalty of his guilt, he shall not be charged again. No man has a right to charge him a second time. I agree absolutely with the Minister in that. When a man has paid the penalty for a mistake or his case has been dismissed, unless there is some very strong fresh evidence available, then he has no right to be charged again.

I notice in the explanation given by the hon. gentleman that clerical workers are to have representation on the Appeal Board.

At 4.20 p.m.,

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Kirwan, Brisbane) relieved the Speaker in the chair.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I suppose the clerical staff are just as much entitled to

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representation on the Appeal Board as other sections. Then, promotions are to be along wider lines. I do not know whether the promotions in the past have always gone along the lines which one would consider absolutely fair. It is a very difficult matter to arrange that. You cannot always find an ideal system in connection with a department.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We do not interfere with the Commissioner in that.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Ordinarily, if a man is capable he has the right to first consideration, because if a man has given his life in the service of the State in any department and he is a capable officer, he should not be side-tracked, as I have known some men to be. It appears therefore that any employee who is transferred for disciplinary reasons is going to have an opportunity of having that particular phase of his transfer looked into. Whilst I admit that everything should be done to help the employee, you are going to open a very wide door—you are going to remove the control from the proper officer of the department. I hold that the person who is in charge of any establishment should be one who is capable of running it, and, if he is not, then somebody else ought to be put in his place. If we are going to have ever so many avenues it is going to be a very dangerous thing. I noticed that the Minister quoted John Ruskin. He did not put his soul into the second reading of this Bill to-day.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do you want me to rant?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not want the hon. gentleman to rant. I want him to give some evidence that he is heart and soul behind the Bill.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You do not understand English.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I should be very sorry if I did not.

MR. HARTLEY: At one moment you say the Bill is good, and the next moment you think it is bad.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am trying to point out what are good things in the Bill and what I consider are defects in it. Let me here deal with the favourable side of it. I think that, if men are put to the expense of fighting an appeal and are successful, they have a right to have their expenses paid. The proposals that a Board of Inquiry should be established, that the title "Deputy Commissioner" be repealed and the title "General Manager" be used instead, and that provision be made when the Commissioner dies—may he long be spared—for the Deputy Commissioner or one of the management to act in his place, are good provisions. There are a lot of details in the Bill. Generally speaking, it seems to me that the Commissioner is being robbed of the power which he had and should continue to have, and the Bill is going to make the man in charge of our railways feel that it does not matter very much—whether from the financial side or the point of view of general administration—what happens.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not the Commissioner's view.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman has said that before. It may or may not be the Commissioner's view. It may be

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that the Commissioner says, "If we are going step by step along certain lines, why should I worry?" I do not know that it is so. Apparently this is a Bill which is going to make possible continual disturbance amongst employees of the Railway Department.

I will finalise what I have said in this way. This side of the House is out to help.

MR. COLLINS: Do you speak for the whole of them?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am speaking for myself just now. This side of the House is out to help men who are in the employ of the Railway Department along legitimate lines, but we say that in connection with a big service such as the Railway Department there must be men in charge, and those men should have ample power and should not be disturbed by the irritating privileges which are being provided in this particular Bill. We shall have an opportunity in Committee of going more fully into this Bill, and no doubt hon. members will take the fullest advantage of that privilege.

MR. KERR (*Enoggera*): One of the most important points in this Bill appears to be the rearrangement that has apparently taken place in regard to the North, Centre, and South. In the Railway Department for a number of years there have been very many changes, and powers have been transferred to the North, Centre, and South. It looks to me that the object of this Bill is to centralise the Railway Department in the capital cities of the State under the Commissioner. A good deal of attention has been given to the contention that the heads of the department in the Northern and Central divisions should have a good deal more power than they previously possessed.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Where is the evidence of that statement?

MR. KERR: The evidence of that is the bringing down the Deputy Commissioners to the rank of General Managers.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That has been in existence some years.

MR. KERR: At the present time there is a Deputy Commissioner in Townsville.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

MR. KERR: At the present time the Act provides for a Deputy Commissioner in Townsville.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And in the Central district, too.

MR. KERR: Then, why not continue it?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say that there is not a Deputy Commissioner in Townsville to-day—there is a General Manager.

MR. KERR: You are cutting him out. My contention is that at the present time the Act provides for a Deputy Commissioner at Townsville and a Deputy Commissioner in the Central Division, and the Minister knows it. There has been a good deal said to the effect that these Deputy Commissioners are getting more powers in their own divisions.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are not interfering with the powers of General Managers to-day; they have the same power as the Deputy Commissioners had.

MR. KERR: I am glad to know that the Minister has no intention of further centralising railway administration. A good policy

in my opinion is for the Railway Department to decentralise as much as possible. I think we shall then get a much better service, and that has been proved.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is so.

Mr KERR: Clause 3 provides—

“The general manager shall, subject to the direction and control of the Commissioner, assist him in the general management, inspection, and supervision of the railways under their respective charge.”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is the present phraseology.

Mr. KERR: I want to know if there is any intention of taking away the powers of the Deputy Commissioners?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Absolutely no.

Mr. KERR: My opinion is that, as they have worked well, we should extend those powers, and, instead of bringing down the position to a General Manager directed by the Commissioner in accordance with this Bill, we should give greater local powers to the officers in charge in the Northern and Central Divisions. Here is an opportunity under this Bill to bring in something of that description.

There is another point in regard to the Bill which I wish to deal with; that is with reference to an employee being dismissed by the Commissioner. I take the stand that the Commissioner should have absolutely final powers. I recognise what the Minister has said—that the principle of appeal should always be allowed—but you cannot follow that out for ever and ever. If it is to be followed out as a principle, what appeal has a man from the Governor in Council? The Commissioner has charge of nearly £50,000,000 of public funds, and has 13,000 or 14,000 employees under him, and, in my opinion, he should have the right to dismiss a man; but there is another appeal to a body who are not more competent to judge than the Commissioner for Railways. The Minister has practically said that Mr. Davidson, the present Commissioner, has not used his power in that direction. In the case of dismissal, the Commissioner can upset the appeal to an Appeal Board. I think the Commissioner's decision should then be final. I am quite satisfied that the Bill is going to give the employee a slight concession, but not a great deal. It looks to me as though the Minister has been asked to bring in a non-contentious measure, and that his Bill is the result of his deliberations. I am satisfied that this Bill is not one which we can pull to pieces at all.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is too dangerous when you have many railway men in your electorate.

Mr. KERR: Undoubtedly the policy of the Government is to bring in legislation which is not of a contentious nature, and the Minister as a member of the Cabinet is doing his part by bringing this along. I

[4.30 p.m.] make no objection at all, but I want to take this opportunity of dealing with another question. For many years there has been a practice in the department of breaking the continuity of the service of temporary employees in order to conform with the provisions of the principal Act. The Act provides that no temporary officer shall be employed for more than six months, and the practice is, when a man has

been on for six months, to put him off for a day or two days and then put him back for another six months. In some instances that has been known to go on for years. It is evading the Act, and the Minister should not tolerate it any longer. Here he has the opportunity to get rid of the pernicious principle by inserting a provision in the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It was a bad habit of past Governments.

Mr. KERR: It was a very bad habit at one time, and this Bill still leaves the door open.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is very seldom done to-day.

Mr. KERR: Within the last seven or eight days a man came to me and told me that he had been put off for a day or so in order to break the continuity of his service and that he had only temporary service, although he had been doing permanent work for a solid six months.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You give me the case.

Mr. KERR: I shall give the hon. gentleman the case. I should like now to refer to the provision which takes away certain powers of the Commissioner in reference to appointments and puts it in the hands of the Governor in Council. Under the principal Act the Commissioner had to give a certificate before an officer could be appointed from outside the service.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It had to be approved by the Governor in Council.

Mr. KERR: We are following the bad principle of bringing into the Queensland public service a large number of experts rather than giving our own men a chance of appointment to the higher paid positions. As I said the other day, I am prepared to advocate a policy of giving our Queenslanders a chance to go home at the expense of the Government and learn all that there is to be learned in their particular branches, more particularly in respect of agriculture. We have been very backward in this regard; yet we are bringing experts here under agreements, not at ordinary public service salaries, but we pay in the vicinity of £1,000 or £1,500 a year. The Public Service Commissioner has authority in the matter, and no one can appeal against his decision, so that there is a discrimination against the whole body of public servants, whether in the Railway Department or that section of the Government service which is usually looked upon as the public service.

Then I notice a clause to the effect that any employee who has succeeded in an appeal shall not be recharged or further dealt with for the same offence. Now it is essential that the Appeal Board shall go into the technicalities of each appeal which comes before it and see if the appeal was lodged within the correct number of days after the decision, if the correct notice was given, if the proper departmental inquiry was held, and so on. In hundreds of cases appeals have been dismissed on technicalities, so that the employee need only search high and low for a technical breach—and hon. members know that one clause in the Railway Regulations will override or undermine another clause—in order to succeed in his appeal. If this Bill is passed in its present form, that will be the end of the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will teach them to be more careful.

Mr. Kerr.]

Mr. KERR: No matter how careful a man may be, it is very easy to have one's mind concentrated on one clause and overlook another clause. I remember a case in which a lady who was employed by the department was before three Appeal Boards. In the first case the charge was dismissed on a technicality. The same charge was laid, the technicality having been complied with. The solicitor, who I think was the Assistant Home Secretary, was able again to rake up a technical breach under another section, and again her appeal succeeded. The third time the case was heard without any alteration of the charge, but I do not remember the result. The Bill does not make provision for such a case as that, and my contention—without wishing to do anything against the interests of the employee at all—is that the charge may be of a very serious nature, and, if the technicality is remedied, it should be proceeded with.

The provision in regard to departmental inquiries is an advance, but it is difficult to say whether it is in the right direction or not. There is a good deal of technicality in connection with it, and I do not think the employees have very much to gain, although it seems to me that it will be all right. I am not saying that there is no advantage in it, but I do not think it is going to do any harm.

We have been going to a good deal of expense in the printing of periodical lists of employees of the Railway Department. The "Blue Book" of officers in the public service has been abolished, and I do not think that many persons in the State ever peruse the list of railway officers; and, if the Government had deleted the section which provided for its publication, I do not think much harm would have been done. The Commissioner in his annual report gives the number of his employees, and to print a long list of employees, causing overtime payments and so on, seems unnecessary. What is more, the list is out of date before it is issued. I would commend to the Minister the desirability of investigating the matter before the Committee stage of the Bill in order to find out how much it is costing to print the staff list and discover whether there is any reason why we should continue that provision of the principal Act. We could very well take the opportunity of dispensing with it altogether.

One provision in the Bill has struck me as important. I refer to the clause which says that the department is to be treated henceforth as a whole in the matter of appointments, transfers, and so on. Hitherto a line of demarcation has been drawn between the Northern, the Central, and Southern divisions, but the Bill proposes that the service is to be treated as a whole, and every position in every division will be advertised in the usual way.

Every appointment and transfer to be made will be advertised in the "Weekly Notices," and there will be appeals from the department as a whole. I think that is a good move. There has been a good deal of trouble with regard to seniority in connection with transfers from the South to the North. I am waiting to find the man who can correctly define what is seniority in a case of promotion. The Appeal Boards in the Railway Department and the public service are the most unsatisfactory things that we have in the State. Hundreds of public servants to-day do not bother a moment about the Appeal Boards. In nine

cases out of ten they are beaten on the question of suitability. There is possibly only one adjudicator on the question of suitability. Let me take the Railway Department. I saw in the Press the other day a report about a man being appointed to one of the stores, and there was an appeal by five or six clerks against that appointment on the ground of seniority and suitability. Of that number of appellants the Board was satisfied that three or four of them were senior to the person occupying the position, and were competent to carry out the work of that position. Many magazines through the world have contained articles on the definition of "seniority." Those articles have inquired as to whether seniority should be based on salary, position, length of service, or competence. It is absolutely impossible to combine the whole lot. Let me take the instance of the recent appointment of Under Secretary to the Chief Secretary's Department. Of all the public servants to-day who have qualifications equal to that officer, there is not one who would appeal against that appointment. Why? Because the head of the public service would say that he considered that this man was the most suitable, and under those circumstances the Appeal Board would be absolutely useless. Mr. Story, in one of his reports, attempted to define this important subject, that is causing grave dissatisfaction. The Appeal Board generally is not satisfactory, either in the railway service or in the other departments of the State. I think that the Bill is one more for Committee. I am satisfied that there is not a great deal in it, more especially as the Minister stated that no attempt is being made to centralise the authority as was done in what they call the "bad old days." I am glad that there is increased authority for the Central district and the North.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I am very pleased that this Bill has been introduced, because I think, on the whole, that it will improve the railway service. The provisions deal mainly with the Appeal Board and the Inquiry Board. It is really a Bill to allow better management in the details of the various branches of the service. I do not share the fear of the hon. member for Wynnum that there is the danger under this Bill of the exercise of political influence. As a matter of fact, under the system of Appeal Boards, political influence is becoming much more difficult to exercise than previously. I do not express any opinion on that one way or the other, but I say straight out that I believe the Government in power should have the right to appoint the officers most in sympathy with their policy, and should have those that they can trust most to carry out the work of the various departments in the best interests of the State. The system of Appeal Boards has obviated to a big extent the possibility of the exercise of political influence. I think hon. members will agree with the correctness of that contention. Supposing that an hon. member did recommend someone for appointment—personally I am not saying that I would not do it—I would do it—it is sheer hypocrisy for hon. members opposite to protest against political appointments, political dismissals, and political persecution.

Mr. ROBERTS: Should those four men have been appointed at Ipswich after the Commissioner stated he would not appoint them?

[Mr. Kerr.]

Mr. HARTLEY: I would say that that was done by the sub-bosses in the department. The hon. member for Bremer was not instrumental in having them appointed. We have that from his own statement and from the Commissioner. The appointments were made to belittle and damage the members for that district. I say that hon. members opposite are playing that trick every day.

Mr. MAXWELL: You have no right to say that.

Mr. HARTLEY: They try to go behind the backs of Ministers and members in a district to get their political friends appointed. I have had experience of that since I have been in this House.

Mr. ROBERTS: They were Mr. Cooper's friends.

Mr. HARTLEY: Possibly some of them were. He recommended some of them for appointment. He wanted to give a reason why they should not be appointed. When he was furnished with what he considered to be a valid reason why they should not be appointed, he went no further; yet, in spite of that, some influence in the Railway Department was responsible for their appointment. I say that it was deliberately done by the sub-bosses and the understrappers in the department to damage the hon. member's prestige in the Ipswich Railway Workshops. I have seen that attempted before. When hon. members opposite talk about the use of political influence, I say that no one was more guilty of that than the members of the late Denham Government. Their appointments were absolutely and purely political appointments, and their political dismissals and their promotions in every branch of the public service reeked with political bias and prejudice. To talk about political influence is all humbug. I would be pleased if the Government took up the stand of making more appointments—

Mr. KELSO: You believe in "spoils to the victors."

Mr. HARTLEY: That is just what I was going to say. I am not afraid of what I say. I say that the Government would be much safer and would get much more honest administration if they adopted the principle of "spoils to the victors" and appointed men who are legitimately enthusiastic in the attainment of success in the various departments.

Mr. MAXWELL: You would introduce the American system.

Mr. HARTLEY: I do not believe in the Tammany system that is operating in the Brisbane City Council in connection with certain contracts. I believe in honest government and the appointment of people who are honestly enthusiastic to see that the policy of that Government succeeds, and that is why I want the Government, when making any appointments, to keep that sentiment in view.

Let me get back to the question of interference with the Commissioner, and the bringing to bear of political influence upon him. Under the Appeal Board, as operating in both the public service and the Railway Department, it is becoming almost impossible to lift an employee over the head of the one who is entitled to the position on the mere word or boosting by any member or members, for the reason that, if an appointment is made, the employee who thinks he

is unjustly dealt with can appeal to the Appeal Board. The Board is so constituted that political "pull" cannot be brought to bear on it, and any such appointment would be upset, and the appointee and the man behind him made to appear ridiculous. On that ground I am not concerned about the charge that has been levelled that the proposed amendment of the Railways Act will make it possible to bring to bear more political influence than has been the case formerly.

Mr. MORGAN: It will only place a boomerang in the hands of future Governments.

Mr. HARTLEY: If it is going to be a boomerang in the hands of future Governments, that fact will not worry the Government.

Mr. MORGAN: If your system was carried into effect by future Governments, they would sack every one of your political appointments.

Mr. CARTER: We know that.

Mr. MORGAN: It would be a shame and a disgrace if it did happen.

Mr. HARTLEY: I quite agree that the contention of the hon. member for Murilla is correct, and that, if this Government were defeated, many of the employees appointed by them would be immediately dismissed.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Nonsense!

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not a wild statement, because the hon. member for Sandgate in the Rockhampton by-election said on the platform distinctly that the public servants had nothing to fear if his party was returned to power except those who had been appointed since this Government came into power, and that political appointees would have something to fear.

Mr. KERR: Have they not an Appeal Board?

Mr. HARTLEY: They have an Appeal Board; we created it.

Mr. KERR: You did not.

Mr. HARTLEY: We did.

Mr. KERR: No; that is the mistake you make.

Mr. HARTLEY: If your party was returned to power, the Appeal Board would be wiped out in one act.

Mr. KELSO: Have you proof that he said that?

Mr. HARTLEY: He said that public servants had nothing to fear, but that those who had been appointed since 1915 would be turned out on the street in order to make appointments for their followers. (Opposition dissent.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. KERR: The Appeal Board was there before you were thought of.

Mr. HARTLEY: It was not even possible under the régime of the late Government to form a union in the railway service.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You are absolutely incorrect, because that statement was never made in Rockhampton.

Mr. HARTLEY: I can prove my statement by looking up the Rockhampton newspapers,

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and I will look them up. I had the statement cut out, but that is the effect of the statement the hon. member made.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You cannot produce it.

Mr. HARTLEY: If I get an opportunity, I will lay the extract from the newspaper on the table of the House.

Mr. MORGAN: And if you do not do so, you should apologise.

Mr. HARTLEY: There will be no need to apologise, because the hon. member did say in effect that, though the public servants had nothing to fear by returning his party to power, the political appointments made since this Government came into power would be dispensed with.

Mr. ROBERTS: You put in the word "political."

Mr. HARTLEY: When I produce the newspaper cutting it will show it pretty clearly. The hon. member for Wynnum said that he objected to the Bill because it would clip the wings of the Commissioner. In what way can the appointment of an Appeal Board clip his wings?

Mr. MORGAN: He is only a figurehead.

Mr. HARTLEY: Does the hon. member want to put him in the position of an autocrat? The hon. member for Wynnum does not put his contention into practice in his own business. He does not give his manager or submanager in his stores in the Valley absolute carte blanche to do what he likes. He controls him to some extent both in his administrative and his financial dealings. It would be just as absurd to say that the Commissioner should have full autocratic and complete power to administer the railways as it would be for the hon. gentleman to say to his manager, "Do what you like; make what arrangements you wish for running the business." That is an absolutely absurd stand for him or any other hon. member to take up.

There is just one other question I wish to bring up, and that is in connection with the one raised by the hon. member for Enoggera respecting a change in the title of Deputy Commissioner to that of General Manager. He said that was a step in the direction of centralising the whole management of the railway system in Brisbane. That is an absurd contention, because to all intents and purposes the Deputy Commissioners in Rockhampton and Townsville have been General Managers, and have held the office of General Manager for the past two or three years, if not longer. There is no difference in their powers. They simply call for tenders for the stores required and have just as much local autonomy and can procure their stores of whatever class they wish as they did previously; but there is a difference in this way: Under the other system the three Deputy Commissioners had three separate staffs in the three separate centres of the State. It meant that the Deputy Commissioners in Rockhampton and Townsville had a separate accountancy staff and a separate set of books instead of the one system which was operating throughout Queensland. It was found that this system was going to be too expensive, and it would have led ultimately to a certain amount of confusion. The alteration made provides that the accountancy and financial part of

the railways will still be administered in Brisbane. The hon. member will admit that is a very sound, businesslike method. It is absolutely absurd to think that a certain amount of money should be allocated and placed at the disposal of the Deputy Commissioners in Rockhampton and Townsville, who would in turn place it in a bank there and have an accountancy staff to administer it when it could be done just as easily by letter or draft from Brisbane.

Mr. ROBERTS: That has never been done.

Mr. HARTLEY: What has never been done?

Mr. KERR: What you are talking about.

Mr. HARTLEY: When the position of Deputy Commissioner was created it was seen that this was going to be a defect in the system, and it was. That is why the title was altered from Deputy Commissioner to General Manager, because under the system of Deputy Commissioners they had that power.

Mr. ROBERTS: The Minister made a statement when those officials were appointed. Compare that statement with what you are now stating.

Mr. HARTLEY: I will allow the hon. member to do that. I think it will be found, taking it by and large, to tally with what I have said.

There is the question of a retrial when an appeal has been dismissed on a technical or other point. I think it is an absurd contention to say that a man should be continually prosecuted because of the stupidity of his boss, who does not know [5. p.m.] how to charge him with some offence. That was being done under the old system. I was surprised at the hon. member for Enoggera citing a case where a woman was prosecuted on the same count on two different occasions, each time the case being dismissed on a technical point. When the case came up a third time it should not have been against the woman in the Railway Department, but the man making the charge should have been charged with incompetency as an officer of the Commissioner and severely dealt with. The Commissioner's time should not be taken up with dealing with silly charges of that description.

I think the policy of inter-divisional appeals is a sound one, and that the Minister is right to allow an appeal from the Central Division against promotion or an appointment that has been made in the Southern Division or vice versa. You will know, Mr. Kirwan, as will others who are conversant with the working of the Railway Department, that it is a difficult thing at times to get men to go to the far West. I have known men go to the far West, and because they were good men they were left there and junior men were brought down from Rockhampton to the Southern Division. Although these men were many years junior to those men out West, when an appointment came along in the Southern Division it was given to juniors, and those men out West could not appeal. That state of affairs led to a good deal of dissatisfaction. The wiping out of those conditions and the institution of an inter-divisional appeal will give general satisfaction. I think the Bill is an improvement on the former provisions of the Appeal Board. Of course, we do not expect that Board to fulfil every condition satisfactorily, but it has

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eliminated friction and has done a good deal of service and will meet the general requirements of the department.

Mr. KELSO (*Vundah*): I think that this Bill is, in certain particulars, a very good one, and should meet circumstances that are sure to crop up in the administration of a great department such as the Railway Department. Unfortunately, the Minister is rectifying certain anomalies, and at the same time taking the opportunity for bringing in some very vital new principles. Hon. members on this side of the House have agreed that certain anomalies should be rectified, such, for instance, as the question of any employee having the right to be promoted into another section of Queensland. It is a very good thing for every railway employee to look forward to becoming the Commissioner in the future. He should, therefore, have a right to all promotions going for which he is eligible.

Mr. COLLINS: He looks forward, but his chances of getting them are very small.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: We have had two instances in Queensland already.

Mr. KELSO: If a man has sufficient ability to be appointed as Commissioner to the Railway Department, he is entitled to that appointment. Surely hon. members opposite will admit that Mr. Evans did splendid work?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: He introduced the Mayne Junction scheme.

Mr. WEIR: What about his introduction of the McKean cars?

Mr. KELSO: It is all very well to pick out isolated cases—

Mr. WEIR: I know that he was responsible for the McKean cars.

Mr. KELSO: The Commissioner must take the opinions of his responsible officers, and if those officers make a mistake you should not blame the Commissioner. I do not say that the McKean cars are wonderful things—I do not know much about machinery, but it strikes me that the McKean cars are not suitable. Evidently the Commissioner appointed an expert to go into the matter, and the hon. member for Maryborough knows that his interjection cannot hold water. The principles to which we take objection are those enabling employees who are dismissed by the Commissioner to appeal to the Governor in Council and also to appeal against an appointment. It all comes back to the question of the way in which the railways should be run. The other night, when discussing certain Estimates, the Premier said to me, in reply to some exception which I took to the fact that the Public Service Commissioner has not power to appoint all public servants, that certain high appointments did come under the approval of the Governor in Council. With the exception of that provision the Public Service Commissioner was not interfered with in any way. If that principle holds good with the rest of the public service, is it not a feasible thing to argue that the Secretary for Railways should agree to its being applicable to his department? He comes along with the suggestion with regard to appointments and with regard to dismissals, and gives every employee an opportunity of appealing to the Governor in Council, which, I suppose, in actual practice will mean the Minister. I can see that probably the whole of the

Minister's time will be taken up in dealing with matters criticising the action of the Commissioner.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, no!

Mr. KELSO: I remind hon. members opposite that not once but many times they have pointed to the Commonwealth Bank as a marvellous institution—one of the most remarkable institutions in the financial world. I think Mr. Andrew Fisher was Prime Minister at the time, and he saw that the only possible way in which an institution of that kind could succeed was by placing the whole power and direction in the hands of one man. A great mistake might possibly have been made by making a political appointment, but it is to the credit of the gentleman who had charge of the affairs of Australia at that time that they had wide enough vision to support a man who turned out to be one of the best men in his profession that could be found in the world. I remember distinctly some time after the late Sir Denison Miller was appointed that a question was asked in connection with some detail regarding the Commonwealth Bank, and the Minister concerned very frankly admitted that the whole government of the bank was in the hands of the governor of the bank.

Mr. PEASE: They are going to bring political interference into existence now, when they appoint Mr. Massy Greene.

Mr. KELSO: The Minister admitted that the governor would tell him, and very rightly so, to mind his own business, because he was appointed practically as a dictator. If we got the right man as dictator, it would be a very good thing. I do not think anyone on the other side will say that the present Commissioner is a man who is not fitted for his job. I believe that Mr. Davidson, if he had a freer hand, would make a greater success of the railways than they are at the present time. Although the Minister told us that the Commissioner agreed with the whole of the clauses in this Bill—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: With the Bill generally. I have got that in writing. The Commissioner has no objection to the particular clause you are commenting on, because he is quite satisfied he can sustain his decisions.

Mr. KELSO: I accept the hon. gentleman's explanation, but, at the same time, there must be a reservation in the mind of a man like Mr. Davidson at an attempt to whittle away some of his authority.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He does not consider it in that way at all. He is not so small-minded.

Mr. KELSO: I know the Commissioner is not small-minded; but, if a man in authority has his authority whittled away, what inducement has that man to put forward his best efforts? I am not suggesting that Mr. Davidson is not putting forward his best efforts. But if you are going to whittle away the power of the Commissioner, and if you are going to introduce legislation on the lines suggested, I defy the Minister to argue that he is going to infuse extra enthusiasm into any man to do better work.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner does not view it as whittling away his power. He does not object to the right of appeal.

Mr. KELSO: I accept the hon. gentleman's statement; but the hon. gentleman must

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know that the Commissioner, when he is faced with the position, is not going to sing out about it; he has to accept things as they are.

Mr. HYNES: You are not paying the Commissioner a very high compliment.

Mr. KELSO: I ask hon. members opposite to put themselves in the position of the Commissioner for Railways. If his authority is gradually whittled away, is there likely to be an increase of enthusiasm in his work? At the present time the principal function of the Commissioner is to try and increase the revenue of the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Under section 17 the Commissioner has power of dismissal, but he very rarely exercises that power. It is done by another authority altogether.

Mr. KELSO: I am not very keen on these Appeal Boards, because I can see something better if the Appeal Board was composed of heads of departments and a certain number of employees. I quite agree with the suggestion made by the Minister in that regard, that the men themselves should be represented on it. I quite agree also that, when a man is charged with an offence, he should know what he is charged with. I am considerably astonished to find it actually in the Bill; but, when a man is charged with an offence, he ought to have full details of the charge. It says in the Bill that he is to have the right to have those details, and I can only assume, as that is in the Bill, that up to the present the employee charged with an offence has not had the charge presented to him.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He has the right of representation on any Inquiry Board.

Mr. KELSO: I am talking about the clause which provides that, when a man is charged with an offence, he shall have details of that charge given to him.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are extending the time.

Mr. KELSO: Up to the present time I presume that, when he has been charged, he has not known what he was charged with; or is the Minister legalising something which has been done?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are giving the right of representation on the Inquiry Board.

Mr. KELSO: On general principles I think it is a very good thing. We all agree with anything that is fair, and the employee should have that right; but I am taking exception to the clause which gives an employee the right to approach the Governor in Council when an appointment is made under the Act or when he is dismissed. I do not think that will work out very well in practice. The Commissioner may agree to it, but he has to agree to it simply because he is beginning to see that, if the Government are set on having legislation in a certain direction, it is no use objecting to it. It is all very well for hon. members opposite to say it is not so, but some hon. members on the other side have frankly admitted that their policy is "spoils to the victors." They know quite well that this principle was tried in America and it was an absolute failure. Both political parties in America came to the conclusion that that policy was one which was an absolute danger to the success of the

public service in America. Immediately a new party got into power in America they made a whole boxful of appointments.

Mr. WEIR: What did your party do before this Government came in?

Mr. KELSO: We did not go in for "spoils to the victors." (Government laugh er.) When this party was in power it did not go to the lengths that hon. members opposite have gone to in the matter of political appointments. In the past in the United States of America, immediately a new political party got into office every public servant in the country knew that he would be dismissed and a fresh appointment made. The hon. member for Fitzroy admits without any reservation—and I think it is a good thing that the House should know it—that the policy that he believes in—which is the policy of his party—is "spoils to the victor."

Mr. HARTLEY: That is my policy.

Mr. KELSO: I am criticising the Bill as I find it, and concentrating on these two clauses I can say distinctly that any employee may appeal to the Governor in Council. I am not going to insinuate that members on the other side or the Government in power at the present time would ever dream of making political appointments. They would say that that was farthest from their thoughts.

Mr. WEIR: You would never dream of it; you would execute it.

Mr. KELSO: We would not do it at all. We have a higher conception of our duty than to do a thing like that; but hon. members opposite unblushingly tell us that that is their policy, and the hon. member for Fitzroy is railing against his own Government because they are not going fast enough. He would like to see the principle of "spoils to the victors" carried right out and the American method adopted here. It is right that the public should know that, because up to the present time, whenever that position has been suggested, all over the place there has been a sort of "Hush! Hush! You must not say that." The Premier the other night told us there was no political interference in connection with the Public Service Commissioner. Evidently there is a difference of opinion on the part of hon. members on the other side, as now other hon. members tell us—it was said twice during the last week—that it is only a fair thing, and that it is part of the Labour platform that the party in power should appoint to public positions those men who are favourable to them.

I agree with the principle of the Bill in regard to the appointment of five General Managers in Queensland, who, subject to the instructions of the Commissioner, should have as free a hand as possible. I believe in the system of decentralisation over such a great State as Queensland. If you appoint General Managers in Townsville and Rockhampton, and they have to refer everything to Brisbane, it does not spur them on to do the best they can. If they feel that in the exercise of their duty they have a fairly free hand, subject to the ultimate control of the Commissioner, you will get better work done by these General Managers than you will if they have the idea that they are going to be controlled from Brisbane on every little detail. I quite agree with that part of the Bill. I think that principle will

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have a very good influence all over Queensland and that it will work successfully, as I believe it has done up to the present time. The Minister is proposing to legalise something in that direction which has been in operation for a considerable time.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I think that the general impression right throughout the State, both inside and outside the service, is that the Railway Department should be free from political influence. If you enter into conversation with the men on the railways in any part of the State, they will tell you without exception that they think it would be much better if political influence was not exercised in respect to the general management and control of the railways. I think that a man should be free to express his political views and to exercise his vote according to his conscience. In my opinion there should be no interference whatever with a man who conscientiously exercises his vote or who expresses his political or religious beliefs. We might just as well say that, because a man has certain religious views or has no religious views at all, he should be victimised in respect of work in the Government service. The State servants should be at liberty to exercise their votes and to express their political views without being victimised by any Government which may be in power.

Mr. CARTER: What was the position when your party were in power?

Mr. MORGAN: When we get into power—and the time will come when we shall get into power—we will let the people of Queensland know that all we expect from the public servants is faithful service, and that the expression of their political views will not in any way affect their promotion or bring about their dismissal from the service of the State. The hon. member for Fitzroy fearlessly expressed his opinion that the Government should adopt the policy of "spoils to the victors." What is going to happen if that policy is carried into effect? It will be a great danger from the employees' point of view. A man may be entitled to promotion, when all at once there is a change of opinion in the State as to which political party should occupy the Treasury benches, and a new Government take office. What would be the result if the policy of "spoils to the victor" advocated by the hon. member for Fitzroy was adopted? It would mean that a man who, after years of faithful service of the State, was on the verge of promotion would, owing to the fact that there had been a change of Government, be refused promotion and perhaps put out of the service altogether.

Mr. HARLEY: No, it would not.

Mr. MORGAN: The adoption of the hon. member's policy would mean that, if a State employee expressed his views at a public meeting in favour of the Labour party, and another Government got into power at the election, he might lose his promotion and perhaps be dismissed from the service. I will give an illustration of what occurred in my electorate. A friend of mine is the relieving night station-master at Goondiwindi. He is a very fine officer in every respect. He does not hide the fact that he is a strong supporter of the Labour party, but he and I are the best of friends notwithstanding that fact. During the last election he endeavoured to get someone to

speak at Goondiwindi the night before the election. I had arranged to speak there. He told me that he could not get a speaker, and before my meeting was held he himself addressed the meeting for a few minutes advocating the cause of the Labour candidate. I listened to his address, and after he had finished I held my meeting. If the Labour Government had been defeated at that time and our party returned to power, I would have been justified, under the policy laid down by the hon. member for Fitzroy, in having this man sacked from the department for having dared to come out in the open and advocate the cause of my opponent. Whenever I meet him in Brisbane we have a talk over political matters, and we have not had an unfriendly word. I believe the Railway Commissioner, Mr. Davidson, is a very capable man, but, unfortunately, he has not been given the opportunity he should have had to display his capabilities. He has been kept under by the Government in power, who have not allowed him to exercise a free hand. The result is that losses have occurred on our railways and Mr. Davidson has to be the scapegoat for all those losses. As other Commissioners have had to do, he has to pursue the line of least resistance, because his bread and butter is at stake.

Mr. CARTER: That is a cowardly thing to say.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a most unjust attack.

Mr. CARTER: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. MORGAN: You do not know what shame is.

Mr. CARTER: I have learnt by looking at you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Murilla must address the Chair, and I will protect him from interjections. I would point out to hon. members who are interjecting that they will have an opportunity of getting up on their feet and making a speech.

Mr. MORGAN: It is almost impossible to speak when a windbag like the hon. member for Port Curtis is making a constant din just beside one.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair, and I will protect him from interjections.

Mr. MORGAN: I was drawn aside by the interjections of the hon. member for Port Curtis, I do not object to sensible interjections.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are insulting the Commissioner.

Mr. MORGAN: I am not insulting the Commissioner at all. I am one of the best friends he has got, and have always given him a fair spin, but he has not been given a chance in the department, and has been kept down. Suppose he desired to get a

[5.30 p.m.] position in some other part of the world, and he had to produce his record in the Queensland Railway Department, would that not be detrimental to his chances and prevent him from getting promotion in some larger State or some other part of the world? He would have to show a record of losses of £1,000,000 a year for eight or nine years. If he had had a fair "go," and had been allowed to administer the railways in accordance with

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the terms of his appointment, I am confident he would have shown a result 100 per cent. better than has been shown. That man, in my opinion, has been victimised by the Government. He has not received the fair and just opportunity he should have had. Had a man of his ability been allowed the freedom and latitude which he ought to have received, I feel sure that the result to the department would have been better.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The present Government appointed him.

Mr. MORGAN: I was pleased that the present Government did appoint him; but the present Government have not been fair or played the game with him. They have not given him the opportunity to prove his worth. What does it mean in this matter of dismissal of employees? If an employee who has been dismissed has a friend on the Government side—he may even be a voter in the electorate and a political supporter of a Cabinet Minister—political influence pure and simple is going to be brought to bear for the purpose of having him reinstated, whether Mr. Davidson likes it or not. Whilst it may give the Government a certain amount of power—to which they are not entitled—and whilst it may place the worker in the railways in a position in which we ought not to place him, so that the Government may dismiss him or reinstate him as they desire, it is only a matter of time till the provision will put the same power in the hands of another Government. Then hon. members opposite, who will be sitting on this side of the House, will be heard to squeal like stuck pigs because the Government of the day have taken advantage of their own Act.

Mr. CARTER: We do not squeal.

Mr. MORGAN: I have heard hon. members opposite squeal pretty often, and it certainly puts me in mind of that noise.

Mr. HARTLEY: You are the people who are doing the squealing now.

Mr. MORGAN: Hon. members opposite do squeal, more especially when they are not on the Government side.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to address the Chair.

Mr. MORGAN: The time will come when this will have a boomerang effect, when the present Government will not be in power, and then they will be sorry for what they have done.

Mr. WEIR (*Maryborough*): I am glad that this Bill is being introduced for the protection of the employes in the railway service. It is not so long ago that the Government of the day—these people opposite or their predecessors—people of the same political views—thought it was wrong for a railway man to have political opinions. We were told, if we ever dared to express them, that we could get on the other side of the fence. The reason why I associate hon. members opposite with a policy of that sort is that I know they are made the same way as those men, and would do the same to-morrow as they did if they were over here, and it is only by legislation such as this that we can protect the railway servants.

Mr. MORGAN: The Commissioner can protect them.

Mr. WEIR: You are hopeless. (Laughter.) Parliament should protect them. In days

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gone by men were sacked under the old regime of anti-Labour politicians because they dared to take an interest in the welfare of this country.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: And their continuity of service was broken.

Mr. WEIR: Yes. I know that in 1912, when men like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, dared to go out for a principle, they were told to eat humble pie before they could get their jobs back; they were made to swear away their liberty for the future. I recognise the worth and make-up of those men who refused— young men who refused to go through with it, and said, "You can have your job rather than that I shall sacrifice my liberty."

Mr. F. A. COOPER: And Welsby was dismissed for taking part in the 1912 election.

Mr. WEIR: Exactly. He made a man of himself owing to the fact that he would not swear his liberty away, but it took years and years of hard work by this Government to give that boy restoration of what he had lost. I have no doubt that that is what hon. members opposite would do again. Let me tell you to what length I think they would go—you cannot make charges against these people unless you charge them with something definite. They would crucify the railway men to-morrow if they had the chance. Nobody knows better than you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For many years I was in the railway office in Maryborough, and for five years I had my increases stopped, and they told me that unless I went to Mr. E. B. C. Corser I would not get them.

Mr. CORSER: Who told you that?

Mr. WEIR: William Le Poer Mansfield. Do you know him? He was your "cobber," not mine.

Mr. CORSER: I do not know him.

Mr. WEIR: If it was not your dirty work I would not tell you about it. I am one of those who do not forget these things. This is not the sort of thing that appeals to me at all, but I want to clarify these matters. I say that, if the service keeps that type of man in it, this Government should see that they are fired out. I am with the hon. member for Murilla that no man should interfere with the politics or religion of any man in the public service unless he uses his politics in the discharge of his duties against the interests of the Government.

Mr. CLAYTON: Then you are not with the hon. member for Fitzroy.

Mr. WEIR: I am with the hon. member for Fitzroy. Let the hon. member tell me where we are not at one with one another. I am a believer in the decision that was carried at the Emu Park Convention—that, all other things being equal, Government billets should go to our people—and I shall tell you why. If two men are on the verge of an appointment, and they are of equal suitability, but one man is known to be sympathetic with the Government in power—I do not care what Government—the man who will give the Government the better spin is the better man for the position. Let us look at it the other way. Take the leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Windsor. Can you see him appointing a man to take charge of his business in Roma street who he knows perfectly well has sympathy with State trading in his particular line? It would be dangerous, because his eyes would be on the business of his competitor. Business men do not appoint unsympathetic

men to control their businesses, because they know that they could not depend upon them to do the work they want them to do.

At 5.40 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. WEIR: I am not doubting that men in the menial positions cannot do any harm, but for men in the responsible positions I consider that, all other things being equal, those who are in sympathy with the Government have the right to the job.

Mr. KELSO: Public servants should be outside politics.

Mr. WEIR: That is where we disagree. I do not believe that public servants or the Commissioner should be outside politics. I am glad to see that there is a provision in the Bill giving the men the right of appeal to the Governor in Council. The hon. member for Nundah was quite wrong when he said that the Commissioner did certain things. The Commissioner for Railways only once in about twelve months has exercised his prerogative of sacking a man from the service.

Mr. KELSO: He has the right.

Mr. WEIR: He should not have the right. No Commissioner should be allowed to be an autocrat. The Government are here to see that the men get justice. Governments are returned to take their responsibility and not run away from it. They should be in a position to control the railway service. That should not be left to a Commissioner. The Government should keep their hand on the throttle, and they and they alone should see that justice is done to the men. Why do I say that hon. members opposite would throw out this machinery to-morrow? The hon. member for Sandgate, in speaking in Rockhampton during the by-election there, is reported in the "Evening News" to have used these words—

"The civil servant and railway worker would be quite safe in the hands of the Queensland United party. No civil servant, who had worked up to his position in the ordinary way and become proficient, would have anything to fear, but the men who would have to look out would be those who were pitchforked into jobs through political influence."

Mr. CARTER: The Opposition should now apologise.

Mr. WEIR: Have the Opposition subsided yet?

Mr. ROBERTS: No.

Mr. WEIR: The view of hon. members opposite is that every man appointed to the service since 1915 has been pitchforked into his position.

Mr. ROBERTS: Your Government did the same thing under the same circumstances.

Mr. WEIR: One fault I found with this Government when they came into power was that they did not do something of that kind.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Merit counts now more than anything else.

Mr. WEIR: Before this Government came into power a man was put under my control who was known to be pretty well down in the social scale. I am not going to mention his name as I do not wish to hold him up to ridicule; I was one of those who stood by him and put him on his feet. He is one

of my personal friends to-day, due to the fact that I gave him a fair run. He was a blood relation of an hon. member who used to be in this House. I again refuse to give the man's name.

Mr. MORGAN: You did not play the game with Mansfield.

Mr. KIRWAN: Whom did he ever play the game with?

Mr. WEIR: I shall tell you some more about Mansfield.

Mr. KIRWAN: Ask anyone who has worked under him about him.

Mr. WEIR: I know the "bounder." The person I was previously referring to was put under my control and he was considered to be on the lowest rung of the social scale. He was capable to some extent. The man who brought him there left him and turned round and grinned in my face, and said, "How long will you stand this fellow?" I replied, "Why?" He said, "Do you know his name?" I knew his name, and knew that he came from a respectable family that was at one time associated with the Legislature of this State. I replied, "Yes, I know his name." He said, "You will not keep him long, on account of his politics." I said to the man, "You keep up your end of the stick, and I will help you." I helped him for some considerable time. The Government in power at that time were under an obligation to appoint this man as a political appointee, and there was a political arrangement within the department to place the man under me. In carrying out their dirty work they wanted to use me and make me responsible for firing the man out on to the road because he was not competent. That man is there to-day and is doing well and is competent. That is only one instance. I could enumerate five, six, or ten instances where the party in power at that time placed their friends in positions in the department.

Mr. MORGAN: We could mention scores of instances where the Minister has put in the relations of hon. members opposite.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: You cannot.

Mr. WEIR: I want to remind the railway employees and their friends of the remarks made by the hon. member for Sandgate. Hon. members opposite adopt this position: They consider that every man appointed to a Government position since 1915 has been a political appointee, and for that reason every man who came into the service since 1915 would be liable to the order of the boot if hon. members opposite got into power. That is a logical conclusion to come to. If we had taken that stand in 1915, we could have fired hundreds of persons who were politically hostile to us. The hon. member for Nundah made reference to the fact that there was a provision in the Bill stating that a man must have a copy of the charge against him. That has been in the staff regulations for donkeys' years and is now being transferred to the Bill. The staff regulation reads—

" . . . and cause the defendant to be furnished with a statement of the charge against him."

Mr. KELSO: I do not object to that

Mr. WEIR: I say that it is one of the fairest things in the Bill. Another important matter is the introduction for the first time of an Inquiry Board to take the place in some instances of the Appeal Board, on which

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the men will be represented. I believe that the bulk of the appeals would never have taken place if there had been a decently constituted Inquiry Board. The men would have gone to an Inquiry Board if there had been one properly constituted—that is to say, if it had given these men full representation. Because of the lack of that representation they were forced to go to the Appeal Board to get justice. In my opinion they can now get justice through the efforts of the Inquiry Board, and I think most of the cases will be settled there.

Let me now deal with the question of control by the Commissioner. I do not believe in it. I do not think that any Government should allow the Commissioner to run amok. I want to remind hon. members that the Commissioners in this State and every other State have committed very serious blunders.

Mr. KELSO: What about the Commonwealth Bank?

Mr. WEIR: It was a good institution until the Nationalist party of this country used it for corrupt purposes during the war. What is happening to-day in connection with the railways? Take the Tasmanian Government. The Tasmanian Government are handling their Commissioner for Railways. Why? They have suspended him because they allowed him to run amok without any control. No Government should allow a Commissioner to get into that position. We have the glaring and shocking example of Mayne Junction and dozens of other things that have been done in this country by incompetent Commissioners. They should not be allowed to do these things.

Mr. MORGAN: We have a good man now.

Mr. WEIR: I do not believe that we have a good man. I have no special bouquets to throw at him, but I do not believe he is "big" enough for his job.

I want to bring under the notice of the Minister the question of costs in connection with appeals. There was a time when it was very difficult for a man fighting a case before the Appeal Board to get fair and legitimate costs. There have been cases where there have been four or five appeals in succession. I have in mind the well-known Maslin case. Of course there are many other cases besides that one. In all those cases it was a difficult matter to get a fair and equitable basis for the apportionment of costs for the appellants. I think this Bill gives a fair chance for the proper fixation of costs and will rectify some of the present difficulties, though I do not think it obviates all difficulties. I believe that in time to come we shall have to make further amendments to the Railways Act. I can see that at no distant date there will be provision for a committee working between the Commissioner and his officers, and that there will be representation from the employees on that committee in addition to the Commissioner.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I cannot agree with the sentiments expressed by the hon. member for Maryborough. My belief is that, if you put a man in charge of a department or enterprise, he should be given full authority. If he is going to suffer any interference either from the Minister or a member of Parliament, he cannot be expected to carry out that enterprise or undertaking in a satisfactory manner. We all know there has been interference not only with the Com-

missioner for Railways but with other heads of departments. The Government are going to initiate a system now under which there are going to be endless appeals from men who the Commissioner thinks are not giving satisfactory service. If a man is put in charge of a department, he should, without interference, be given an opportunity of proving what he can do, and then, if it is found out he is the wrong man, let him get out and someone else come in his place. It is no use putting a man in a position and then taking half his authority away and expecting efficiency.

There are one or two matters upon which I would like information. The Bill states that—

"Any employee dismissed by the Commissioner may appeal from such dismissal."

Does that include a construction worker?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. MOORE: He is an employee of the Railway Department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. MOORE: The present Railways Act says, "Any employee of the staff," and now this Bill says, "Any employee." I thought the Act had been widened to cover everybody in the service of the department. It seems an extraordinary power to give. I cannot understand, if a principle is good in one case, why it should not be good in another. The Government introduced a Bill to give the Commissioner of State Enterprises absolutely autocratic powers—power to dismiss and transfer any employee under his jurisdiction. There is no Appeal Board for those employees. Yet, when the Government are dealing with the Commissioner for Railways and Public Service Commissioner, they allow an appeal as far as the Governor in Council, practically meaning the Minister. If the principle in the case of the Commissioner of State Enterprises is good, why should it not be equally as good in these other cases? To me it seems an extraordinary anomaly. The hon. member for Fitzroy pointed out what a good thing it was to do away with Deputy Commissioners, because it was only a waste of money having these officers with their secretaries and staffs in Rockhampton and Townsville. When the Government brought in the Bill in 1915 the hon. member congratulated the Government upon doing so because it meant adopting the system of decentralisation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The powers of the Deputy Commissioner are not being reduced.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member pointed out it would reduce their powers, as they would not have the same staff.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is reducing the expenses, but we don't reduce the powers of the General Manager.

Mr. MOORE: If you reduce the staff, you reduce the powers also.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your deductions are incorrect.

Mr. MOORE: If you reduce the staffs in the different areas, you must reduce the powers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The alteration is simply that wherever the words

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"Deputy Commissioner" appear we substitute "General Manager," giving the General Manager the same powers as were possessed by the Deputy Commissioner.

Mr. MOORE: It does not seem to me that they will have the same power. It is going to be for the benefit of the State that their powers are going to be reduced in those particular instances, because a triplication of staffs is not for the benefit of the State. The Government brought in the Bill providing for the Deputy Commissioner and his staff, and their action was heralded as one that was going to benefit the railways and make them pay.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Fitzroy merely pointed out that the alteration would tend to economy in the administration but there would be no reduction in power.

Mr. MOORE: The Government are going to centralise the power again, instead of decentralising it because they found that their previous action was a mistake.

Mr. HARTLEY: They still have the same power as they had three years ago.

Mr. MOORE: I do not think that they have the same power even in purchasing stores. The Commissioner will have that power in Brisbane. I cannot agree with the idea of the hon. member for Maryborough or the hon. member for Fitzroy that political interference with the Commissioner is desirable. In my opinion a man should be entirely free in his political opinions and should have the right to express them as he considers right, and not be victimised because he may express an opinion in conflict with the opinions of the Government of the day. It is all moonshine to say that because of a man's political opinions he will not carry out the duties allotted to him. It is marvellous to me how quickly the Government can find out the political opinions of a man when he gets a job. The average employer does not ask applicants for employment whether they are Labour men or Nationalists, as they hold that efficiency and efficiency alone should be the determining factor in securing employment.

Mr. GLEDSON: You don't believe that.

Mr. MOORE: I do.

Mr. GLEDSON: Why, some of us have been hunted from one end of Queensland to another, and did not get a chance.

Mr. MOORE: It is absurd to say that a man's political opinions have anything to do with his securing employment.

Mr. GLEDSON: It has everything to do with it.

Mr. MOORE: I cannot agree with the resolution passed at the Labour Convention at Emu Park in that respect. The only thing that should count is the man's ability, and not his politics. If we are going to get into the position that a man's politics should be of a certain brand before he is able to secure employment, what sort of conditions are we going to get in Queensland?

Mr. PEASE: You had it in Queensland for fifty years.

Mr. MOORE: No.

Mr. PEASE: You have it in the Federal sphere to-day.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member for Maryborough was able to point to one isolated

case in that respect, whereas we can point to dozens and dozens of cases that have occurred since this Government came into power.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE: They did not enter the service by examination but were pitchforked into it.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: And ex-politicians, too.

Mr. MOORE: It is no use my going on and giving names. We want to see men enter the public service on the lines laid down and that they should rise by their merits. It is absolutely essential that this should be the case, and, if the principle is going to be introduced that a man is to rise in the service because of his political opinions, we are not going to get a service that will be efficient or of benefit to the State. We know the dissatisfaction that occurs in the service to-day. That dissatisfaction exists because of the political appointments and political interference.

Mr. COLLINS: Name one of the political appointments.

Mr. MOORE: I do not know that the hon. member for Bowen wants me to mention the name of a single individual who entered the service in that way. He knows it has occurred. I could give the names in certain cases, but it is no use making it unpleasant for any individuals. I have no doubt that hon. members on the opposite side of the House would not care if I did so, because they have been known to victimise individuals.

Mr. COLLINS: How about the victimisation practised by your party?

Mr. MOORE: I have no doubt that, if the mentioning of a name would tend to discredit a man in the service and allow others to be promoted over him, the hon. members opposite would have no hesitation in doing so. I think that individuals should have the right to their political opinions. The hon. member has nothing to complain of, but I do not mean those men who are disturbers of the peace and agitators.

Mr. COLLINS: It was the disturbers of the peace who were our reformers.

Mr. MOORE: There are ways of reform, and there are reformers. There is no necessity to call men out on strike to be a reformer. Such action might be necessary in order that an individual should advertise himself.

Mr. COLLINS: If there had been no strikes there would have been no British race to-day.

Mr. MOORE: I am quite prepared to admit that in some instances strikes are a necessity, and have been a necessity. I admit that a strike is a necessity if legislation is brought into this House which is unreasonable and unworkable. I do say, though, that there have been any number of strikes in Queensland which have not been brought about for the benefit of the worker or for any reform, but have been brought about by men anxious to secure advertisement and jobs.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. DASH: The hon. member for Mirani brought the sugar-growers out on strike.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member for Mirani has the confidence of his electors. Throughout all the elections that he has

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fought and won he has kept his seat, notwithstanding the statements that have been made against him. When the hon. member for Fitzroy was speaking to-night he made the statement that the Appeal Board had been introduced by this Government in 1915. That statement is absolutely absurd. The Appeal Board was brought into existence in an Act passed in this House in 1905; it was extended in 1914, and altered again a little in 1915.

Mr. HARTLEY: What sort of a loaded-up Appeal Board was it?

Mr. MOORE: It was the same as that constituted from 1914 on. It was the late Government that brought in the Appeal Board under its present constitution. There is another very interesting thing [7 p.m.] that I should like to know, and that is the number of railway employees who spend their time on the Appeal Board appearing as representatives. Many times employees, instead of doing the work they are entitled to do, are down here on some other kind of business—

Mr. HARTLEY: You are opposed to it?

Mr. MOORE: Of course I am, when it is abused. There is no occasion for the number of men who put in their time in this fashion. If you are going to extend appeals like this, you are going to have men continually sitting on Boards listening to grievances over which the heads of departments should have jurisdiction.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why did you bring in the Board in 1905?

Mr. MOORE: I was merely pointing out that the hon. member for Fitzroy said the Appeal Board was brought in by this Government. I said it was not; I did not say that I agreed with it. I approve of it in certain circumstances, but not that it should be used on every possible occasion for some tiddly-winking grievance that should be within the jurisdiction of an official.

Mr. WEIR: Where did you get your authority about the constitution of the Board in 1905?

Mr. MOORE: From the Act itself. If the hon. member will peruse the 1905 and the 1914 Acts, which were passed before this Government came into power, he will see that this Appeal Board was constituted then the same as it is to-day.

Mr. WEIR: Nothing of the kind. Let us have the Act of 1905.

Mr. MOORE: I would have to go and get the volume. I have here the 1914 Act.

Mr. WEIR: You are talking about regulations regarding punishment—not the Appeal Board at all.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. WEIR: What is the constitution of that Board?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MOORE: The same as it is now.

Mr. HARTLEY: The employees' representative never sat on it.

Mr. MOORE: In 1914 the Appeal Board was constituted as follows:—

“A police magistrate, who shall be appointed by the Governor in Council for each of the divisions of the State respectively;

“Four employees (hereinafter called

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respectively ‘the employees’ representatives’), who shall be elected for each of the divisions respectively of the State;

“In the Southern division, the persons holding for the time being the offices of chief engineer, signal and light engineer, chief mechanical engineer, and general traffic manager; or, in the Central and Northern divisions respectively, the officers in control of traffic, maintenance, and locomotive work.”

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WEIR: Will the hon. member give the page?

Mr. MOORE: Page 7226 of volume 8.

Mr. WEIR: Where did you get your authority? You say there was an Appeal Board in 1905?

Mr. MOORE: Out of the Act.

Mr. WEIR: You are quoting the 1914 Act now.

Mr. MOORE: I have not got the 1905 Act by me. I have looked at it, and the hon. member is entitled to do the same thing. He will see that there was an Appeal Board in 1905.

Mr. WEIR: There never was. I worked under it

Mr. MOORE: There is another thing I would like information upon—that is the reason for having a different constitution for the Boards in North and Central Queensland. The General Manager is the only one entitled to sit on the Appeal Board in the Northern and Central divisions, while in the South there are four or five heads of departments who may sit on the Appeal Board. I cannot see the object of the change in the constitution.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no change. We are inserting the words “General Manager” wherever the words “Deputy Commissioner” now appear.

Mr. KIRWAN: That deals with the question of administration, and not with the Appeal Board.

Mr. MOORE: In the Central and Northern divisions the General Manager is the only one to sit on the Appeal Board, while in the Southern division there are five of them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What are you reading from?

Mr. MOORE: I am reading from the notes I made on the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You read the Bill. The words “General Manager” are inserted in place of the words “Deputy Commissioner.” That is a question of administration.

Mr. MOORE: I am referring to the Appeal Board.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is a misapprehension.

Mr. MOORE: I am not too clear on the point. I thought it was something that could easily be explained by the Minister, and I did not go fully into the question to find out the reason for the alteration.

I have not very much to say against the Bill as a whole. I believe the Appeal Boards will probably be abused, and I do not think it is a good thing to allow officers in authority to have their powers whittled away in every possible way. They ought to

be in full control. If you have not a satisfactory General Manager, then he ought to get out and allow somebody else to come in. The chief objection is in connection with the appeal to the Governor in Council—that is, to the Minister. We had an example the other day, as pointed out by the hon. member for Bremer, where men were put back in spite of the Commissioner. That is a very serious state of affairs. The hon. member wanted to know how it was done, and we all want to know how it was done. That was not the only occasion, and it will not be the only occasion, when such a thing has been done. When you get Ministers in a position such as they are in to-day, where they are dependent on the votes of their party, you will find political interference coming in and individuals wanting certain men shifted from their district. We have heard it said again and again by certain hon. members, "So-and-So is no good to me. I want to get him out of the district." What does the member do? He goes to the Minister and sees that it is done. That is what I object to. That is where the trouble comes in. Men are pushed out of their district, not because they are inefficient but because their political sympathies are not of the right sort.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a most cowardly statement to make.

Mr. MOORE: It may be cowardly, but it is true.

Mr. KIRWAN: That was done under your Government.

Mr. MOORE: It is a most extraordinary thing, but hon. members on the other side always try to shelter behind what a previous Government did. If they are doing things that are unjust, their excuse is that it was done under "your Government." Is it not a most extraordinary thing? This Government were going to bring in the millennium; there was not going to be political interference, and men were going to have freedom to express their views; but directly a man in the Government service expresses views contrary to the opinions held by the Government he is victimised; he is a doomed man. Consequently they have to keep their mouths shut. I believe in the Government servant having complete freedom outside office hours.

Mr. HYNES: You did not give them the right to take part in political meetings.

Mr. MOORE: Do you give them the right?

Mr. HYNES: Yes.

Mr. MOORE: You get a State school teacher or any other public servant to get up in a political meeting and oppose the Labour Government, and see how long he will keep his job.

Mr. HYNES: You refused to allow them any political right beyond exercising the franchise.

Mr. MOORE: I have heard it advocated by hon. members opposite in their meetings outside that persons who opposed them should not even be allowed to exercise the franchise. (Government laughter.) I have the Act of 1905 here now. The preamble reads—

"Whereas it is desirable to amend the laws relating to appeals by employees of the Railway Commissioner, and to make better provision for the hearing and determination of the same."

And so on. Section 1 reads—

"This Act shall be read and construed with the Railways Act of 1888 (herein referred to as the principal Act) and Acts amending the same, and may be cited as the Railways (Employees' Appeal) Act of 1905."

Section 2 reads—

"(1) Every appeal which, under the principal Act and Acts amending the same, may be made by an employee to the Commissioner shall hereafter be made to a Board which shall consist of five members—namely, the officers holding for the time being the offices of General Traffic Manager, Chief Engineer, and Locomotive Engineer, a police magistrate to be appointed by the Governor in Council for each of the divisions of the State, and an employee to be elected for each of the divisions of the State as hereinafter provided—three of whom shall form a quorum."

I think that the hon. member for Townsville will now be satisfied that the Appeal Board was formed by the previous Government. Instead of making the statement that I am endeavouring to mislead the House, perhaps he will be able to look up the Act.

Mr. HYNES: I am saying the Act was never used.

Mr. MOORE: I am not saying the Act was ever used; I am saying that provision was made in the Act of 1905, and it was widened in 1914 almost to the present scope.

Mr. HARTLEY: It was widened in 1915.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member's Government was not in power in 1914. In 1915 it was widened again. The Appeal Board has been there, and it has been an institution of the Railway Department since that time, but whether it has been used to any considerable extent I have no knowledge.

Mr. WEIR: It never was used. I worked under it.

Mr. MOORE: It is quite possible that the hon. member did not have any occasion to apply to the Appeal Board; he may possibly have had no grievance. I dare say that under the administration of the previous Government railway servants had no grievances and did not need an Appeal Board; they were satisfied with the justice they received from the head of the department. It is only when we get political interference with railway administration that we find the employees must have an Appeal Board to endeavour to get justice. That is one of the awkward things about it. As soon as outside influence, instead of seniority or merit, comes into play, you have grievances, and it is found necessary to have an Appeal Board before which men can put their case. That is the unfortunate position which we are getting into. The Minister says that the Commissioner agrees with the Bill. I sympathise with the Commissioner. I quite understand his position as head of the department under an Administration whose policy it is to lay down what shall be done. The Government say, "We are going to put this on the statute-book. Do you believe in it?" and the Commissioner naturally says "Yes."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is an insult to the Commissioner, because that is not the way it is put to him. He has a certain position, and he is protected by Act of Parliament.

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Mr. MOORE: He is protected to a certain extent.

Mr. COLLINS: Do not judge the Commissioner by what you would do yourself. He does not require you to champion his cause.

Mr. MOORE: The Commissioner does not require the Opposition to champion his cause, but I sympathise with him in his position. I know the difficulty of it. Hon. members opposite know that interference does come in in connection with this.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: But you do not believe in having no political control, do you?

Mr. MOORE: Of course I do, in regard to appointments.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I mean as regards administration.

Mr. MOORE: I do.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You and your party interviewed the Minister in 1921.

Mr. MOORE: I do not think the Minister can say that I have ever been to his office to exercise political influence.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said you and your party.

Mr. MOORE: I have never been to the hon. gentleman to ask him to override anything that the Commissioner has done.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said you and your party.

Mr. MOORE: I have been on two occasions to interview the Secretary for Railways in regard to the construction of railways, but not to override the decision of the Commissioner. I never did such a thing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You will have the evidence shortly.

Mr. MOORE: You can bring evidence with regard to other interviews. Every member of Parliament and every Minister knows that members of Parliament get requests from their constituents to do certain things. They have to introduce deputations with the object of which perhaps they do not agree, but it is part of the duty cast upon them by their membership of Parliament. A member who represents a district represents all shades of political opinion in it, and if a man opposed to him in politics asked him to do something for him he would do it; perhaps he would take him to the head of the department.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE interjected.

Mr. MOORE: I am perhaps more fortunate than the hon. gentleman. I have not had supporters who have asked me to do things of that sort, and if that kind of request was made to me I would go to them and tell them that I do not care to do that sort of thing. I do not think the Minister can ever accuse me of asking him to override the decisions of any of his officers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your political party asked me to override the decision of the Commissioner.

Mr. MOORE: I think I know what the hon. member is referring to, but as a member of the party I do not dictate the policy of the party as a whole. I do not suppose the Minister dictates the policy of the Labour party. He is guided by the decision of the majority, and he has to abide by it and carry it out.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Act under which the Commissioner was appointed was passed by your party.

Mr. MOORE: The Bill which we are considering takes authority from the head of the department, who has an official Appeal Board in most cases and a departmental board in other cases, and gives it to the Minister or the Governor in Council.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why do you show such vindictive hostility to the railway men?

Mr. MOORE: I am not showing vindictive hostility to the railway men. I am endeavouring to see that the administration is carried out on efficient lines and that outside influence is not allowed to creep in. If you are going to appoint or transfer a man because of his political opinions, you are going to have trouble and you are not going to get efficiency. I am not upset about the men or whether they have a chance of appealing or not, but I say that there are proper tribunals to which they can appeal. There is the head of the department whom the Government have placed in a position of trust because they think he is the right man for it, and having done that they should let him carry out the work as he thinks fit, and not allow him to be overridden by political influence. I think the Government will be well advised if they leave out that portion of the Bill.

Mr. LLOYD (*Enoggera*): Two objections to this measure have been advanced by the Opposition. One is that the Bill proposes to impose unreasonable restrictions on the Commissioner for Railways and that therefore it should be resisted. The other objection is that the restrictions exist already and that consequently this Bill is unnecessary. I leave it to hon. members opposite who will follow me to reconcile those two statements.

Let me deal now with the statement that the Appeal Board exists already. The Appeal Board which existed in 1914 may have done a certain amount of work in one or two respects, but it was a board to hear appeals against the decisions of the subordinate heads of the department only. It was not an Appeal Board in the case of a decision of the Commissioner. I remember one case in which I called upon the late Commissioner, and he advised me to go to one of the subordinate heads and get his decision because there was a possibility of an appeal from the decision of a subordinate head but none from his own.

We hear a great deal about the independence of the Commissioner—the independence which it is suggested that we are going to destroy and which it is also suggested never existed. I want to know when this independence of the Commissioner did exist. It certainly did not exist under the Government which preceded the present Government. At that time all, or nearly all, the dumping of people from outside the public service was done in the Railway Department. That was not only done by private members, but by Ministers too. When the Ministers of the Government who were in power prior to 1915 wished to get a poor relative or a friend or an elector into a Government position, he rarely went to those departments which come under the Public Service Act. He nearly always went to the Commissioner for Railways. It is a significant feature that the departments which the Ministers themselves controlled were generally avoided. The Ministers did not care to take the responsibility, and from that we can deduce this truth, that where the Ministers them-

selves are responsible for appointments, those appointments are more likely to be fairly made. The practice in former days was to take a man whom a member of Parliament had particular reasons for getting into the public service, whether he was qualified or not, along to the Commissioner for Railways, and then the Commissioner and not the Minister had to take the blame if the appointment was an injudicious one. Apparently that is what the Commissioner was there for. Speaking from my own experience, when I first entered this House in 1915 I represented a constituency in which there was a large number of railway men. When I first entered Parliament the railway men came to me on nearly every point. They used to come to me on most trivial matters. Apparently it was the practice under the Government that went before this one for a member of Parliament to intervene in everything. Now I find that for every one man who comes to me at the present time there must have been at least fifty who came to me before, simply because under the present Government things are really managed from inside the department, and there is less political interference now than there ever was. The Minister stated that the Commissioner had no objection to the provisions of the Bill. I have not the knowledge of inside railway working that some hon. members have, but I believe that in choosing the present Commissioner the Government chose on the whole the best man available, and I think the Commissioner very wisely agrees with the Government that it is desirable that there should be some appeal. Evidently he has sufficient confidence in his own powers of judgment that he believes that when he gives a decision there will not be much chance of its being overridden. At any rate he has sufficient confidence in the justice of his decisions that he is prepared to take the chance. We have heard this afternoon something about the necessity of rendering a man independent when you place him in charge of an enterprise. This thing has been talked about for years. I should like to know where this precedent came from. It is said to come from private enterprise. Nothing of the kind exists in private enterprise at all. You never find in private enterprise a man who is not working on his own capital entrusted with the supreme control of the enterprise he is conducting. The man working on his own capital is in a different position. Where you find a salaried man in charge of an enterprise he is subjected to restrictions far more numerous and far more onerous than the heads of Government departments are subjected to—not only the Commissioner for Railways, but the ordinary Under Secretaries. Even the employer working on borrowed capital—because the number of men in the outside world who work on their own capital is just as small as the number of business men who work on their own freeholds—is subject to all kinds of restrictions. The restrictions do not very often take the form of interference on behalf of the labouring man who is sacked, but in other ways they are far more vexatious and disastrous than the restrictions that may be placed on the heads of public departments.

The case of the Commonwealth Bank has been cited. It is cited as a triumph of the one-man system of government. The Commonwealth Bank was an enterprise which could not possibly have gone wrong. It

started with a monopoly of business which would have made the fortune of any financial institution that had management which could be described as sane. It required no particular ability.

Mr. KELSO: You are retracting now.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. LLOYD: I hear some indistinct rumblings from a novice on the other side of the House. I do not want to take any advantage of a novice, but if I hear any more of those rumblings I shall probably say something which that hon. member may not like. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. KELSO: I am saying something you don't like.

Mr. LLOYD: I suggest that the Opposition should provide the hon. member with either a megaphone or a muzzel. I would be satisfied with articulate utterances. I was citing the case of the Commonwealth Bank, and, although I do not wish to detract from the merits of the gentleman who controlled it, that was an institution which had no more chance of going wrong than the Customs House, as its revenue and profits were as assured as the revenue that goes into the Customs House. It has been said that we on this side of the House are after political preference. I am not aware of any such intention on the part of this party, and for my part I cannot see how the thing can possibly be worked. How can one know the political convictions of anyone else? Out of the whole population of Queensland I know the political opinions of only seventy-one men, and they are in this House with me. I know the convictions people tell me they have. The man who is very anxious to get a Government position believes that a certain profession of faith is necessary, and it is only human nature for him to make a profession of faith which he thinks is most likely to advance his own interests. I am quite certain that this party will never adopt anything in the way of political preference. (Opposition laughter.) That is, giving a position to an individual in preference to other individuals better qualified, simply because that individual professes to belong to a certain political faith. But there is this point to be considered: It is the business of the Government entrusted by the public with the carrying on of the public business on different lines to those on which it has been carried on before to see that it is properly served. If they find that there are people drawing Government pay who are prepared to offer obstructive resistance to the carrying out of that policy, it is the duty of that Government to deal with them. If, for instance, a political party has been before the country for a quarter of a century advocating the system of day labour in Government works, and if at last the people of the country returns it to power with an overwhelming majority, it is its duty to make as great a success as possible of day labour on public works. If it finds employees who, entrusted with the carrying out of those works, are obsessed with the idea that day labour must necessarily be a failure, it will be necessary for the Government to replace those individuals by other individuals who are not hindered by such an obsession. As far as I am concerned, the loyal servant of any Government is the man who will carry out that Government's policy. I pay no heed whatever to a man's

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political professions. It is not every man who says, "Lord, Lord," as we read in the Scriptures, "who shall inherit the Kingdom," but the "man that [7.30 p.m.] doeth the will" of the Divine Power in heaven. That is the sensible policy for a Government to carry out. The test is whether the particular public servant is making an honest attempt to the best of his abilities to carry out the policy that the Government have decided upon. It is the duty of the Government to stand by that individual, no matter what professions he may make of political faith; and it is equally the duty of the Government to remove that individual if he is taking an opposite policy.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): As a person who has been intimately associated with the industrialism of the State I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it is high time that something was done with the Railways Act as it exists to-day. I am rather surprised to find that hon. members of the Opposition are talking about political interference. Not very long ago, in 1921, the leader of the Country party wrote to the Secretary for Railways endeavouring to get him to exercise his influence in overriding the decision of the Commissioner for Railways. (Opposition laughter.) A letter was written by the hon. member for Dalby in 1921—he was then leader of what might be termed the bucolic section of the Opposition—to the Secretary for Railways, deprecating the action of the Commissioner in closing certain gatehouses and requesting him to interfere and to override that decision.

Mr. CORSER: And he did override it.

Mr. HYNES: And yet they talk about political interference. This may be a small matter, but at the same time a big principle is involved. If they seek political interference in this small matter, they will also appeal to the Minister on questions of vital importance to the community.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HYNES: We repudiate the charge of political interference. I have suffered victimisation at the hands of the Tory predecessors of hon. members opposite—

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No! No!

Mr. HYNES: And there are others on this side of the House who have been victimised by Tory Governments, and who have had the boot put into them and have been put off their jobs by reason of the fact that they have endeavoured to do something to improve the conditions of the employees of the Railway Department. This measure is merely a recognition of one of the fundamental principles of British justice. It is extending to the employees of the Commissioner for Railways the right to appeal against the decision or action of an individual. It is something, in my opinion, which observes one of the fundamental canons of British justice, yet Opposition members are opposing it bitterly. What right has any individual to take away from any person in the community his living, the right of employment, without that person having a right to appeal to a higher authority before that sentence is carried out? That is what this measure is calculated to bring about. I know that hon. members opposite, if they got over here, would consider very seriously handing the whole of the railway system over to private enterprise.

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OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No! No! and laughter.

Mr. HYNES: They told us at the hustings during the elections that they would do so, and the deputy leader of the United party, speaking at Ingham in December last, said that it was high time that something was done, that the Government control of the railways had proved a failure; and he instanced the great success which had been made by private enterprise in connection with the American railways. The only inference that intelligent people can draw from such a statement is that the party now the Opposition would favourably consider the adoption of the American system of private ownership of the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They believe in private exploitation.

Mr. HYNES: As the Minister says, the Opposition believe in private exploitation. In the Federal sphere of politics they have perpetrated the same thing. They have sold the Commonwealth Woollen Mills. The anti-Labour factions of the Opposition—it does not matter whether they are members of the Country party, members of the United party, or members of the Federal anti-Labour party—all subscribe to the doctrine of *laissez faire*, and they are opposed to a Government embarking in commerce and industry. That opinion has been freely expressed by the leader of the party of the same political kidney as hon. members opposite in the sphere of Federal politics, and that only recently.

I know that the right of appeal has been looked for by the employees in the Railway Department for many years past. It is a right that any individual in this community should have—the privilege of appeal when his livelihood is taken away from him by an individual. That is what this measure is going to bring about. It will bring about a more efficient and more satisfied service than we have at the present time. If hon. members opposite are really desirous of seeing the railways become more efficient and of seeing a more contented service, instead of getting up and decrying and disparaging our attempts to bring about a betterment of the position they should give us their whole-hearted support in connection with the carrying of the measure which is before the House to-night.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): The hon. member for Townsville has referred to the disabilities that he experienced under a Tory Government. The previous Government, when in office, carried out the railway administration to the credit of themselves and of the State.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: They showed satisfaction and contentment in the service, and they showed a surplus. The hon. member did not suffer any disadvantages, as he was not in the State at the time. How can he state that he suffered personal disabilities when he was not a citizen of the State? If his arguments are to be based on statements so devoid of fact as that is, we cannot take any notice of his statements at all.

Mr. HYNES: Who is not a citizen? I am a citizen and a better citizen than the hon. member. My mother is also a citizen of this State, and a better citizen than you are.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CORSER: Perhaps she is; I am not going to say anything against your mother.

Mr. HYNES: She is a better citizen than you are.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CORSER: Under parliamentary procedure I must accept the hon. member's statement; he need not keep repeating it. The hon. member also infers that the members of the Opposition are not out to provide or support an appeal. The Opposition desire that the employees of the Railway Department should receive a fair deal, but they do not believe in unnecessary appeals. The Government come along with an appeal that is based on the desire and the recommendation of the employees themselves. They are to be members of the Appeal Board. The Government are going to give to the railway employees a far greater opportunity than is given to other employees, to holders of land, or anyone else. They are going to give to them all that is desired, and yet the hon. gentleman says we are trying to stop the Government from bringing about a more contented service. The Government have been in power for eight years, and, if the service is discontented, why have the Government not rectified or attempted to rectify the position before? They have not shown where the service is not contented. We do not know that the employees in the railway service are not contented. I think they are contented.

Mr. HYNES: Your party brought about a contented service by booting out the people who were trying to improve the conditions.

Mr. CORSER: Whom did we boot out?

Mr. HYNES: Dozens and dozens.

Mr. CORSER: Give one instance.

Mr. HYNES: I was booted out because I tried to bring about better conditions.

Mr. CORSER: You were booted out probably because you were trying to foment trouble.

Mr. HYNES: You used batons against them.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Your friends used firearms to shoot them down.

Mr. HYNES: That is a lie.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must withdraw that expression, as it is unparliamentary.

Mr. HYNES: I withdraw the remark; but the hon. member is not correct in stating that I shot people down.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Not you.

Mr. HYNES: His powers of imagination are very vivid.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member for Townsville stated that hon. members on this side had used batons against those who disagreed with us, and the hon. member for Albert is quite right when he says that the friends of the hon. member for Townsville used firearms against those who disagreed with them.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: They used firearms in a political disturbance.

Mr. COLLINS: Who asked for the military to be brought to Brisbane? (Disorder.)

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: I was not in the House when the military were asked for. Who asked for them?

Mr. COLLINS: Your party asked for them.

Mr. POLLOCK: Have you ever been "shot"? (Laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: After the next election the hon. member will be shot, and he had to assist to close the parliamentary bar so that he would not be "shot." (Laughter.) I do not want to say anything about how he was nearly being shot in the markets last year. (Loud laughter.)

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: I remember being "shot" out of here.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: We want a contented service. We want to bring about fair conditions for all employees, but we do not want the opinions only of stump orators; we do not want the opinions of agitators; we want the opinions of the managers of the Railway Department. The policy of the Government is to accept the opinions of the employees. We do not want any one section to dominate the opinions of the others. We do not say that, because the majority are employees, they should dominate the interests of the State. We do not say that the Commissioner should be there as a figure-head, that his whole authority should be stripped from him and that he should be dictated to by the unions or anyone else.

Mr. KIRWAN: Don't you believe in political control?

Mr. CORSER: We do not believe in political control of our railways. If the hon. member had intelligence enough to understand our platform, he would know that it stands for the wiping out of political control in the Railway Department.

Mr. KIRWAN: It is like the peace of the Almighty—"which passeth all understanding."

Mr. CORSER: We believe in placing the Railway Department under business management, and, if we have the opportunity of administering that department of the State, we are going to bring about business control as against political control.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Your trouble is that the people do not believe it.

Mr. CORSER: Our trouble is that there was too much deception on the part of the other side, and there was too much printing at the cost of the State of that which was not true, and the people were not given an opportunity, at the cost of the State, to learn what we would do. The promises of the Government with regard to railway administration and all other administration is heard only during election time, and after election we find, as was admitted by the hon. member for Townsville, that they have a discontented railway service. We are told that the employees are not contented, and that in asking for sane administration we are supposed to be opposed to something which will bring about a contented department. All we ask for is sane administration. No member of the Opposition has condemned any desire on the part of the Government to appoint a fair tribunal to enable every employee to have a say as to whether he has been justly treated or not. Is this not the same Government that went in for retrenchment in the Railway Department last year? They

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retrenched the employees, although during the election they told the whole State that they were out to preserve employment in the department and were against retrenchment. Yet they went in for the largest retrenchment that we have had for many years.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CORSER: There was no appeal then, and we asked for an appeal. The hon. member for Townsville referred to the leader of the Opposition, who sent a protest to the Commissioner or to the Minister against the desire of the Government to cut out post-mistresses who were railway officials at country railway stations.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A protest to the Minister against the Commissioner's action, and asked him to take action.

Mr. CORSER: Whom were we to go to? To the union?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You wanted me to exercise political influence over the Commissioner.

Mr. CORSER: Did you not do it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman did not use that influence, and yet we got our rights.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You got them through the Commissioner—not through me.

Mr. CORSER: It shows what a sensible man the Commissioner is, and it shows what a small man the Minister is when he could not prevent us getting our request.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I would not interfere on behalf of the party who advocate independent control.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman interferes in all other control; he interferes with the head of the department on the matter of retrenchment; he interferes with other matters; but in this case, because it came from the Country party in the interests of country people, he was not going to interfere.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You wanted me to use political influence.

Mr. CORSER: Political influence was being used by the Minister to wipe out that thing which was fair. That is where the political influence was used—to take away from us facilities which the country people had—and because we had a good case we made representations to the Minister and we made personal representations to the Commissioner. We put our case in writing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I sent you back to him.

Mr. CORSER: We went to the business authority, and we were able to keep those railway stations open; we were able to keep the officials there.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: What is the Commissioner for?

Mr. CORSER: It is his function.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: Why did you try to pass him?

Mr. CORSER: Why did the Minister try to close down these stations and then put the blame on to the Commissioner?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner took that action himself.

[Mr. Corser.

Mr. CORSER: We are criticised because we took action.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are all log-rollers when you get the chance—political log-rollers.

Mr. CORSER: Everything we do in the interests of the State must be log-rolling. What is this Bill? Is this log-rolling? They already have their workers' log, they have got their unions, their courts, their arbitrators, and now the Government are asking for a further appeal. There is no big fuss about it. We are not raising a big fuss about anything that is fair. Yet hon. members opposite condemn us and say that we do not want to give them a fair go when they have been retrenched.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why this bitter hostility?

Mr. CORSER: Would not the Minister like that statement to appear as though it was the expression of the opinion of hon. members on this side? We have no hostility against the railway servants. We recognise that the service can only be conducted fairly and well by giving conditions which will be reasonably fair and comfortable for them.

Mr. FOLEY: Read the speeches of all those who spoke before you on your side.

Mr. CORSER: The speeches of hon. members on this side have all been in the interests of the department and the men, and not one sentiment has been expressed against them.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER interjected.

Mr. CORSER: It is better than not reconciling any of them, because we have got a loss of £10,000,000 in connection with our railways.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You have got the benefit of that.

Mr. CORSER: We have got none of the benefits of that expenditure. The line in our district is the busiest railway in Southern Queensland.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the hon. member to speak to the question before the House.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member for Townsville said that we had claimed that, if we were returned to power, we would hand over the railways to private enterprise. That statement has not been made by us; it is not the policy of the Opposition. It was not Labour that established the Government control of railways. The Liberals first instituted railways under this system before Labour ever saw the Treasury benches—before they ever saw a seat in the House at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you admit then that you are the lineal descendants of those people?

Mr. CORSER: We admit that it was not Labour that brought about State-owned railways. Labour had not one seat in Parliament at that time; yet Labour will claim the whole of the credit for this State enterprise.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CORSER: The only difference is that under their administration the railways are in debit, while under the other administration they were in credit. I am very sorry that there is this discontent in the service, and anything the Opposition can do to bring about a better state of things will be done.

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*): I have to offer a few comments on this amending Bill which has been introduced by the Secretary for Railways. As one who has worked in the department, I think I am entitled to say something about the matter, particularly in view of some of the statements made by hon. members opposite. First of all, I desire to congratulate the Minister on having introduced this Bill, which I believe will generally have a beneficial effect throughout the Railway Department, and will lead to contentment and to a more efficient service.

Mr. CORSER: Is it the result of your report? (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. KIRWAN: The first principle of the Bill which I wish to deal with is the one that permits of the representation of the men on departmental inquiries. The hon. member for Maryborough, in discussing this particular principle, gave expression to the opinion that with departmental inquiries it was quite possible that there would be a lesser number of appeals. With that view I entirely agree. We all remember the Murphy's Creek disaster. We have a recollection of the heads of the department sitting in judgment on the men and recommending for dismissal three of the men who were on that train. Owing to the deaths which followed on the second accident, it became necessary to have a public inquiry, and the evidence which came out at that inquiry exonerated the three men of the rank and file, and was responsible for some of the heads of the department being dealt with. But what would have happened had there been no fatal results from that second collision? The departmental heads would have sat in judgment on the men and condemned them when they themselves should have been condemned. The hon. member for Wynnum said that the effect of this Bill, when it comes into operation, will be in the direction of less efficiency in the Railway Department. He inferred that the heads of the department would not care what manner of administration there is in the department. Personally, I do not think that statement is justified, but I am here to say that some of them do not seem to care what goes on so far as efficiency is concerned, and they cannot be less efficient if any number of amending Bills are passed. Another hon. member said that men in authority should have power. So they have. The judges of the Supreme Court have power to sentence a man to death provided he is convicted by a jury.

Hon J. G. APPEL: Not death—the death sentence is abolished in this State.

Mr. KIRWAN: To satisfy the hon. member I can go outside the State or to the time of their own administration of affairs. Under the administration of hon. members opposite it was possible in the case of a criminal, although he might have the blackest record in the Commonwealth or in the world, to appeal to the Executive for mercy, and if the Executive Council, in their wisdom, decided to recommend that the death penalty should take effect, it did not prevent the criminal from appealing to the Governor of the State and asking for his intervention in the direction of mercy. If that practice obtained in regard to a criminal who had been tried by twelve of his peers and convicted, why should it not be allowed to a railway man who has a decent record? The hon. member for Murilla said that the railways should be placed beyond political control. Imagine hon. members opposite talking

about the necessity of divorcing Government administration from political control! I have a recollection of this Government passing a Bill to deal with the administration of the Government Savings Bank and the State Advances Corporation. They appointed a well-known public servant in the person of Mr. Fowles, who was Under Secretary to the Treasury, as Commissioner of the bank. They gave him powers which practically rendered him immune from political control. He was in the position of being able to tell any hon. member who went to him and made representations to him as the result of letters from or of a personal interview with a constituent, that he would take no notice of his views. He administered the institution under his control on those lines. Did hon. members opposite, who now say they do not believe in political control, get up in the House and extol Mr. Fowles because he treated hon. members in that way? Nothing of the kind! The hon. member for Murilla got up in the House and moved that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into the administration of this gentleman who was beyond political control. That shows the absolute hypocrisy of hon. members opposite, and reminds me of the words of Carlyle, when he said, "Good Lord, deliver us from cant."

Mr. VOWLES: The Commissioner was defying Parliament.

Mr. KIRWAN: The hon. member for Murilla, as will be seen in "Hansard" for 1917, moved for the appointment of a Royal Commission. I will give one or two illustrations to show the objections which hon. members opposite have to departments which are not susceptible to political control—that is to the representations of members who go there for their constituents. On page 401 of "Hansard" for 1917 I find this—

"The Secretary for Public Lands: We only got the Bank Act altered last year. They suffered your rotten system for ten or twelve years before that.

"Mr. MORGAN: Whether they suffered our rotten system or not, the Minister, I am pleased to know, recognises that it was rotten, and as it has not been altered, it must be rotten now. If it was rotten four or five years ago, it must be pretty putrid now."

"Putrid" because it was under no political control. That is the hon. member's definition of "no political control." Then, in pointing out how the bank worked because members could not get the views of their particular constituents recognised when they wanted a loan, the hon. gentleman, as reported on the same page, said—

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Mr. VOWLES: You abolished the bank afterwards.

Mr. KIRWAN: We did not abolish it afterwards. It was taken over by the Commonwealth. We find that the hon. member also said on the same page—

"They even had the cheek to ask that man, who applied for £200 for unspecified purposes, and has been told that he can only have £50, how he intended to use the amount had the same been granted! I think one and all will agree with me that that does not show business propensities so far as the bank is concerned. That is certainly not a letter written by a bank which is desirous of doing business, but rather of one which wishes to

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put obstacles in the way, so that at last he will say, 'Oh, blow the bank'—or something stronger—we will try to get the money somewhere else, or do without it altogether, sooner than go to the trouble of writing again. That is what is happening day after day, and nobody knows it better than the Minister for Public Lands."

That is a sample of administration under non-political control. The hon. member for Burnett had a good deal to say a few minutes ago about the advantages of non-political control. In 1917, as reported on page 405, that hon. member said—

"A settler writes to say—

"The way the Agricultural Bank don't do business is carried to a pitch of elegance somewhere near pawubroking. Anyhow, I got my loan in two lots—the forms to purchase stock about a week before the cheque for unspecified purposes. Time it took ran into the fifth month. I know my case is not alone, and it's time they were scarified about their methods."

Those are illustrations which go to prove that hon. members opposite did not believe in administration which is above political control. They denounced the administration of Mr. Fowles because he would not listen to their representations, and the hon. member for Burnett gloried in the fact that he was able to go to the Commissioner for Railways and make certain representations to him and induce him to revoke a certain decision. The Commissioner would not have revoked that decision if it had not been for the political representations of a political party. The point is that hon. members opposite now wish to give the Commissioner for Railways absolute control. Suppose that we passed a Bill this session to give him absolute control of the railways, and power to run them on business and commercial lines. What would happen? Up would go fares and freights. Who would be the first to call out? Hon. members opposite. Every member of the Country party would denounce him and point out that he had too much power and was not fit to run the railways, because he made them pay.

The hon. member for Murilla said that he did not believe in interference with a man because of his political opinions. I have a pretty keen recollection of what happened to me in the Railway Department of Queensland.

Mr. VOWLES: What happened?

Mr. KIRWAN: I have a pretty keen recollection of the victimisation practised by the Government of the party opposite, which the hon. member for Dalby sat behind.

Mr. VOWLES: You were promoted.

Mr. KIRWAN: Certainly I was promoted, but I do not know that any hon. member on the opposite side helped me to win Brisbane in 1912. I had a pretty tough battle. I also know that on that occasion there was nothing against me as a servant of the Commissioner except my political opinions. My record, as hon. members can see in the Railway Department, was of a first-class character, and, if it had not been for the deliberate and vindictive victimisation of the party over there, I might still have been on the Central Station helping the hon. member on to 8S, or the Western Mail, as it is known.

Mr. SIZER: Misdirecting him. (Laughter.)

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Mr. KIRWAN: I never misdirected anybody. The only people who got into the wrong trains when I was at the Central Station were those who were deaf, and that was no fault of mine. It is a well-known fact that, when I went on duty on Sunday mornings I disturbed the religious services in the City Tabernacle on Wickham terrace and the Presbyterian Church in Creek street. (Laughter.) I have no complaint to make against the Railway Department or the officials—I want to be fair—but I have a distinct complaint against the Government of that day because of their victimisation of me on account of my political opinions. However, I am here, and perhaps I ought not to complain of the turn of the wheel of fortune.

The leader of the Country party said that men who were disturbers of the peace ought to be dealt with. Possibly these are the only men who were dealt with by his political party. Disturber of the peace! That was the charge laid against him who was extended on Calvary's Cross. It has been the charge laid against some of the best men the world has ever seen.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear; all reformers!

Mr. KIRWAN: If the charge is laid against an ordinary railway man he need not be ashamed of it. If it were not for the disturbers of the peace, the progress which we inherit, the political privileges which we enjoy, the measure of freedom to which we were born, would never have been known. Every man who took part in agitation and made himself a live member of the great movements which brought these things about was described as a disturber of the peace but many years afterwards justice was done to him.

I hope that the results of this Bill will be beneficial to the department. Sometimes I think it would not be a bad idea to give the Commissioner carte blanche for twelve months and allow him to run the railways from his own point of view. I venture to say that, if that course were followed, nobody would more strongly denounce his administration than hon. members on the Opposition benches—just as they denounced Mr. Fowles when this House gave him full control of the State Advances Corporation.

Mr. CORSER: You took the Government Savings Bank away.

Mr. KIRWAN: The hon. member knows that is not right. He will find in the "Hansard" I have just quoted some of the things he said about Mr. Fowles, even to declaring that if he were executed in Market square it would be scant justice.

Mr. CORSER: He should never have had anything to do with the advances to settlers.

Mr. KIRWAN: There is the miserable pretence, the transparent subterfuge, which the hon. member tries to shelter behind. When he is pinned down, and it is pointed out to him that he is a humbug, so far as political principles are concerned, he tries to shelter himself behind the statement that Mr. Fowles did not administer the bank properly, or something of that kind. The point I want to drive home is that, whenever an opportunity has been given to a public official in a high capacity to administer a department without political control, there has been an outcry from hon. members opposite.

Mr. CORSER: What about that £250,000 saving that you were going to make in the Railway Department?

Mr. KIRWAN: If the hon. member gives notice of that question, I will answer it to-morrow. (Laughter.) In New South Wales the Nationalist party are grumbling about the excessive power of the Railway Commissioners. Ministers are complaining that they cannot get proper accommodation, that the Commissioners takes no notice of them, and I make bold to say that an amending Bill will be introduced in that State to deal with the administration of the railways.

Reference has been made to the Commonwealth Bank. What is the proposition of representatives of the party whom hon. members opposite helped to return at the last Federal election? Are they going to appoint a Commissioner or a Governor beyond political control to take charge of the bank? Nothing of the kind. They are going to appoint a board, and, if we can believe rumours, this board is to be composed of Mr. Massey Greene and one or two other defeated political candidates, and, undoubtedly, they will carry out the political policy of the National party so far as the administration of that bank is concerned. I trust that we shall hear very little from hon. members opposite that they stand for no political control. So far as I know, there is no party that stands more for political control and has exercised it to a greater extent than the political party opposite. The only fault I have to find is that the Labour Government are not game to exercise political control to the same extent as hon. members opposite exercised it when they held the reins of Government.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I really thought that on the second reading debate of this Bill we were going to deal with amendments of the Railways Act. It seems to me the discussion is far foreign to that.

Mr. COLLINS: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. VOWLES: I would not have spoken on the matter if it had not been that certain statements made by hon. members opposite require a reply from my point of view. In the first place, the hon. member for Townsville made reference to a certain incident that occurred during the last session, and to a letter which I wrote and which was referred to on a previous occasion during this session, where I, as leader of the Country party, wrote to the Secretary for Railways asking him to take into consideration—the matter was done fairly and aboveboard, and in black and white, and I can produce the correspondence now—a matter of great moment to certain widows and women generally who were looking after gatehouses. They were the recipients from the Federal Government of the small sum of 5s. a week for handing out stamps for the convenience of the general public. In my letter to the Minister I asked that these women be permitted to retain these fees and do that service to the public. That is what hon. members opposite attempted to condemn or described as political interference. We merely ask that these widows—whom we hear so much about the Labour Government protecting—should be permitted to continue to receive that additional remuneration of 5s. per week and carry out those services. The Minister is silent. He said that we were not successful in our political interference. The fact remains that those services were continued to the general public, and these women are receiving the additional 5s. per week. That is one instance that hon. members opposite would bring up to show that the party to which I belong would put the Railway Commissioner and every officer in his department under political control. The platform of the party that I have the honour to belong to provides that the railways should be carried on by the Commissioner as a business concern, free from political control. If the Government would recognise that as a general principle, I submit that all the amendments of the principal Act that are sought to-day would not be necessary. If you are going to run a business on business lines, you are not going to have it hampered with the constant irritation of appeals or interference from the lowest class of employees right up to the Governor in Council. It is absurd to suggest that the prerogative of mercy in the case of a man sentenced to death can be compared with the case of a person who is guilty, possibly, of the enormous crime of being drunk on duty or coming late to duty, and saying that that person should have an ultimate appeal to the Governor in Council. That is too absurd altogether. The appeals to-day are occupying so much valuable time of highly-paid officials that it is becoming a system which is causing very big expenditure in our Railway Department.

Mr. COLLINS: You cannot spend too much money in good government.

Mr. VOWLES: You would imagine to hear some of the remarks to-night from hon. members opposite that they were creating some new reform.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES: What do we find in following back the Railways Acts? I venture to say that, if you go back to 1905, you will find that the conditions which obtained then with regard to the right of appeal were better than they are to-day.

Mr. HARTLEY: They were not. There was no appeal against promotion.

Mr. VOWLES: Now the Labour Government find that it is necessary to create all sorts of Appeal Courts. If the administration is as it should be, and in the interests of the employees—the Government allege that the administration is in the interests of the employees—and free from political control, why is it necessary to have these Appeal Courts now when they were not necessary in 1905?

Mr. HARTLEY: There was a system of official tyranny in 1905.

Mr. VOWLES: We have never heard of it except in isolated cases, where men have come along and have eventually got into political life as the result of their own representations, and because they said they had been victimised. They made martyrs of themselves. What do we find now? I have followed the history of the Appeal Courts in the course of my business, and I know something about them. You will find that a man appeals on every possible occasion on the off-chance of some success through sentiment, influence, or anything at all that will come to his rescue. It has got to that stage now

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that even heads of departments have been reprimanded in certain cases because they have done their duty. They have temporarily suspended men, and in some cases, where the person concerned has been acquitted, the official who is his senior and who was the cause of having him temporarily suspended had been rapped over the knuckles. I am talking about cases that I know of. There is too much political interference. The whole of these appeals—even to the higher court in the Governor in Council—are there so that the man may have a chance at every stage—not that he expects that justice is going to be done, but that a certain amount of mercy may be extended to him by the Minister.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: What harm is there in that?

Mr. VOWLES: If you were proceeding on those lines commercially, you would never be done with trouble. We do not want to engender that spirit into our Railway Department which is going to result in constant semi-litigation and the waste and delay of valuable time and valuable service.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: How many appeals are there every year?

Mr. VOWLES: They are pretty frequent. What do hon. members opposite quote? They quote their own personal cases of victimisation. We have heard the hon. member for Brisbane. The first time I heard him speak in this House on railway matters he was going to revolutionise the railways and save £250,000 a year. I wish to goodness he would come along now, because the expenditure has gone up at such an alarming rate that, if he were prepared to apply himself in the manner in which he said he was able to do, he would be able to save us £1,250,000 instead of the £250,000 that he spoke about in those days. I am rather surprised that there has been great silence on the part of the Government with respect to certain statements made by one of their members, who told us about "scientific sabotage" in the Railway Department. I take it that that is a charge made by an hon. member who is living in a railway town against his fellow workmen, you might say.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: The matter is sub judice.

Mr. VOWLES: It is not. It is not before any court. It is now before a departmental board of inquiry. I see by to-day's paper that Mr. Martens, speaking at Bundaberg, confirms the statement made by a Government member that there is "scientific sabotage" going on in the Railway Department. If that is going on all the time, why all this talk about a court of inquiry to inquire into the wrongs of the man who is engaged by the department? Why not have a court of inquiry to find out what is becoming of that money which has to be found by the general taxpayer to make up the shortages and losses in this department? Reference was made to-night to certain remarks which were made by the hon. member for Burnett about Mr. Fowles when he was sole Commissioner in charge of the Agricultural Bank. Why should we object to Mr. Fowles as Commissioner? We did not attempt to use political influence outside. Hon. members on both sides of the House complained that Mr. Fowles was defying the will of Parliament and that he would not carry out the spirit of the legislation. He

was eventually got rid of, and so was his bank.

Mr. CORSER: What did he get?

Mr. VOWLES: We do not know, but we are not worrying to-night about what he got. We did not go round organisations and use the political pull. What we had to say is in "Hansard," and it is an awful pity that in many of the instances that come before the Government the evidence is not all put down in order that they can read it and decide for themselves whether the decision is a fair and just one. We have only to look at the case mentioned by the Minister, where the letter is in black and white. That is the way we do our business. What we have to say about the Commissioner is in "Hansard." That counts and carries weight, and where the political pull comes in is where the friend of an organisation, the recognised friend of the Government, can come along and dig one of his political friends in the ribs. That is what is described as "under the cushion." That is the thing that goes on with the appointments. The hon. member for Sandgate has been charged with having made certain statements in Rockhampton.

Mr. HARTLEY: Not only charged, but I proved them out of the newspaper.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member never proved anything. An hon. member came along afterwards and read something.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is the paragraph I referred to.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member did not produce the paragraph. What were the sentiments expressed in that paragraph? They were the same sentiments that we all expressed—that the railways cannot pay if you are going to load up the service with unnecessary men. The late hon. member for Maranoa, the Hon. J. M. Hunter, admitted in this Chamber that there were 3,000 men in the service more than were necessary.

Mr. GLEDSON: That was your statement.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member for Maranoa made that statement in reply to a question in the House. He said that there were 3,000 more men in the railway service than were necessary at that time.

Mr. HARTLEY: Where are they?

Mr. VOWLES: The Hon. J. M. Hunter at that time was a Minister of the Crown, and his statement is on record.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Produce the record.

Mr. VOWLES: I am not dealing with that phase of the question.

Mr. HYNES: Stick to the facts.

Mr. VOWLES: Those are facts. The hon. member is too much of a novice to know what was said here in those days.

Mr. HYNES: I am novice enough to wake up to your arguments. I am awake to those 6s. 8d. tricks of yours.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member must have been fraternising with the Assistant Home Secretary. When you have those admissions, it is only reasonable, if you are going to put the department on proper lines, that you should go back to the starting point given to us by the Hon. J. M. Hunter—that the Railway Department has been overloaded unnecessarily, presumably with friends and

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political appointees of the Government. We should start from there and put it on business lines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have less employees per mile of railway than you had, so what is the use of talking bunkum?

Mr. VOWLES: Can the Minister tell me the proportion of employees per mile?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, it is less per mile of railway than under your Government.

Mr. VOWLES: We had the same number of train miles as at present, but there are now less services, higher fares, and higher freights, yet everything is topsy-turvy. (Government interjections.)

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. VOWLES: I admit, Mr. Speaker, that I have got away from the principles contained in the Bill.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member can deal with that matter on the Estimates.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member for Brisbane gave the reason why he left the service, and, as nothing was said about that, I thought possibly that it would not be out of place if I referred to certain matters connected with the service. There is not a great deal contained in the new principles in the Bill, but it seems to me that we are taking away from the Commissioner those powers which were vested in him originally. We are taking them away gradually and are surrounding him with trouble, and not placing him in the position to carry on this big railway concern in the way that it should be carried on.

Mr. HYNES: That resolution that was quoted to-night is likely to take away his powers from the cakehouse.

Mr. VOWLES: I do not know what the hon. member is talking about when he mentions the cakehouse. I have never been in one in my life.

Mr. HYNES: You have been in plenty of public-houses.

Mr. VOWLES: And I have seen you there, too. If we are going to run a big State enterprise like the Railway Department profitably, it must be run on commercial lines, and in order to do so the Commissioner must be independent of politics. When the hon. gentleman talks about a board being started to support the Commissioner to carry out the railway policy, and when he says it is the intention of our political party to make that board a political one, he is not telling the truth. The object is to have a board composed of railway experts representative of the North, Centre, and South. It should carry out a line of policy for the railways, and the Commissioner would be the chairman of the board. If any Government is prepared to work the railways on those lines, it will be found that, instead of having an accumulated deficit of £10,000,000—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You had an accumulated deficit of £8,000,000, at any rate.

Mr. VOWLES: Who had?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You and your party.

Mr. VOWLES: Over how many years?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You had a deficit of over £8,000,000.

Mr. VOWLES: Over how many years?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: How many years have we had? You had £8,000,000 of a deficiency.

Mr. VOWLES: £8,000,000 in fifty years; but the present Government have had £10,000,000 in seven years.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You had £8,000,000, anyway.

Mr. VOWLES: The deficit under this Government is getting higher and higher every year. It is like a barometer—it is rising and rising. When the time arrives to run enterprises such as the railways on business lines, instead of having these accumulated deficits, and deficits each year, and the rate of interest invested on our railways rising—

Mr. HYNES: Do you know there has been a war?

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. VOWLES: Yes, I know there has been a war. I know, too, that the war is well over.

Mr. PEASE: Who won the war?

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman did not.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! These matters are quite outside the question under discussion.

Mr. VOWLES: I do not propose to trespass on the time of the House any further. The Bill is purely a Committee one. There are only one or two principles to consider, and it was not my intention to speak at all, otherwise I would have spoken early this afternoon, but certain things were said referring to matters that occurred during last session when I was leader of the party on this side of the House, and, although it was somewhat irregular, I deemed it my duty to reply to them.

Mr. HYNES: It was something which showed your inconsistency.

Mr. VOWLES: No; the paltriness of it might cause the hon. member not to refer to it again in the future. The Minister has admitted it by his silence.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will reply when the hon. member sits down and expose his insincerity.

Mr. VOWLES: The Minister and his department would deprive me if they could of the credit of securing justice for those widows and orphans concerned even if it was only to the extent of 5s. a week each.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I want to congratulate the Secretary for Railways upon introducing this Bill, which is long overdue. The ex-leader of the Country party, the hon. member for Dalby, says there is very little in the Bill. I consider there are some matters contained in it which will be of great advantage to the railway employees of this State—

Mr. VOWLES: I said that there is not a great deal in the new principles.

Mr. GLEDSON: If the hon. member for Dalby considers there is nothing in the Bill, he certainly has not read it or has not looked at it from the point of view of the

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employee; and we certainly cannot expect him to do that. The hon. member [8.30 p.m.] emphasised the right of appeal to the Governor in Council by an employee, and considered that the employee has no right to such an appeal. I take it that any employee who is dismissed from his work and deprived of his bread and butter is entitled to an appeal. The position of the railway employee is not like that of the ordinary worker outside the service—men who have been brought up to take work in any trade. A railway employee is brought up from his youth in the railway service, and has had practically no work outside railway work, which is specialist work. He has been trained to that work the whole of his life, and after he gets up in years he is suddenly dismissed for some reason or other. The accusation may be false or it may be true. The hon. member for Dalby says he should not have the right of appeal to the Governor in Council because it is going to cost money and we have no right to incur that expenditure! He raised the point of a man being dismissed for being drunk. That is all right, but we know very well that there are many cases where men have been taken up for being drunk when they were not drunk at all. I think it was the day before yesterday when a case occurred in our own city where a man was taken up for being drunk and he was found to be not drunk but injured. A great many cases like that have happened, and they might happen again. We say that every employee who is dismissed for misconduct should have the right to appeal to the highest court in the land, and in this Bill he is receiving that right.

The Bill gives the power to institute inquiries into cases of misconduct, and those inquiries shall be held with representatives of the men on the Board of Inquiry. This is a good thing, and it will be for the benefit of the employees of the State, for the benefit of the department, and, incidentally, for the benefit of the State itself. I would like to see the Bill go further; I would like it to contain a proviso that power should be given that inquiries should be held in connection with the working of the railway system throughout the State.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: There should be power given not only to inquire into cases of misconduct, but to make inquiry into the whole of the workings of the railway and into every branch of the railway service. If that were done, the department would be better served, and a lot of the trouble and talk that has been going on on the part of hon. members opposite with regard to "scientific sabotage" in the railway service would be done away with altogether.

I want to speak about a phase which has been raised by almost every hon. member who has spoken. The hon. member for Dalby said that, if he had his way, he would carry on the business of the Railway Department by placing the Commissioner in full charge and telling him that he had to carry it on as a business concern in a business way, on business lines. That would mean that the first men to complain would be the hon. member for Dalby and those associated with him, because, if the railways were carried on on business lines, the railways running into agricultural districts would have to charge such freights as would enable the

lines to pay. This suggestion of the hon. member for Dalby about being run on business lines—that is, that the department should receive full payment for services rendered—would mean that such lines would either have to be closed up or that the freights and fares charged on them would be so excessive as to be a heavy tax on the man in the country.

There are some very good items introduced in this Bill which have been entirely overlooked by the hon. member for Dalby. Previously appeals were confined practically to one district and could not be made outside of the division in which an appointment was made. This Bill provides that appeals can be spread from one division of the State to another, and every eligible employee in the service will have the right to appeal against appointments in other divisions. I take it that the Appeal Board that is set out here, the Board of Inquiry, and the appeal to the Governor in Council, are not necessarily for the purpose of having appeals made to them. They will serve a greater purpose than that. They will make the heads of the departments careful in connection with their work, their transfers, and appointments, and will cause them to see that men are appointed who are fit for the positions which have to be filled. This Bill will make it clear to the heads of departments, when they are transferring employees and making appointments, that they will have to appoint the right men to the positions, otherwise eligible men will have the right of appeal against such appointments. It will also make them very careful to see that their administration of the department is just and is conducted on fair lines.

Another item upon which I must commend the Minister, and a matter which was also raised by the hon. member for Maryborough, is that of the man conducting an appeal. He goes to a certain amount of expense in successfully conducting his appeal. This amending Bill provides that expenses can be allowed to him, and he will not be suffering a lot of out-of-pocket expenses in the endeavour to secure his rights. That will prevent appeals being made when there is no ground for an appeal. I am not going to take up further time. The Bill appeals to me as one that is going to mete out to railway employees a measure of justice to which they are entitled.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (Warwick): I agree with the hon. member for Ipswich in the belief that there is a good deal in the Bill. Further than that, I believe there is a good deal behind the Bill. If I am permitted, I should like to say that not only the introduction of the Bill itself—which indicates pretty wide discontent in the Railway Department—but the speeches which have been delivered—animated speeches, warm-hearted speeches—by hon. members opposite, indicate their realisation of the very manifest discontent in the Railway Department. If such is the case, is it not wise to inquire as to what has brought about that discontent? Is it not pertinent to ask how it is that this Government, who have been in office some eight years, have waited those eight years before introducing a measure which is going to remedy such defects? Could you imagine a stronger champion with a better knowledge of the department than the hon. member for Brisbane? Surely he for one will not have failed, in caucus at

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any rate, to indicate what should be done for the department? I suppose he may be consoled by this, that when he left the department to contest the Brisbane seat, things were not in such a state of unrest.

Mr. KIRWAN: He didn't leave the department; he was "fired" out.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Then the hon. member has my sympathy. At any rate, things were not in the state of discontent that they are in to-day. It must have been a growing discontent, and it has grown until it has reached a point when something had to be done, and now the Government at this late hour—at the dictation probably of somebody behind them, the Emu Park Convention, the Trades Hall, or something else—are coming at the point of the bayonet to try to undo the injustice that has been done to the men. I doubt whether this Bill is going to do it. I doubt whether the Government are not going to create further trouble. If there has been this discontent, as evidenced by the speeches this evening, ruling for years, why have the Government been so slow in undoing the injustice? They have been wanting altogether in their duty. If there is real discontent in the department, then the Government are responsible for it. They have brought about this discontent.

Mr. HYNES: Discontent is a torch-bearer of progress.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The Government brought about the discontent in the department in the early days of their administration by destroying the discipline of the department, and they are going further to destroy the discipline of the department by following out the identical principles which were followed out years ago. What did the department do years ago? The late Secretary for Railways, Mr. Adamson, said to the men: "If you have any trouble, come to me direct. Never mind the head of your department." What is being said now in connection with the Bill before the House? "If you have trouble, never mind the heads of your department; never mind the Commissioner or anyone else. Appeal to the Government of the day." That is what it practically means. There is abundant evidence that there is discontent in the department; and who has brought it about? Let the men who have been "deflated" say what has brought it about. I remember about two years ago the Minister, in introducing his Estimates for the year, indicated how wise the administration of his department had been, and he said, "Look at what we have done. We have cut down the number of employes by 954 men." No doubt those men are feeling aggrieved. They may feel that a wrong has been done to them. The trouble going on in the Ipswich Railway Workshops is all evidence of discontent. You have evidence of discontent in the reduction which took place in connection with the wages paid to the men.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I do not think I am out of order. I am trying to argue that the introduction of this Bill is really the outcome of discontent in the Railway Department, and if there had been no discontent then this Bill would never have been introduced.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What you appear to be after is the contentment of ignorance.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I do not accuse the Minister of having a superabundance of intelligence in connection with a matter of this kind if he cannot see the force of the argument I am bringing forward. When men are deflated by hundreds, you may come to the conclusion that there is discontent, but Ministers may not like to have it brought home to them again. They would prefer this being done in a quiet way by the men themselves; but it suits us on this side of the House to state wherein they wrong the men where there has been deflation and where wages have been reduced. The Secretary for Mines smiles at me across the Chamber for making such an assertion, yet he is the very man who on the hustings indicated to the people that once they were returned to power there would be no further unemployment. The Government have created unemployment by deflating a large number of men.

Mr. HARTLEY: What has that to do with the amending Bill?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The amending Bill is simply the infliction of a great indignity upon the Commissioner for Railways. He is able or he is not able, competent or not competent, to discharge fearlessly and well the duties appertaining to his office. If he is not capable of doing that, then he has no right to be there. The employes already have their Appeal Board, but in order to bring in a greater amount of political influence the Government are going one step further in the matter of appeals.

Mr. HARTLEY: Don't you ever buy an improved machine?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Yes. I have been trying to tell the House that they are not improving the machine. In the course of my remarks I have indicated that the fatal mistake was made years ago, and, instead of remedying the error by rectifying the wrong that was then done, and allowing the Commissioner and the Appeal Board to decide things, you are going a step further and passing over the Commissioner entirely. You are duplicating the error which was made previously, and a very big mistake is being made by the Government in this connection. If you place a man in a position of responsibility—it may be the manager of a department—you trust him. When you make a man Commissioner for Railways, then you trust him to do what is right in connection with his office, and to do it fearlessly. If he does not do it, he has no right to be there. There is no doubt that the wings of the Commissioner are being clipped by this Bill, and I do not think it is going to make for the successful working of the Railway Department. There is no evidence that the destruction of discipline has made for the success of that department; but there is abundant evidence that the Railway Department has gone to the bad conspicuously as a result of interference, and further interference is going to have a further bad effect.

Mr. HARTLEY: You would not be putting up that big building if you thought that.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I believe in the country.

Mr. HARTLEY: Do you believe in the railways?

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Mr. G. P. BARNES: Believe in the railways? Yes, but we must manage the finest asset we have got in a business way. It is our biggest earning concern and our biggest spending concern; yet there is evidence to-day that there is unrest in the department. The speeches of hon. members all indicate that. I am very sorry indeed that such should be the case, and that the extent of the business which is being transacted is not realised by the Government; but that by no means alters the fact that they are unconscious of the wrong they are doing not only to the Commissioner but also to the department. It is evident that the Government are unable to realise what the proper control of a big business concern should be.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I am sorry I was not in the Chamber when the Minister made his second reading speech. During the discussion which has taken place there have been quite a lot of matters dealt with, and one of the surprises to me was the fact that some hon. members opposite were not aware that as far back as 1905 the Appeal Board was introduced by the then Government.

Mr. KIRWAN: No; a private member introduced it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am sorry the hon. member is trying to split straws.

Mr. KIRWAN: I am not. You said the then Government introduced it.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was introduced by the late Hon. E. B. Forrest, who was a Government supporter.

Mr. KIRWAN: That is correct.

Mr. TAYLOR: As showing the scope of the measure passed at that time, subsection (8) of section 2 of that Act reads—

“The Board shall investigate every appeal made by an employee against the decision of the officer at the head of his branch with respect to his dismissal or any charge made against any such employee, or with respect to any penalty imposed upon such employee, and may confirm or modify such decision or may suspend such employee, or, if he has already been suspended, may further suspend him for any period not exceeding six months without salary or wages, or may inflict a fine to be deducted from his pay, or may dismiss him or make such other order as they think fit.”

The only thing that could not be brought before the Appeal Board was the case of an appeal to the Commissioner by an employee with regard to his right of promotion as provided by section 56 of the principal Act. I think the provision with regard to promotion was a very wise provision, because, if there is any troublesome duty in connection with the administration of the Railway Department, it is the adjustment of promotions.

Mr. WEIR: The best part of the work of the Appeal Board now

Mr. TAYLOR: Every man reckons he is as good as the other fellow. When a promotion is made it is a very difficult matter for those who make the promotion really to get at who is the best man. I contend that the Commissioner—and after him the men on the Appeal Board—is the best individual to say whether the person applying for promotion shall have that promotion or not. To take away the right of the Commissioner,

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as this Bill proposes, and provide that the Commissioner shall not be the final court of appeal in connection with these matters, but that they shall be referred to the Governor in Council, I certainly think is a great mistake.

Mr. WEIR: Would the Commissioner know more about a man's ability than the Governor in Council?

Mr. TAYLOR: I think he knows a great deal more. If he does not, he is not competent to hold the position.

Mr. WEIR: There are thousands of men in the service whom he has never seen.

Mr. TAYLOR: That also applies to the Governor in Council. The endeavour to take away from the Commissioner this particular veto is going to cause a tremendous amount of friction and trouble in the department.

Mr. WEIR: As a matter of fact the Commissioner never adjudicates now.

Mr. TAYLOR: Why do you want to take away the power from the Commissioner if he does not adjudicate at the present time?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is a request from the railway men, and the Commissioner does not oppose it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I think the Commissioner is a reasonable man and knows his business better than anybody here. I think that an appeal to the Governor in Council is simply an appeal to a political body.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The present Act provides that.

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not claim that the railways can be run apart from politics, but I do say that the matter of appointments and promotions, with the exception of the appointment of the Commissioner himself, should be free from political control.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The present Act does not provide for that. The matter of employees outside the service has to go to the Governor in Council, and you did not oppose that.

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not think it right that that should continue to exist. That should be withdrawn, and the Commissioner and those associated with him should have full control of the appointments which are made in connection with the department. It has been said by some speakers that previous Administrations adopted a very tyrannical attitude towards employees of the Railway Department.

Mr. WEIR: So they did.

Mr. TAYLOR: This is what the “Railway Advocate” of 10th February, 1922, says—

“Probably never before in the history of the Queensland Railways have the employees been compelled to suffer injustices and hardships such as are being experienced at the present time under the camouflage of a system called ‘pooling of available work.’”

When hon. members opposite say that past Administrations adopted a tyrannical attitude towards railway employees, it is only right that I should quote extracts from their own publications to show the treatment which railway men are getting at the present time. This is what the “Railway Advocate” says in its issue of 10th November, 1922—

“It is time railway men throughout the State bestirred themselves to a daily

danger in their midst—i.e., the efficient (for the bosses) Railway Act, a product of good old Toryism. What is more regrettable still is the fact that, apart from the present Government declaring that the Act is good, and that it is not proposed to alter it, we have actually had thrust upon us, per medium of the Cabinet, the most reactionary Punishment Board that one could possibly conceive."

Mr. WEIR: And the railway men supported this Government at the last election. (Government laughter.)

Mr. TAYLOR: In its issue of 10th March, 1923, the "Railway Advocate" said—

"One of the many tricks resorted to is that of sending temporary employees to perform relief work, and refusing payment of the allowances laid down in the award. They do this by dispensing with the services of the employee where he may be stationed, and then giving him another appointment at the place where he is to relieve . . . It is done in such a way as to create in the mind of the unfortunate victim that he is to receive allowances for the period of his relief . . . He goes away, in many cases leaving a wife and kids behind him, with only his wages to subsist on. . . but when action is taken to obtain the allowance for him, he receives a rude awakening."

Then on the same date in the same paper we have the following:—

"Attention was drawn to the fact that in a number of cases station-masters were working overtime and payment for same was being refused by the department . . . Although representation had been made for definite hours of duty for station-masters, the department refused to do this and payment for overtime was refused. In the Central district it was a common practice for the hours of duty to be laid down and then a train running arranged which made it impracticable for those hours to be worked owing to such practice, yet the claims for overtime were persistently refused."

As I said a few moments ago, it is quite impossible to dissociate politics from the Railway Department administration altogether, but I do say that political influence should have nothing whatever to

[9 p.m.] do with the appointment of employees. We find that the Public Service Act of 1896 provided that entrance to the classified division of the public service could only be effected in two ways:—First, by passing the prescribed examination, appointments to be made in the order of passes; and secondly, in cases where the Public Service Board certified that no officer in the service was qualified to fill the vacancy, a person from outside could be appointed without examination. A return of all such appointments had to be submitted to Parliament. In the Public Service Act of 1922 this provision for a return of all such appointments, except by examination, was omitted deliberately, as it was pressed for by the Opposition. I do not know for what reason it was omitted, since the Opposition at that time asked that it should be retained.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot proceed along those lines unless he connects his remarks with the Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR: I intend to connect them in this way—that, in order to avoid any suggestion of political interference, this system, which had fallen into disuse, was reintroduced.

Mr. WEIR: The Railways Act contains the same provisions.

Mr. TAYLOR: It contains very nearly the same provisions. Referring to the Bill itself, we find that probably the most welcome provision is in the latter portion of the Bill. I think that the clause relating to the Board of Inquiry is an innovation which may probably work out in such a way as to help the department very greatly. One hon. member suggested this afternoon that, had such a power been in existence during the last year or two, there probably would not have been so many appeals, and I quite agree. I believe that the proposed board will have a very excellent effect, and I believe that its constitution is a very good measure of reform and that success will come about as a result. I take it that all of us are anxious to have a contented railway service, and we recognise that there are tremendous difficulties in the way. So many of our officers are long distances from the centres of control, and it is very difficult to exercise in those small outposts of the State the complete control which the officers would like to exercise. The appointment of managers as proposed in the Bill is an excellent thing, and will probably assist the Commissioner to get efficient management. I do not say that the service has not been efficient. I believe that generally it has been, but I think that during the last year or two—as is proved by the number of men who have been appointed to the department—it has been overstaffed.

I do not agree with the clause which proposes to take away some of the powers which the Commissioner has at present. Under the principal Act an employee had the right to go to the Appeal Board, and, if he was not satisfied, he could then go to the Commissioner, whose decision would be final. I certainly think that arrangement should be continued, and we should not take from the Commissioner the right of finally deciding such appeals. Mention has been made of running the railways on business lines. As other hon. members have said, if the Commissioner were told to run them on business lines, there would be only one thing to do. He would have to make them pay. There is no question about that, and therefore the Government should have a certain amount of control in that direction; but in the matter of appointment of employees members of Parliament should welcome anything which would relieve them of the necessity which exists at present of going to the Secretary for Railways and other Ministers in regard to matters of employment. They could continue to give a certificate of character or anything of that kind to an individual whom they knew and who was seeking employment in a Government department; but in many cases—hon. members know that what I am saying is true—they would not complain if the other obligations were removed. I hope that the Minister will see his way to withdraw that provision in Committee.

Mr. DASH (*Mundingburra*): I think that this Bill is long overdue. It has agitated the minds of railway workers for a number of

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years, and I think it will go a long way towards bringing about a more contented service. One of its chief features is the clause whereby an employee in one division in the State can appeal against any promotion in any other division. At present, if a position becomes vacant in the Southern Division, a man in the Northern Division has no right of appeal against the resulting appointment. The employees in the North consider that they should have equal opportunities with those in the rest of the State.

I, for one, say that there should be some appeal against the decision of the Commissioner, no matter who he may be. No doubt the hon. member for Wynnum and the hon. member for Warwick know that sometimes their foremen or heads of departments do something against which the other employees may appeal to them, in order to place their case before the owners of the concern. If that has not happened in their business, it must be a business out of the common, because I know many instances where employees of private concerns have been dealt with by the heads of departments, and I as a union representative have gone to the owners and placed the case before them and had inquiries made, and in some instances the employees have received another chance. The same treatment should be meted out to public servants. All managers are not alike. If they happen to get a "set" on a man, many things may take place and words may pass between them, with the result that the manager may say, "If you do not like the place, you know what to do." We know what that means. That has happened with heads of sub-departments in the public service. I remember cases where I have had to approach the heads as a result of action which has been taken when words have passed between subordinate heads and employees, and, if it is right to give an appeal to the Commissioner for Railways against the decision of a subordinate head, it is only right that there should be an appeal against the decision of the Commissioner himself.

In the old days—and it has not been entirely eliminated to-day—if a man was discharged from one gang, the riding ganger would send word along to another gang telling them that So-and-So was dismissed from such and such a gang and that he was not to get a start in their gang. The Commissioner has agreed that where agreements exist the employee can appeal through his union to the industrial magistrate, who can take evidence on the job or wherever he thinks necessary. Over and over again the industrial magistrate's decisions have been acted upon. In some cases he has ordered that the men be reinstated, and in some cases he has decided against their claims. In providing for appeals it is only right that those employed in the service should have the same right as others. The question of costs in connection with appeals has been mentioned. We know that it is very costly to appeal from a decision. Lawyers have to be engaged, and in some cases where there are a number of witnesses cases last two or three days, and when the appeal is over there are very heavy costs against the union if the appellant fails. This Bill makes it obligatory on those concerned to have the costs taxed, which is a very safe and wise provision. Under the Industrial Arbitration Act, if a man is wrongfully dismissed and he contends that

he has been victimised, he can move the court to hear his appeal, and if the judge considers that he has been wrongfully dismissed he can order that man's reinstatement in his previous occupation. That can take place with regard to a private employer, and, if it is a good thing to have in respect of private employment, then it should be equally good for the employees in the Railway Department. We know that many men are injured in the Railway Department in the course of their occupation. We know that sometimes they strain their hearts in doing heavy lifting at railway workshops. They get compensation for a few weeks until the doctor says that they are sufficiently well to go back to light work. They might have been employed for a considerable time as temporary hands in the department. When they go back to light work the question arises as to whether they can ever get on the permanent staff, because they must pass a medical examination in order to get on to that staff. These men know that they would be rejected by the doctors as unfit to go on to the permanent staff, and they should have the right to request the member for the district to approach the Commissioner on their behalf to see if some leniency cannot be meted out to them, as they were injured in the department in the service of the State. I, for one, will never agree that a member of Parliament should not be approached by men in the public service. I have approached the heads of departments in an endeavour to do something for men with large families who have been out of work for a considerable time. I have ascertained on their behalf if it was possible to give them a start on any work in operation. I have found the heads of departments very considerate. It is only right that they should do that. If the Commissioner does anything wrong, there should be someone above him to whom an appeal can be made. We do not regard him as being the last authority in the running of our railways. The Minister and the Government are responsible for the action of any employees within the service. I wish to congratulate the Minister upon introducing the Bill, because I think that, when it is consolidated with the present Act, the railway employees throughout the State will be pleased with what the Government have done. I hope that this Bill will overcome a large number of the difficulties that were not overcome by the principal Act. I hope that it will overcome the difficulties in the direction of granting employees in every portion of the State the same rights with regard to promotions and appointments of every description.

Mr. SIZER (*Sandgate*): Evidently the main point which is exercising the minds of hon. members opposite in their benediction of this Bill lies in the question of appeals. I would like to ask them what greater advantage they expect to derive by an appeal to the Governor in Council as against an appeal to the Commissioner. Evidently the argument presupposes that there have been decisions by the Commissioner which have not been to their satisfaction and that they must have been of a biased nature. That being the supposition of the argument, I take it that it is for that reason that they wish to have an appeal over the head of the Commissioner to the Governor in Council. The hon. member for Maryborough stated in connection with appointments that there are thousands of men in the

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Railway Department of whom the Commissioner has no knowledge. That is a weakness as to competency to adjudicate; but I would like to ask hon. members in what better position is the Governor in Council? They are less likely to know what men are in the Railway Department. What is to be gained by appealing over the head of the Commissioner to the Governor in Council? What is actuating hon. members, and what is expected to be gained? The only inference that can be drawn is that some man with a "pull" may appeal over the head of the Commissioner—no matter how impartial he may be—to the Governor in Council, which really means the members of the Cabinet. It may be that this man is a political supporter or a hard worker politically. What is there to be gained by this appeal to the Governor in Council?

Mr. DUNSTAN: To get satisfaction.

Mr. SIZER: That statement presupposes that they are not getting satisfaction.

Mr. WEIR: Yes.

Mr. SIZER: The fact remains that evidently the Government are determined to establish more rigid political control than they have had in the past.

Mr. WEIR: Can you not see that no Commissioner will turn down the decision of his departmental heads if he can avoid it?

Mr. SIZER: I am not prepared to say that. There is the right of appeal to the Governor in Council. Why stop at that stage?

Mr. WEIR: Why not give the right of appeal to the Privy Council?

Mr. SIZER: There is no logical reason why the appeal should stop at the Governor in Council. Judging by the remarks of the hon. member for Maryborough, they are no more competent to deal with an appeal than the Commissioner.

Mr. DUNSTAN: They have the final say.

Mr. SIZER: At the best they are just as competent as the Commissioner, and no more.

Mr. WEIR: They are more likely to deal fairly with it.

Mr. SIZER: They are not. Why stay there? Why not have an appeal to someone else? The effect of it is going to be that although an officer may have a brilliant man in the service whom he is anxious to promote, although he may not have quite as long a record as some other members of the service who may not be as brilliant, he will not be able to avail himself of his services. The Commissioner, before availing himself of his services will have to consider what appeals will be made, and he will consequently be harassed and intimidated into not making the selection he would otherwise have made. Every time the Commissioner has to consider an appointment or a dismissal he will have to take those facts into consideration. That is an unfair position to place him in. Very often it is wise, when giving a decision after making up your mind fairly and squarely, not to give any reason for that decision. This is going to be to the detriment of the service if every little pin-prick and one thing and another is to be subject to an appeal and the Commissioner has to turn round and face an appeal, probably to the Governor in Council. It will make his life intolerable. It is unreasonable to expect the Governor in Council to

spend their time in listening to appeals when they already pay a Commissioner, who is competent to deal with it, a salary for that purpose. The Governor in Council have enough work to do at the present, instead of having continually to sit as arbitrators on appeals from individuals in the railway service. The Government cannot limit where the appeal may come from or its nature. It may be on some big question, or it may be on a trivial one, but it will still occupy the time of the Governor in Council. Nothing is to be gained by this privilege, and it is only inserted for the purpose of giving a tighter hand to some of the friends of the Government outside over the higher officers in the Railway Department. Probably before this provision has been in operation for any length of time the Government will be the first to move for its rescission. They will find that it will work to the detriment of their own interests, and like many other things they have done, they will wish they had not done it. The public have a right to expect efficiency and to know that the Railway Department is being efficiently managed and along reasonable lines. I share the opinion of the hon. member for Windsor, that it is a very difficult matter to make the Railway Department in Queensland pay.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. SIZER: I was saying I realise it is most difficult to make the railways pay, and that I recognise that whatever has been done in that direction so far is being done as well as possible. At the same time, when we speak of business control—

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of criticising the administration of the Railway Department when the Railway Estimates are under consideration.

Mr. SIZER: We appoint a Commissioner, but we are taking away his powers, and I want to show that this action does not tend to efficiency. The public are greatly involved in this matter.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! The hon. member must obey my ruling.

Mr. SIZER: I only want to show—

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! The hon. member has already repeated those facts, and I do not want to call him to order again. He must know that he will have an opportunity of making those remarks when the Railway Estimates are before the House.

Mr. WEIR: Explain that statement you made in Rockhampton.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*), in reply: The hon. member for Dalby suggested that my silence, or my failure to reply to his question at the time was an indication that I had receded from my contention that he and his party had been guilty of political interference in the railway management. I will repeat my charge. I was pleased with the speech of the leader of the Opposition. He dealt in a practical and sensible way with the Bill, but some of his supporters did not do likewise. They threw out all kinds of innuendoes and suggestions of the most unfair and cowardly nature in a vague, general way about political interference. They should prove their statements or hold their peace for ever. They indulge in vague

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generalities. The hon. member for Dalby said that I charged him with political interference because he sent me a communication asking me to see that certain gatehouses were not closed down, and that certain unfortunate women and children were not placed at a disadvantage. Is it not enough to make the gods weep? Has the hon. member forgotten the cruel and brutal way in which women and children were dealt with when his party was in power?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Five shillings a week.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; they evaded payment of what the Act said should be paid.

Mr. SZER interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Sandgate did not reply to the sensational charge made against him by the hon. member for Fitzroy.

Mr. SZER: What sensational charge?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member ought to have been in the House at the time and replied to it. Before dealing with the remarks of the hon. member for Dalby, let me say that it astounded me to hear the vicious attack that was made upon the railway men and the vindictive hostility displayed towards railway men by hon. members opposite. It was astounding to a degree. They would treat the railway workers of the State as industrial slaves, and refuse them the right of a hearing on appeal and deprive them of every vestige of citizenship. We know quite well that the railway men were unable to form an industrial union under the laws of the land when the hon. members opposite were in power. The railway workers were treated as industrial slaves, and to-day after all these years we find hostility of the same nature exhibited in the speeches of hon. members on that side of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! The Minister must confine his remarks to the limits of a reply.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am replying to speeches made this afternoon.

I want to say a few words on railway management. To-day there are employed less men per mile of railway than 1914, and the net returns within the last two years have improved by 200 per cent., yet the miserable, mean spirit exhibited by some hon. members opposite prevents them from admitting and appreciating the improvement that has taken place. This improvement is reflected in the statistics. As you have properly observed, Mr. Speaker, discussion on that matter should be reserved for the Railway Estimates, and it will be.

Let me refer to the memorable and notorious communication referred to by the hon. member for Dalby. It was not a suggestion that the widows and orphans should be protected and that certain gatehouses should be kept open, but a protest against the action of the Commissioner—a protest couched in no uncertain terms. Inter alia, the hon. member for Dalby, as leader of the Country party, wrote in April, 1921—

“At a meeting of the Country party held to-day the following resolution was agreed to—

That the action of the Commissioner

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for Railways in closing certain gatehouses in the country was false economy and would cause the inconvenience of the residents in these districts.”

The details are furnished, and the letter winds up—

“I trust that the matter will have your further consideration.”

Mr. VOWLES: Read the whole thing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What about that? The decision of the Commissioner is appealed against.

Mr. VOWLES: I ask that that letter be placed on record.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am quoting from “Hansard” for 1921.

Mr. VOWLES: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the letter be impounded.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have no objection to placing it upon the table. It is merely an extract from “Hansard.”

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Table the letter!

The SPEAKER: Order!

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Table the letter!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Certainly. This request was for further consideration. I was not asked to consider the merits of the case, but to [5.30 p.m.] consider the Commissioner's action. This is an attempt at political interference by a political hypocrite who comes to this House and objects to Labour legislation, stating that it is political interference. (Opposition dissent.) He states that hon. members on this side of the Chamber are guilty of political interference. Just fancy the duplicity, the inconsistency, the hypocrisy of hon. members opposite, particularly the ex-leader of the Country party, coming along with their protests—

Mr. VOWLES: What do you say?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say the hon. member is guilty of hypocrisy, duplicity, and insincerity. This letter proves it absolutely. Yet hon. members opposite who are afraid to be pinned down to their political utterances come to this House and have the cheek to talk about political interference when they are guilty of that very thing. Here is a communication from the ex-leader of the Country party, who, coming along audaciously urges the Secretary for Railways to exercise this very political interference and control which his party denounces. It is an outrageous thing for hon. members, particularly an hon. member like the hon. member for Dalby, who has been in the House so long, to criticise political interference and control, and yet send a letter of the nature I have mentioned to the political head of the Railway Department, the Minister, complaining of the very charge that he and his colleagues have hurled against us this afternoon.

Mr. VOWLES: Will you put that letter on record?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In bold relief the letter from the hon. member for Dalby must be contrasted with his statement—

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Where is the letter?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I would refer hon. members opposite to this letter which is to be impounded at the request of the hon. member for Dalby. Impounding a letter which has been in "Hansard" for two years!

Mr. VOWLES: You said you had a letter. Where is it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have a letter, and it will be placed upon the table. Hon. members opposite refuse to accept the logic of their own arguments and their own contentions. They expect members of this Assembly to listen to their contentions as to the undesirability of political interference; yet they are guilty of that very interference. There is no objection to an hon. member going to the Secretary for Railways; that is part of his right under the Railways Act. But this is a case where we have interference from hon. members opposite, who approached the Minister and endeavoured to induce him to take action, and now accuse him of interference. That is where the inconsistency and insincerity comes in. It is fair that the House and the people of the State should know that hon. members opposite have been endeavouring in various ways to bring about political interference where it suits their particular purpose.

I do not intend to deal with political history to-night, but I must say that the whole protest from the Opposition is an evidence of their insincerity. They have themselves endeavoured to exercise political interference to override the action of the Commissioner for Railways. It is a sin for members of this party to approach a Minister with a view to political action, but it is quite permissible for members opposite to do so—such is their logic! I am going to repeat, instead of withdrawing, the charge against the hon. member for Dalby. I repeat it, and emphasise it, and I want the House and the country to know how politically inconsistent he is in his arguments.

One word in conclusion. Any power exercised by the Minister as political head under the Railways Act in Queensland is exercised under the provisions of an Act passed by hon. members opposite. If they do not believe in partial political control in matters of policy, why did they place those powers in the Act? The present Administration have not enlarged those powers, and the present Minister is only exercising powers that have been provided for by hon. members opposite when they were the Government. The powers that are exercised by him are powers in relation to the policy and the powers that are conferred upon him by the Railways Act. To suggest that the Commissioner in matters of administration is not getting reasonable freedom is cowardly and unfair. The Commissioner has intimated that he has no objection to the provisions contained in the measure that we are now discussing. In regard to the proviso concerning appeals from his decision to dismiss any employee, the Commissioner states that this power is rarely exercised, and he says, "When I do exercise it I have sufficient confidence that the Governor in Council will consider to the fullest possible extent the reasons I give for dismissal." He says, "I believe in the right of appeal. It should be established. It is the inalienable right of the members of the railway service."

Mr. VOWLES: You would not give that right to the police when they asked for it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite made the police political slaves. When the present Government came into power we conferred on the police the right to combine as unionists.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They would not give the police a vote.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As the late Home Secretary and the present Secretary for Public Lands says, they would not even allow the police to cast a vote. That is industrial slavery, and it is a warning to the railway men and a warning to public servants generally that, if hon. members opposite by any unfortunate circumstances should get into power again, there will be slavery, tyranny, and injustice rampant in the public service.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS (Vanango): Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister having replied, the debate is now closed.

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

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

PALMERSTON LAND SETTLEMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*): The criticism of this Bill by the so-called Country party and by members of the Opposition is very hard to understand. The suggestion was made by the Secretary for Public Lands when he moved the second reading of the Bill that it was the old animus against North Queensland, which had been exercised here for fifty years before Labour came into power, has again come to the fore. To my mind there can be no other reason for the strong opposition which the Country party and the United party have levelled against this Bill. It is a Bill which is intended to cope with the need of settlement, and the only man who is eliminated is the speculator. I am quite satisfied that the remarks of the Opposition in their endeavours to kill the Bill and the criticisms they have levelled right through the piece are solely due to the fact that the object of the Government is to eliminate the speculator. All we are concerned about is to settle people on the land in such a way that they will not have to pay through the nose for the land and that the settlement will be satisfactory. The land concerned is all Crown land. There is no land to be resumed, and there is no land which any commission agent or anyone else can make any money out of. The hon. member for Wynnum criticised the Bill because, he said, it is a communistic Bill, and he also took exception to the appointment of a supervisor. A supervisor was appointed in connection with soldier settlements, and I want to know why at this late hour the Opposition are objecting to the appointment of a supervisor when they practically initiated the principle.

At 9.39 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Kirwan, *Brisbane*) relieved the Speaker in the chair.

Mr. PEASE: The present leader of the Opposition was a member of the Land

Mr. Pease.

Settlement Committee in connection with soldier settlements, and supervisors were always provided by that committee, and for what reason? They were provided to safeguard the public money and to see that the people on the soldier settlements were helped and guided. Hon. members opposite say that there is too much paternalism in the Bill. I would refer them to the soldier settlement at El Arish, which is one of the most successful soldier settlements in Australia, and a supervisor is in charge there. The soldier settlers there are gathered from all parts of the globe—overseas as well as Australia—and I suppose there was never a more mixed lot of settlers than are to be found at El Arish. They are mostly married, and have their wives and families there.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: It is the most successful soldier settlement in Australia.

Mr. PEASE: I would have said that if my modesty as member for the district had permitted me.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The only one in Australia that has been a complete success.

Mr. WARREN: What about the soldier settlements in South Australia?

Mr. PEASE: I want to point out how successful the Palmerston land settlement scheme will be, because it is based on the same lines as the El Arish settlement. It is equally as necessary in the one case as the other for a supervisor to be appointed to safeguard the Government money and help the settlers to succeed. I trust that the Palmerston area, when it is opened up, will equal the success of the El Arish soldier settlement.

A good deal of comment was made by the Opposition in regard to the evidence given before the Public Works Commission, but those hon. members were not fair—they are never fair—the same thing applies there as in everything they do. They tried to mislead the House. They read extracts from the evidence given before the Commission, but they were very careful to cut out all the evidence in favour of the area. I am going to quote a few extracts to show how unfair they were. The tramway is built with a lot of unnecessary curves in it, and it is a difficult line to negotiate, but it was built by the shire council years ago. The Government of Queensland had to take over the line some years ago, and that is why it is in its present state; but it is not proposed to leave it in that condition. There is no intention on the part of the Government to spend a lot of money in building a further tramway from Nerada, at the head of the existing tramline, and leave the present tramline in its present state. Mr. Crowther, General Manager of the Northern Railways, made that statement. He also gave the following evidence:—

“An extension of this tramline to the Beatrice River would create further settlement. Do you think that would be of advantage to the present line?—Naturally I do. Whether it would be a sufficient advantage to make it pay I cannot say, but it certainly would be an advantage to the existing line.”

I believe a better grade could be obtained. Mr. R. D. Macgregor, Officer in Charge of Railways, Innisfail, gave this evidence—

“By Mr. Collins: Do you have any

[*Mr. Pease.*

difficulty on the present 2-foot gauge in hauling log timber?—Timber traffic is a very dangerous traffic on a 2-foot system. We have to take these logs on bogies which have no continuous draw gear. These bogies are set to take timber of various lengths—3 feet to 10 feet. On the present tramway there are ninety-nine 3-chain curves between Currajah and Nerada, a distance of 16 miles 67 chains. A number of these curves could be eliminated and haulage made much easier, and we could do some regrading, which would simplify the hauling of logs.”

That is what it is proposed to do. It is proposed to straighten out that line and make it possible to haul the necessary load over it to make it pay.

Mr. TAYLOR: But they have to cut very short logs.

Mr. PEASE: I say that once the line is straightened out it does not matter what size they are. The logs have to be short now because it is really a criss-cross railway. This expenditure is not warranted with the line as it is at present. It would be waste of money merely to straighten out the line, because the good dairying land is about 8 miles from the existing railroad. Mr. Callaghan, the Public Estate Improvement Officer, said in evidence—

“The position with the department is that there are 180,000 acres of Crown lands in that area which the department desire to settle. . . . The department has been considering the scheme for some time. . . . The engineers of my branch have been through the country. . . . One hundred acres is reckoned as a fair living area in that district.”

I emphasise that evidence. Here is a responsible officer making an official statement that 100 acres is a fair living area in that country. It shows the value of the land, and he had in mind dairying and mixed farming, not canegrowing. Hon. members opposite seem to think that this is an area for canegrowing. That is not so.

Mr. ROBERTS: Who said that?

Mr. PEASE: All the remarks I have heard from the other side point in that direction. The hon. member for Mirani last night practically confined his remarks to a lecture on canegrowing and the regulation of cane prices. Would 100 acres be considered a fair living area down here? I quote further extracts from Mr. Callaghan's evidence—

“The Land Office reports show that the Palmerston area has particularly good soil. . . . The department has information that it is suitable for dairying. . . . Departmental reports point to the fact that the country can be classed on the whole as good agricultural land. . . . Judging from extensive knowledge of that district, it is one of the most fertile places in Queensland, and the construction of the line was justified.”

Those are not my remarks or those of the Minister, but the sworn evidence of a responsible officer, as the Commission pointed out. Mr. Callaghan also said—

“Timber alone is going to be a valuable factor in the settlement of that country.”

Then Mr. Melville, the Under Secretary for Public Lands, said—

“It would be a hopeless proposition to throw the land open without extending the tramline. . . . Land was opened 7 miles past Nerada, and only two blocks were taken up.”

I would like to explain those remarks to the House. It might be thought that, because land was opened for selection only 7 miles past Nerada and only two blocks were taken up, it was not an attractive proposition. The fact is that those 7 miles were just along a cleared road without much formation, and there is no butter factory in the district. Without a butter factory men 7 miles from the head of the railway could not make a living, so that hon. members will see how necessary it is to build a line and establish a butter factory. The Innisfail people have been moving for a butter factory for some years, and the Secretary for Agriculture promised them a loan for the building of a co-operative concern. When the Premier was in Innisfail in May last year to finalise the matter he rode over the bush track and considered the land to be of such value that he asked the Innisfail people to hold their project over until the Government proposals were developed. The Premier will be in Innisfail next week, and I understand that the people interested in the butter factory proposal will approach him again.

Giving evidence before the Public Works Commission, Mr. Swain, the Director of Forests, said—

“Such a line would bring millions of feet of timber to the market which would now have to be destroyed. . . .

“The timber proposition in the area to be benefited by the proposed tramline was estimated at 40,000 acres, and he anticipated it would realise a profit of £61,000.”

He anticipated that profit under present conditions. When the tramline is straightened out and the State sawmill is shifted to Wangan, which is the junction, the profit to the Railway Department will be very much greater. Now we come to the most valuable evidence given before the Commission.

Let me quote what Mr. Witham had to say. Mr. Witham is a surveyor of seventeen years' experience in that district—he was not there only for a few days.

Mr. MOORE: I read the evidence.

Mr. PEASE: You only read a portion of it.

Mr. MOORE: I read it all.

Mr. PEASE: He states—

“The Palmerston area is practically unknown, as denoted by blank space on the map. In my estimate I traversed about 156,000 acres, which consisted of rich chocolate soil, undulating country, steep in places, with areas of level lands mostly along the watercourses; exceptionally well watered by permanent creeks. It is very similar to the lands already selected on the Tableland, and is suitable for dairying, corn-growing, &c.”

He also stated that when you look at scrub country it looks very difficult, but after opening it up you find opportunities of getting out. That is what the Minister

pointed out. That was exactly the position at Babinda and all the mountainous country that we have in North Queensland. It is very difficult to estimate the quantity of land available because you cannot see it until the scrub is cleared. The other night I heard the Opposition talking about ringbarking the trees. Let them go to North Queensland and talk about ringbarking the trees. Why, we could put an hon. member in one of the limbs and he would not be noticed. Hon. members opposite attack this measure just because it is brought in by a Labour Government.

Mr. MOORE: We did not say that the land was bad.

Mr. PEASE: You did. Mr. Witham further says—

“In the early days the country around here looked impossible country, but after it was opened up some means were always found of getting to the road.”

He was speaking of the Millaa Millaa country. The Secretary for Agriculture knows as well as I do that the Millaa Millaa country is practically the best dairying country in Queensland. Land is so valuable there that, if anyone went there with plenty of money, he would have great difficulty in buying even the freehold land. Mr. Witham said that it would cost £7 an acre to fall and clear the country and put it under grass. He is not only a surveyor, but he is a practical farmer, and he was at that time and I believe is still farming a 160-acre block. He points out that in making that statement with regard to the cost per acre, he is guided by his own experience. He does something which evidently the Opposition do not believe in doing. He shows that the experienced settlers in North Queensland appreciate what the Government are doing. He advocates that the Government should remove the timber. In his evidence he stated that the selectors got very little of the proceeds of timber and that the bullock drivers and agents got the bulk of it. That is what we are going to prevent under this Bill. No private person will get the proceeds of the timber. As the Minister pointed out, the Government will receive those proceeds, and they will be used in the development of the district. Mr. Witham also stated in his evidence that he considered the value of the timber was such that he could nearly pay for the tramline and the construction of a road out of the profits. Mr. R. E. McHugh, who is one of the pioneer settlers in the Millaa Millaa district, also gave evidence. He said that there had been no failures on the country between Atherton and Millaa Millaa, and that there were better opportunities now than when the land was first opened. Of course there are. Since that land was opened the Labour Government have come into power, in which there is a sympathetic Secretary for Agriculture representing that district, and he has voiced the needs of that district because he knew that he had something that he could back up, and the result has been that under this Government railway lines have been opened up in the district, main roads built, and to-day we have there one of the finest soldier settlements in Australia. The Millaa Millaa district is absolutely one of the finest dairying centres in Australia and is the most successful.

Mr. ROBERTS: We are going to pass the Bill.

Mr. Pease.]

Mr. PEASE: We are going to pass the Bill. The Opposition have been crying stinking fish, and always have. They have injured the land—I do not know why. I am going to put on record what I know about the land and what everybody should know so that the people will know what is there. The "North Queensland Register" of 20th August, 1923, in speaking about the Palmerston area, said—

"It is scrub upland country, splendidly watered, and favoured with a fine rainfall.

"It is estimated there are 180,000 acres of good dairying land which would mean 1,125 farms of 160 acres each.

"The Bill as suggested is based on common sense.

"It is the first big land settlement scheme mooted for North Queensland and should find strong support from all Northerners.

The members of the Opposition did not know that North Queensland was on the map until this Government came into power. Here is the largest paper in North Queensland acknowledging that this is the first big settlement evolved for the North. It further points out—

"The only objection is that the Queensland Labour Government do not favour freehold, and the principle will be perpetual lease."

I would like to compare Denmark in this respect. Denmark is the most successful dairying country in Europe. I read something in the "Courier" a few weeks ago about the farmers in Denmark, but that paper was attempting to mislead the people. It said that all the land in Denmark was held under freehold tenure. Listen to this, taken from the "Producers' Review" of 10th August, 1923—

"A LAND OF SMALL HOLDERS.

"Denmark is a land of small holders. The small farmer has security of tenure so long as he can pay interest on the capital value of the land which the State, through its policy of cutting up the large estates, provides for him. The rate of interest is 4 per cent., and to obtain a State loan an applicant must show he possesses capital to the amount of £150 or thereabouts. Although capable small holders occasionally obtained larger farms in the course of time, there is general recognition in Denmark that a little land well cultivated is better than a larger farm insufficiently stocked and less productive."

There, in the most successful dairying country in the world, the farmer pays 4 per cent. on the capital value of his land, and he does not get freehold. I have another testimonial, as it really is, from the manager of one of the largest concerns in North Queensland. This is what he says about the Palmerston area—

"Your Government are prepared to do a great deal towards making settlement in this area attractive.

"On my tour through Canada I was much impressed with the methods of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company in which they prepare a farm for the settler, stock it, build his house, and provide the necessary implements. This

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does away with that heart-breaking task which so many pioneers find too great for them.

"Mr. Clapp, Chief Commissioner for the Victorian Railways, visited the North recently, and he was amazed at the wonders of the Atherton tableland. He had no conception that there was anything like it in the Commonwealth."

My reason in getting that remark into "Hansard" is just to show that the Victorian Commissioner for Railways does not know what a beautiful country we have in Queensland. The reason of his knowledge now is because of the propaganda that is always issued from this side. Another strong criticism indulged in by the members of the Opposition in regard to this scheme was because it was what they call a "communistic measure." The Melbourne "Age," which is not a communist paper, according to an extract published in the "Courier" of 7th September, 1923, said—

"As a means of peopling the country community settlement has attractions that cannot be claimed for any system dealing with individuals separately.

"Secure the settler, find him the land on which he can make a living, make him a home, and give him the ordinary comforts of civilisation.

"Make an area of land available divided into ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred holdings, according to the area available, bring all the dwellings within reasonable distance of each other, and form the nucleus of a central township, equipped with school, public hall, etc."

At 10 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. PEASE: One would imagine he was reading from the "Worker"—not from the Melbourne "Age." The Opposition should wake up and find out that land settlement to-day cannot go on under the ideas that existed years ago.

Mr. MOORE: You are not advocating that in the Bill.

Mr. PEASE: You people have suggested that it is a communistic scheme.

Mr. MOORE: We were referring to the group system.

Mr. PEASE: The group system is incorporated in the Bill. When I first entered this House in 1920 I was very much interested by a passage in a speech made by Mr. Spencer, the then member for Maranoa. It appears in "Hansard," No. 1, of 19th August, 1920, and reads—

"Anybody can realise that, when a man takes up a selection with only small capital, by the time he has put up a fence and some sort of a house, he has to go away to earn some more money to keep his wife and family, and it takes him years to get going. If you want to encourage land settlement you will have to encourage the small man, and if you do that I feel sure you will have production increased a hundredfold.

"Unfortunately, we find that the Lands Department, has not encouraged the small producers, and now they are being driven off the land and are coming into the cities because they can get

better wages and conditions of living. The Government will have to find out what is a proper living area and then improve it for the man before he goes on to it."

This Government have taken that suggestion and have done something in that direction. Yet we find the same old party criticism about communism and all that sort of thing. I had a Mr. Batting, a pioneer of Banyan, to see me last week. He told me that in 1910 Mr. Denham induced settlers to go on to the Banyan area, and that the Government of the day intended to make that an ideal settlement. What happened? They made the land available, got the settlers there, boomed it up, and then left the settlers to starve, and they got no relief until this Government came along, and are now going to build a sugar-mill in that area.

There was a big discussion on another Bill in connection with the perpetual leasehold system. I am going to make only one reference to that. I want to know how the Opposition can reconcile their position with the attitude of some of their members. The hon. member for Burrum asked the Treasurer on the 29th August—

"1. When does he hope to have Crown lands in the Tully River mill area open for selection.

"2. Is it his intention to immediately resume the freehold lands comprised in that area?

"3. Will the settlement of such areas be carried out by individual ballot or be allotted in group or community settlement?

"4. If by the latter, will he allow the member for Burrum an opportunity of nominating twenty (or less) experienced sugar workers with limited capital and without land, for settlement as a group of farms in that area?"

Why does he want Crown lands opened in the Tully River mill area for selection? There is any amount of freehold land available now, and there is no necessity for any man to go to the Tully River and to have Crown lands up there opened. Why do they not take up land on the freehold principle? I have a paper which shows there is any amount of freehold land available.

Mr. MOORE: Perhaps they have not got any money?

Mr. PEASE: Does not that prove the value of perpetual lease? That shows how bad your arguments are. You people are growling about perpetual leasehold, yet a couple of weeks ago the hon. member for Burrum practically asked the Treasurer to make land available under perpetual lease conditions.

Mr. MOORE: He did not.

Mr. PEASE: The hon. member for Burrum discussed the matter with me, and I know very well that he asked for these Crown lands exactly for the reason the leader of the Country party has suggested, so that his friends with limited capital can go there, get the land, and start cultivating it.

Mr. MOORE: He did not say that they should have perpetual leaseholds.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PEASE: I wish the House to understand exactly the attitude of the Opposition in this matter.

Mr. KERR: Did you read the "North Queensland Register" of 22nd August?

Mr. PEASE: That simply attacks this as a communistic system.

Mr. KERR: It calls it "the direct anti-thesis of democracy."

Mr. PEASE: You took your orders to the "Courier," and the "Courier" wired them up to the North, and there you are. That is the position I want to bring before the House. These people condemn perpetual leasehold with their mouths, but, when it comes to wanting their friends to be settled on the land, they practically go begging to the Premier and say, "For goodness' sake, throw open perpetual leaseholds upon this area so that our friends can take up land there." I advise the friends of hon. members opposite who are desirous of taking up land in the Tully River area to get busy and take up all the freehold land they are able to lay their hands on, as otherwise I am afraid they will miss the 'bus.

Mr. MOORE: The Government may have it resumed like they did in other cases.

Mr. PEASE: The people are quite satisfied that this Government will do the fair thing. We are not going to do anything that is absurd or silly. All we are anxious to do is to settle the people on the land and assist them to become successful. All this talk about perpetual leasehold is not genuine, because when they want to put their friends on the land they come along and say, "Give us perpetual leaseholds."

I want to refer to a few of the remarks that the leader of the Country party made at the introductory stage of this Bill. He started off by attacking the witnesses who gave evidence before the Royal Commission on Public Works. He pointed out that they were publicans and commission agents. I may tell him that the publican he referred to, "Bob" McHugh, was a pioneer farmer in the Millaa Millaa district. He went there before there was any railway and did the pioneering work.

Mr. PAYNE: A very practical man.

Mr. PEASE: He initiated the cheese industry. When he found out in the wet season that owing to the bad roads under the previous Administration he was unable to get his cream to the factory, he did not sit down and cry or write letters to the paper. He started to work and initiated the cheese industry. He manufactured cheese, and for eight years he struggled along there. He went out into the scrub and felled his own timber and sent it away. He got a certain amount for it, and to-day he is an enterprising and successful man. The hon. member also had something to say about a commission agent. Who was the commission agent? Mr. Davies, who at the time, in addition to being a commission agent, was deputy chairman of the Johnstone Shire Council. He is a successful sugar-cane farmer, and was acting chairman of the Shire Council when he gave his evidence.

Mr. MOORE: I quoted his evidence.

Mr. PEASE: The hon. member quoted some of it, but not all of it. Mr. C. S. Page was also twitted with being a commission agent. Mr. Page is the man who

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initiated the butter factory scheme in the Innisfail district. The hon. member also had something to say of Mr. Hervey Jurd. He is another pioneer settler in the Millaa Millaa district. He went into that scrub years ago when conditions were not the same as they are to-day. As a matter of fact, Mr. Jurd was the man who used to take the settlers' cream to the factory, and I know from my own experience when I was in Atherton that very often in wet weather the road was so bad that by the time he got his cream to the factory the cream had been churned into butter. To-day he is a director of the North Queensland Bacon Company.

Mr. MOORE: I quoted his evidence.

Mr. PEASE: Mr. Worth was also quoted. Mr. Worth is a pioneer of the district. He has been a timber dealer for years, and he has a full knowledge of the whole of the district. Mr. Witham I have already quoted.

Mr. MOORE: I quoted Mr. Callaghan, too.

Mr. PEASE: Something was said about hearsay evidence. I notice that Mr. B. H. Corser attended the Land Court on one occasion, and I was astounded to read this little bit of evidence which he gave—

"I acquired 7,000 odd acres of the land in question on advice without personal inspection."

He and other hon. members get up and say that a lot of this evidence was given by witnesses without knowing anything about the matter; yet we find the hon. member for Burnett himself acquiring 7,000 odd acres of land "on advice." I suppose the advice was that, if he took it up, he was bound to make a good deal of money out of it. Mr. Wilson, of Meggitts Limited, was in Cairns on 11th August this year, and also visited Atherton. He pointed out that, when he was leaving to go to North Queensland, he was told that North Queensland was not fit for white people to live in. He gave an interview to a Cairns paper in regard to his visit to Atherton, and he emphasised the lack of knowledge which existed in the South of Australia concerning this district. There is a vast amount of land there.

Mr. MOORE: We have not said that there is not.

Mr. PEASE: The success of the Palmerston settlement is assured by the fact of the land being all taken up at the Millaa Millaa end. There is not one vacant block to be got there.

Mr. MOORE: What about the other end, where all the blocks are valued at £1 an acre?

Mr. PEASE: I hope that the hon. gentleman will accept the invitation he received from the Innisfail Shire Council to go up there. If he does, I will take him to see the land. In that area we have a river called the Jordan, and I will say that, if the hon. member is baptised in it, he may get rid of some of his political sins. (Laughter.) I can assure the House that this River Jordan is well named, because there is no doubt that the land round about it is the Promised Land. If anybody wants to take up a farm and make a success of it, my advice is that as soon as this land is available he should get a block. If a man likes to work, he will have a chance of making a very decent living from the start, and eventually he will be

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able to sit back in an arm chair and enjoy himself. Hon. members opposite say that they represent farming districts, but their farms are practically within walking distance of Queen street. They should go out to see Mr. McHugh, a pioneer selector of Millaa Millaa, who gave evidence before the Public Works Commission. He went out there with his wife, and they brought up a family and are now independent. I trust that the public will not be misled by what hon. members opposite have said. The land in the Palmerston area comprises some of the best land in Queensland. I again extend an invitation to Opposition members to go to North Queensland for the jubilee week, commencing on 9th October next. I can assure them that they will have a real good time, and, that they will see the River Jordan and the Promised Land.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.