

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 1923

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER, 1923.

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

QUESTIONS.

COST OF NEW IPSWICH RAILWAY STATION.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. What is the total cost of preparations for the new Ipswich Railway Station, including resumptions, retaining walls, platforms, subways, etc.?"

"2. What is the total annual estimated loss through delay, inconvenience, etc., caused through the hanging up of traffic, goods, and passengers on account of the out-of-date station arrangements at present in Ipswich?"

"3. What is the estimated cost to complete the new station buildings at Ipswich?"

"4. Will he state when it is proposed to complete the buildings and use the new station?"

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

"1. £160,530.

"2. No estimate obtainable. The delay due to existing arrangements is comparatively small."

"3. £63,000.

"4. No money is provided on the Estimates for the present financial year, but the work will probably be completed during the currency of the next financial year."

CIRCULAR OF QUEENSLAND EGG BOARD IN RE GRADING OF EGGS.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

"1. Has he seen the circular issued by the Queensland Egg Board—relating to the grading of eggs—which came into force on 1st September?"

"2. Has he particularly noticed the paragraph referring to country egg producers *re* conforming to a standard set out?"

"3. Why is it that country suppliers are told that their eggs are not graded?"

"4. Why are city egg producers paid 1s. 1d. per dozen first grade, and paid weekly?"

"5. Why are country egg producers told that they will be paid monthly, at the rate of 9d. per dozen?"

"6. Is the Egg Board selling to agents at their own offer?"

"7. Should not country and city egg producers be paid at the same rate and at the same periods for eggs of similar quality and grade?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. J. Huxham, *Buranda*), in the absence of the Secretary for Agriculture (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*), replied—

"No; but inquiry will be made of the Queensland Egg Board."

PROTEST OF CENTRAL QUEENSLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURE AGAINST PROHIBITION OF RATOON COTTON.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*) asked the Chief Secretary—

"1. Has his attention been drawn to the following resolution recently passed at a special meeting of the Central Queensland District Council of Agriculture:—

That this District Council place on record its protest against the decision of the Government to legislate against the ratooning of cotton under a systematic method, as we hold the view that the demand for such legislation is by restricted interests, and is not conducive to the expansion of an industry which, given systematic administration, gives promise of becoming magnified by its Empire importance, and this State's greatest asset, primary and secondary, and, incidentally, to develop our vast areas of scrub lands, and also those partially productive and virgin lands now awaiting closer settlement.

Further, this Council, from close observation of the facts leading up to this decision, and having regard to the report of the representatives attending the conference on 15th August, embracing comments on the conduct of the Minister for Agriculture and Director of the Council of Agriculture thereat, is of opinion that a Royal Commission of Inquiry is desirable.

In furtherance of its efforts to give effect to such desire, this unit of the Council of Agriculture requests the Premier (Mr. Theodore) to appoint a Royal Commission of Inquiry, representative of the Government and the farmers, with wide power to call and analyse all evidence for and against the ratoon problem, previous to introducing any anti-ratoon legislation.

Consequent upon the passage of the foregoing resolutions, this District Council strongly supports the sending of a representative oversea, carrying samples of Queensland ratoon cotton, with the object of approaching the markets to test the marketing possibilities of this particular class of cotton, this being considered very necessary in the interests of the growers. That the Government be asked to assist the District Council in its determination by subsidising the project to the extent of £1 for £1. That the hearty co-operation of the Council of Agriculture be sought in having the matter suitably referred to the Government and to strenuously assist in having effect given thereto. That the assistance of the District Councils of the cotton-growing districts be also solicited in this and the preceding resolutions?

"2. Has such resolution yet been received by the Government; and, if so, what action is being taken in regard to it?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*), in the absence of the Premier (Hon. E. G. Theodore), (*Chillagoe*), replied—

"1. No.

"2. No."

REPORT OF COMMISSIONER FOR TRADE.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*), without notice, asked the Secretary for Public Works—

“Will he inform the House when the report of the Commissioner for Trade will be tabled?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

“I will inform the hon. gentleman. The report will be tabled at the time provided by statute.”

(Laughter.)

VISIT OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO DAWSON VALLEY AND UPPER BURNETT LANDS.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*), without notice, asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“Will the Government consider the advisableness of making arrangements such as will afford the members of this House an opportunity to visit Dawson Valley, so as to be informed first hand, investigate, and inquire into the scheme on the spot? If yes, will he endeavour to arrange for this to take place prior to the introduction or passing of legislation?”

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

“The whole Dawson scheme was discussed by this House during the last session of the last Parliament. In view of the desire to finish the session by the end of October, it would not be desirable to adjourn the House for the purpose of proceeding to view the Dawson Valley. I am prepared to arrange for a parliamentary visit to both the Burnett area and the Dawson Valley area early in the recess if hon. members so desire.”

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PAPER.

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

Regulation, dated 21st September, 1923, under the Wheat Pool Act of 1920.

JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUNDS BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*): I beg to move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide for the proper control and disposal of funds raised towards the relief of the lamentable distress resulting from the recent earthquake disaster in Japan.”

Question put and passed.

METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

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

Question put and passed.

[*Hon. W. Forgan Smith.*]

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—FIFTH ALLOTTED DAY.

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

RAILWAYS.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

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

“That £106,803 be granted for ‘Railways—General Establishment.’”

The total appropriation required for the year 1923-24 is £4,846,330. The total estimated revenue for the financial year is £5,700,000. The total appropriation for the year 1922-23 was £4,738,308, and the expenditure £4,712,362. It will be noted that the expenditure for 1922-23 was therefore £36,100 less than for the previous financial year, and less than the appropriation for 1922-23 by £24,046. In 1921-22 the expenditure showed a decrease as compared with the previous year of £238,136. I might mention that this was the first time for twenty years that there had been a decrease in railway expenditure over the previous year. The total reduction in the expenditure for the past two years has therefore been £334,256. The appropriation for the year 1923-24 shows an increase over the expenditure for 1922-23 of £132,068. The principal items which account for this increase are—

	£
Replacing old locomotive boilers	26,000
Automatic increases, etc. ...	30,000
Extra staff opening new lines ...	18,000
Extra time for anticipated increase in traffic ...	27,000
Relaying, substitution of angle for strap fishplates, ballasting, P.W. material, etc., etc.	27,000
Advertising Branch—previously provided for under Trust Funds ...	12,700
Unemployed Workers' Insurance	6,000

The total amount exceeds the £132,068, representing the difference between the appropriation now asked for and the expenditure for the previous year, but there are some decreases. Hon. members will find in the foregoing items the reasons for the slight increase in expenditure that has been provided for, as compared with the last financial year.

In the last two years the railway service has shown gratifying improvement, and I will give a few figures indicating the changes that have taken place.

EARNINGS.

	£
1920-21	5,279,400
1921-22	5,154,500
1922-23	5,420,400

EXPENDITURE.

	£
1920-21	5,048,400
1921-22	4,810,300
1922-23	4,714,200

PERCENTAGE WORKING EXPENSES TO EARNINGS.

1920-21	95.63
1921-22	93.32
1922-23	86.97

NET REVENUE EARNINGS.

	£
1920-21	230,900
1921-22	344,100
1922-23	706,100

PERCENTAGE OF NET EARNINGS TO CAPITAL.

	£	s.	d.
1920-21	0	9	9
1921-22	0	14	2½
1922-23	1	7	10

MILEAGE OF RAILWAY OPEN FOR TRAFFIC.

1920-21	5,752
1921-22	5,799
1922-23	5,905

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Why don't you go back to some of the earlier years?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will go back as far as the hon. member desires if he will restrain his impetuosity. This is merely an introduction to the exchanges that will probably take place subsequently between the hon. member for Wynnum and myself. The table is not a long one, but it is a very eloquent one. If one had the eloquence of Demosthenes, the force of Chatham, and the logic of John Stuart Mill, he would not be able to porray the improvement in the position of the Queensland railways during the last two years, over the figures for the preceding years, in a more powerful manner.

Mr. KERR: If we had the Commissioner's report we should not want those figures.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a most ungenerous remark, for this reason: Before the Premier went North he came to me with respect to the Estimates, and said: "The Opposition desire the Estimates taken in this order—Agriculture, Education, Railways. Are you prepared to go on?" I said, "Yes, certainly." As a result, the Railway Estimates are now being introduced by me. I have discussed with the Commissioner the question of the presentation of his report, and he said that the Government Printing Office were engaged on the Auditor-General's report, and the Commissioner would not be able to present his report before Tuesday next. Hon. members will see figures in various parts of the report which I am giving in statistical form this afternoon, as I desire to see them printed in "Hansard" in this manner. Just for the present, that is all the information I desire to give, and I content myself with formally moving the vote.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): The Minister has given us some figures regarding the railways, and I also wish to quote some figures which the Committee and the public of Queensland should know with regard to our railways. In the first place, it is gratifying to know that there has been an increase of the earnings of the railways, and that the return of capital invested has risen from 13s. 1d. per cent. for the year 1918-1919, to 27s. 1d. per cent. for the year 1922-1923. It is pleasing to know that quite a lot of things that were said in connection with the railway administration during the debate last

year and in the previous year probably have been taken notice of, and this improvement probably has been the result.

I want to draw attention to the interest on expenditure for the year 1922-1923, which, according to the Treasurer's tables, amounted to £2,181,330. The net income on railways for the year 1922-1923 was £686,058—certainly nearly twice as much as for the previous year. The actual charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the year 1922-1923 amounted to £1,495,272.

I also desire to draw attention to the deficits that have been created since the present Government have had charge of the railways of Queensland. According to the Auditor-General's report the deficits were—

	£
" 1915-1916	508,244
1916-1917	737,388
1917-1918	1,028,008
1918-1919	1,421,328
1919-1920	1,229,579
1920-1921	1,739,475
1921-1922	1,743,270
1922-1923	1,495,272

Total for eight years £9,902,564 "

I think these figures are alarming, notwithstanding the fact that a considerable amount of extra money had to be found in the cost price of materials to run the railways, and in paying salaries and wages. At the same time, when we think of the deficit that we have to face at the present time on our railways, which amounts to £9,902,564, one asks one-self the question: "When is it going to stop? How long is it going to continue?" Certainly the position is most alarming, and it calls for very close attention on the part of Parliament and the Government in order to rectify matters at the earliest possible moment. In dealing with the question of freight, the Treasurer, in his Budget Speech, says—

"The heavy railway losses in Queensland compared with the other States are directly attributable to the policy of continuing the low freight charges. It is considered by the Government to be sound policy to keep the freights at a low level, and charge up the losses on the railways to the consolidated revenue each year, rather than reduce the taxation of city dwellers at the expense of rural industries."

That statement is absolutely wrong in two ways. In the first place, it is the city dwellers who are favoured in respect of freights and fares. As country dwellers have to pay exactly the same rate of taxation, they are being heavily taxed in order to allow city dwellers this concession. Queensland has by far the highest freights in the whole of the Commonwealth.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am going to quote now from the latest figures supplied by the Commonwealth Statistician. The figures in that publication are taken from the same sources in other States as in Queensland, and, therefore, I take it that they are as reliable as

Mr. Taylor.]

it is possible to get them. The following are the figures:—

ORDINARY GOODS MILEAGE RATES ON STATE RAILWAYS, 1921.

—	100 Miles.		300 Miles.		500 Miles.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
(a) Highest Class Freight.						
New South Wales	76	8	160	0	197	6
Victoria ..	63	3	163	0	238	3
Queensland ..	89	4	220	6 (a)	268	4 (a)
South Australia	77	3	199	5	287	9
West Australia ..	77	1	77	9	246	8
(b) Lowest Class Freight.						
New South Wales	6	9	10	0	12	4
Victoria ..	5	4	10	6	12	8
Queensland ..	10	2	21	2	30	3
South A stralia	8	0	16	7	21	1
West Australia ..	4	1	8	3	12	5

(a) Maximum freight on highest class goods to Western Stations is 210s. per ton.

Those figures are taken from the latest edition of the "Commonwealth Statistics" with regard to freights prevailing in the various States of the Commonwealth. It shows quite clearly that the statement that we are carrying primary products at a lesser rate than any other State in the Commonwealth is not in accordance with fact.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are for many lines—sheep, cattle, and agricultural produce, and other such things.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Budget speech also states that the increase in freights in Queensland since 1914 has been 12 per cent. We will analyse that statement by the following table:—

—	Total Tonnage of Goods and Live Stock carried.		Total Revenue therefrom.	Average Revenue per ton.
	Tons.	£		
1914-15 ..	4,970,873	2,516,380	10	1
1915-16 ..	4,570,883	2,364,364	10	4
1916-17 ..	4,035,379	2,433,868	12	0
1917-18 ..	4,154,441	2,516,564	12	1
1918-19 ..	3,783,334	2,483,698	13	1
1919-20 ..	3,790,881	3,000,829	15	10
1920-21 ..	3,867,650	3,267,289	16	11
1921-22 ..	3,732,413	3,105,485	16	8

The average increase in freight per ton carried equalled 6s. 7d.

The average increase in freight per ton carried equalled 64 per cent. (as against 12 per cent. mentioned in the Budget speech).

Those figures are taken from the reports of the Commissioner for Railways and can be verified, so how the Premier could say in his Budget Speech that the increase has only been 12 per cent. I do not know.

Now let me read a table with regard to the work of the staff—

—	No. of Em- ployees.	Train Mileage.	Tonnage of Goods and Live Stock.		Train miles per employee.	Tonnage per Employee.
			Tons.	Mls.		
1914-15	14,936	11,988,521	4,970,873	803	332	
1916-17	15,272	10,729,187	4,035,379	703	264	
1919-20	16,823	10,433,619	3,970,881	621	225	
1920-21	15,899	10,735,723	3,867,650	676	243	
1921-22	15,726	9,634,552	3,732,413	613	237	

[Mr. Taylor.

Hon. members will see from those figures that between 1914 and 1922 the number of employees increased by 790, whilst the train mileage decreased by 2,353,939, and the tonnage of goods and live stock carried decreased by 1,238,460. During the same period the average number of train miles run per employee decreased by 190 miles or 23 per cent., and the tonnage of goods carried per employee decreased by 95 tons or 29 per cent. Those are figures which require some explanation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Larger loads make a big difference.

Mr. TAYLOR: Heavier loads on the trains, as pointed out in the report of the Commissioner, involve very little extra expense as compared with light loads. I ask the Minister to go into these matters and endeavour to discover what is wrong. It is not a bit of use saying that it is because of the extra mileage of railways the Government now have.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have fewer employees per mile than you had in 1914-15.

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not know about that. I would like to draw attention particularly to the fact that in 1914-15 the total tonnage carried on the railways was nearly 5,000,000 tons, whereas in 1922-23 it had dropped to 3,732,413 tons. That shows that things in the State are not as prosperous as we would like them to be.

There are several factors probably contributing to this deficiency in the tonnage that is being carried on our railways, but the shrinkage is of such magnitude [4 p.m.] as to warrant us finding out the reason and seeing if the trouble cannot be removed in some way. I consider that the drop in the figures in connection with the tonnage carried during the past eight years deserves very careful consideration. The following figures show the mileage of railway constructed and open for traffic since the year 1908-9:—

MILEAGE OF RAILWAY CONSTRUCTED AND OPENED FOR TRAFFIC.

Miles.		Miles.	
1908-09 ..	139	1915-16 ..	129
1909-10 ..	163	1916-17 ..	247
1910-11 ..	207	1917-18 ..	31
1911-12 ..	398	1918-19 ..	174
1912-13 ..	258	1919-20 ..	216
1913-14 ..	46	1920-21 ..	67
1914-15 ..	268	1921-22 ..	47

Total, seven years 1,479 961

Average mileage opened per annum—
1908-09 to 1914-15 = 211.3 miles.
1915-16 to 1921-22 = 137.3 miles.

I just quote those figures to show the state the railways were in, and what happened prior to the present Administration taking office.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your Government had a deficit of £8,000,000 before this Government came into office.

Mr. TAYLOR: I have the greatest regard for the men managing the railways in Queensland. I believe they are competent and know their work, notwithstanding the remarks that may be made from time to time. In a huge department like the Railway Department, with its ramifications extending right from the Tweed practically to the Gulf, it is a very difficult task

efficiently and thoroughly to supervise the whole of the working of the staff, but, taking it by and large, I think that the men who have control of the railways are carrying out the job as efficiently as anyone could do it.

A few days ago reference was made to what is called political control and political influence. There is a very great difference between political control and political influence. If a member of Parliament went to the Minister or the Commissioner and placed a case before him, suggesting that what the Minister or the Commissioner proposed to do was not in the best interests of the railways, I think that member would be quite justified in his action.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: In that case he would not be endeavouring to control the railways. It is to the control or management being taken out of the hands of the Commissioner that I strongly object.

Just before the recent elections a certain order was issued by the Railway Department—the Minister probably will be able to tell us whether what I say is correct or not. I do not know the correct wording of the order, as I have misplaced it, but it was something to the effect that the employees of the Railway Department who were not able to go and record their votes, or who were unable to be booked off for that purpose, were to be paid time and a-half. I am curious to know whether that was issued at the instance of the Minister or the Commissioner. Personally, I am inclined to think that it was not the Commissioner.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It was following out the Government's decision to declare that day a public holiday.

Mr. TAYLOR: That is what I call political control. The whole of the votes of those men could have been recorded without having recourse to an order such as that. I do not think it was ever done before by any previous Government when there was an election pending. If we knew the cost, we might ascertain that that order cost a good few thousand pounds.

There is another matter I would like to bring under the notice of the Minister. A considerable amount of money has been spent at Mayne Junction. I know from travelling on that line that there is a fair amount of shunting in connection with stock and timber trains on that reclaimed land, but I do not wish to deal so much with that point. From the start of the improvements in that area, sheds and houses were put up and they have been empty for years. Nothing is being done with them. I do not know whether they can be used or not. I understand that there are engine sheds, buildings for officers, and pits for overhauling engines, etc. They have been completed for the last four or five years, and nothing is being done with them. If they are not of any use or if they cannot be put to any use in the immediate future, then the best thing to do is to sell them or remove them to some other location where they can be used. Those works, representing thousands of pounds, have been lying idle for four or five years, and I think something should be done.

Although prospects are not too bright at the present time, I hope that during the current year there will be an improvement in the revenue and an improvement generally

in the railways throughout the State. Because I sit on this side of the Chamber I am not one who wants to see this State go to the dogs. I want to see this State prosper. As I have said on one or more occasions, Queensland will prosper irrespective of what Government has control. One Government may make it difficult at times for a State to advance, but I am sure it is the desire of us all to see our State advance and prosper.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The figures quoted by the leader of the Opposition require some explanation. The explanation which has been given by the Commissioner in his report rather attempts to condone the situation so far as he is concerned. I quite admit that the Commissioner is faced with a most difficult proposition in endeavouring to control the railways and make them pay. We all know that the number of train miles run in Queensland has not advanced in accordance with the increase in population. The other States of Australia are even in a worse position than Queensland in that respect with one exception, and that is Western Australia. Western Australia does not show a large number of train miles run, but it has a larger number in proportion to the population. After all, the increase in the number of train miles run in accordance with the increase in population is one of the important factors in making the railways pay. I think it is a well ascertained fact that railways will increase in their tonnage and become a more paying proposition as the population increases. If we had double our population we should probably get four times the amount of traffic on our railways. The Commissioner has a very difficult proposition to handle. In his report for the year ended 30th June, 1922, he says—

"The average tonnage per mile of open line has actually fallen from 852 tons per mile in 1910-11 to 672 tons in 1920-21, a drop of 180 tons (equal to 21 per cent.) per mile of opened line."

"From a national standpoint, and looking to the future, the opening up of the country for closer settlement by new railways is desirable, but from the standpoint of present railway management there can be no doubt that the construction of new lines has outpaced the growth of traffic; consequently the railways are over-capitalised for the amount of business done, as the revenue from increased tonnage hauled falls far short of paying the additional interest. What we require to make the railways pay is a greater traffic on the existing lines."

When the Commissioner for Railways makes a statement such as that in his annual report, does it not seem to be extreme folly to go in for a policy of a huge expansion of building railways when we have not got the traffic on the existing lines to make them pay?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What the Government want to do is to open up the country by railways and then proceed with the settlement of it afterwards.

Mr. MOORE: I do not doubt but that we have to provide for the future, but we may provide too lavishly for the future. If a huge railway programme is embarked upon before any traffic is available it is

Mr. Moore.]

not going to be successful. Why do not the Government settle the lands first?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are settling the lands on the North Coast and in the Burnett Valley.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, but the Government are going in for a huge construction programme before they really know what settlement will be available for those railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have turned down requests this year, mostly from members of the Opposition, which, if adopted, would cost the State £10,000,000.

Mr. MOORE: Possibly all sorts of requests are made for railways on the off chance of getting them. If people get a railway for the asking, then all the better for them. What the Government require to look at is whether the country can bear the strain. If the Commissioner and his experts say that the railways which are to be built under a big programme are not going to return $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., it seems a foolish policy to proceed with the construction of a huge railway policy without any knowledge of what the settlement is going to be on the lands through which they are to be constructed. The Government have every justification for not spending huge sums of money in building experimental lines which are not likely to return working expenses for years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The experts say that the Burnett Valley railway will add £8,000,000 to the value of the land.

Mr. MOORE: That is an exceedingly doubtful statement. It is all very fine for the hon. gentleman to get up and say it is going to add that value to the land. We have only to take the existing lines to-day. Take for example the main western line running out from Toowoomba. Before it was built over 20,000,000 acres on each side of the line were sold by the Government for 30s. an acre. Exactly the same land can be purchased to-day from the original holders for less than that price. Does that show that the building of a railway adds an enormous amount to the value of the land? It seems to me that the Government are going to place a huge burden on the taxpayers in proceeding with a huge construction policy on which they are not likely to get a return that will make them pay. The Government are building three lines in the Burnett before they know whether they are likely to get any settlement at all.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We shall have settlers there next month.

Mr. MOORE: The Government want to find out whether the settlers are going there first. I am pointing out that the probability is that we are going to add probably £300,000 or £350,000 a year to our interest bill. If the Government can prove that those railways will be a paying proposition within four, five, or six years, they have every justification for proceeding with them; but, when we see a decrease in the tonnage from 1914 up to the present time and the Commissioner pointing out that the railways cannot pay when constructed in advance of settlement, is it advisable to go in for building railways to such an extent? We should go for a policy of making the present railways pay and settling the lands through which they run rather than placing additional burdens on the taxpayer.

[Mr. Moore.

There is another point I wish to make in regard to the running of trains. On page 11 of his report the Commissioner for Railways says—

“There are hundreds of miles of line where even a tri-weekly service is more than sufficient, so far as traffic is concerned, but primary industries and other conditions demand that this tri-weekly service be maintained in order to encourage land settlement and production.”

This is not exactly the same, but it is almost as bad as the conditions obtaining in New South Wales. There they have endeavoured to minimise this difficulty to a certain extent by running motor-trains. If the department in Queensland were to experiment in the same way as New South Wales in regard to motor-trains, they would probably find a solution of many of the difficulties that confront us. The hon. member for Herbert, when speaking on the Financial Statement, pointed out that the Commissioner had to run trains to the Atherton Tableland three times a week merely to carry dairy produce when there was no warrant for his doing so. The Commissioner points out the same thing.

Mr. PEASE: How are you going to run motor-trains up there?

Mr. MOORE: Why not?

Mr. PEASE: How can a motor-train negotiate the Cairns line?

Mr. MOORE: Because it might not be possible to work motor-trains there, it does not say that they cannot be worked elsewhere in Queensland. That is no argument. They were not paying in New South Wales when they started because they did not have the right sort of motor.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are experimenting with the Purrey car now, and the railway officials are of the opinion that it is superior to the rail motor.

Mr. MOORE: I am only pointing out that the same failure attended the initial experiments in New South Wales because they did not have the class of motor for the traffic they were required to haul. New South Wales then, instead of discontinuing them, went to their own workshops and got their own men to go into the question and overcome the difficulty. They overcame the difficulty by the introduction of a more powerful motor. The report of the Commissioner in New South Wales stated—

“The mechanical engineering staff of the department has been engaged in designing a motor which would have all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of the American type. In achieving this it was found necessary to depart from most of the principles which govern the pioneers in the construction of this type of engine, and a motor has been designed by Mr. Brian Lucy, a son of Mr. F. E. Lucy, the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the department, which it is believed will do all that is required of it. This engine has been under construction at the Eveleigh Railway Workshops for some time, and is now complete and ready for its trial run.”

A little later on in the report the motor-trains in the Riverina were being talked of, and this statement is made—

“It is now stated that the Govern-

ment is convinced that considerable economies can be effected by bringing motors into service generally on branch lines, and that the change may pave the way to the wiping out of deficits on country lines, at the same time tending to a reduction of fares which now press too heavily upon country people, and considerably speeding up the services, giving to some country lines a daily service where at present trains run only three times a week."

In New South Wales they have six or seven of these motor-trains running. They proved by experiment that the same type of motor as they had in Queensland was a failure. The new type of motor has been proved to be able to carry and haul all that is required of them on lines such as that mentioned by the hon. member for Herbert.

Mr. PEASE: Motor-trains cannot be run up the Cairns line.

Mr. MOORE: I suppose lines can be picked out in any district where they would not be suitable.

Mr. PEASE: That is our main line.

Mr. MOORE: The Cairns line is not the whole of Queensland. Here they have a motor of 150 horse-power and it has been successful for the haulage that is required of it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I brought your remarks before the Chief Engineer, and he seemed to think that the Purrey car would be the car.

Mr. MOORE: I do not know anything about the Purrey car. If they have been successful in other places, they are likely to be successful here. Because the McKeen car was found unsuitable, and because the little motors that ran from Wyreema to Gowrie Junction were also found unsuitable, it does not say that the motors that I speak of will also be unsuitable.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: They have the population in Victoria.

Mr. MOORE: It is not a question of population on these lines. Motors are instituted because the population is not there when the railways have gone in advance of settlement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We think we have something better now.

Mr. MOORE: I am glad to learn that the Minister has something better. This method of locomotion has been going on in other States for a considerable time.

Another thing that the Commissioner states on page 14 of his report is this—

"If the Queensland rates, fares, and traffic had increased to the same extent as other railways, comparisons show that our results would have been equally favourable after allowing for increasing our present expenditure in the same ratio as the additional mileage which is estimated would have been required."

The Premier and the Secretary for Railways have been taking tremendous credit because they have not increased the freights and fares to the same extent as New South Wales. They could not increase them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have not increased our freights and fares for four years.

Mr. MOORE: The railway freights in Queensland are far higher than they are in New South Wales.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct.

Mr. MOORE: It is quite possible that you could take certain agricultural products for which the rates in Queensland are lower, but, taking the average freights for the higher class rates, Queensland is higher than any other State in the Commonwealth.

Mr. PEASE: What about passenger rates?

Mr. MOORE: I am not talking about passenger rates. I am talking about freights.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Which are the main items in making the railways pay?

Mr. MOORE: It is not a question of passenger freights in the country. Men in the country do not want the railways merely to carry them as passengers. They want them to carry their produce and their goods.

Mr. PEASE: It is chiefly primary products.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member is talking absolute nonsense.

Mr. PEASE: Read the book that has been quoted by the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member can read the book himself. I am going to read some of it; I am going to take the lowest class freights in 1915 and compare them with the lowest class freights in 1922—

Mr. WEIR: You know the basis of comparison is not fair. Do not compare Queensland with Victoria; compare it with Western Australia.

Mr. MOORE: I am talking about New South Wales—not Victoria—but I will compare it with Western Australia if the hon. member likes.

Mr. WEIR: Make a comparison with Western Australia on "Knibbs's" figures.

Mr. MOORE: I will. In Western Australia in 1915 the lowest class rate was—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
For 50 miles	5	0
For 200 miles	14	2
For 500 miles	27	6

In 1922 the lowest class rates in Western Australia were—

50 miles, 3s. 3d., which shows a reduction of 1s. 9d.

200 miles, 6s. 2d., a reduction of 8s.

500 miles, 12s. 5d., as compared with 27s. 6d. in 1915.

Or you can take it this way. Instead of there being an increase in Western Australia from 1915 to 1922 for these lowest class rates, there was a decrease of 1s. 9d. on 50 miles, 8s. on 200 miles, and 15s. 1d. on the 500-mile basis.

Mr. WEIR: You have picked out special lines.

Mr. MOORE: I have picked out the lowest rates. The hon. member for Maryborough asked that I should pick out Western Australia, thinking that that State would favour his argument. I did so, and he now says that I have picked out something that suits me. I shall take the highest class rates if the hon. member likes.

Mr. PEASE: Take the rates for agricultural produce.

Mr. Moore.]

Mr. MOORE: These are the rates for agricultural produce. The highest class rates in Western Australia on a 50-mile basis were 41s. 1d. in 1915; to-day they are 47s. 1d.—an increase of 6s. In Queensland for the same period we had an increase of 8s. 3d. I do not see that the Minister has anything to be so frightfully proud of.

Mr. PEASE: If all these increases have occurred, why does not the revenue of Queensland improve?

Mr. MOORE: Because we have a lesser tonnage to-day than we had in 1915. We have a decrease of about 890,000 tons.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is a big improvement this year.

Mr. MOORE: Of course, I have not seen this year's figures, but I am glad to hear the Minister say that there is an improvement. I quote Western Australia because the train mileage there is 10.62 and in Queensland it is 7.68. With a discrepancy such as that Western Australia should be far worse off than Queensland. That is not so. In 1915 the percentage of net revenue in Western Australia was 3.3 and in 1921 1.64. In Queensland in 1915 the percentage of net revenue was 4.28, and to-day it is .56. We are far worse off than Western Australia, which operates under a similar system with a 3 feet 6 inch gauge. Western Australia is also worse off so far as population is concerned.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Pick such items as cattle, sheep, cream, and other items of a like type, and you will find that we are much better off than New South Wales.

Mr. PEASE: Take passenger fares.

Mr. MOORE: I have not taken passenger fares; I have not got down to the question of suburban fares. The railways are built mainly to carry produce.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take country fares—not necessarily suburban fares. Two-fifths of our revenue comes from fares.

Mr. MOORE: The reason for building railways in country districts is for carrying produce. If the Minister is going to raise freights, we shall not get the goods on the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yet we have the speeches of hon. members opposite in favour of increasing railway fares.

Mr. MOORE: If the hon. gentleman did what he is taking the credit for not doing—that is raise the freights in the same proportion as has been done in New South Wales, he would find that he could not get the produce to be carried on the railways. Motor traffic would come in on many short lines, and the department could not compete with that traffic. It is much cheaper to take produce by road, and it is even cheaper to take passengers by road.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have given up three-quarters of a million of revenue as a result of the Railways Guarantee Act.

Mr. MOORE: The same old question crops up, but we should take the railways as they are to-day. If Western Australian railways, under the same conditions as Queensland railways, are in a better position with a similar population, something should be done to improve our position. Queensland is decreasing its revenue all the time.

[Mr. Moore.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Western Australia is not in a better position. The present Commissioner for Railways in Western Australia made special favourable reference to the Queensland administration when he was inquiring into the position of Australian railways.

Mr. MOORE: The Minister says Western Australia is not in a better position, yet in 1921 the percentage of net revenue in Western Australia was 1.64 and in Queensland .56. Can anybody say that Western Australia is not in a better position?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not the point. What is the mileage in Queensland?

Mr. MOORE: It is less in Queensland in proportion to population than in Western Australia. In Western Australia the mileage per thousand inhabitants is 10.62 and in Queensland it is 7.68. If you take "Knibbs's" figures, you will find that is correct. It is no good the Minister trying to shuffle out of it. We want to get the railways into a better position instead of into a worse position, and we find that the position we are getting into is getting rapidly worse owing to the enormous expenditure in connection with our railways.

There is another matter to which I wish to refer. I admit that in this respect the Government seem to be powerless, but I daresay the Minister the other day noticed the report of a case against a railway conductor instituted by his union. The railway conductor was endeavouring to save the Railway Commissioner money.

Mr. WEIR: Is that your view of it? You want to look a little further back.

Mr. MOORE: It is my view of it, and, if anybody else can take any other view of the matter, I would like to hear what it is. The "Daily Standard," in reporting this case, says—

"According to Mr. McGhie, although there were actually two first and two second-class cars, there were only seventy-nine passengers, nine over the allotted number to a conductor. What was done by Meldrum or Taylor was done in the interests of the department. The work of the second conductor, Mahon, would have been practically finished at Northgate. Second-class passengers did not have an attendant, and they were not supplied with bedding. All Mahon would have had to do was to check the tickets. Mahon would have gone to Northgate and Gladstone and back as a passenger. By taking charge Meldrum was really saving the department something like £3 or £4. He did a little more work than he had a right to do."

Mr. WEIR: What was the decision of the court?

Mr. MOORE: The decision of the court was that he be fined £1, with £2 2s. professional costs.

Mr. WEIR: Why?

Mr. MOORE: Because he broke an award. It seems an extraordinary thing that an award should be made which is so absurd that, if there are a few passengers over the allotted number to a conductor, you have to carry an official as a passenger right to Gladstone and back, and then, because an

employee of the department endeavours to save the department money, he is brought before the court and fined.

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

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*): I am really at a loss to understand the point that the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Country party tried to make. First of all they quoted tables to show the bad state the railways of Queensland are in, and then they did not offer any solution of the difficulty. In quoting tables they were not fair, because they only quoted tables which suited their line of argument. The passenger rates have not been quoted at all. That is one source of revenue for the railways, and it is a fair basis. In Knibbs's "Official Year Book" there is another table which gives the first-class passenger fares in Western Australia and the first-class passenger fares in Queensland, also the first-class passenger fares in Victoria and New South Wales and the second-class fares in the same States; yet hon. members did not attempt in any way to deal with that question. At this juncture, when we are faced with big financial questions, it is the duty of the Opposition to try to help the State, and, if they have any real criticisms that would be of assistance in improving our railways, then they should be offered.

First of all, take the loss on railways. Queensland is not the only State in which the railways show a loss in working. As a matter of fact, there is not one railway service in Australia to-day which shows a profit on the capital cost.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, New South Wales.

Mr. PEASE: Take "Knibbs's" figures. The percentage of loss for 1921 was—

	Per cent.
New South Wales	0.70
Victoria	0.74
Queensland	3.82
South Australia	2.91
Western Australia	2.30
Tasmania	1.52
Average for all States ...	1.62

Those are the losses for the whole of the States of the Commonwealth. This also shows that New South Wales has invested—

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Give us the figures for 1922.

Mr. PEASE: I am now giving the figures for 1923. The recently issued report of the New South Wales Railway Commissioners discloses that the State has invested £26,000,000 in branch railway lines which do not pay, and on which there was a loss last year of £1,106,881. That is for the last financial year.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Take the railways as a whole.

Mr. KELSO: That is for branch lines.

Mr. PEASE: This is what the Commonwealth Statistician says in regard to these figures—

"A false impression may be gained from these averages, but it should be borne in mind that the anticipated advantage of the railway construction policy of the various States has borne fruit in the ultimate settlement of the country."

That is the real crux of the situation. Queensland has a much harder row to hoe than any other State, because, as the Minister pointed

out, we have a record mileage of railways to the number of inhabitants—a greater mileage than any country in the world—and when you compare those figures you have to put a liberal construction on them. When the Commonwealth Statistician goes out of his way to quote these figures and then adds the comments that I have read to the Committee, it shows that, when you take these figures, you should bear in mind what he says, so that a false impression will not get abroad. That is what is happening to-day, and that is what hurts.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Your argument overlooks this very important feature: The cost of railways by reason of the broader gauge is very much greater in New South Wales than in Queensland.

Mr. PEASE: It shows the danger of quoting figures alone. That conclusion that I have read comes from a man who knows his job. He has to compile these figures and disseminate them throughout Australia, and he wants to show the people of Australia that they should not compare the figures alone; but that they should put a reasonable construction on them. I want hon. members of the Opposition to take note of that point. The Commonwealth Statistician has no political bias in connection with the railways of Queensland, nor should we have any political bias. We should look at the matter from a fair and reasonable point of view. I will now quote from page 18 of the Commissioner's report to show where the loss on the Queensland railways comes from, and then I am going to ask members of the Opposition which lines they would close down. According to the Commissioner's report the following sections paid working expenses and interest on capital:—Southern Division—North Ipswich to Tivoli, Northgate to Gympie. Central Division—Rockhampton to Longreach. Northern Division—Stewart's Creek to Carstairs.

The following sections paid working expenses but did not return full interest on capital:—

	Amount short of Full Interest.
Southern Division (11 sections) ..	282,850
Central Division (2 sections) ..	24,030
Northern Division (8 sections) ..	136,598
Total	443,478

The following sections paid neither working expenses nor interest on capital:—

	Total Loss.
Southern Division (33 sections) ..	496,627
Central Division (11 sections) ..	205,705
Northern Division (20 sections) ..	473,097
Total	1,175,429
Loss—Grand total	1,618,907

Taking the two latter tables together, we get the following gross results:—

	Total Loss.
Southern (44 sections)	779,477
Central (13 sections)	229,735
Northern (28 sections)	609,695
Grand total	£1,618,907

That is where the railway deficiency comes from, and I would ask the Opposition to peruse the Commissioner's report and to tell

Mr. Pease.]

the Minister which sections they would close down. Representatives of Northern constituencies have to shoulder the blame for a loss of £609,695. I contend that it is not a loss. We cannot estimate the returns from our railways in pounds, shillings, and pence. You must estimate them according to the services rendered to the community. The North is just now becoming developed, and, if you close down those railways, you close the whole of North Queensland up.

At 4.40 p.m.,

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

Mr. PEASE: As a representative of the North, I am prepared to accept my share of responsibility for practically one-half of the railway deficiency. I say that it is not a deficiency when you bear all the circumstances in mind. If you closed those lines down, that would not make them pay; but, apparently, that is the only solution the Opposition have to offer. You cannot run the trains any cheaper, and you cannot carry goods any cheaper. How on earth can you reduce the rates? Cream, sugar-cane, and timber are largely carried on the Northern railways. The more trains they run, the more they lose. Are you going to let those settlers up there, who have gone out as pioneers, starve for want of a railway?

The leader of the Country party suggests motor traffic. That may come eventually, but to-day we have got the iron horse, and we have to deal with that. I do not like to hear hon. members opposite cavilling at the railway deficiency, because it stares you in the face. The railway deficiency, boiled down, amounts to this: We have such an extensive mileage of railway that it is impossible to make the department pay. Hon. members opposite talk about political interference. There is no political interference so far as fares and freights are concerned. If the Commissioner can prove a good case, his recommendation will always be adopted. The Minister, of course, will have to see that the people are not exploited. If the Minister can see a fair case for an increase, he will allow it. We have to pay for the situation we are in, and all the cavilling here will not alter that phase of the matter. The Commissioner, on page 21 of his report, states—

“There was no increase in rates and fares this year, nor the year preceding, but a reduction of 20 per cent. on the rates of cattle, sheep and pigs, cream, butter, cheese, condensed milk, etc., was made on March last to assist these industries over a period of depression. In addition, concession rates are being allowed Mount Morgan and Chillagoe to assist mining operations to continue while metal values are low.”

Will hon. members say that those concessions should not be made? It is not possible to do anything else except make them; otherwise, in the case of Mount Morgan and Chillagoe, you will extinguish the whole settlement. Not only would that stop the working men in the mines, but the business people would be wiped out of existence.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Don't forget that similar concessions were made years ago by previous Governments.

Mr. PEASE: I am going to quote the rates of agricultural produce as quoted by me when speaking on the Financial State-

ment, and challenged by the leader of the Country party.

Mr. KELSO: You cannot deny that the railways are overstaffed?

Mr. PEASE: I can. On page 576 of the “Official Year Book” of the Commonwealth, No. 15, for 1922, I find the following quotation:—

RATES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE IN TRUCK LOADS ON STATE RAILWAYS, 1921.

	50 Miles.	100 Miles.	200 Miles.
Queensland	s. d. 5 8	s. d. 10 2	s. d. 12 0
As compared with average all States	7 7	11 6	15 1

	300 Miles.	400 Miles.	500 Miles.
Queensland	s. d. 13 0	s. d. 14 6	s. d. 15 6
As compared with average all States	17 9	21 3	23 9

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You are not fair. The leader of the Country party quoted Western Australia.

Mr. PEASE: I will go to Western Australia. The Queensland rate is 5s. 8d., while the Western Australia rate is 8s. 3d. Queensland is carrying primary produce, which includes sugar-cane for 5s. 8d., whereas Western Australia is carrying her primary produce for 8s. 3d.

Then we come to passenger rates. The leader of the Country party talks about suburban fares. The following is a comparison of Queensland with other States in regard to passenger rates:—

	50 Miles.	
	1st class	2nd class
Queensland	s. d. 9 4	s. d. 6 3
As compared with all States	9 9	6 5

Then go on to—

	500 Miles.	
	1st class	2nd class
Queensland	s. d. 71 0	s. d. 43 0
As compared with all States	82 11	51 9

Then we come to the Commonwealth “Official Year Book” again. I notice that the Commonwealth Statistician, when dealing with railway statistics, always qualifies his figures by commenting on them. I take it that he does that for the purpose I am pointing out—namely, that he wants the general public not only to make use of the figures, but to take notice of his qualifying statements. This is what he says in regard to traffic conditions—

“The density of population diminishes rapidly as the coastal regions are left behind, and there is a corresponding diminution in the volume of traffic, while in comparison with other more settled countries, there is but little back loading.”

If you analyse the non-paying lines, you will find that is the position. I have not time to do it myself, but there is the statement. There are non-payable lines in the Northern, Central, and Southern Divisions, and each division has to bear its fair share of the

[Mr. Pease.

loss. The loss in the South is more than in the North, and in the Central Division there is also a loss. Those figures show why the lines do not pay. The hon. member for Wynnum asked me to go back to previous years. I took up in the Library the other day the "Annual Review of Queensland" for 1902, on page 226 of which there is the following comment on the railways of Queensland:—

"The Commissioner's report for the year ended 30th June, 1902, pointed out that the revenue for the year was £449,946 short of meeting the interest on capital. In other words, says the Commissioner, the users of our railways have during the year been charged close on half a million less than they should have been if full interest on the outlay had been desired."

In 1902 the people of Queensland were benefited to the extent of £500,000 by the railways carrying goods and passengers at less than they should have been carried, and to-day it is a little over £1,000,000. This was the remedy in 1902, and no doubt the same remedy would be enforced to-day if the Labour party was not in power—

"The rates and fares have now been increased with the view of reducing the deficit, and the receipts for the months of July and August, 1902, show an improvement of £25,000 on last year's figures, even allowing for considerable decrease in the volume of traffic."

That is the old remedy, and that is the only remedy anti-Labour people will adopt. The Chief Engineer for Railways at that time, Mr. Pagan, showed how he was going to reduce expenditure. He said—

"Special efforts have been made to reduce the cost of maintenance, especially that branch of work described as repairing permanent way, and which is mainly represented by the wages of men on lengths."

"A large reduction has been made in flying gangs, and with a view to further reduction, I propose to try the 'flying gang' system on the Western line, displacing men on lengths entirely in some places."

What is the position to-day? Queensland to-day shows the highest expenditure on the maintenance of the railways in the whole of the Commonwealth. Here are the figures taken from the Commonwealth Statistician's "Quarterly Bulletin"—

"Maintenance only, per train mile—

	s.	d.
Queensland	2	5
Victoria	2	1½
New South Wales	1	9½
South Australia	1	5

"In the aggregate, working expenses in Queensland are lowest per train mile—

New South Wales	10	1½
Victoria	10	1½
Queensland	9	11½

"As also are the earnings, thus proving concessions in fares and freights."

"The earnings per train mile in all States for 1921-1922 were—

Western Australia	12	4½
New South Wales	13	10½
Victoria	13	7½
South Australia	11	8½
Queensland	10	8½

On page 12 of his report the Commissioner points out that in the year 1914-15 the railways paid £4 0s. 8d. per cent. on capital, but that last year the return was only 15s. 4½d., and in order to show that this drop in the net results was not due to decreased efficiency, but to the fact that our revenue did not increase in the same ratio as our costs, he quotes tables to compare the railways of 1914-15 with those of 1921-22—

	Per cent.
Miles of open line (increased) ...	19.8
Cost per train mile (increased) ...	149.4
Employees per mile, open line (decrease)	12.0
Revenue per employee after paying working costs (decrease)	77.2

In that connection I want to quote from the Commonwealth "Year Book" to show what has happened in the business of the Brisbane tramways. In 1917 the company employed 1,121 hands, and their working expenses were £257,000. In 1921 they employed only twenty-one hands more—1,142—but their working expenses were £411,000. What I am trying to prove is that the same situation which the Railway Commissioner has to meet has also to be faced by private companies. Arbitration awards, the heavy cost of material, and everything else have increased working expenses, and the more you analyse the figures the more surely do you find that the Queensland railways are showing a better return in proportion than the Brisbane tramways.

Mr. MORGAN: The tramways are paying.

Mr. PEASE: Of course they are paying, with big fares and the people strap-hanging. Another point I want to make is how business concerns would act in a similar position. I have pointed out that the old remedy was to increase fares and freights and reduce the men—never mind about the safety of the public; that is not to be considered. The fact is that, under Labour Government, our highest expenditure is for maintenance, whereas under the old style of railway management the first thing the Government did when they wanted to economise was to wipe men off the lengths and have flying gangs. From page 22 of the Commissioner's report I want to show how business concerns would act in a similar position to that in which the Queensland railways find themselves. He says—

"A motor tractor which the department has been running on the Brisbane Valley line for Nestlé's milk traffic has been discontinued at the company's request, as they cannot continue to bear the expense of running it."

Of course it is only reasonable. Private enterprise is not there to lose money; it is there to make gains. The moment it cannot make gains it discontinues its operations. But the railway service is out for the good of the people of Australia, and if you sum up the whole position, you find that the Government, as directors, are giving consideration to the interests of the people instead of increasing fares and freights and curtailing services, as was the policy of previous Governments. I am satisfied that, if any hon. member will only take the trouble to analyse the figures instead of just throwing a bunch of them at the Committee and saying, "Take them," he will find that what I have said is correct.

Mr. Pease.]

The main point I want to make is that we must bear in mind that the Commonwealth Statistician has found it necessary to qualify practically every statement he has made regarding the cost of railways, and he has made the remark which the Minister and everybody else who talks about railways after proper consideration find it necessary to make—you must not take the bare figures, because, if you do, the only conclusion is the increase of fares and freights and the reduction of the number of men on the lines. That is the only solution. The Commissioner has pointed it out, and it has been proved by the inquiry which is now proceeding. It was suggested to the Commissioner in one question that there were not enough men in a certain branch, and he said, "That is a common complaint in the railway service." And so it is. Hon. members opposite who quote figures about the railways should quote also the qualifying remarks of the Commonwealth Statistician; if they are not going to quote those remarks they should leave the figures alone. I am satisfied that the ex-Treasurer realises that there is no way of making the railways pay under present conditions, and that the only hope lies in the future when the lines under construction are finished and the population increases along them. Then the lines will pay. I invite hon. members on both sides to take the Commissioner's report and go through the list of lines he has quoted as not paying, in the Southern, Central, and Northern divisions, and tell the Minister which to close down.

At 4.55 p.m.,

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

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat made the assertion that the railways were the property of the people. While that may be so in theory, it is not so in fact; and in the administration of the Railway Department no attempt has been made to make them really the property of the people. We have been adding to the capital cost of our railways many millions of pounds of borrowed money, and whilst we are spending somebody else's money in the acquiring of these railways, we are showing annual deficits instead of making provision by which the returns from the undertaking will enable them to become entirely the property of the people. It is purely a matter of governmental policy whether the railways become the property of the people or the property of persons outside the State of Queensland. The quicker the Government recognise their responsibility in this regard and make due provision out of the returns for the payment for the railways, the better for the people.

Mr. DASH: What do you suggest?

Mr. KERR: Before I resume my seat I shall suggest many things, and I hope the Government will adopt one or two of them. It is quite true that it is my policy to criticise the state of the railways as far as I can, and it is only possible to do so by making a comparison with the rest of the railways in Australia. One must recognise that this is a most important undertaking to Queensland. Nearly three-quarters of the loan money invested in the State is in our railways. In criticising the undertaking, one cannot forget its magnitude, and it is almost impossible to go into detail in a short five and twenty minutes. I want to point out that, in round figures, the people of Aus-

tralia have invested in the railways £244,000,000 of borrowed money. For that money they are paying on the average 4½ per cent., whereas the average return from all the Australian railways is only 3½ per cent.; so that we are 1 per cent. short, which represents a shortage in the annual interest bill of £2,000,000 at least. Last financial year Queensland provided 70 per cent. of the total loss on the railways of Australia. That is a deplorable position, and requires some explanation. It is not much use talking about a decrease of a few tons in freight or a decrease in train mileage and other things, because these are only minor factors, an alteration in which is not going to overcome the difficulty. It is purely a question of policy; in a nutshell, that is the explanation. The Government to-day adopt the attitude that it is better to give railway facilities as cheaply as possible and pay for the cost out of Consolidated Revenue. That is the policy of the Government. To-day many members of the community are being called upon to pay a super tax to meet this deficit. I had to pay my super tax to-day.

Mr. W. COOPER: You are lucky to have to pay it.

Mr. KERR: Is it better to run the railways as a payable proposition, or is it better that the users of the railways, with the rest of the community, should be compelled to make up the loss on the railways by means of taxation? It is all purely a question of Government policy. If the Government intend to carry out the policy of giving railway services free, then that is going to be to the detriment of this State. Every reasonable person will admit that taxation in Australia has reached its limit. If we are going to have increased taxation, then that is going to affect certain sources from which considerable income is derived detrimentally, and in the long run

[5 p.m.] the whole of the State will suffer. I am pointing out that out of the 1 per cent. lost on the £244,000,000, which represents about £2,000,000 throughout the whole of Australia, the people of Queensland are bearing between 70 and 80 per cent. of that sum.

Mr. FOLEY: How would you improve that?

Mr. KERR: If the hon. gentleman had been listening to my argument he would have heard me advocating that the railways should be a paying proposition.

Mr. FOLEY: In other words—increase freights and fares?

Mr. KERR: I am setting forth my policy; I am not afraid of it.

Mr. FOLEY: You are not game to make it an issue at the next election in your constituency.

Mr. KERR: The railways were an issue at my election. They are an issue to-day throughout Queensland. The public of Queensland would like to see the railways pay. I would inform the hon. member that 80 per cent. of the revenue derived from the railways comes from the metropolitan area. You could carry the whole of the agricultural produce of Queensland free, and the deficit would not be very much larger than it is to-day.

Mr. FOLEY: If you increase the fares and freights, you will close down half the country lines.

[Mr. Pease.

Mr. KERR: I am not proposing anything of the kind. If the hon. gentleman represents a country electorate, he should agree to increase the fares in the city so as to give better service on the country lines. He knows that some of the country lines are not paying, and that some of the country stations are being closed. His argument is against his own interests. If he would follow my example, he would put in his spoke and say that the railways should pay their way, and he would then have an opportunity of getting railways run into certain areas which now do not return sufficient revenue to make those sections pay.

Let me quote the position existing in New South Wales, which is a fairly vast State, with railways constructed over a great part of it. I find that the return from the capital invested in the New South Wales railways is £5 4s. 4d. per cent., whereas the interest charge on the money is only £5 3s. 3d. per cent. New South Wales shows a surplus on the railways of £84,000, and on the tramways £5,500, or a total surplus of £89,500. Now that the war is over, New South Wales is beginning to feel her feet again. Last year was the best year for the New South Wales railways since 1881. Whilst we find that the past year was the best year in one State since 1881, we have to admit that it was the worst year Queensland has ever experienced.

Mr. W. COOPER: Do you not think that the climatic conditions had something to do with it?

Mr. KERR: Not very much. Let me again remind the hon. gentleman that it is the metropolitan area in New South Wales that furnishes the bulk of the revenue. It is not the country districts at all. If the Minister will look into the matter, he will see that what I say is quite correct.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have a smaller area, bigger population, less miles of railway, and increased fares and freights.

Mr. KERR: That is so.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Their railways cost more to build.

Mr. KERR: We in Queensland have been fortunate in having our railways constructed cheaper than any other State. We have had our railways constructed at an average cost of £8,000 per mile, whilst in the other States the cost has reached in some cases £14,000 per mile.

Mr. PEASE: Queensland's position is due to day labour and the honest railway construction worker.

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman does not require an argument on the question of day labour—I am not going to raise it here. I have perused the Commissioner's report very carefully, and I find there a statement with which I am inclined to agree. I think that, if we gave the Commissioner absolute control and told him that at the end of five years we expected the railways to pay, he would be quite justified in going ahead and making them pay.

Mr. HYNES: That is just about as clear as mud.

Mr. KERR: It is to the hon. member. The Commissioner in his report points out that, if the freights and fares had been increased to the same extent in Queensland

as they have been in the other States Queensland would compare favourably with those other States. I am inclined to agree with the Commissioner on that.

In connection with our railways it is not a matter of finding say £20,000, but we have to look for £2,000,000. I could quote instances of where money could be saved in the Railway Department. There are other instances like that mentioned by the hon. member for Bremer.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KERR: But they are only minor details. We have to look for millions of pounds, and not a paltry few thousands. Until the policy of the Government is altered we are not going to get any further. I ask the Government in good faith to give the Commissioner the power to make the railways pay. I ask them to give him the right to place the railways at the end of five years in a position equal to that of the other States. There is no gainsaying the fact that Mr. Davidson is a competent man, and he would make the railways pay if he had a free hand. Then there would be a possibility of some relief in taxation. Probably we would not have a super tax imposed on the people in addition to the ordinary tax. Not only have we a deficit on our railways, but we are also getting inadequate services from the railways. We are not getting a sufficient return from the money that is invested.

Mr. W. COOPER: Tell us how much you know about the railways?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When the Hon. T. M. Hall came back from America he paid a very high compliment to the Queensland railway service.

Mr. KERR: He may have done so. I desire to deal with the question of the electrification of the railway system.

I have already asked some questions in connection with this matter. The Government have no policy with respect to the electrification of the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That will not reduce the capital cost.

Mr. KERR: Under an electrified system there would be cheaper running, faster service, a saving of time in the interlocking system and signalling, and in five to ten years we would be able to start and show a profit. I want to show that the Railway Department, notwithstanding the great loss, is receiving an inadequate return for the money expended. In 1914, before this Government came into power, the Railway Department had a sufficient number of engines, carriages, and wagons constructed to meet their needs, whereas to-day they have not nearly a sufficient number of the necessary vehicles to run the railways. That is a statement that I hope by comparisons to substantiate.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not correct.

Mr. KERR: If my statement is not correct, then we had too many employees in 1914. I want to quote some figures in support of my statement. For the four years prior to the advent of this Government 143 additional engines were constructed. The present Government in eight years have only built seventy-two engines, or seventy-one less

Mr. Kerr.]

engines were built in eight years than in the four years' administration of their predecessors.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are a better type.

Mr. KERR: It does not follow, though they may be a heavier type because of the introduction of heavier rails. Why should we not progress?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You also want to know the cost and size of them.

Mr. KERR: I will tell the hon. gentleman the cost, too. His arguments do not hold a grain of salt. Let me go on a little further. For the four years prior to the taking of office by this Government eighty-two additional suburban carriages were built. For the eight years during which the present Government have been in power only forty have been built, or forty-two less have been constructed in their eight years than in the four years immediately prior to their taking office.

Mr. GLEDSON: Can you give us the carriages that were rebuilt and repaired?

Mr. KERR: No, these are new carriages. For the four years immediately prior to the Government taking office 2,641 additional goods wagons were built, while in the eight years of office of this Government only 2,253 were constructed, or 388 fewer goods wagons were built in the last eight years than in the four years previous to their administration.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You do not see the point. We do not want to construct wagons if they are not required.

Mr. KERR: But the Government have built 1,200 extra miles of railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have a new type of locomotive, drawing heavier loadings.

Mr. KERR: The loads are not heavier than in 1914.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, they are.

Mr. KERR: I beg to differ with the hon. gentleman. They are not. There were 671 additional coal trucks constructed in the four years immediately prior to this Government taking office, and during the last eight years only 231 have been built, or 440 less coal trucks have been constructed in the last eight years than were constructed in the four years previous to their administration.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Then there were the rebuilds.

Mr. KERR: In the five years prior to the Government taking office, when money was cheaper than it is now, £1,963,992 was spent on rolling-stock, while during the last five years only £1,113,962 has been spent, or a decrease of £850,030.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Give the comparisons over an eight-year period?

Mr. KERR: I did not go into those figures, but I do not think that the figures for eight years will show much difference. In the five years prior to this Government assuming office £9,347,096 was spent out of loan money for all purposes as against £8,113,795 for the last five years. The difference in the expenditure in the five-year period was therefore £1,233,301.

I am sure that the Minister does not desire any further information from me. If my facts are correct, they show, in addition

[*Mr. Kerr.*

to the fact of the large deficits, that there is something wrong in the building of the necessary equipment for our railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. KERR: I have had several complaints, more verbal than otherwise, about the shortage of trucks. It must be astounding to think that in the last eight years the construction of trucks has been 50 per cent. less than in the four-year period immediately preceding.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have had complaints, too, and I have had special reports from the Commissioner showing that they are not founded.

Mr. KERR: I have heard of these complaints when travelling around Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are no grounds for them all the same.

Mr. KERR: The Minister must recognise that there must be something wrong. How does this maladministration affect the people of Queensland? I turn with a great deal of pleasure to the report of the Commissioner for Railways in 1914, as it affords pleasant reading. That report says—

“During the year 1,757 appointments were made and 935 left the service, a net increase of 822. Some 3,000 men were engaged on construction and other permanent works.”

There was a distinct increase in the number of employees in that year.

Mr. GLEDSON: Over 900 employees left the service in one year, most of them to go to the war.

Mr. KERR: Yes: 935 employees left the service; and I say it is a pity that a good many do not get out of the service to-day and find other occupation. There were more positions offering, and greater chances in life for young men and other men in 1914 than there are to-day. If a man is appointed to a Government position to-day he hangs on to it for grim death, because he knows that, if he leaves the service, he cannot get any other job. That state of affairs has been brought about by maladministration of one kind and another, together with the large deficits. It is a pleasant fact to observe that in 1914 we were able to absorb such a large number of men, as it is in striking contrast with the figures for 1922, which show a decrease of 173 as compared with the figures for 1921. That comparison is one for all right-thinking men to reflect upon and consider whether that administration is best in the interests of the community. I have in my possession figures which show that in 1914 sixty-two trade apprentices were appointed in the department, whereas in 1922 only one was appointed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take an eight-year period! You should be fair in your comparisons. I have the comparison for the eight-year periods, and they show we engaged more than your Government did.

Mr. KERR: I will take each year by itself. In 1918, forty-nine were appointed, and in 1919, thirty-two.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take the figures for eight years.

Mr. KERR: In 1920, 139 were appointed; in 1921, sixteen; and in 1922, one. This fact should not be forgotten that in 1916 600 boys were taken on in the department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We engaged more trade apprentices than your Government did in a similar period.

Mr. KERR: I accept the Minister's statement, but I can hardly agree with it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is a fact. I have taken the figures out as a result of a question you asked.

Mr. KERR: In 1916, 600 youths were appointed to the department, while in 1922 only seven appointments were made. That is a direct result of maladministration and the policy adopted by the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We engaged more trade apprentices than your Government did in the same period.

Mr. KERR: I never had a Government. Why tell me of something which existed many years ago? Why should something be tacked on to me that happened before I ever thought of politics? It is unjust. I must criticise the policy and administration of this Government when I think I am justly entitled to do so. There is no gainsaying the fact that the position of our railways to-day is a direct result of the policy that has been adopted. If the railways were an industry of average prosperity, why should Mr. Steer go into the Arbitration Court and seek to secure a reduction of wages on the ground that the railways are not an industry of average prosperity? What is the use of creating the court to fix wages for an industry of average prosperity and then allowing the Government to bring in a department to undermine it? The judge in his judgment quoted the statement of Mr. Steer that the railways were not an industry of average prosperity.

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

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I represent a country electorate, and while I recognise the fact that the Queensland railways are not paying, and are not likely to pay for some considerable time, I consider that in many respects the people in the far-distant portions of this State are paying heavier freights than they should be paying.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Enoggera wants to increase freights.

Mr. MORGAN: We represent different interests and have different viewpoints. (Government laughter.) That is so on both sides of the House. I am sure every hon. member represents the interests of those who live in the country, and they must know, as I know, that the person in the country pays freights both ways.

Mr. CARTER: The leader of the Opposition says otherwise.

Mr. MORGAN: If I produce in the country something that has to be sold in Brisbane, everybody knows that I pay the freight. If I order groceries, wire, and other things necessary to improve my holding, those commodities go to the country, and I again pay the freight. Therefore, I pay freight both ways. I am speaking from a country point of view, and I consider that if we are going to encourage the settler to remain in the country, and not come to the towns, we must do something to assist him to remain in the country.

The Government gives a Western allowance merely to compensate railway employees outback for the freight they pay on their goods—not to increase their wages, but to

allow them to have their goods carried free on the railway. If it is a good policy—and I say it is; I do not want to do away with it—the rest of the workers in the country who are not Government employees should have free railage on their flour, tea, sugar, and other necessities. If a deficit results—and it has been so for the last eight years, and has been made up from the Consolidated Revenue—we have a right to make up that deficit out of the revenue, and so encourage people living long distances from towns, and give them the same privileges we give to those more fortunately situated, who live near our seaport towns. I am asking for the people in the country the same treatment that is extended to the people of the cities and towns. I do not necessarily want to penalise the city people. Why should the worker outback—the shearer, the rouseabout, and the general farm hand—have to pay 4s. or 5s. more on a bag of sugar than does the man in the city? Why should they pay 3d. or 4d. per lb. more on their tea, more for their oatmeal, jam, and other necessities, which are used daily? It is not right. Those workers are our pioneers; they are opening up the backblocks of our country.

Mr. HYNES: Do you know that there is a differential rate paid in various districts?

Mr. MORGAN: There is in connection with some occupations. I recently mentioned that the lengthsmen who happens to be working between Brisbane and Ipswich does not receive the same allowance as the man working between Roma and Charleville. That is owing to the fact that the cost of living in those outback localities is greater. We all think that is a just thing to do, and I therefore advocate that we should do for other employees what we are doing for employees in the public service.

The hon. member for Herbert specially quoted figures with respect to passenger fares in the endeavour to show that the rates in Queensland are lower than the rates in the other States. A great number of country people may only use the railways once a year as passengers, perhaps only once in five years, but they are using the railways daily in transporting the necessities of life. It would be better to give them a reduction on something they are using every day of their lives than to give them the lesser advantage of saving 2s. or 3s. once every year or so. If you raise their freights, you are going to penalise them.

There is another matter of national importance. We have arrived at the conclusion that we should carry prickly-pear poison on the railways free, as it is a matter of national importance. Is not wire netting also a matter of national importance? Does it not assist the settler to keep out and get rid of the dingo, the rabbit, and other pests? I think it is right that the people of the cities should contribute their share towards getting rid of these pests. We in the country are not responsible for them; we did not bring them in, and are no more responsible for them than the man who resides in Queen street. Those who have properties in Queen street are having their properties enhanced in value to an enormous extent, and they have a right to contribute towards getting rid of these country pests by allowing the settler to have wire netting and other necessities for pest reduction carried free on the railways. This can be done by paying any

Mr. Morgan.]

loss on the railways out of the Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. HYNES: And then the hon. member would come along and criticise the department because it was not paying.

Mr. MORGAN: I am not one of those who object because the railways are not paying, provided they are run economically. If we wish to encourage the man in the country to develop that country, we should give him the same opportunities as we give the men in the centres of population. People are coming into the cities daily because they can get more luxury and comfort there than in the bush. They recognise that they have only a certain time to live, and they desire to make that time as easy as possible.

I desire to point out one or two anomalies. I think that we should do all we possibly can to encourage the use of the railways. One reason why the Commissioner is losing a considerable amount of revenue is because he charges exorbitant freights on certain classes of goods which are carried on the railways.

I quote motor-cars as an instance. Some people may say that motor-cars are a luxury, and that they can afford to pay high freights on the railway. At present motor-cars are not carried on the railways to any great extent. At one time on almost every train going out West you would see five or six motor-cars being conveyed, while to-day the trucks are running empty. The department will run a truck up to Roma empty to bring back a few tons of produce. At one time these trucks would carry motor-cars, but, owing to the heavy freight on motor-cars, the people come down to Brisbane and take possession of their motor-cars here and drive them back at about one-tenth the cost. Not only does the department lose the freight on the motor-car but also the passenger fare, and the result is the railways are losing a considerable revenue in that regard.

Mr. HYNES: Is it not better to tax the owner of a motor-car?

Mr. MORGAN: We are not getting the freight—that is the point. It is like putting a prohibitive duty on an article and preventing it coming into the country. The Commissioner for Railways puts a prohibitive tariff on motor-cars, and the man who buys a motor-car says, "I won't use the railways at all," and the Government get no revenue. A motor-buggy is put in No. 1 class and the freight on same is 46s. 7d. per ton per 100 miles, but a motor-car is put in No. 3 class and the freight is 89s. 4d. per ton per 100 miles. I cannot understand why a motor-buggy should pay so much less freight than a motor-car, because it has to be put in a truck the same as a motor-car. It is a well-known fact that it costs only about 10s. for petrol sufficient to take a motor-car 100 miles, and not only does the Railway Department lose the freight on the car and the passenger fare, but the buyer of the motor-car also takes with him from Brisbane four or five cases of petrol and a case of oil, and very often there is more than one passenger. Therefore, the Railway Department loses the freight on the car, freight on the benzine and oil, and also one or more passenger fares. I was reading reports from Canada and other parts of the world, and the Railway Commissioners all say they would sooner have a large volume of busi-

ness at a low freightage than a low volume of business at a high freightage. That is the policy that should be adopted. The trade in motor-cars in Brisbane, according to the agents, has increased enormously during the last twelve months. Sales recently have been greater than at any previous time.

Mr. COLLINS: That shows greater prosperity in Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: Not necessarily. Many men buy a motor-car because it is a necessity. In the West a motor-car is not a luxury; it is just as much a necessity as a telephone is a necessity for a doctor. Notwithstanding that there has been an enormous increase in the sales, on the railways we find that seldom, if ever, is a motor-car carried. I hope the Commissioner will take notice of what I say.

Already figures have been quoted by hon. members on this side of the Chamber to disprove the claims made by the Government that freights are lower in Queensland than in the other States. Freights are 100 per cent. higher.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take cattle, sheep, cream, and agricultural produce.

Mr. MORGAN: It is well known that we have a "to port" rate and an "up country" rate, and, if you compare the "up country" rate on these things with the rates paid in Victoria and New South Wales, you will find that the freight on all the items mentioned by the Minister is greater in this State. During the elections, when members of the Government party were comparing the freights in Queensland with those in New South Wales, they quoted the "to port" rates, while the "up country" rates were more than double. The "up country" freight on agricultural produce and goods of that description is 100 per cent. greater than it is to Brisbane. Then again the Minister mentioned cattle. Although the freight on cattle has been reduced by 30 per cent. in Queensland, it is still higher than the freight in New South Wales and Victoria, but it must be remembered that a beast worth £7 in the Enoggera sale-yards would be worth £14 in Sydney and £21 in Melbourne.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Because the carriage is greater.

Mr. MORGAN: We pay as much to send a bullock 500 miles to the Enoggera sale-yards, where it will realise £7, as the man who sends a similar beast 500 miles on the New South Wales railways to Sydney, where it will realise £14. The stockowners can afford to pay more freight in New South Wales owing to the fact that their bullocks are worth double what they are in Queensland, and in Victoria they are worth three times as much. The late Secretary for Railways, Mr. Fihelly, when chaff was bringing £25 to £30 a ton, increased the freight, although it was during a drought period. He said that when produce was bringing those exorbitant prices the Railway Department had a right to get extra freight. I agree with him to a certain extent, but, if that is good policy, when chaff came back to £5 a ton, it was good policy to reduce the freight. If it was good policy to increase the freight on cattle when they were bringing £22 a head in the Enoggera yards, it was also good policy to reduce the freight

[Mr. Morgan.]

back to normal when cattle came down to £5 or £6 a head.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We did that, but the other States did not do it.

Mr. MORGAN: You increased the freight by 60 per cent., and then reduced it by 30 per cent., leaving the freight on cattle higher to-day than it was in 1914. If the Government adopt the policy of increasing freights when an industry is flourishing, they should reduce the freights when the industry is back to normal. I want to point out that in many of the country places, especially in respect of new lines, the Government are adopting a policy of putting the goods sheds too far away from the railway stations. On the Juandah line, for instance, the station-master at the terminus has to travel from 300 to 350 yards from the station to the goods shed every time he wants to take out a parcel. He has to close up his office to go for the parcel and then run back to carry on his work. The same thing exists on the Tara railway line and in other localities. Why cannot the goods shed be placed as near as possible to the station? The Commissioner has refused the man I am speaking of a porter. He is run off his legs. If a man wants a bag of potatoes or a bag of sugar, the station-master has to close up the station and run 350 yards to the goods shed and back again with the goods.

Mr. HYNES: You are looking for his vote.

Mr. MORGAN: I am not looking for his vote. This is one of those things which the hon. member for Bremer complained about. It is due to want of foresight on the part of the officials responsible for the construction of the lines. It is one of those things which they do not think about, as they have not to do the work themselves, and they put the shed too far away.

Mr. COLLINS: Do you say that this official runs? (Laughter.)

Mr. MORGAN: Some do.

Mr. COLLINS: You often complain about them going slow.

Mr. MORGAN: We have a number of very fine officials in the Railway Department, but we perhaps have got some who go slow. All the same, an official in charge of one of these stations has to do a certain amount of work, even if he works day and night. He has his job to do. If it is found that his books are not properly kept and his returns are not furnished, he soon gets "hauled over the coals," although he is working a good many hours. When these stations are being constructed, the Minister should draw attention to the necessity for the buildings which are necessary to carry on the work of the station being conveniently situated, so that the employees will be able to do their work quickly and efficiently.

I also think that there could be a considerable saving in coal effected in the department. I have heard complaints from engine-drivers who have told me that a great deal of the coal they get from different parts of Queensland is an absolute disgrace. There seems to be no supervision exercised, and a great deal of the coal is only dirt.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is ridiculous.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not wish to give names, but I could give the Minister the names of competent engine-drivers in regard to this matter.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There has been a great saving in coal in the last twelve months.

Mr. MORGAN: I am pleased to know that there is a great deal of truth in what I have been told. These men tell me that there is no proper supervision in the matter, and that the men who sell the coal palm off almost anything on the department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not so.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not stand for anything like that, which is quite a wrong thing. In regard to coal, oil, fuel, or things of that description, it may be possible to save anything from £1,000 to £20,000 a year, and that should be done. Greater supervision should be exercised in regard to these matters.

Another thing I wish to point out is the shortage which exists in regard to cattle trucks. I asked a question on the matter some time ago, and the Minister's reply showed that there had been very few cattle trucks added to our rolling-stock, although the lines have been considerably extended during the last few years. Since 1914 there have been very few cattle trucks built. If you ask the Commissioner to-day to supply you with cattle trucks he cannot do it. They have been booked up weeks ahead. There are supposed to be very few cattle travelling now; yet on the Western line it is difficult to get trucks for the cattle, and you have to book up some considerable time ahead. It cannot be said that there is a great rush in the movement of cattle. I hope the Minister will take notice of this.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We have not the tonnage we had in 1914.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (Warwick): The hon. member for Herbert, when speaking, reminded me of a voice crying in the wilderness. After quoting a long list of railways which were non-paying, the hon. member asked, "Which section of the railways would you close down?"

Mr. COLLINS: Which would you?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That is not the question. The hon. member for Herbert explained what was happening elsewhere, and returning again to the position here asked, "What do you suggest?" It seems to me that it is for hon. members opposite to make suggestions which will tend to clear the atmosphere in regard to the condition of our railways to-day. I think it would have been very much more to the point if the hon. member for Herbert had explained why our railways are earning so much less to-day than they were previously. If he had turned to the Auditor-General's report for last year—we have not been favoured yet with a report for this year—he would have seen the figures which the Auditor-General gives for a period of ten years. Commencing with 1912-1913, the Auditor-General shows that the deficit in connection with the working of our railways in that year, after providing for interest, was £83,008, and in 1913-1914, £32,745. In 1914-1915 the railways showed a surplus over and above interest of £48,651. In 1915-1916 the hon. member's friends assumed the administration of affairs in Queensland, and from that date things have gone from bad to worse. Commencing with 1915-1916, the first year of office of the Labour party, the deficit was £538,244, and the

Mr. G. P. Barnes.]

amount gradually increased until in 1921-1922 the loss in connection with the working of our railways amounted to £1,743,270. I have not given the whole of the figures for the intervening years. At any rate, taking in last year, our railways have shown a loss of something like £10,000,000. When hon. members opposite charge this side with the mutilation of figures, why do they not deal with the real figures which have to do with the management of the Railway Department? Why do they not attempt to explain how it is that a loss so stupendous as this has occurred in the administration of the Government which they support? No attempt whatever is made by hon. members opposite to give the information sought by hon. members on this side in that direction.

Mr. PEASE: According to the Commissioner's report, coal is practically 100 per cent. higher now than it was in 1915.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: There should have been compensating business to provide for that contingency.

Mr. HYNES: Freights would have to be increased if they did that.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Freights have been slightly increased, but in the reports for the most recent years there is nothing to show that anything has been done to make ends meet. Hon. members opposite have asked the question, "What do you suggest?" Members on this side have made suggestions again and again. They agree with the Commissioner for Railways, who puts his finger on the truth accurately and in a most direct way when he says—

"If the Queensland rates, fares, and traffic had increased to the same extent as other railways, comparisons show that our results would have been equally favourable after allowing for increasing our present expenditure in the same ratio as the additional mileage which it is estimated would have been required."

What we want to know is this: What has happened to account for the fact that we have not had the same traffic? There must be some reason. Neither fares, freights, nor traffic have kept pace with those of the other States, and, when you are faced with an extra cost for coal or any other commodity, you cannot meet the position unless you are doing the business which is necessary to enable you to do so.

I want to quote some figures which the Commissioner gives. I am sorry to have to quote them again, but hon. members seem so indifferent to the facts as actually stated by the Commissioner himself that it seems absolutely necessary. He tells us that in 1921-22 the tonnage carried on the Queensland railways was 4,544,831, whilst in 1921-22 it had decreased to 3,732,415, or by 17.9 per cent. That is one reason why our railways are not paying. The Commissioner tells us deliberately that that is the reason, and we on this side want to know how it is that, with all the facilities we have for carrying goods, we cannot show an increase like the other States. The position shows a progressive state of affairs in other States and a retrogressive one in Queensland. What has brought about the difference? One can say immediately that we need to increase production and population—the two things which are necessary to our progress—and, if a Liberal Government had been administering the affairs of Queensland, the population

would have been infinitely greater than it is to-day, and they would have encouraged in every way the increase of production. There you have our answer, in perfect agreement with what the Commissioner has said. Let me compare the decrease in our tonnage with the increases in the tonnage carried in the other States—

	Percentage
Queensland	Decrease 17.9
New South Wales	Increase 21.9
Victoria	Increase 38.4
South Australia	Increase 35.1
Western Australia	Increase 2.0

Those figures show that, however much we would like to do so, we cannot dissociate the failure of our production from the administration of our affairs by the present Government. It is no use their saying that they have done, or are going to do, a great deal to encourage settlement. They have been thinking and talking about it, and many of them have wanted to do it, but the others would not allow it to be done; consequently the Queensland railways have gone to the bad by over £10,000,000.

Now let me compare the increases in the expenditure of the railways in the different States—

	Percentage
Queensland	100.2
New South Wales	109.3
Victoria	96.5
South Australia	75.1
Western Australia	55.4

On the other hand, the increases in the revenue were as follow:—

	Percentage.
Queensland	34.5
New South Wales	59.7
Victoria	110.3
South Australia	83.9
Western Australia	37.4

However, the whole explanation seems to lie in the figures given by the Commissioner comparing the percentage of net earnings with capital for the years 1914-15 and 1921-22—

State.	1914-15.		1921-22.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Queensland	4	0 8	0	15 4½
New South Wales	3	12 1	4	17 7
Victoria	2	0 0	4	0 5
South Australia	1	16 2	3	15 7
Western Australia	3	6 0	2	12 10

We need not inquire further for the why and the wherefore of the position. The fact is that we have expended £12,000,000 in building railways during the last eight years, and we now have an extra 1,000 miles of line but are earning less money than we did eight years ago. There must be some explanation. Is it to be found in the encouragement to the people to leave the land and join the city population? No doubt the high earnings in the city have brought about an exodus from the country, which has resulted in a lessening of the production in the country. Every member of Parliament must have been made aware of the position, because for years he has been having applications from young fellows for references to this, that, or the other Government department or the Brisbane tramways or some other undertaking, and, if he has inquired—

[Mr. G. P. Barnes.

as I have done in a number of cases—as to why they are leaving the land, he has been told, “There is so much to be made on the land and there is so much on the railways.” And the trouble is that the railways put on men when they did not want them.

Mr. DUNSTAN: Where are the vacant farms?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The farms may not have become vacant, but production has decreased. Encouragement should have been given to the producer to put his boys here, there, and everywhere on the land, but there has been no such inducement.

During the remaining portion of my time I desire to direct the attention of the Committee to some of the very important railway proposals that are now engaging the attention, not only of the people of

[7 p.m.] Queensland, but of the people in the South. Indeed, the move is so formidable that it makes it essential for Queensland to look after her laurels, and consider to what extent she must be influenced by what is taking place. One of the great moves is in connection with the Camooweal-Bourke railway project. I think it is generally understood that for various strategic purposes and otherwise, and in consideration of the interests of the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth may lend a hand in connection with the construction of this line. We are also aware that the Premier has spoken on the subject, and given impressions regarding what should be done in connection with these matters.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am afraid that the hon. gentleman is not quite in order in discussing the policy of railway construction under this vote. He may do that when the Loan Estimates are being considered.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: If that is the case, I shall defer my remarks until the Loan Estimates are being discussed, when I shall have an opportunity of more fully dealing with the question at issue.

Mr. ROBERTS: We may not reach that vote.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The matter is of such extreme importance that, if we fail to reach that vote, perhaps other means may be taken to direct the attention of the country to what is going on, and what attitude Queensland should adopt in order to conserve her interests.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I have listened very attentively to the remarks made by hon. members opposite on this vote and to the reasons given by them for the loss on the railways. Some of them have complained that there need not have been any loss on the railways, and that they should be made to pay. That was the contention emphasised by the hon. member for Enoggera. Immediately he resumed his seat the hon. member for Murilla rose and said that the railways ought not to pay as well as they are paying now, and he advocated the carrying free of a lot more goods, and to make up the loss by a payment from the Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. MORGAN: What do you think?

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member for Warwick quoted from the Commissioner's report, to show that the fares and freights and the amount of traffic were not the same as in other States. Those who have kept in

touch with what is going on in the country, know the reasons for these things. The hon. member for Warwick knows the reasons just as well as we do on this side.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I think I do.

Mr. GLEDSON: It is absolutely necessary for us sometimes to point out what are the reasons for the loss that occurs on the railways. If the hon. member for Warwick had turned to page 13 of the Commissioner's report, instead of picking out certain bits, he would have found these words—

“The seventy-five branch lines which tend to increase the operating costs, owing to their isolation, and comprise 56 per cent. of the mileage, not only failed to pay anything towards interest on capital, but actually cost 24s. 1d. to earn 20s.”

“The loss of £277,362, in addition to interest on capital amounting to £317,317, making a total loss of £1,094,679, goes a long way towards accounting for the total deficit.”

That is the report of the Commissioner for Railways dealing with the reasons for the loss on the railways and their earnings. The hon. member for Herbert struck the nail on its head during his speech. He said that there were only two ways of making the railways pay. One of the ways was to do what the hon. member for Enoggera suggested—to put up the fares and freights to enable the railways to pay for the services that they give, and the other was so to reduce the wages and the employees of the service as to make it inefficient. The Government have not adopted either of those methods. If we refer to the same report, we shall find what the Commissioner has to say in connection with the increase of freights. On page 21—I am not going to deal with the matters dealt with by the hon. member for Herbert—we are told—

“The return for the service rendered in relation to the cost of providing it is a vital one from a managerial point of view, and I think I should again show the present relationship of Queensland fares with those of other railways as indicated in the following table.”

The Commissioner then goes on to show that in Queensland the approximate average increase in fares since 1914 was 17 per cent.; in New South Wales—not 17 per cent.—but 66 per cent.; in Victoria, 48 per cent.; in Western Australia, 30 per cent.; and, when we turn to other countries, we find that in New Zealand the increase was 25 per cent.; in South Africa, 29 per cent.; and in Great Britain, 75 per cent. It is just as well that the Committee should know where it stands in regard to other matters affecting the railways. Hon. members have said that the cost of materials had not a great deal to do with the deficit. The hon. member for Warwick said that we ought to get over the cost of materials. Let us refer to the report and find out what is the actual increase in the cost of materials during the period to which hon. members opposite have confined their remarks. On page 33 of the Commissioner's report there is a table showing the cost of stores. This table shows that the increase in the cost of materials in 1921-22 over 1914-15 was—Carbide, 142 per cent.; cement—of which the department uses large quantities—50 per cent.; white lead, 92.44 per cent.; raw linseed oil, 80.95 per cent.;

Mr. Gledson.]

galvanised corrugated steel, 87 per cent.; galvanised plain steel, 92 per cent.; barbed wire, 333 per cent.; fencing wire, 225 per cent.; telegraph wire, 291 per cent. Increases are shown right down the list, if hon. members care to peruse it.

I wish also to deal with this continual talk from hon. members of the Opposition as to the administration of the department. I have in my possession a copy of the "Queensland Times" of to-day, in which is given a report of a meeting held at Ipswich last night. The report says—

"At last night's meeting of the Ipswich sub-branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League Mr. A. Clarke said Dr. Campbell, of Durban, had been delighted with his tour of the shops, and had afterwards declared that, in all his travels, in Australia and elsewhere, he had never seen bigger or better works."

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: While on this matter I want to say that, so far as the work performed in the railway workshops is concerned, there is not a better class of work turned out, not only in Australia, but in any part of the world. (Hear, hear!) The workmanship has been favourably commented on by visitors from all parts of the world. That leads to another phase. Nearly every paper that you pick up refers to railway disasters and accidents in various parts of the world; I congratulate the Queensland Railway Department upon their record so far as accidents are concerned. I suppose that we have fewer accidents per train mile in Queensland than is the case in any other country in the world. (Hear, hear!) I think that reflects considerable credit on the workmen engaged in our workshops, in the Traffic Branch, and those engaged in the Construction Branch. While hon. members opposite and others are lying in their beds sleeping in safety, those men are working day after day to keep them in safety.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: Yet we never hear one good word from members of the Opposition for these men who are doing such good work and are providing for the safety of the community.

Mr. KING: You do. Your statement is absurd.

Mr. GLEDSON: They never miss an opportunity of decrying their own workmen and the men engaged in the railway service in Queensland.

Mr. KING: That is not so. What about the hon. member for Bremer?

Mr. GLEDSON: I am not going to be drawn off the track. If the hon. member for Logan has his way I shall be checked by you, Mr. Kirwan. If he wishes to say anything on the matter, it can be done in the proper way. I think the hon. member for Bremer will be able to justify himself in his own way, and without the hon. member for Logan attempting to do so.

There is a further matter which should cause reflection on the part of hon. members: that is the statement that 266,000,000 passengers have been carried on the Queensland railways without accident. This is on account of the excellent work that has been done—mainly by the men in the Ipswich workshops.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Gledson.

Mr. GLEDSON: It reflects great credit on the workmen engaged in the building of our rolling-stock, of our engines, and in the construction of our railway lines.

Mr. CARTER: What about the lengthsmen?

Mr. GLEDSON: I include them also. Very often when hon. members opposite are sleeping safely in their first-class carriages at night, these men are working to preserve their safety—

Mr. CORSER: We have not said anything against them.

Mr. GLEDSON: And whenever they get the opportunity they decry these men.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No! No!

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: I hope that my remarks will bring hon. members opposite to a realisation of the duty they owe to these workers.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CLAYTON: Wowserism.

Mr. GLEDSON: I am glad to see that the department have gone steadily along, that they are branching out in their activities, and showing that they are alive to the interests and the safety of the public of Queensland. In the vote before us I notice there is provision for a Timber Bridge Inspector, a Chief Engineer's Inspector, and also a Steel and Concrete Inspector, and I take it that these men will be thoroughly competent for the work they have to perform, and they also will contribute towards the safety of the travelling public of Queensland. Once again I want to give my meed of praise to the men engaged in the railway service from one end of Queensland to the other for the good and efficient work they have done, which has contributed in no small degree to keeping Queensland as free as it has been of any serious accident.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER (*Wide Bay*): The hon. member for Ipswich by his remarks would suggest through the pages of "Hansard" to the more simple-minded of the workers that he was standing up in defence of the workers whom we on this side had attacked. No member of the Opposition has said anything but good of the railway workers in Queensland. We have had nothing to say against them, and I challenge the hon. member to show one expression by members of the Opposition to the detriment of the workers on our railways.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member for Mirani has accused them over and over again of going slow.

Mr. CORSER: It is all very well for the hon. member to make these remarks, which are really made at the expense of the men employed in the Railway Department, because they only raise the ire of those whom he is attempting to place in a false position. We know that every section of Queensland is pleased with the facilities offered by honourable workers, yet the hon. member for Ipswich has been attempting to drag them through a dirty trail in order to get kudos for himself at the expense of someone else. We have every regard for the workers on the railway who make railway travelling safe. I travel two days and two nights for many weeks in the year on the railways, and I have nothing but good to say of the men, who do their duty faithfully.

I notice that the railway opening up the Dawson Valley is to be advertised in Great Britain. We know that railway is to open up a lot of country, and we trust that some day it will bring about the successful settlement that it is claimed it will do. On the walls of this Chamber we have a couple of very pretty paintings of that country, which are to be shown at the British Empire Exhibition. I notice also there is another illustration of Queensland's advance in the shape of plans of the Bowen iron and steel works, this picture being a blank. (Laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member is not going to discuss the Bowen iron and steel works.

Mr. CORSER: I will say nothing about them, but I understood that the plan is nothing, too. (Laughter.) A matter of some moment to the State is the settlement of the Upper Burnett lands, which I do not propose to discuss here, but, allied very closely with the success of that settlement, is the railway which has been passed by Parliament. The first section of that railway from Mundubbera to the Burnett River—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will not be in order on this vote in discussing railway construction. He may discuss that on the Loan Estimates.

Mr. CORSER: I want to make a suggestion to the Minister. On the last section where the settlement is to take place we find a railway bridge is required—at the end of the line crossing the Burnett River.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would point out to the hon. member that there is no money provided in this vote in connection with the matter he is raising. He will have to raise the question when we are dealing with the expenditure of loan money. Under this vote he can discuss the general administration of the Railway Department.

Mr. CORSER: I hope that there will be money provided for that bridge in another vote.

The Minister made a great mouthful of the fact that the Government was able to show a saving in expenditure. He said that the expenditure was £334,236 less in the last two years than in any previous two years for some time back. It is not a satisfactory state of affairs to find that, notwithstanding that saving in expenditure for the last two years, we still have a great deficit on the railways. It is not much to our credit to boast about this saving of expenditure of £334,236 when we know that the retrenchment of 1,120 men by the Government brought about a saving of £340,676 in one year. We have really only saved in those two years an amount which is not equal to the saving brought about by the retrenchment of railway men in one year. That is not a satisfactory condition of things. We must also remember that there has been a saving of £66,000 in expenditure brought about by the system of pooling work. There is also a diminution in the convenience the service renders to the general public. We have had a curtailment of the train service—a curtailment of the conveniences of the service to the country people. If a special train is asked for to-day, a guarantee is insisted upon before it starts.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That has been the condition for years.

Mr. CORSER: It has not always been the case. I have known cases where children have been brought down to the seaside without a guarantee being asked for. In criticising the methods of the department, I am not going to cavil at business methods, but when you curtail the conveniences of the people you expect some saving to be shown at the end of the year. We have had a curtailment of conveniences.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No curtailment.

Mr. CORSER: If we get a special train to-day, it will start at a time convenient to the department, in order to cross an ordinary train on the line, to save the expense of bringing a temporary staff to let the trains cross at a place which is not convenient to the department. All these things are curtailments. We know that we have not had the necessary expenditure in connection with the preservation of our railway station buildings for many years. Many of them have not been painted since this Government came into power. The depreciation on the timber in those buildings is far greater than any small savings which the Government have shown in the direction I have mentioned. If savings are effected, you would expect that the ordinary services would be granted to the people. In many of our country districts the railways are paying a considerably greater amount of interest on capital cost than they did previously. The Gayndah line is showing a better result in the way of percentage increase than any other in the State, but during the whole year we cannot get a passenger train on that line. People have to leave Maryborough at ten minutes to 7 o'clock in the morning and arrive at Mundubbera, if they are lucky, at half-past 5 o'clock at night.

Mr. W. COOPER: What is the distance?

Mr. CORSER: Roughly, 120 miles.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You have a very good service and do not appreciate it.

Mr. CORSER: If the Minister had to travel over it once a week, he would not like it. I am making a reasonable appeal to him to alter the policy of the Government in this particular.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not the policy of the Government.

Mr. CORSER: It is the policy of the department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Ah! The policy of the Commissioner!

Mr. CORSER: Matters of policy are in the hands of the Government, and they make it a policy not to give a convenience to the people where it does not cost much more. On the Gayndah line there is a mixed train every morning. Why not have one passenger train a week?

Mr. W. COOPER: And make it a Saturday train?

Mr. CORSER: Saturday would be absolutely the worst day—and I do not suggest any day. That could be inquired into. We know that the policy of the department is to give mixed trains on country lines and place no value on the time of the country people, although there are fast trains elsewhere. A little adjustment would give us one passenger train a week and save travellers long tedious hours on hot days sitting in the carriages—and not the most comfortable carriages at that. I hope the

Mr. Corser.]

Minister will give some consideration to these points, and make available to our country people a convenience which is in some way in keeping with that which is expected in the cities.

The Railway Department has gone through periods of fairly bad times, but we want to feel that when we get into power, we shall find that the railway equipment has been kept in that state of preservation which is necessary in all Government institutions.

Mr. GLEDSON: The present rolling-stock will be worn out before that.

Mr. CORSER: I think some of the engines are worn out now. Here is a statement which appeared in the Press of 8th April, 1921—

"Statements have been repeatedly made that the rolling-stock on the Queensland railways is not generally in as good a condition of repair as it should be. It is known that temporary expedients have been adopted to deal with emergencies. A deputation of the Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association intended to wait on the Commissioner for Railways to-day with reference to the dosing of leaking locomotives with horse manure or sawdust. The association was unwilling to take any responsibility in the matter without authority from the heads of the department. Owing to the Commissioner's temporary absence from office, the association was unable to obtain the desired audience. It is stated that when the boiler tubes in locomotives were found to be leaking, manure or preferably sawdust was placed in the water and then forced into and stopped the leaks temporarily."

If that is the condition of our engines, naturally those who expect later on to assume the responsibility of administering the department want to know why they are not in a state of decent repair after all this great expenditure on our rolling-stock.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are. You ought to know that.

Mr. CORSER: I do not know from experience.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner has specially reported on it, and has emphasised that they are in a better state of repair and are more effective now than in 1914.

Mr. CORSER: We must realise that we have been building engines pretty frequently. I am only putting in a plea for the better care of our rolling-stock. One should go into the country districts and look at the cattle trucks and the carriages that are used for the conveyance of people in the country. If the Government have not got any paint for them, then a drop of tar

[7.30 p.m.] would probably save them. Many are now in a terrible state of disrepair. A person would be very foolish if he did not paint his house periodically and keep out the weather. These carriages cost thousands of pounds. A large sum of money has been sunk in our rolling-stock, and a little oil and paint would preserve them for those who will have to carry the responsibility afterwards. Why allow an asset in the State railways provided by previous Governments to deteriorate? State railways were provided long before the Labour party came into power, and long before they ever thought of being on the

[Mr. Corser.

Treasury benches. The railways were then cared for as something belonging to the people of Queensland. Every individual member of the Government of the day took a kindly interest in the railways, and so did the people of the State. It is a pity for us to imagine that because there is a Labour Government in power, who do not expect to reign too long, we can allow these things to get into a state of dilapidation and disrepair. I sincerely hope that my remarks will be taken in the spirit in which they are intended, and that the Minister will look into the rolling-stock in this State. He should not only look at the rolling-stock that goes through the Central Station, but he should go into the backblock and see the stuff there, and see if it is not advisable to send some of the painters of the city to the country to preserve thousands of pounds worth of rolling-stock that is for the use of the great majority of the people—those living outside the city. We have 200,000 people here, but there are 600,000 who are using the rolling-stock that I am referring to. That rolling-stock should receive attention and be preserved in the interests of the whole State.

Mr. COLLINS: Very poor criticism.

Mr. CORSER: It all depends on who is analysing it.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wile Bay*): I would like to express my appreciation of the efforts of the employees in the Railway Department from the Commissioner down to the junior porter and for the consideration that they have shown to myself and other members of Parliament who have travelled on the railways from time to time. (Hear, hear.) There is not the slightest doubt that every convenience is provided for the carriage of members of Parliament, and we appreciate that to the very highest extent. It is very pleasing to note that there is an improvement in the railways as compared to the position they were in some time ago. We know that just a few years ago it was necessary for this Government to constitute an Economy Board, whose duty it was to see where they could sack men and women in the Railway Department. I am very pleased to know that it is not necessary now to have an Economy Board traversing the railways, and that deflation is not now taking place. If political influence is removed from the Railway Department and you put your trust in the Commissioner, I have sufficient confidence in that man to know that he is going to run those railways more efficiently than they are being run now. Let me now deal with the train service in country districts. I think a good deal could be done to assist the settlers on the Kingaroy line by giving them better facilities for travelling to their business centre. I received a letter to-day from a constituent of mine who complains about the delay occasioned by settlers coming down for the week-end to their place of business—Maryborough. A portion of the letter states—

"At the present time we have to go down to Theebine on Friday afternoon and wait there until about 8 o'clock, and then go on to Maryborough, arriving there at 2 o'clock on Saturday morning."

At 7.35 p.m.,

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

Mr. CLAYTON: I think the Minister should look into the matter, and see if better facilities cannot be given to enable these settlers to reach their market place for the week-end. Whether they go to visit Maryborough or Gympie, something should be done to enable them to get down on Friday night, instead of having to break the journey at Theebine, as they do now, which delays them in transacting the large amount of business they have to do. Another thing that strikes me when travelling on the line is in connection with the gangs employed in the railway yards chipping between the rails and pulling out the small weeds that grow there. I am inclined to think that if those weeds were poisoned, a considerable amount of labour would be saved. The poison tank could be used more successfully on some of the lines and at many of the stations. I suppose it costs about £14 or £15 to chip a station yard, whereas it could be done by the poisoning method, and the men could be better employed than they are now. I would like the Minister or the Commissioner to give consideration to the delay of trains in the Maryborough railway station yard. At the present time—I think this is about the only place in Queensland where it does occur—the train is held up, and tickets are checked from one end of the train to the other. Nothing of that sort occurs at Bundaberg or Gympie. I think some improvement could be effected at Maryborough which would prevent the delay that now occurs. We have the public blocked off from the railway station, and I think the Minister could institute a scheme whereby the tickets could be checked on the railway platform or as people leave the platform. I hope that matter will be considered.

Another important matter that I would like to deal with is in connection with travelling stock. During the summer months we experience great trouble in connection with the travelling of our stock, owing to the excessive heat. I have on occasions seen stock having to be derailed at Croydon Junction and allowed to cool down before continuing to travel through the night. I understand that in Argentina they have a system whereby they can give the travelling stock what they call a shower-bath. Where they have the showers they can cool down the stock from one end of the train to the other, and that means great assistance to the people who have placed the stock on those trains. If the department would take that matter into consideration and do something on those lines, instead of the stock having to be derailed and the dead ones pulled out, as has occurred on many occasions, they would save a considerable amount to the pastoralists and the purchasers of the stock. I would like to see such a scheme inaugurated. It would be a very simple matter to place these showers along the line so that the cattle can be attended to. That would aid considerably in bringing the cattle down to our markets in a better condition.

The other day I introduced a deputation to the Minister in connection with the construction of a line which is of the utmost necessity to Queensland. The proposal was the construction of a railway line from the timber country of Manumbar to Goomeri. Unfortunately, owing to the large amount of loan money expended, the Minister had to turn down the request of that deputation. I can assure the Committee that it is of the utmost necessity for the Minister to give

consideration to the construction of this line. In that timber area we have about 120,000,000 feet of matured pine going to waste. I know that the Forestry Department is intent on getting this connection, so that they can dispose of the very fine timber that exists there. The department tell me that for every tree that is taken from that scrub, two will grow in its place. Although the Minister has turned the deputation down, I hope he will reconsider the matter, because it is of the utmost importance to Queensland. If the Government are not in the position to set aside money for the construction of this important branch, the Timber Merchants' Association in Maryborough is prepared to co-operate with the Forestry Department, and negotiate with the Government for the building of this line. The construction of this railway will alleviate the shortage of timber that exists in connection with the Maryborough mills, and enable many workers to be continued in employment who must be forced on to the labour market in the near future owing to the shortage of pine timber. I hope that the Minister will give consideration to the matters that I have mentioned, and see if something cannot be done to bring about improvement in the train services to which I have referred.

Mr. W. COOPER (*Rosewood*): I have listened to the criticism of hon. members opposite of the administration of the railways during the last eight years, but I have yet to learn that their administration during the eight years they have been under a Labour Government has been any worse than their administration by previous Governments. The charge has been made that the lack of administration has brought about the enormous deficits that have occurred in the last nine years. Hon. members opposite have not given any cause for these deficits. The railways, in my opinion, should not be particularly profit-earning concerns. The whole expense of the administration of the railways and the expenses generally are borne by the common taxpayer to a very large extent, particularly the deficiencies that arise. The Government are administering a State enterprise, and the whole of the people bear the deficits. As the hon. member for Ipswich pointed out, there are only two methods by which the railways can be made to pay. One method is by increasing fares and freights, and the other is by reducing the wages of the employees. The Government, at all events, believe that it is absolutely necessary that every man who works in the railways should at least be paid the full reward of his industry. I have had an opportunity of judging the extent of the sympathy meted out to the employees by Tory and Labour Administrations. The employees have been charged with having adopted a go-slow policy, and the deficits have in a measure been attributed to that policy. I worked in the Railway Department from 1910 to 1918. The railways from 1910 to 1915 were administered by what was commonly known as a Liberal Government. I want to say without fear of contradiction that I worked harder from 1915 than I ever did under a Liberal Government. I have also seen waste taking place that should not have taken place. I have seen waste taking place while the railways were administered by a Labour Government, but it was not the fault of the Administration. I am quite satisfied that the Commissioner and the Secretary for

Mr. W. Cooper.1

Railways, and, generally speaking, the heads of the departments would not tolerate for one moment any waste. We know in big concerns like the railways that difficulties are placed in the way of administering the department. It is impossible for any one man or any set of heads to cope with and prevent small waste. What we want to consider are the conditions that have prevailed since 1914 as compared with those existing prior to that time. The Railway Department is administered in just as efficient manner at the present time as it was under the previous Administration.

I heard the hon. member for Wide Bay speak of what might be done to alleviate the suffering of travelling stock. Something might be done to alleviate the sufferings of stock travelling from the West and North-west by watering them on the road. The hon. member for Wide Bay pointed out that in Argentina showers were constructed for the purpose of cooling the cattle down at certain points to obviate detrainment at certain places. We want to take into consideration the conditions under which stock-owners truck their cattle. It is absolutely necessary, for the safety of the stock, and so that they may arrive at the market in good condition, to see that as many as possible are placed in a truck so as to prevent them falling down and dying on the road. The hon. member for Wide Bay has not told this House that the trucks in Argentina are constructed with concrete bottoms to prevent the bullocks getting down. The floors of the Queensland cattle trucks are constructed of wood, and immediately water was applied it would make the wood slippery and cause the cattle to fall.

Mr. MORGAN: What happens in wet weather?

Mr. W. COOPER: The hon. member for Murilla, as a stockowner, knows that they get down. I am not disputing what the hon. member for Wide Bay has said, but before his suggestion was adopted there would have to be an alteration in the construction of the trucks. It is unfortunate for Queensland at the present time that some of its citizens have not got sufficient water for shower baths in their own homes, and if it was not for my electorate I doubt if the people of Brisbane would get a shower at all. However, something might be done in the matter of the reconstruction of the cattle trucks to permit of the hon. member's suggestion being adopted. If it is possible, the cattle trucks should be constructed so that the cattle might be given a drink on the road.

I have heard complaints made against the employees on the Queensland railways. I have had the opportunity of travelling over the railways of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, and of making a comparison of the efficiency of the employees on those lines as compared with the employees on the Queensland railways. I say unhesitatingly that the employees of the Queensland railways stand out on their own. (Hear, hear!)

We can also congratulate the Railway Department on the absence of accidents in Queensland. We have had only one serious accident to my knowledge, which occurred at Murphy's Creek, but that was not under a Labour Administration. That occurred during the reign of the Denham Government.

[Mr. W. Cooper.

I happened to be one of the men who went to Murphy's Creek with the relief gang for the purpose of clearing the line after the accident. I do not say that the Denham Government or the Commissioner for Railways of that time was responsible for that accident. I do not think that they were; but when the accident occurred there was a certain amount of negligence on the part of the officers who were sent to the scene to supervise the clearing away of the wreck. The railways of Queensland are one of the largest of our State enterprises. We have to consider whether the Government have done all that it is possible for any Government to do to make the system proficient. In my opinion that has been done. We have to realise that we have a certain amount of deficit, but we have to take into consideration the conditions prevailing during the last eight years under a Labour Administration. I say without fear of contradiction that no Government ever passed through a more strenuous time or had more difficulties to contend with than have the Labour Government, and the Railway Department has consequently been handicapped. We have had droughts, the war, the increase of prices, and the amount of railways that have been constructed; we have also had the additional wages that were absolutely necessary to give the employees of the Railway Department reasonable living conditions, and we have had a hostile Federal Government. We had all those hostile conditions to contend with.

We have to consider that the railways are a State enterprise, and that the whole of the people have to bear the responsibility of any losses that may be incurred through them. If we attempted to make the railways pay, we should either have to increase the fares and freights or to reduce wages. What would happen? In another ten or twenty years the children of the pioneers of this great State would come along without any responsibility at all and would reap the benefit while the present taxpayer would have borne the whole of the burden. I believe that posterity should pay a fair and reasonable share of the burden of taxation. Let us say that Queensland is in a state of development, and, while in that state, the people here are responsible for any deficits. We should not make a section of the people shoulder this burden, nor should we attempt to tax ourselves into prosperity.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I have come to the conclusion that the last speaker has proved that the Government had every contingency against them.

Mr. CARTER: They have had the Opposition against them.

Mr. WARREN: In fact he convinced me that the Almighty was against them. Therefore the sooner they pull out the better it will be for Queensland. The Government during this time of depression have derived from taxation more revenue than any other Government that existed in Queensland. What has been bad? The people may have suffered—and they will always suffer while they are victimised by a bad business Government. It is of no use blaming the Almighty, the drought, and everything else, when we know that the failure is due to bad business methods. Some hon. gentlemen on the other side have concluded, because nobody on this side of the House said anything about the worker, that we thought the

worker was a bad individual. They thereupon set up an "Aunt Sally" and forthwith knocked it down again themselves. If the Government are satisfied with the railways, they are very easily satisfied. If Government members are satisfied, I consider that they are tame rabbits. I am not satisfied, and I desire to say that the people of Queensland are not satisfied. (Government dissent.) I represent a constituency which is near Brisbane and is connected with the city by rail; but even at so close a distance to the city we have serious drawbacks to contend with so far as the railways are concerned. There are many things to consider at this juncture. It would be wise if the Government, instead of taking great credit and saying that they have done a wonderful thing in connection with the railways, acted like business men and considered what might best be done. Nobody wants the Government to impose taxes in order to make the railways pay. It is quite true that the railways should not pay. We do not expect them to pay.

Mr. CARTER: Then what are all those tears for?

Mr. WARREN: There are no tears, but I could weep for Queensland; there is no question about that.

Mr. COSTELLO: Hear, hear!

Mr. CARTER: You are always weeping.

Mr. WARREN: They would be tears well spilt when we consider what a deplorable condition Queensland is in under the administration of a Labour Government. No man in his senses would say that the State railways ought to pay. No co-operative company should pay. They are not there to pay, but they ought to clear expenses, and they ought to be run on businesslike lines. I do not wish to make a comparison, because comparisons are not always wise or applicable; but, if you go to New South Wales at the present juncture, you will see steel trucks and steel wagons—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have 2,000,000 people and a less mileage of railways than we have.

Mr. WARREN: Even if we had not a quarter of the population we should have up-to-date rolling-stock.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: We have.

Mr. WARREN: The hon. member who says that either does not know or does not care. A considerable quantity of wheat is handled in New South Wales, and the bulk of that wheat, I am informed by the General Traffic Manager for New South Wales, is brought in in steel trucks. We are building bridges of reinforced concrete, not because they are better or cheaper than wooden bridges, but because they will last longer. Why do we not copy the Southern States, and have steel wagons? It is a good business proposition, and it would save money in every way. We have already had the example set us.

One thing I have been impressed with during this debate has been that the Commissioner's department is blamed for every mistake that has been made, while every little credit is attributed to the Government. (Laughter.) That is the act of a small-minded individual. I am confident that, if the Commissioner were given the management of the Queensland railways, he would

manage them satisfactorily, but he is not given that latitude.

Mr. CARTER: Who has the management of the railways?

Mr. WARREN: No doubt political influence is responsible for landing us in our present position.

Mr. CARTER: It is a very fortunate one!

Mr. WARREN: The hon. member does not speak plainly. When he learns to do so I will answer his interjections. The responsibility is not with the workers; it is not with the rolling-stock; it is with the management of the railways; and, if the Commissioner is responsible—I am quite convinced

that he is not responsible—it is [8 p.m.] the duty of the Government to produce a man who can run the railways in such a way that they will give satisfaction to the people and will save this enormous loss every year. I ask in all fairness, can any country stand these enormous losses year after year? We know perfectly well that it is only putting off the evil day. Can the Minister claim that we have an up-to-date railway system?

Mr. CARTER: Yes.

Mr. WARREN: If he does claim that, he is claiming something that is not correct. I claim it is not an up-to-date railway system. Even shire councils have had to build tramway feeders to our main railways. This work should be the responsibility of the Government. I do not say that these tramways are not carried on in a proper way, but, although they are only short lines, there is not the loss on these tramways that is sustained on the general railway system of Queensland. This proves that they must be run on more businesslike lines. The people who run these tramways have to pay award rates. One hon. member opposite, with tears in his eyes and swelling in his throat, told us about the wonderful increase in wages. I admit there has been an increase in wages, and I quite agree that that increase was absolutely essential on account of the increase in the cost of living; but are the railwaymen any better off to-day? The purchasing value of the £1 is not as great to-day as it was in pre-war days, and these men are not one whit better off. I am not going to say that the Government would be doing right if they were to reduce wages when the cost of living is as high as it is at the present time; but in receiving that increase in wages the worker is no better off than he was previously. While the people in the country would like to see a reduction in the cost of carrying goods to and from the country, at the same time we cannot expect, while the railways are "gone a million," to have our goods carried at a lower rate. As the hon. member for Murilla said, the people in the country have to pay both ways. That is quite true. That is to say, the land has to pay all the time. We shall have to make conditions in the country more attractive, as no doubt the country conditions in America, Canada, and New Zealand are more attractive. We can only make conditions in the country through our railways. We have a wonderful country, and we have many attractive places in Queensland, and it should be the duty of the Government, and particularly of the Railway Department, to cater for the country, and they should be prepared to face this question in a businesslike manner and put the right man forward to conduct the business

Mr. Warren.]

of this great concern. When we consider that we have over £50,000,000 invested in our railways we see at once that it is a very big concern. I would strongly urge the Government to face the proposition and not patch the matter up, because it will have to be faced some time or another. Until the people living away from the city are catered for by our railways better than they are at the present time, life in the country is not going to be so enjoyable, even with all the modern advantages, as it is in the city. If the Government desire to increase the attractiveness of the country they will do something for us through the railways.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I think it is only fair that the Minister should fall into line with other Ministers and render a statement of his expenses incurred during the last year. Each Minister so far has given details of his expenses, and I would suggest to the Secretary for Railways that he give his expenses before the debate is closed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will give them at once—personal expenses, £211; miscellaneous expenses, £302. That includes car hire and the entertaining of guests at the opening of new lines and turning the first sods.

Mr. KELSO: Thank you. It is regrettable that we have not the Commissioner's report. The Minister explained the reason why, but hon. members are under a certain disadvantage in discussing these Estimates because of the fact that we have not the detailed information which is given in the report. The whole of the argument so far has been as to why the railways do not pay and have not paid for some years. Hon. members on the opposite side have explained, to their own satisfaction, why the railways do not pay; but hon. members on this side can hardly follow their argument when you consider that the largest business that the State handles has been losing on an average over £1,000,000 a year, until the deficit for the last eight years has reached nearly the £10,000,000 mark. Surely during the eight years the Government must have put on their considering cap to see whether it is not possible to bring the expenditure more within the limits of the receipts. It is true that we cannot at the present time conduct this huge business as an ordinary business concern. It is the settled policy that the railways must develop the country; still, at the same time, it is possible to look into the matter to find out where the leakages are. There must be some leakages. If some great corporation is running a big business, those managing it dissect the figures and find out where the leakage is, and in many cases they come to the conclusion that certain departments are not paying. Perhaps they increase the price of their goods if they can, or they eliminate some of those departments. I am not going to advocate that, because there are railways in the country which are not paying, those railways should be closed up. For good or evil, many of those railways have been built in places where it is not possible to get a decent revenue for many years to come. One might say that in proportion to the population we have too many miles of railway at the present time. The question is how to make them pay. The hon. member for Rosewood has repeated, what we have heard time and again, that there are only two ways to make the railways pay—that you can only make them pay by increasing freights and

fares, or you must deflate a large number of the employees. I do not advocate deflation, but I want to offer another solution to-night which I think the Government have not taken as seriously as they ought to do. We have all the facilities for settling a large population in Queensland, and I do not think the Government for the past few years have taken seriously into account the question of immigration. We have acres here which would carry millions of people, and we want to know why it is that these millions of people cannot come to Queensland.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in dealing with the question of immigration.

Mr. KELSO: I was trying to connect that up by saying that, if you are trying to solve the difficulties of making the railways pay, we ought to look at all avenues by which it is possible to increase the revenue, and one of the surest ways of doing so is to bring population here. However, if I cannot pursue that line of argument, I shall have to leave it. It has been suggested by hon. members opposite that it does not matter whether the railways pay or not—that they are a great developmental asset to the State and belong to the people, and if there are any deficits, they have to be paid by the people. I would ask the Minister to follow that to its logical conclusion. If he takes the stand that the railways are a great national utility, then why charge any freights or fares at all? Why not allow any person in the community to ride free on the trains? Why not make it possible for any merchant to send his goods, or any farmer to send his stuff on the railways, free of charge, and defray the cost out of the Consolidated Revenue? If the hon. gentleman followed that out logically, he would at once see that by piling up a huge deficit you would be putting the State in a very awkward position financially. We must remember that in order to build railways we must borrow money. When we borrow money, in most cases we have to go to the London market. The financiers there look into the conditions of each State, and they will immediately say, "Here is a State which is prepared to borrow all the money we can lend them; but we cannot see that they are making a business proposition of their affairs, as they have big deficits."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you really believe the financiers say that when you are borrowing money?

Mr. KELSO: I wish the hon. gentleman would allow me to develop my argument. If he does, I will give him some information.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He has only interjected once.

Mr. KELSO: That is quite enough.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You interject a lot yourself.

Mr. KELSO: So does the hon. gentleman. Let me assume that the whole cost of the railways is borne by the Consolidated Revenue. In that case the income tax would have to be increased very largely. The effect of increasing the income tax so largely is the real reason why at the present time industries are not being established in the State as they ought to be.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Whose speech are you replying to now?

[Mr. Warren.]

Mr. KELSO: I am making my own speech.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: But you talked about the Minister advocating free railways.

At 8.15 p.m.,

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

Mr. KELSO: I did not do that: the Minister has misunderstood my remarks. Hon. members opposite claim that it does not matter what the deficit is.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They do not say that.

Mr. KELSO: Hon. members opposite have assumed that it really does not matter whether the railways pay or not. The Minister cannot contradict that.

Mr. PEASE: You cannot make them pay under present conditions.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We say that it is not indispensable that they should pay.

Mr. KELSO: One hon. member said that it does not matter whether the railways pay because the deficit is paid out of the Consolidated Revenue. I am only trying to show that, if you followed that out logically, you would have a tremendous increase in the income tax, and that would be indirectly one of the reasons why the secondary industries in the State would not go ahead.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Then you advocate an increase in fares and freights?

Mr. KELSO: No; I am coming to that, if the Minister will wait. The Premier a few days ago in his tour up North deplored the fact that the secondary industries of this State are not so prosperous as those in the Southern States.

Mr. PEASE: No; he said they wanted cheaper power.

Mr. KELSO: He admitted that industries here are not progressing the same as they are in the South. However, I will not continue that line of argument.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We have not got the markets here.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman knows that we can raise many primary products here. He would be the first to admit that it is most desirable that we should work up our primary products in Queensland, and so provide a lot of work for the people in the State. The hon. gentleman knows that we have reached the limit of taxation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The secret of success in manufacturing is to find a market.

Mr. KELSO: The fact is that people will not bring their money into Queensland and engage in industry here because taxation is so high.

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

Mr. KELSO: I am trying to connect my argument with the vote by showing that, if we had a lot of industries in operation here, the railways would pay. If we have a lot of immigration here, that will help to solve the difficulty. Hon. members opposite do not agree with us in regard to immigration. Notwithstanding the fact that it may be thrown back at me that there is not enough work for all the people here, I am of opinion that, if we brought thousands of people

here, it would immediately stimulate industry. By bringing in industrialists and farmers and increasing the population there would be no trouble in making the railways pay.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There are plenty of people in England, and they have got 2,000,000 unemployed there.

Mr. KELSO: Then the hon. gentleman will admit that there are plenty of people in England who would come here?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing the whole subject of immigration. He will be in order in showing that immigration will enable the railways to pay, but not in discussing the matter of immigration generally.

Mr. KELSO: The Minister is drawing me off the track.

The CHAIRMAN: I would suggest that the hon. member should address the Chair.

Mr. KELSO: I will address the Chair. I am not going to weary the Committee with a lot of figures, like the hon. member for Herbert did, for instance.

Mr. PEASE: I hope you will assimilate them.

Mr. KELSO: It seemed like a cataract coming out when the hon. member was speaking. We had not time to grasp one set of figures before another set came out.

Mr. PEASE: You read them in "Hansard."

Mr. KELSO: I will read them in "Hansard." But even at the risk of wearying hon. members with a few more figures, I would point out one or two things. It is a peculiar thing that the mileage of railway lines increased by 20 per cent. between 1914 and 1922. I am not going to give the figures in detail, but only the percentages.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They are more involved.

Mr. KELSO: I am sorry if the Minister thinks that they are involved, but if he will read them in "Hansard" and study them, it will do him some good. During the same period the population has increased by 17 per cent., and the number of employees by 5 per cent. Now we come to the decreases—

	Decrease. Per cent.
Train mileage	20
Tonnage of goods and live stock carried	25
Number of train miles per employee	23
Tonnage of goods and live stock per employee	29
Net earnings per employee	77
Percentage of profit to capital, from £4 0s. 8d. to 15s. 4½d.	

With those figures in front of us, if hon. members on the other side are satisfied with the progress which has been made by the railways, they must be very easily satisfied.

I hope that the Minister is not overlooking the fact that a very serious competitor with the railways in the near future will be motor traction. In America and in England, and, in fact, in Victoria and New South Wales, it is going to be a very serious problem.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner is dealing with that question.

Mr. Kelso.]

Mr. KELSO: I am pleased to hear that. I have read that in America and in Great Britain motor traction is a very serious competitor of the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why is it serious?

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman likes competition, does he?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes; you get better service.

Mr. KELSO: Would the hon. gentleman mind private enterprise competing with the railways? That is the point I want to speak about. I do not think it is a fair thing that the Secretary to the Railway Commissioner, Mr. Steer—I am not reflecting on him personally in any way—is chairman of the Tramway Trust, because he is occupying two positions which, to a certain extent, clash with one another. I can quite conceive that, as chairman of the Tramway Trust, he is occupying a position similar to that of Pooh Bah in "The Mikado." It might be that, as Secretary to the Railway Commissioner, he does not want the competition of the tramways in the suburbs, and as chairman of the Trust he might turn down an extension of the trams which might serve a good many people in the suburbs simply for that reason.

Mr. MAXWELL: He is only one man.

Mr. KELSO: That is so. At the same time he is a capable man and well up in his business, and we know that what he says would have a good deal of weight with the Trust.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Would you appoint an incapable man?

Mr. KELSO: I would not appoint an incapable man. I would appoint an independent man. I am quite with the Secretary for Public Lands when he says that if there is competition, we shall get better service; but I do not think it is right to have as chairman of the Tramway Trust a man who is interested in the railways, with which the tramways might be a competitor.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Would you be in favour of building a tramline and a railway to serve the same people?

Mr. KELSO: I am not speaking about that, but the chairman of the Trust might see that if a tramline were built, it might compete with the railway.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Railway Department runs the tramways in Sydney.

Mr. KELSO: I am taking things as they are here at present. The Government are the creators of the Tramway Trust, and they should not condemn their own work. The Secretary for Public Lands says that in Sydney the railways and the tramways are run by the Railway Commissioners. If he thinks that is a good thing, why not bring it about here? But the Government have appointed a Trust, and I say that the Trust should be independent, and should be run by the representatives of the people of Brisbane within a certain area, and it should be wholly controlled by those people.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There are plenty of members of the Trust to prevent the Secretary to the Railway Commissioner from using the tramways in the interests of the Railway Department.

Mr. KELSO: I quite agree with that, but the influence of one man who is capable in

[*Mr. Kelso.*]

his business is such that, when he expresses an opinion, he may sway half a dozen others round the table.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not on a question of policy. He is an expert on railway matters.

Mr. KELSO: Mr. Steer may be put into a position where the two interests clash, where he has a certain duty to the Railway Commissioner and another duty to the Trust.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I feel sure that if that position arises, Mr. Steer will be the first to draw attention to it.

Mr. KELSO: I am drawing attention to it now, and time will show whether I am wrong. It seems to me that the chairman of the Trust might be anxious to eliminate all competition with the tramways by motor-cars, for instance.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss the policy of the Tramway Trust.

Mr. KELSO: There is one other point I want to touch upon—that is, the question of free passes on the railways. I would be glad if the Minister would give us some idea as to the extent to which free passes have been issued during the last three years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have been cutting a few out.

Mr. KELSO: I am glad to hear it. The information might be helpful, and the Minister should be glad of the opportunity to give it, because there is a feeling outside that during the last few years there has been an indiscriminate giving of free passes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Those in existence now were given by other Governments.

Mr. KELSO: I am not speaking about the passes of members of Parliament. I have always thought that they should have every facility for travelling throughout the State, so that they may be fitted to carry out their duties. It has been said by people outside that it would be interesting to know how many passes have been issued during the last few years, and a return would not do any harm, because if the Minister says that the number has been reduced, it would be interesting to compare it with the number handed out during the regime of the so-called Tory Government. There is a feeling abroad that certain persons who are friends of the party opposite can get free passes.

Mr. COSTELLO: Organisers.

Mr. KELSO: And trade union secretaries.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is said by those we have turned down.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman will see that I am not referring to this matter in any carping spirit. I am giving him the opportunity to disclose the position, because what I have stated is a matter of common rumour.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You know "Rumour is a lying jade."

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member ought to be grateful to me for giving him the opportunity to deny what everybody knows is common rumour. If it is not true, I shall be delighted to hear it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As a matter of fact, some of your own members come to me for passes.

Mr. KELSO: That may be. I am giving the hon. gentleman the opportunity to deny the public rumour that friends of the Government can get plenty of passes. It would be very interesting if he would submit some statistics on the question.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): It seems to me that in discussing the Railway Estimates we need to be careful to take a wide survey of the whole position and not confine our attention to the small and what one might call the petty issues which may not have an appreciable effect on railway finance.

During the past two months I [3.30 p.m.] have done considerable travelling on the Queensland railways, and I am pleasantly compelled to state that, speaking of them as a whole, I think those railways are very creditably conducted. Perhaps one's remarks must be somewhat tempered when referring to the Northern railway system, because there is no question whatever that the administration of the railway service in North Queensland is nothing like so proficient nor are the railways as well run as they are in the Central and Southern districts. That is probably due to the fact that the North is entirely cut off from the South, and it is very difficult indeed to feed the North with the rolling-stock, engines, and other necessary appliances to enable that section to be as efficiently run as is the case in the Central and the Southern districts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The seasonal occupations also make it difficult.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am afraid that in travelling from Townsville to Cloncurry, if certain of our members were subjected to the inconveniences that one has to put up with on that line, that there would be a very considerable amount of growling and grumbling. I am prepared to admit that because of the fact that the North is isolated it is not so easy of efficient management as the systems in the Southern and Central portions of the State. I must also confirm the statements that have been made that the railway service, from the Commissioner downwards, speaking generally, is quite efficient. The officials are courteous, attentive, and sincerely desirous of doing the right thing. That has been my experience of the railway men generally. In talking of our railways, and in taking advantage of the opportunity which these Estimates present to criticise them, I think we must be fair and take into consideration the elements, which certainly are acting in an adverse manner upon the railway revenue. There is no doubt that we as an Opposition would be rather loath to see the Government raise the railway fares throughout Queensland, and, on the other hand, we must also be honest and admit that as an Opposition we would not be desirous of seeing the wages reduced in the railway system. If we, therefore, make those two admissions—which I think is the case all round—then we must also admit that to a very large extent you remove the possibility of reducing the annual deficit upon the railways; but, as business men, what we do say is that there are many instances of wastage of money which these elements do not touch, and that is the commercial or business side of a huge undertaking spending millions of pounds per annum. The railway service is a huge business undertaking. I quite admit

that it is a very difficult thing indeed for one man to conduct such a huge institution; but I am of the opinion that, if more business control was introduced into the railway system, very considerable economies could be effected, which, I think, if my memory serves me correctly, you, Mr. Kirwan, said might be effected some years ago.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When he was in opposition.

Mr. MAXWELL: Surely he has not changed his mind since then?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I would be very sorry to think that a gentleman occupying the honourable position of Chairman of Committees would alter his mind now that he is not in opposition—we have such high regard for that hon. gentleman's veracity. We all must admit that, if greater acumen was introduced into the conduct and business of the Railway Department, very considerable economies could be effected. In making that statement I am reflecting on no one. I am simply acknowledging that in such a great institution there is room for better control and greater economy than is exercised at the present time.

I was very interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Rosewood. I am afraid that he got somewhat tied up in his statements, particularly when he was dealing with posterity. I do not think he quite knew whether posterity came before or after him. He seemed to be somewhat confused as to what obligations he intended to pass on to posterity. The point I wish to make is that, if it is a fair thing that the farmers and the users of the railways in Queensland generally should saddle the taxpayers—as has been the case—with £10,000,000 during the past eight years, then why should not the taxpayers complain and ask if the future inhabitants are going to benefit from the railways, why the cost should be imposed upon the present taxpayers? Why not capitalise the interest? If you are going to capitalise the interest and pass it on to someone else who will have to meet that commitment at some future time, then I can understand the argument; but that is not being done. You are simply shifting the responsibility of the maintenance of the railways or the upkeep of the railways from the shoulders of the users and putting it on the taxpayers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Largely it is a subsidy on country development, because most of the trouble is with the branch lines.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That may not always be the case. It is not only the branch lines that are deficient in interest and expenditure. The point is that the deficiency on the railways is not being accumulated and passed on to prosperity or this increased population which is coming at some future time. The taxpayer is paying it to-day, and, as a matter of fact, out of the additional £17,000,000 which has been raised in taxation since the Government came into power, no less than £10,000,000 has been expended in meeting the railway deficits. That is an astounding statement to make, but it is true. The railway deficit to a very large extent has been responsible for the high taxation in Queensland to-day. The effect of that high taxation comes back as a boomerang.

I notice that the Premier in a speech delivered at Cairns last week, evidently

Mr. Elphinstone.]

learning wisdom from the criticism of the Opposition, has suddenly awakened to the fact that the secondary industries in Queensland are stagnant and require to be encouraged. That is what we have been telling hon. members opposite for a long time past. In effect one of the reasons why our railways are not so productive as they should be is because there are no secondary industries in Queensland. There is no carriage of manufactured goods, except what we bring from other parts of Australia. I would be very much more pleased, and I am certain everyone else would be too, if the railways were used as a circulating medium for carrying Queensland manufactured goods to other parts of the State. That is what we want to see. The railway deficit year by year is having a boomerang effect, because it is stopping that development of secondary industries which would help in no uncertain way to diminish to a very large extent the railway deficit. To be fair in criticising the railways, I think we must admit that the great expenditure which has been incurred piece-meal on the North Coast line for probably the last ten or twelve years or more has never been given a chance to show its revenue-earning possibilities by reason of the line being unfinished. Therefore I am hopeful and exceedingly optimistic that, when the line has been completed through to Townsville, provided an efficient service is maintained, it will have quite a material effect upon the railway revenue of Queensland. It seems to me that that should be our main artery—an artery that should be continued. I am encouraged in that contention by a study of the position that has arisen by the connection of Mackay with Rockhampton. The development which has taken place at Mackay, particularly in regard to the State butcher shops, is marvellous since the railway was connected with that city. I was compelled to make that observation because I noticed in the reply which the Minister gave me the other day that Mackay has been blessed with four State butcher shops, and that no other town in Queensland has that number.

Mr. PEASE: He is a good Minister, too.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Probably I would get into trouble with the Chairman if I followed that argument. The advancement that has been made in Mackay since that town has been connected up gives one encouragement to hope that as soon as the line is connected with Townsville the same prosperity will follow there. I am compelled to admit that the drain on the resources of the taxpayer by reason of the interest he has to find to make up the railway deficit has been occasioned to a large extent by the large sums of money which have been non-interest bearing so far as that North Coast line is concerned.

A matter that has always engaged my thoughts in regard to the railways is in reference to our Ipswich railway workshops. In making these remarks I am obviously not going to make any reference whatever to the inquiry that is taking place to-day. I do think that, if different methods were adopted in regard to our Ipswich workshops, we would get much greater economy in the manufacture of the engines and carriages which emanate from that source. I had the pleasure some little while ago—and I have stated this before in the House—when Sir Ross Smith was visiting Queensland, and his

propeller was damaged to such an extent that he could not proceed further until the Ipswich railway workshops completed the task of making a new propeller, of visiting the workshops and seeing the new propeller and the men engaged on the job. Anyone sincerely desirous of looking on the right side of things could not help but be impressed with the zeal and energy that the men engaged on that job displayed in making that propeller. I could not help feeling that, if that zeal and energy could only operate in the workshops in regard to making the carriages and so forth, the difficulty in regard to efficiency and costs would be solved.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The locomotives are being turned out from the Ipswich workshops at a cost that will compare with private enterprise. The same remarks apply also to the quality of the work.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am not, in my argument, comparing Government enterprise with private enterprise. I am simply dealing with the Ipswich railway workshop operatives as part of the State's activities.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They will compare favourably both as to interest and efficiency with the employees of private enterprise.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: My point is that, if some means could only be devised whereby the interest of the operatives in the workshops can be maintained in their work by a payment in keeping with what they produce, either by piecework or payment by results, there would be a marvellous difference in the results. There is a fine class of men engaged in the workshops, and some of them reside in my electorate. They are a class of men that the State ought to be pleased to employ, as they are men who are anxious to devote their best time and attention to their work. But they must be given some incentive in regard to their work, such as existed in so far as the making of that propeller blade is concerned.

Mr. KELSO: The unions would not agree to the introduction of piecework.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Possibly not; but the time has come when union domination over the affairs of Queensland has to cease, and when we must get down to efficiency. I am quite satisfied that, if such methods were applied to the Ipswich railway workshops, the Government would get much better work than they do to-day and at a lesser cost. I say that without the slightest reflection on the men there.

Another point I was struck with during my rambles was the activities of the Main Roads Board, and particularly in so far as the railways were concerned. I look to that channel of activity to offer a solution in regard to some of the non-paying and unprofitable sections of our railways. That is an activity that the House is agreed upon. I was pleased to see that activity going on to the extent which was evident. It is obvious to me that, if the work of the Board is carried out in a thorough workmanlike and economical manner, we shall be able to establish many feeders to our railway system which will be bound to have the effect of providing increased traffic and thus reducing the loss on our railways.

I am constrained to make some brief reference to the Blair Athol coal. I had

[Mr. Elphinstone.]

the pleasure quite recently of going through that mine, and I was immensely impressed with the potentialities of that huge deposit. One could not help expressing sorrow that it was not more accessible to our industrial centres. One found a most marked difference in travelling on the railway as soon as the Emerald district was entered. The Emerald district is served by the Blair Athol coal, and I found the carriages in that district perfectly clean, that there were no heaps of cinders to stumble over such as we have on the North Coast line. The wonderful deposits at Blair Athol are awaiting development. It seems to me that there is an obligation on the Minister to see that he makes much greater use of that coal than he does at the present time. The Blair Athol settlement is being strangled at the present time on account, I understand, of the inability of the Government to support it to the extent that the people there would like.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What is wanted for the Blair Athol coal is an export trade. The Government are assisting the company by providing facilities for export, strengthening the line, giving them a special rate on export coal, and assisting them in every possible way.

MR. ELPHINSTONE: I am very glad to hear that. The export possibilities of a tremendous deposit of magnificent coal such as this is are untold. One of the great obligations devolving on the Government or any other Government that follow in their train is to see that that coal is given a market. I quite understand that the Government in their State enterprise activities, having two coalmines of their own in that neighbourhood, only want to support that State enterprise in so far as coal supplies for the railways are concerned. Nevertheless there is a wonderful deposit, which, in my judgment, if it is given access to the coast in a manner which will permit of that coal being sold at reasonable competitive rates, will bring untold possibilities to that district.

Another matter I wish to touch upon briefly is the advertising which one sees in our railway carriages and on our railway trucks at the present moment. In one of my earlier speeches in this House I had the temerity to suggest that advertising might be adopted in the Railway Department with profit. One is encouraged to make that remark because in railway carriages in Great Britain, America, and other countries in the world you see every suitable space occupied by advertisements. I am not suggesting that we should make our carriages unsightly, or that the spaces alongside our railway lines should be made unsightly with advertisements dealing with proprietary medicines and so forth, but I do think there are many ways by which the railways can secure revenue by that means. It has been adopted to a certain extent, and I would be glad if the Minister in his reply will let the House know to what extent he will encourage the utilisation of our railway property in this direction to secure revenue.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is being exploited to the fullest possible extent.

MR. ELPHINSTONE: I am glad to hear it. It is good for business, and it is not unsightly in the way it is being done. I hope it will be carried on further.

In conclusion, I am forced and pleased to admit that the railway system as a whole in Queensland is satisfactory. We have more miles of railway per head of population in Queensland than in any other country in the world. We on this side do not wish to see our railway fares increased; we do not wish to see our wages reduced; but we do wish to see greater efficiency introduced in regard to the business side of running our railways. We think that can be brought about. The arguments that have been advanced so far as political interference is concerned are well worthy of the Minister's attention. I was speaking within the last fortnight to a railway guard. It was rather pathetic to hear an old servant of the department express the view that it was no use trying these days. He just lived out his existence and served his stipulated number of hours. He had lost interest in the Railway Department because of political interference.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He was a hopeless pessimist and a prevaricator to advocate such an argument. Our Inventions and Improvement Board offer inducement to any ambitious employees.

MR. ELPHINSTONE: If the Minister's interjection is correct, what must be the feeling of that sleeping-car conductor who was summoned and fined for a breach of the award because on the train which he was superintending he had seventy-nine sleeping-berths as against seventy?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do you suggest that any Minister or member of Parliament had anything to do with that? The first I heard of the case was to-day. I understand that the man was summoned for a breach of the award. It had nothing to do with any Minister or any hon. member.

MR. ELPHINSTONE: I do contend that the awards and the machinery for making the awards have been guided by the Labour party. They merely condense all their opinions in so far as the way our industries and undertakings should be run. The very element they are introducing, curbing the desires or the efficiency of the employees in this regard, is having a stagnating influence upon them. There are political influences at work on the railways; there is no gain-saying that. Perhaps they are not quite so apparent as they used to be, but they exist; and the Minister will be well advised to see that they are removed in their entirety, so that each individual is free to exercise his abilities in the way best fitted towards the advancement of the service. By that means he will help to diminish to a very large extent these influences, which are acting as a drag on the resources of the State.

MR. COLLINS (Bowen): It has been very refreshing to hear the criticism of hon. members of the Opposition in connection with this vote. I am satisfied that, if they remain in Opposition for another two or three years, they will be nearly as radical as hon. members on this side of the House. (Laughter.) I was especially interested in the speech of the hon. member for Oxley. He had practically no complaints to find against the railway system. The only fault he found was that the Northern railway system was not quite as efficient as the Central and Southern systems. I am with him in that opinion. It is not quite so efficient so far as the comfort of the traveller is concerned. However, that can easily be explained, as

Mr. Collins.]

we have no connection yet with the Northern railway system. When we link up from Mackay to Proserpine, I take it that the Northern railway system will then be brought up to the same level as the Southern system.

I wish to say a special word on behalf of the men who build our railways, because I notice that in this vote we have an item of £1,200 for the Chief Engineer. I believe I am perfectly in order in discussing practically the construction of railways, because the Chief Engineer is in charge of the construction of the whole of our railways in Queensland. I am very pleased that so far as the debate has gone we have not heard anything about "go slow" methods in connection with our railway system. I hope we are not going to hear any more about them. My advice to these men who talk so much about "go slow" methods in connection with the building or working of our railways is that they should get into some of our deep cuttings for eight hours or work on a hot day between Richmond and Cloncurry, between Cloncurry and Mount Elliott, or between Cloncurry and Mount Cuthbert. If they did, we should not hear so much about "go slow" methods. These men never did go slow except in the imagination of hon. members opposite.

What is the use of trying to make comparisons between Queensland and other States of the Commonwealth or with any other country in the world? What other country or State can hon. members make a comparison with?

Mr. COSTELLO: Russia.

Mr. COLLINS: I have here the "A B C of Queensland Statistics;" it is dated 1923, but, although it does not give the latest figures, it will serve just as well to quote.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It is back in the dark ages.

Mr. COLLINS: We find from the "A B C" that in Queensland in 1921 the number of miles of railways open was 5,794, the population being 757,634. In New South Wales at the same time, the number of miles of railways open was 5,045, and the population 2,099,763; Victoria had 4,274 miles open, and a population of 1,531,529; South Australia had 2,333 miles open, and a population of 495,336; Western Australia had 3,539 miles open, and a population of 332,213; Tasmania had 630 miles open, and a population of 213,877.

Those figures prove that you cannot make a comparison with other States. What is the use of saying that our railways ought to pay as well as the railways of New South Wales with its population of 2,090,000 odd? You compare Queensland, with a present population of only 800,000, yet with 700 miles more of railways. What has astonished me—I have said this previously and will repeat it—when I have travelled through Queensland—and I have travelled over nearly the whole of our railway system at one time and another—is not how little our railways are paying, but that they are paying as well as they are.

Mr. KELSO: The standard gauge of New South Wales costs twice as much as ours.

Mr. COLLINS: That is no comparison at all. I think the hon. member knows very little about the State he lives in. In some

portions one travels 100 miles and does not find 500 people on either side of the line in the whole of that distance. We have to wait patiently until the population grows; then our railways will pay.

I was very pleased to hear the sentiments expressed by the hon. member for Murilla in regard to the cheapening of fares and freight. There is nothing new in his argument, as it was advanced years ago in regard to our country districts. There is nothing wrong in the proposal, and the Labour party are endeavouring to carry it out. Some hon. members opposite say that our railways should be made to pay better than they are paying. Those hon. members have never asked themselves the question whether our roads pay. The hon. member for Nundah, when talking about loan money to build railways which do not pay, should have considered that question. We build a lot of roads out of loan, but I do not know one case where a single dividend has been paid. Our railways are practically highways which are being used for the development of the State. They are necessary highways, too. The men who will advocate

[9 p.m.] as time goes on that the railways should be made as free as possible will be the men who are right away out in the far Western portions of the State.

Mr. KELSO: Do you believe in free railways?

Mr. COLLINS: I believe in the programme laid down by the party with which I am associated, and I stick to their platform as closely as it is possible for a human being to stick to any platform. We have not reached that stage, maybe, in our evolution when we should have free railways, but, at any rate, we have made them freer than they were before. It is an easy matter to make the railways pay. I heard the hon. member for Oxley talk about adopting business methods. What do "business methods" really mean? Any schoolboy could make our railways pay by increasing fares and freights and reducing wages. That, I suppose, is what the Opposition would do from a business point of view. That is what business people generally do. They want to make everything pay. "Does it pay?" "Will it pay?" That is their usual cry, and not "Has it developed the country?"

Mr. TAYLOR: Don't you think a railway that has been running for forty years should pay?

Mr. COLLINS: Last night I had the pleasure of telling hon. members on the other side of the House why railways that have been running for forty years do not pay, and they will have to pass legislation a lot more drastic than the legislation they were passing last night to make them pay better than they are paying.

Mr. KELSO: What does Karl Marx say about it? (Laughter.)

Mr. COLLINS: I will make it my business to buy the hon. member for Nundah a cheap edition of the works of Karl Marx, so that he will know something about his doctrine. The development in connection with the railways that is taking place in the North, and especially in my own electorate, is something marvellous. When I was first returned for Bowen in 1915, there went in and out of Bowen about eight or ten trains per week; but owing to the good work that this Government have done in connection with the

[Mr. Collins.]

building of the railway to the Bowen coalfield, which is saving the Railway Department £50,000 a year by supplying coal to our railway system in the North, there went in and out of Bowen quite recently in the period of one month nearly 400 trains. That is the result of the development that is taking place on the Bowen coalfield. While the hon. member for Oxley was saying good words about the Blair Athol coal, and about there being no dust in the railway carriages, I want to say a word on behalf of the Bowen coal, because I have travelled between Bowen and Townsville in railway carriages drawn by engines using Bowen coal, and I did not notice any coal dust in the carriages. We can all be proud of the fact that we now have a daily passenger train from Bowen to Townsville, and from Townsville to Bowen. That shows the development that has taken place in connection with the railway system while the Labour Government have been in power. I am satisfied that when we have the railway completed between Mackay and Proserpine, which will enable us to go right through to Ingham and beyond, it will be a better paying proposition than it is at the present time, and we shall see a revolution in the development of the Northern portion of the State. Let us hope that, when that railway is completed, members sitting in Opposition who know very little about North Queensland—I do not say the whole of them—will take advantage of the railway to make themselves acquainted with North Queensland. Owing to the fact that we have developed the Bowen State coalmine, instead of paying 42s. 6d. per ton for coal used on our railways, screened coal is now supplied to the Railway Department at the Bowen State coalmine at 18s. per ton for screened coal, unscreened coal 16s. per ton, and slack at 14s. per ton, which I believe is the cheapest coal in Queensland. That is something that the Government have done in connection with the railway system. In giving us cheap coal for our Northern railway system, they have enabled the Railway Department to save £50,000 a year, owing to the coal being supplied at a cheaper rate than was paid for the coal which was brought to Queensland from the South.

One of the reasons advanced by the hon. member for Oxley, in his usual schoolmaster's style, as to why our railways do not pay, was that we had not many secondary industries in Queensland. Yet we all know that he has been one of the most bitter opponents of a proposal to establish a large secondary industry in this State—that is, the Bowen iron and steel works. The hon. member for Oxley has opposed that every time. If that is the reason why our railways are not paying, all hon. members should swing behind this Government and help us to get the necessary funds to establish a big secondary industry—namely, the iron and steel works at Bowen.

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): The hon. member for Bowen endeavoured to make capital out of a statement that the Opposition were advocates of a reduction of wages. That is entirely untrue. We believe, as every sensible man believes, that a reduction of wages should not be resorted to except as a last resource—that all other means should be tried before a reduction of wages is considered. The whole success of the railways is wrapped up in the management, and I fail to see that any system can be made a

success where the men are being used as tools for political purposes. Right through the piece we can see the hand of the vote-catcher. The railways have been used as an instrument to get votes for the Government. There is no need for me to particularise, for the simple fact that it is known full well that what I am saying is true and incontrovertible.

As the construction of railways has been mentioned, I would refer to a little matter which was published in the "Worker" of the 13th instant, under the heading of "Railway Construction Workers—Men to be Discharged."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member can discuss that matter on the loan vote, but not on this vote.

Mr. FRY: I will discuss it on the loan vote. The policy that has been dominating the railway system and preventing it paying is wrapped up in the fact that men were put on prior to the last election and discharged just after the election was over.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is incorrect.

Mr. FRY: If the hon. gentleman looks up the date of appointment and the date of discharge, he will find that those men were appointed before the election and discharged after the election. The Minister is wrong in his statement.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that the hon. member will not discuss that matter.

Mr. FRY: It is all wrapped up in the question of management. I repeat that the railways have been used as an instrument for political purposes, and that is detrimental to the general welfare and success of the railways. What is the use of saying that the railways are here to serve the State, when we know very well that that is only part of the reason? We know that the railways are being run in such a manner as not only to cause a huge loss to the State, but they were also used in connection with the election.

I am going to refer to another thing which affects my electorate—that is, the railway which was promised the people of Kurilpa at the last election.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope I have made it clear to the hon. member, but in case he did not hear me, I will state the position again. The construction of railways can only be dealt with on the Loan Estimates. The hon. member will be quite in order in discussing the general administration of the Railway Department on this vote.

Mr. FRY: I do not want to discuss the construction of railways from the standpoint of loan money at all. The Government should have saved sufficient money to build this railway in Kurilpa out of revenue.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member does not obey my ruling I will deal with him.

Mr. FRY: All I have to say is that the general administration of the railways has been carried out in such a way as to result almost in a state of chaos. If the State is losing £1,000,000 a year, can the railways be said to be successful? Are they not in a state of chaos? Hon. members opposite

Mr. Fry.]

cannot point to railways which are being built for the development of the State and for that purpose alone. We know that the North Coast Railway was one that should be built, and we applauded its construction.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will give the hon. member a final warning. I hope that he will discuss the general administration of the railways. I have told him once before, and I tell him again finally, that railway construction must be dealt with on the Loan Estimates, in case the hon. member did not understand me.

Mr. FRY: I do not intend to continue my remarks any further. I can see the position, and I will retire. I am satisfied that I have got in what I wanted to say.

Mr. WEIR (*Maryborough*): I think that the attitude which the hon. member for Kurilpa has adopted in getting in what he wants to say is not the attitude which should be adopted by hon. members.

Mr. FRY: You all did it; and the Chairman allowed you to do it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has reflected on the Chair, and I ask him to withdraw that expression.

Mr. FRY: I withdraw it.

Mr. WEIR: I think the Secretary for Railways can very well be congratulated this year above all other years on the hopeless case which the Opposition members have made out after doing what they could to criticise the Railway Department decently. There is one thing which, in my opinion, makes the case which the Opposition have put up such a hopeless case—that is that the Railway Department is the biggest spending department in the State. The Opposition attacks have all been minor attacks. My conception of the attitude of an Opposition—particularly hon. members opposite, who profess to be commercial men—is that they should criticise the Government constructively as strongly as possible. The hon. member for Oxley has also pointed out what business men could do with the railways, but hon. members opposite have not made much of their opportunity of criticising.

Mr. KELSO: You were not in the House at the time.

Mr. WEIR: You drove me out; it was not my fault. (Laughter.) I thought that hon. members opposite would have assisted the Government to find out what was wrong with the department; but it is the same as it was last year—all they can do is to mention matters like the lighting of the Dalby platform. The Railway Department can stand criticism, and I believe that any constructive criticism will be welcomed by the Government. Some of the comparisons which have been made by hon. members opposite have been one-eyed. The leader of the Country party made comparisons between the Western Australian and Queensland railways. I interjected at the time that there is no comparison between the two. Anyone who knows anything about the administration of railways knows that there can be no basis of comparison between those two railway systems. We have the record in "Knibbs" of the train mileage in the different States, and, after all, the train mileage is the true basis of comparison. We find that the train mileage run in the

last year available for comparison purposes, 1921, was 10,750,000 in Queensland and 5,000,000 in Western Australia, although the actual mileage of lines opened for traffic in Western Australia is only, approximately, 1,500 below that of Queensland. In connection with the working traffic the goods and livestock carried in Queensland amounted to 3,750,000 tons, and in Western Australia to 2,750,000 tons. I think the first attempt at comparison should be in connection with the mileage we are running—what it is costing, and the tonnage we are hauling. We can look at the tonnage we are hauling over the lines and see whether there is a fair comparison between Queensland and other States in regard to the hauling of tonnage and the cost of running the lines. Here we are running more than twice the number of train miles but carrying only about one-third more tonnage. On that basis of comparison Queensland has not done too badly. Anybody can look in the Commissioner's report and find the list of lines which are not paying. What is in my mind at the moment more particularly is the long line that goes West to Quilpie and Cunnamulla. I think that in 1921-22 it showed a loss of £113,000, but the line that strikes me most forcibly is the line from Theebine to Nanango and Tarong, which in the same year made a loss of £32,000. This evening I heard the hon. member for Burnett castigating the Government in his usual style for not giving a better service on the Mundubberra line. What happens on that line to-day? The loss in the year 1921-22 was £27,000. I am not going to say that the Government are responsible for that and that they should increase fares and freights. There is only one logical way out of the position. Somebody has suggested closing down the railways which are not paying, and the only alternative is to increase fares and freights. But who will suggest that? The hon. member for Enoggera suggested an increase in fares and freights, but he did not have the support of his party—amongst themselves they were divided. One of the members of the Country party—the hon. member for Murilla—practically said he believed in cutting out fares and freights altogether. Hon. members opposite cannot make up their minds coherently for five minutes as to whether they want this party to close down the non-paying lines or increase fares and freights.

Mr. WALKER: He only advocated reducing the freight on necessities.

Mr. WEIR: I take it that in the Western country all things are necessities. I do not know anything going to the West that is not a necessity.

Mr. CLAYTON: What about beer?

Mr. WEIR: I do not want to enter into a discussion on prohibition, or I believe I might convert the hon. member for Wide Bay if he is sincere. Getting back to the railways, I am with the hon. member for Murilla in saying that we should look at this position more broadly, but I am not an extremist. I am a sane and sober man who wants to see where he is going. I do not want to run amok like the hon. member for Murilla, who wants free passage over the railways all over the State, at least until this new viewpoint is possible of realisation.

At all events, I started out to say that fair criticism is a thing which the Govern-

[*Mr. Fry.*]

ment welcome. I have watched the operations of the Railway Department pretty closely, and I have come to the conclusion that, if the heads of the department were imbued with the desire to make the railways the success we want them to be, the service would be better than it is. I know that today most of the suggestions for improved methods are coming from the rank and file. I know that it may be said, "What else would you expect, when they are in the majority?" They are in the majority. I admit, and on that basis one would expect most of the suggestions to come from them; but what I want to point out is that there are men who are responsible heads, and we are not getting the percentage of suggestions from them that something new or something better should be done that we are getting from the rank and file. That sounds as if most of the effort is coming from the rank and file, and I say that it is always coming from the rank and file. I want to go further and say that the heads generally are not doing a fair thing. I am not saying in any carping spirit that they are setting out not to do a fair thing or to do an unfair thing, but they are not imbued with a desire to do something big; something that will last; something that will be a monument to their service in the Railway Department. I say that definitely. When they see the necessity for considering the railway service as their service and institute new systems and methods which will make it better, then they will justify their occupancy of their positions. I do not say that without knowing something about it, and I want to take some things that are happening in this State as well as in every country in the world and draw the attention of hon. members to them. America is suffering more than any other country, and in the Commonwealth Queensland is probably suffering more than any other State.

Take the waste in water and coal. Any man who has stood in the Maryborough traffic yard will agree with me. Take any yard—Rockhampton, Warwick, Toowoomba, Maryborough, Townsville—in nine cases out of ten you will find the station built in the centre of the town and running both ways. Why I mention that is that, unfortunately, for many years there has never been a concrete system of showing firemen and engine-drivers the point at which they want to stop shovelling coal into the engine—no attempt to instruct them. I believe all Australians are out to do their best, and I believe that we in Queensland have perhaps the best running staff in the Commonwealth. I have worked on the railways, but I am not going to say that without other proof. Look at the result on paper in the statistics. Take any branch in the department. I am not going to say that the locomotive man is deserving of any more credit than the navy, but I am going to say that the locomotive man is entitled to just as much credit as any man in the service, because he is doing good work. Take the trains which travel between here and Maryborough. Take the number of days and the number of trains that are run. Ask any man who travels on our railways, and I think he will agree that he gets the best service in the whole system between the border and Rockhampton.

Mr. CLAYTON: No train has ever been late since I have been a member.

Mr. WEIR: Give the locomotive men decent engines and decent conditions and the results are a credit to the State.

Mr. KELSO: Is that an insinuation that they are not getting decent engines?

Mr. WEIR: No. The mail train is running good time, and therefore they must have good engines. The Government should institute a bureau to deal with these technical questions, and they should instruct the younger men that, when they are running down the station-yard and are going into the shed within half an hour or a quarter of an hour in some cases, it is wrong from a technical and economical point of view to keep an excessive fire and full head of steam. Tens of thousands of pounds are wasted in this way every year. I have been hammering away at these things for a long time. It is not a case of a voice crying in the wilderness, because I can see some of the things being done. I hope more will be done.

I wish now to deal with the criticism of the hon. member for Oxley. I was in Ipswich from 1912 to 1916 during the time that the piecework system or the bonus system was in vogue. I saw all that stuff tried on the men; and I want to warn this Committee that immediately they try the piecework or bonus system on the railway men at Ipswich they will stop work. I say advisedly that they will not tolerate it. I recollect distinctly the occasion when the boiler-makers said, "Have it on your own; we will not have it." That was their remark when an attempt was made to foist the bonus system on them. It would be wrong in principle to introduce such a system, because it is pernicious. I recollect going round the yards and conversing with the foreman at Ipswich, and looking at the work done under the piecework system and the day-labour system. I had an experience travelling around from East Ipswich in carriages built under the piecework system. They creaked so much that they resembled a brass band. Under that system the men turned out very shoddy work. Any system which affects the rolling-stock from the point of view of the health of the public and from the point of view of danger to the life of the public is grossly wrong. It would be wrong for any Government to foist piecework on these men.

I have been very much struck by the tone of hon. members opposite to-night. I recollect—it was before the last elections—hon. members opposite saying that the railways were overstaffed. To-night the hon. member for Burnett says, "Perish the thought!

Whoever said the railway men [9.30 p.m.] were going slow?" I recollect the hon. member for Oxley and the hon. member for Dalby saying that the Railway Department was shockingly overstaffed, and going on to try to prove their case.

Mr. BRAND: There has been deflation since that time.

Mr. WEIR: Nearly every deflated man has been put back again, showing conclusively that twelve months ago the deflations were not justified. The Government are very apt, as all Governments are, to listen to the howls of the "Courier," the "Daily Mail," and the Opposition. The Government have had an opportunity of realising what they have done, and they find that they were not justified in jeopardising the service and pandering to the

Mr. Weir.]

popular howl. They recognise that they were wrong. Hon. members opposite have decried the Government for not retrenching, and have told the Government that there were 3,000 men too many in the Railway Department. Last year the hon. member for Murilla stated that thousands of railway men employed in all parts of Queensland were only killing time. No one has said that to-night. They are not killing time. They killed the Opposition at the last election. I have always stated that the criticism of the railway men must be fair. I have always been constant in my defence of these men, because I knew perfectly well what they were doing. They are doing a fair day's work and getting good results.

I want to talk about the question of locomotives generally. I think the hon. member for Nundah referred to some old practice that has been in vogue in the railway service since years before I entered the railways in 1899. I remember in the history of the Railway Department men in the far West and the North having to leave their engines and go into the bush and gather horse manure to stop the leaky boilers. We are told by the hon. member for Nundah that that is happening now. It has always happened. It is one of the means adopted by the men to get to the end of their journey.

Mr. KELSO: I did not make any reference to it.

Mr. WEIR: I thought it was the hon. member. It was, I believe, the hon. member for Burnett who made the remark. I want to disabuse hon. members' minds of the idea that that is a new device. It has always been well known amongst locomotive men. They have to adopt the best means they can. What is more, in a big service like we have, with hundreds of locomotives in use, it has always been a case of the bad water that has had to be used. Take Isis Junction, for instance. Anyone who knows anything about the water at Isis Junction will bear me out that the gauge glass will show as much froth on the water as there is on a pint of beer. That shows conclusively that these men have a big struggle in carrying out their duties. There seems to be a belief existing that these things have only happened in recent years. They have always happened. While the men struggle along under these conditions they have to do the best possible.

Let me also deal with the "pooling system" as applied to locomotives. I have never been a 100 per cent. pooler. Many men have argued in favour of the pooling system. Although I have worked the sheets for years and years, I have always taken the view that the policy of tying an engine up cannot be justified. There was a day—in my time, too—when the men got off the engine, and that engine stopped until the men were required to go to work again. I believe that the engine can work longer than the man. That is the only way the best can be got out of an engine. There is, however, a limit to that. My argument is that three sets of men will do more justice to a locomotive in a year than eight or ten sets of men will do. Look at the oil consumption in the department to-day! Circulars are issued every week and notices appear in the weekly notices drawing the attention of the men to the excessive use of oil. That tells me that in the multifarious use of the

[Mr. Weir.

locomotives everybody's interest is nobody's interest. The interest of the men in the engine under those circumstances ceases when the men cease duty on it. I do not believe in the engine standing idle, but there is a limit even to that. To work an engine with not more than four sets of men would, in my opinion, be more economical, taking into consideration the life of an engine and the conditions of the men than with a larger set of men or keeping engines set apart for certain men. These remarks are entirely my own, and are based upon things that I have seen, and I have made them in the hope that they will do some good. We can all see something wrong, and I could get up and criticise for a week on little things that do not matter. The railway service is a standing monument, and it is up to the members of the Opposition to offer some constructive criticism and not criticism of a destructive nature.

I congratulate the Minister on the year's results, and particularly I do so because of the very poor case that has been made out by the hon. members opposite on a very big industry like the railways.

Mr. BRAND (*Burrum*): The hon. member for Maryborough can certainly be accused of consistency—consistency in accusing members of the Opposition at all times of not criticising the Government.

Mr. WEIR: Intelligently.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. member can do that too. Many hon. members on this side have been led to believe that the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat is somewhat in the nature of a Napoleon in railway finance, but in his speech to-night he has not offered that constructive criticism that he complains is not offered on these Estimates.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There has been abuse offered by some hon. members on that side, and there has also been some constructive advice.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. member for Oxley offered some fine thoughts and suggestions, which should be very helpful to the Minister.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I only wish that the speeches of the other hon. members were like his.

Mr. BRAND: I hope that the suggestions offered to the Minister will bear fruit, and that he will recognise that they were offered in the spirit of furthering the best interests of the railways and for no other purpose. I am one who recognises, in discussing the Estimates under review, that the policy of the Government always plays an important part in the administration. It has to be remembered, so far as the present Government are concerned, that they have exercised their right in that direction to the full. In fact, political influence has been rampant in the Railway Department. I would like to offer my congratulations to the Commissioner and his staff right down to the navy on the line as to the manner in which they have carried on the administration of the railway system in Queensland in spite of the fact that men have from time to time been jerry-mandered into the service over the heads of some of the officers for political purposes.

At 9.40 p.m.,

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

Mr. PEASE: What has happened to the appeal board?

Mr. BRAND: The appeal board does not often come off, as the hon. gentleman knows. The hon. member knows that there have been such instances as I have stated.

Mr. WEIR: You had better specify them; you cannot mention one case.

Mr. CLAYTON: Of course he can.

Mr. BRAND: I do not wish to mention any names, but the hon. member for Maryborough knows that there was a case quite recently at Bundaberg.

Mr. WEIR: Specify it.

Mr. BRAND: It has been stated by hon. members that we have a very efficient staff. If we are going to continue to have an efficient staff, we must recognise that we have to treat the employees decently. I should like to see our railway staff the best in the Commonwealth of Australia. I should like to see them made a model for all others to copy. To bring that about, I am of opinion that the Minister should give better conditions than he is giving to-day to those employed in the Railway Department.

I am not going to touch on the hours and conditions of some of our railway employees, but I think hon. members will agree with me that some of the housing conditions under which the Minister expects employees to live are most appalling. This applies particularly in the case of lengthsmen who are living in houses which may be truthfully described as hovels, and who are expected to bring up their families while living under those conditions.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Have you any idea what the present Government are spending as compared with what was expended by previous Governments? The previous Government were absolutely shocking in their want of attention to the needs of employees.

Mr. BRAND: There are small houses in which some of our best employees have to live containing only three rooms and a kitchen, and without a bathroom.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When cases are laid before the Commissioner, I find that he is very sympathetically inclined.

Mr. BRAND: I do not know about that. I have placed cases before the Commissioner, but not a bathroom has yet materialised. Take the conditions under which employees have to work in the sugar districts. The Workers' Accommodation Act provides for the employee on a sugar farm to be supplied with a suitable bathhouse. Yet the Secretary for Railways has hundreds of houses under his charge without a bathroom—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your Government erected the house.

Mr. BRAND: I sincerely trust that the Minister will take the matter into consideration, and that he will see that it is most essential for the lengthsmen to have bathrooms. By reason of the nature of their work, it is necessary for them to clean themselves, and they can only do so properly by having a decent bathroom.

I have listened to hon. members on both sides of the House speaking about excessive freights and fares. We have been told that the Railway Department are charging excessive freights. This I am prepared to admit,

but I am not one of those who say that freights should come down all round—not even to the country people. I believe that we should extend to the country people every assistance possible, but this should not be done if it is going to mean that railway employees must accept reduced wages. The hon. member for Rosewood said that the only way to make the railways pay would be by either charging higher freights or reducing wages. I sincerely trust that freights will not be reduced, if that will mean a reduction of wages. I agree that there are some things for which a lower freight should be provided. It is recognised that roads are necessary to assist the railways and to develop the country, so that greater production to provide freight for our railways will take place, and we must have up-to-date machinery for the construction of these roads. Only quite recently the shire council in my district endeavoured to get some machinery up from Brisbane for the purpose of carrying out more effective works on these roads. They brought one motor-truck which weighed 7 tons 16 cwt. from Brisbane, and they were charged by the department £46 12s. for that small truck. The Minister might well look into this matter, and see if it is not possible for these roadmaking appliances to be carried over the railways at a special rate, such as is paid on agricultural produce and other goods.

The matter of coal supplies for our railways has been touched on by some hon. members, and having a coalmining area in my electorate I wish to say something on this matter. I am not at all satisfied with the manner in which the Minister uses his power in the direction of obtaining supplies of coal for the different depôts.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As a matter of fact, I do not exercise the powers at all.

Mr. BRAND: I am of the opinion that the Minister does exercise his powers with regard to some of the coal supplied to some of the depôts.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The orders are placed by the Commissioner.

Mr. BRAND: I am very pleased to have that assurance. I believe that Government policy should play some part in this matter, but to-day we have the anomaly of coal being supplied to the Gympie depôt from Ipswich—a distance of something like 130 miles—when much superior coal can be obtained at the Burrum—a distance of only 70 miles. It is recognised by all that the Burrum is a much superior coal to the coal in the South. The private users of coal in the Gympie district draw their supplies from the Burrum. I submit that private enterprise has always recognised efficiency in connection with anything it requires. I am satisfied that Burrum coal is a much more efficient coal and a much cheaper coal to the people in Gympie than the coal drawn from the South, otherwise they would not use Burrum coal; they would get their coal from the South.

Mr. GLEDSON: So they do; they go to Bundamba.

Mr. BRAND: The Minister stated a while ago that he did not exercise his powers, and I would like to know why it is that he got coal from the Baralaba State coalmine—a distance of something like 200 miles—for the

Mr. Brand.]

Bundaberg depôt when coal could be obtained from the Howard area—a distance of only 3½ miles.

Mr. GLEDSON: You know that is not so.

Mr. BRAND: That has been so.

Mr. GLEDSON: They are not doing it now.

Mr. BRAND: Because Baralaba coal was proved to be not efficient.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You have got a comparison of the prices. The coal is mixed with Styx coal.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman knows that the comparison of prices does not come into the matter at all. He knows that it is a matter of policy to develop a State mine, and that he had to take the coal whether it suited his department or not. Engine-drivers and firemen in the Railway Department have interviewed the Minister time and again with regard to the Baralaba coal, imploring him to give them decent coal to work with. In replying to some of the deputations the hon. gentleman has stated that Baralaba coal is most efficient coal. We have had replies from the Enginemens' Association stating that from a practical point of view the Baralaba coal is not a suitable or payable coal to the Railway Department. I am going to read a letter, which was published, from the president and secretary of the Enginemens' Association in the Central Division.

Mr. GLEDSON: That was three years ago.

Mr. BRAND: It was in 1921. It is signed by Messrs. A. W. Smith and R. P. Macoun, and reads—

“Mr. Larcombe's statement can be accepted, as it is probably correct that he has not been advised to the contrary, but we can assure you that complaints have been and are still being repeatedly made to the heads of the Railway Department, particularly as to the broken-up condition in which this coal is being supplied to locomotives, its tendency to form a clinker, and its closing up the tubes at the end of the fire-box, resulting in the late running of trains. Then there are reports, etc., not to mention an excessive and unreasonable amount of work entailed on the firemen, and a lot of unparliamentary, though pardonable, language on its qualities, all in an attempt to prove its unsuitability generally for locomotive purposes in train working.”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not being used now. It is being mixed with Styx coal with most excellent results.

Mr. BRAND: It has been stated by the Minister in reply to deputations that it was his intention to mix the coal with Styx coal. It has actually happened that in the Central Division when the drivers have been compelled to use Baralaba coal they have not been able to get their engines along, and had to “pinch” some Blair Athol coal which was in other trucks. The Minister knows perfectly well that in the early part of this year a deputation from the Bundaberg Enginemens' Association placed before him the facts in regard to the working of that coal, which showed that the coal was a most unsuitable coal for railway purposes and was being used to the detriment of the Railway Department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You know you are wrong. You know the coal is being mixed.

[Mr. Brand.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman told them that the coal was splendid coal, but that in future he would mix it with Styx coal so that they would have a better class of coal.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: With good Styx coal—that is right.

At 9.51 p.m.,

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

Mr. BRAND: In the district which I represent the enginemens are clamouring for Burrum coal, which is recognised as the best locomotive coal in Queensland. The hon. gentleman knows that perfectly well, as he has had deputation after deputation waiting upon him on the matter. But for political reasons he seems to think that it is his duty as a Minister to see that the Burrum coalminers get as little work as possible from the Railway Department.

Mr. GLEDSON: You are incorrect. You should not say that.

Mr. BRAND: I can assure the hon. member for Ipswich that the coalminers of the Howard district recognise that, as is evident from the big vote I received on the coalfield at the last election.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do they think you would get it for them?

Mr. BRAND: There is another matter with regard to coal which I would like to bring before the Minister. I hope that the hon. gentleman will extend the concession of special freights to coal when the destination is to such a place as will prevent the importation of Newcastle coal. I think that it should be our duty as Queenslanders to see that our own coal is used for our own requirements. If it is possible to keep out Newcastle coal, the Railway Department should lend a hand by reducing freights so that our own coal can be used instead.

Mr. GLEDSON: The Railway Department does not use Newcastle coal.

Mr. BRAND: I do not say that the Railway Department uses Newcastle coal. To make myself clear to the hon. member, I would point out that quite a number of gas-works in Queensland procure their coal from Newcastle, yet we have a coal in the Burrum district which will produce gas, coke, and tar of good quality.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the hon. member is in order in dealing with the quality of the Burrum coal.

Mr. BRAND: I am only endeavouring to justify my contention that we should have cheaper freights in order to keep this trade within our State and keep out Newcastle coal. I hope the Minister will do all he can to help us.

I am going to condemn the method under which the department is using special trains in country districts. We know perfectly well that on Sundays in the city of Brisbane trains are run by the department and not by political bodies, but in the district which I represent, when the sugar-cane harvesting season comes along, the Australian Labour party seem to get a monopoly of running Sunday excursion trains. Throughout the lean season of the year—and particularly

has this been so this year—the department has run special trains to the seaside, to Pialba and Urangan, and I believe has made a very good profit out of it, but when the better times come along we find that the Australian Labour party have applied to the Minister for the trains for the whole of the suitable Sundays throughout the season and have a monopoly.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is an absolute fabrication.

Mr. BRAND: The Minister knows that they have every pay Sunday each month booked up. I want to be perfectly fair. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that the Australian Labour party have secured trains right throughout the season, and that he is not running trains during the crushing season.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They never applied to me. That is an absolute fabrication.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman's department will not be running trains during the present crushing season, when it would have been possible to make a decent profit. They have been handed over to a political body.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why did you not raise that matter departmentally?

Mr. BRAND: I would like to deal now with the attitude which the Minister has adopted in regard to siding accommodation at different centres in my electorate. We know that in the cities people who desire sidings have not to pay any added cost in the shape of freight for the right to use them; yet in my electorate people living in certain localities must not only make a contribution towards the erection of the sidings but they have also to pay 1s. a ton until the cost is wiped out, and then the siding becomes the property of the Railway Department, and not the property of the farmers.

Mr. SWAYNE: That is not fair.

[10 p.m.]

Mr. BRAND: It certainly is not, and I ask the Minister to release the farmers from the special royalty charges imposed with respect to many sidings in my electorate. Only quite recently I interviewed the hon. gentleman with regard to a certain siding on the Wallville line, and I received a reply in the following terms:—

"I am directed by the Hon. Minister to inform you that it has been approved to proceed with the work of providing this siding. The residents have agreed to share the cost of the siding equally with the department, and have also signified their willingness to undertake the necessary earthworks. A royalty charge of 1s. per ton, in addition to the freight, is to be collected on all goods forwarded from or received at the siding until the department has recovered the difference between the half cost of the siding and the value of the earthworks carried out by the residents."

I sincerely trust that in the coming year the Minister will make a name for himself and see that so far as the country residents are concerned they will not have to pay this added charge.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): I notice a very great change in the attitude of hon.

members opposite now as compared with the time when I first came into this Chamber. At one time it was almost a crime to talk of economy in the Railway Department, but now hon. members opposite approve of it, and take credit for the economy that has been effected. Praise should be due to the heads of the department; I am not going to give any credit to hon. members opposite. They have never shown any desire to encourage economy in any way whatever. I am not going to quote any figures. The figures that have been quoted are more than I can digest. I am sure, Mr. Kirwan, you are tired of hearing figures, and out of consideration for your feelings I will not quote any. Sufficient have been quoted by hon. members on both sides to show that the position of the railways is not altogether satisfactory and that a better position is required.

I am going to make some suggestions for improvement in the railways. One way—it is the only way, I think, in which we can make the railways pay—is to encourage cultivation along the existing lines.

Mr. W. COOPER: Why did you object to the compulsory cultivation clause in the Closer Settlement Bill last night?

Mr. CLAYTON: Because there are no markets.

Mr. DEACON: Last night the hon. member for Rosewood advocated compulsion for the farmer in connection with cultivation, and to-night he advocates encouraging the railway men to work. He should adopt my view, and encourage the farmer instead of applying compulsion to him. We could encourage the farmer by making it possible to cultivate the land within a certain distance of our railways. Beyond 12 miles of our main railway line cultivation ceases except in small isolated areas.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I cannot permit the hon. gentleman to discuss that aspect of the question.

Mr. DEACON: I want to show that the railway position is unsatisfactory, and that we can improve it by encouraging the farmer. We would then have a greater tonnage on our railways. That is the only way in which we can improve the railways. The only way in which we can bring more land under cultivation and thus increase our tonnage is by having feeders to our main lines. We have never given any attention to the construction of light tramlines in our agricultural districts.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! The hon. member must discuss that on the vote for railway construction.

Mr. DEACON: I am not going into details. I only want to say that is the only way we can hope to attract trade to the railways, and it is the only means by which the general position can be improved. I hope that it will be taken into consideration.

It has been suggested by some hon. members that we should build roads, and comparisons were made between roads and railways. I am sure that the hon. member who suggested the construction of roads did not take into consideration the cost of traction on the roads and the fact that the time of the farmer is worth something. It is worth something, too, so far as the railways are concerned, because the farmer is their best customer.

Mr. Deacon.]

It is upon the efforts of the farmer and all citizens that the prosperity of our railways depends. They should accordingly encourage all methods for saving the time of their customers.

Another matter which ought to be taken into consideration is the encouragement of industries which will provide traffic for the railways. I refer particularly to the wheat-milling trade. That trade is being killed at the present time. Every mill in the country that has not been shifted to Brisbane is contemplating doing so. That is not a good thing for the country or for the railways, which will then simply have to haul the raw material down to Brisbane. It also means that the development of the country will be restricted. It would be advantageous to the Government to grant a subsidy out of general revenue, so that the flour-milling industry can be continued in the country, and it could also be encouraged by a special rate. I know that the payment of the subsidy by the Railway Department is impossible, but the Treasurer might possibly consider it. Sooner or later something will have to be done in that direction, as we cannot allow the present state of affairs to continue. It means that we are concentrating all the industries in and around Brisbane to the detriment of the development of the country. Under those conditions we can never expect the railways to pay.

Before I resume my seat I wish to congratulate the heads of the Railway Department. I refer to the working heads, and not to the political heads. I am sure that the Minister does his best, but he has to work under great difficulties. The Minister has a lot of supporters behind him who are not in sympathy with his efforts to improve the working of the railways. I realise that Ministers have responsible positions, with work to do—

Mr. W. COOPER: And they do it.

Mr. DEACON: And that they have behind them men who are not interested in the work of the Government. I am quite satisfied that, if Ministers came from this side of the House, they would be altogether different and would have good men behind them. I congratulate the Commissioner for Railways upon the work he has done. I hope that, not only the Minister but also the employees in the Railway Department, will see that we must have a better state of affairs. It will be mainly through their efforts that this will be brought about. I hope that next year we shall see a much greater improvement upon the present position.

At 10.13 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: By agreement, and under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307, I shall now leave the chair and make my report to the House.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

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

PAPER.

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

Report of the Manager, State Advances Corporation (Workers' Dwellings Branch), for the year ended 30th June, 1923.

The House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

[Mr. Deacon.