

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 1923

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THURSDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER, 1923.

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

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACTS
AMENDMENT BILL.

ASSENT.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt from His Excellency the Governor of a message conveying His Excellency's assent to this Bill.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—SIXTH ALLOTTED DAY.

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

RAILWAYS—GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Question stated—"That £106,803 be granted for 'Railways—General Establishment'"—

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I notice that on page 97 of the Estimates the salary of the General Manager at Brisbane has been increased from £540 to £750. I would like to ascertain what the reason is for such a very big increase.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is really not an increase. The General Manager has been in an acting position for some years, and he has now been appointed to the position and is being paid the minimum salary for his classification.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I judge from what the Minister says that he has been underpaid in the past, and now the department are going to make good in that regard.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He has proved himself to be satisfactory.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I notice, too, on page 98, that the salary of the General Manager at Toowoomba has been increased from £650 to £700.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: All these officers are being placed on the minimum salary for their classification. They have been in acting positions, and their services having proved satisfactory, they have now been permanently appointed to the positions.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It seems to me that these men have not had a fair deal from the Government. I have one other question in connection with the Works Manager and the Assistant Works Manager at Ipswich. According to page 99 of the Estimates, in 1922-23 the amount received by these two officers together was £1,060, while for 1923-24 the amount set down is £1,400. Am I to presume that the same condition of things applies there?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, they are placed on the minimum of their classification.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Government apparently have not been doing the right thing by some of these people, and now they are waking up to their responsibility in that regard. If that is the explanation, it seems to be an extraordinary thing that so far these officers have been carrying out duties

for which they have not been properly paid. I think that no member of Parliament should hesitate to criticise the department, from the Minister downwards—and I shall criticise the department—apart from the fact that sometimes the Minister refuses to receive deputations.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, no!

HON. W. H. BARNES: Then my experience was a singular one. First of all, I was turned down.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I was at first, but subsequently on making a fresh appeal the hon. gentleman certainly did receive a deputation. Apart from that I have always received the greatest courtesy from the Minister, from the Commissioner, and from the various officers of the department. There has been a disposition shown to receive members of Parliament who have had reasonable requests to make, and to try and meet them if the officials can possibly do so.

MR. COLLINS: Should not members of Parliament expect courtesy from public officers?

HON. W. H. BARNES: Of course they should, and I think they invariably get it. If they did not get it, they would soon hear about it. It is certain that, if hon. members did not receive the courtesy to which their position entitles them, it would soon be made known.

MR. COLLINS: By showing respect to members of Parliament they are showing respect to the people who send them here.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member for Bowen is usually such a genial man, that I wonder what he had for lunch to-day; he must have had something that was not satisfactory. (Laughter.) There is no question that, while the growth of traffic in some directions has been very great, the growth of expenditure has been particularly great. In regard to the net return on the money invested, the Minister yesterday took exception to the criticisms which were levelled against his department from this side of the Chamber.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said there had been an improvement during the last two years.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have figures here which show that there has been an improvement, but I want to look at the Railway Department from the business side. Hon. members opposite have said that it does not matter whether the railways pay or not—that has been practically the gist of their argument. From the State point of view and irrespective of politics, we have to get down to the fact that if every industry and every undertaking in the State ceases to pay interest upon the money invested, then we are going to run up against a dead end.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will explain that matter when I reply.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If the hon. gentleman has a magic wand by which he can turn deficiencies into surpluses, he is a most valuable member of the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are misinterpreting our speeches, that is all.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Whether it be the Railway Department or any other depart-

ment, you cannot continue year after year making a loss without having a day of reckoning in the end. I put it to the Minister whether his business knowledge does not lead him to realise that there must be a day of reckoning if we do not pay our way.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your Government did not pay their way. They lost £8,000,000 on the railways.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman gets very peppery when his department is criticised. He says that over a period of many years the previous Government lost £8,000,000 on the railways. Let me remind him that over a period of about seven years his Government have lost about £10,000,000. I am going to quote some figures which will make the hon. gentleman realise his position.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I shall quote some figures myself, and I shall make you blush.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Looking at it from a business point of view, can we help wondering what will happen if we go on in this way, remembering that during the term of this Government the deficit on the railways amounts to nearly £10,000,000. I know that the Minister, by way of interjection, asked, "Do you want the freights to go up?" Last night hon. members on this side were asked what they would do, but I would remind the hon. gentleman that it is time for the doctor to prescribe when he is called in. Our duty is not to throw bouquets at the other side.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You always throw bricks.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Very likely that is according to the deserts of the hon. gentleman.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: According to the deserts of the ex-Treasurer.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The fact remains that we have got into a position in which the railways and other State enterprises are losing money year after year, and, although it is not my duty to say what the remedy should be, nevertheless I believe that in the interests of Queensland and if we are to have sound management of the State's affairs, at least a Commission should be appointed to inquire into the administration of the railways and discover if there is any means by which there can be an adjustment of this continual discrepancy. It is most essential that it should be done. I want to quote from the Auditor-General's report for the financial year 1921-22 to show how losses may continually creep in in the management of the Railway Department. I have no objection whatever to the department's buying stores and supplying them to men engaged in railway construction work, but I take strong exception to its engaging in undertakings which mean a loss, even in the interests of men who are receiving fair wages. We are asked to point out where the losses take place. On page 81 of the report I have mentioned the Auditor-General makes this significant remark—

"There were eleven stores operating during the year, five of which had not been in operation three months prior to the 30th June, consequently balance-sheets have not been made out."

Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

Then he goes on to show that the losses on some of the stores were as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Townsville-Cardwell	131	3	9
Enoggera-Terror's Creek	928	4	7
Mackay-Proserpine	526	13	9
Malbon-Sulheiman Creek	604	9	0
Blackall-Windorah	630	1	4
Merinda-Bowen Coalfields	1,179	3	2
Innisfail-Tully River	155	14	1

Allowing for certain credits from other stores, the Auditor-General shows that the net debit balance at that date was £3,000. Not a very big sum, I admit; but I would ask, if it be necessary in the interests of the workers to run these stores, is it not right that they should pay for themselves?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They did pay during the last financial year.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We are handicapped by not having the latest reports, and we can only criticise on the basis of the figures we have. It is evident that in connection with the management of the railways the Government have not been content to go along lines which were prudent. They have gone along imprudent lines with disastrous results. I tackled the Minister by way of interjection when he was moving this vote. He went back a year or two to show that certain things had happened during that time, and said that conditions were now very much better. The hon. member for Herbert said that during the year 1914-15 the railways showed a return of £4 0s. 8d. per cent. The Minister also made reference to certain things that had taken place. I pointed out that the year 1914-15 was the only year so far as I could remember in which there had been a surplus after providing for interest and working expenses.

The Minister took a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that last year was better than the previous year. I am prepared to admit that it was. But let us hark back and see what the position is. I find on consulting the Auditor-General's report for the financial year 1921-22 that in 1912-13 the railways showed a deficit of £33,008, in 1913-14 a deficit of £32,745, and in 1914-15 a surplus of £48,650. It is very significant that, when a Labour Government—a Socialistic Government—took a hand in the business, immediately there were deficiencies.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That was the year in which war broke out. The same thing applied in the other States. You know it was due to war conditions.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman knows that there is no comparison between the tremendous loss made here and the losses made in the other States. I know the argument is used that we have a greater mileage of railways. I admit that, but we must not forget that the cost of building our lines was much less in proportion than the cost of building the lines in New South Wales and the other States where they have a wider gauge.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have a smaller area and a bigger population.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The other States, with the exception of New South Wales and Victoria, have not a larger population than Queensland. In Queensland the population is about 800,000, in New South Wales a little more than 2,000,000, and in Victoria about 1,600,000, but in the other States the

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.

population is smaller than that of Queensland. The fact remains that the other States have been able to keep more closely to business requirements in running the railways than we have.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: By increasing fares and freights.

HON. W. H. BARNES: What is the use of the hon. gentleman trotting that out?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is a fact.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We know that in some instances the fares and freights in the other States are greater than in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The increase has been less in Queensland than in any other State.

Mr. ROBERTS: The Government raised the freights four times.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The percentage increase in Queensland is less than in any other part of Australia.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman has always claimed that in connection with the cattle industry the Government have reduced the freights, and some reference was made to the concession granted to Mount Morgan. I want to point out that previous Governments have assisted Mount Morgan by suspending payments for a certain period.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a different thing.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Previous Governments have reduced the freights in connection with live stock. The hon. gentleman will remember that when his party came into power they objected to the low rate ruling for the carriage of live stock.

Mr. ROBERTS: They said it was not profitable.

Mr. HYNES: A previous Government passed the Railway Guarantee Act, which penalised the settlers.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We know that wherever the Government could raise freights they raised them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am prepared to admit that during drought periods the Government have carried a certain class of goods at a fair rate, but previous Governments did exactly the same. They met the people just as liberally as they are being met to-day.

I have been sidetracked somewhat, but let us just look at the position. The deficits on the railways since the present Government assumed office have been—

	£
1916-17	737,338
1917-18	1,023,903
1918-19	1,421,328
1919-20	1,229,579
1920-21	1,739,475
1921-22	1,743,370

As a matter of fact, the Government only had £344,000 last year after paying working expenses to meet the interest bill for the year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Some years your Government did not even do that.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The figures in the report of the Auditor-General are an absolute negation of the hon. gentleman's

statement. In 1913-14 there was a deficit of £32,745, but in 1914-15 there was a surplus of £43,651.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Go back a bit further.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I will go back and take the hon. gentleman's figures as he gave them to this House. He stated that the previous Administration showed a deficit of £3,000,000 over the whole period of railway establishment until the Denham Government went out of office in 1915.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do you say that the post-war problems have not affected the position?

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is an old stock argument that the hon. gentleman and other hon. members on his side of the Chamber are constantly trotting out. There is just one answer to the whole business, and that is the Government are not a set of business men and do not know how to run a business concern.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will give you the results of your business management.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Yes, but I do not think that the hon. gentleman should get so angry as he does.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is just a superabundance of energy. You do not understand my psychology.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not understand the hon. member's psychology or any other of his eulogies, as they are very difficult to understand.

Mr. KELSO: He must have been reading Coué lately.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Auditor-General says that the returns for the last five years on the capital invested in the railways have been—

	Per cent.	
	£	s. d.
1917-18	1	9 7
1918-19	0	13 9
1919-20	1	7 11
1920-21	0	9 9
1921-22	0	14 2½

The return for the 1914-15 period was £4 0s. 8d., the result of business management. No doubt the Government have succeeded in one way, and that is in getting the State into a financial hole so far as the railways are concerned. That is the position that exists to-day, and it has been brought about by the absolute mismanagement of the Government.

Mr. PEASE: Have you studied the balance-sheets of any big trading concerns since the war?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have not had the pleasure of reading the hon. member's.

Mr. PEASE: I will show it afterwards both before and after the war.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would like to peruse it. The Government are spending borrowed money on the railways, and in this respect I want to refer to pages 213 and 219 of the report of the Auditor-General. I quite understand that borrowed money is in the main used for purposes such as building railway lines, etc. I want to know how much loan money has been spent in the construction of rolling-stock. On page 213 of the report of the Auditor-General it is stated that £13,164 came out of loan funds for this

purpose. Then, on another page of the report there are indications of how money has been spent in that regard.

Take, if you will, the tarred paving platform at Bundaberg. It is only a small amount—£166 3s. 5d. My point is that whatever branch of the railway service you look at in connection with the work performed, it will be found that very little money has been spent from revenue wherever the Government could sidetrack and use loan money. I admit that in connection with schools a good deal of loan money has been spent, but all Governments have tried, as far as possible, to minimise that. It seems to me that generally the Minister in managing his department has tried to work in here and there things which should not have been put in.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We spent over a million last year.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I know that the Minister will spend it if he has the chance. I read with very great interest the previous report of the Commissioner. He makes reference in that report to certain kinds of locomotion where the traffic is not very heavy, and I agree with him in his ideas. On this point I should like the Minister to give the House some information. I understood from what the Minister said yesterday afternoon that he had in view some other kind of locomotion that will be less expensive to run than the present cars, and which will be put into operation on lines with a small amount of traffic.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are experimenting with that purpose in view.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am interested in a big question with regard to the Belmont tramway, and any assistance the Minister may give will be welcome. I should like to know if he is prepared to help in this direction?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I hope to do so. We are experimenting with that object.

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is another matter I wish to bring up. In connection with the building of railways I believe I am right in saying that somewhere in the locality of Mackay a railway line was built and the people concerned found the money for the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will have to refer to that on the Loan Estimates.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I was hoping that, with your permission, Mr. Kirwan, I should be able to squeeze it in. As you do not desire it, I will merely say that I had in view the return made by the Belmont tramway, and that the Minister was very sympathetic. I should be very delighted if he will furnish the information I previously asked for.

It seems to me that the railway from Brisbane to Cleveland is going to assist to fill up the State so far as the population is concerned—the other must come. I hope that the Minister will see his way clear to make some suggestion which will help that most important district. Although we differ widely in politics, I hope to have the pleasure of showing the hon. gentleman through the Redland Bay district with a view to the construction of the Redland Bay Railway, which has been recommended by the Public Works Commission.

Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): I am getting tired of listening to the carping criticism of the Opposition against the railway administration of the Government, and the perpetual whining about the loss on the Queensland railways. Queensland is a State of very large distances. We have the largest mileage of railway of any State in the Commonwealth, and naturally the cost of running our railways is greater than it is in States which have a larger population and a smaller mileage of railways.

One would think, judging by the remarks of members opposite, that the railways in the other States were paying, but it is rather a significant fact that the railways in the Tory-governed States are showing deficits also. A person does not need to be a genius like Karl Marx to conceive a method of making the railways pay. It is an easy

[4 p.m.] thing to make the railways pay by simply increasing the freights and fares, but such a policy would retard land settlement, and therefore does not commend itself to this Government. In the whine of the hon. member for Murilla last night, he gave the Committee to understand that, owing to the maladministration of the railways, the people of Queensland were drifting into the cities. That is not so. There is a tendency in Queensland, the same as in the other States, for the population to drift towards the cities; but the drift is not so great in Queensland under a Labour Administration as it is in the five Tory-governed States of the Commonwealth to-day. I do not want hon. members opposite to accept my unsupported testimony for that statement. I have here an extract taken from the report of the Commonwealth Statistician, which shows that on 31st December, 1921, the percentage of the population in the capital of Victoria—which has never had what the hon. member calls a socialistic Government—was 51.37 per cent. In Queensland, under a socialistic Government, the percentage of the population in the metropolis is only 28.27 per cent.

Mr. MORGAN: They have only one port in Victoria, and we have six or seven.

Mr. HYNES: That completely upsets the argument that the Labour Government of Queensland have not fostered the primary and secondary industries of the State by giving them a decent spin in the matter of railway freights.

Mr. MORGAN: We have virtually three separate States in Queensland.

Mr. HYNES: The hon. member for Murilla says I have chosen the one State that supports my argument.

Mr. MORGAN: I did not. What about Rockhampton and Townsville?

Mr. HYNES: The population of Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, is 925,400, and the percentage of the population of New South Wales at present living in Sydney, under a Tory Government, is 43.55 per cent. Now take South Australia, another Tory-governed State. The percentage of the population of South Australia living in Adelaide, the capital of the State, is 51.64 per cent.

Mr. MORGAN: There is only one port there, whilst we have six or seven.

Mr. HYNES: The percentage of the population of Tasmania living in Hobart, the capital of the State, is 24.63 per cent. Our Government, by fostering rural industries

[*Mr. Hynes.*

and by showing sympathetic treatment towards the man on the land, are inducing closer settlement, and the result is shown in the figures that I have just quoted.

Mr. MORGAN: There are three capital towns in Queensland.

Mr. HYNES: Something was said during the debate about the increase in freights in the various States, and the hon. member for Wynnun endeavoured to make some capital out of an argument he was adducing about the increase in freights in Queensland being comparatively higher, and has attempted to make us believe that the Labour party were not sympathetic towards the man on the land. According to the Railway Commissioner's report for 1922, which is the last available, there has been an increase in freights in all the States of Australia since 1915. In New South Wales there was an increase of 65 per cent. in fares and an increase of 52 per cent. in rates. In South Australia, which is not under a socialistic Government, the increase in freights has been 44 per cent. In Victoria, under a Tory Administration, the increase in fares has been 42 per cent., and the increase in freights 43 per cent. In Western Australia, also under a Tory Government, the increase in fares has been 30 per cent., and the increase in freights 29 per cent. In Queensland, under a socialistic Government, as the hon. member calls it, the increase in fares since 1915 has only been 17 per cent., and the increase in freights only amounts to 19 per cent. That proves conclusively that the present Administration in Queensland are doing their utmost to encourage settlement on the land. They are the true friends of the farmers and of the people who are functioning in the primary and secondary industries of this great State.

Mr. CORSER: The increase in rates in some cases is 400 per cent.

Mr. HYNES: This is a solo, and the hon. member will have an opportunity when I sit down. The increase in wages secured by the railway employees in Queensland is much higher than the increase in the other States of the Commonwealth. In Queensland the average increase since 1915 is £4 18s. 4d., as compared with £4 11s. 6d. in New South Wales. The average weekly wage paid to the employees in Queensland is much higher than it is in the other States. Notwithstanding this, the present Administration have shown that they are handling the railways more capably than the railways in the Southern States are handled, and they are giving to the primary producers—the agriculturists and men opening up the country in the remote parts of the State—more sympathetic treatment than they are receiving in the Tory-governed States at the present time.

I desire to make some reference to a matter which concerns me and my own electorate, and I hope hon. members will not accuse me of unduly working the parish pump. We have been advocating the construction of a new railway goods shed in Townsville for the purpose of enabling goods to be more economically handled than they are at the present time. Owing to the restricted facilities in Townsville for the handling of goods, it costs twice as much to handle goods in Townsville as it does in Rockhampton. Hon. members on this side of the House who represent important Northern constituencies recently waited on Mr. Crowther, General Manager of the North Queensland railways, with a view to securing an improvement in the

loading facilities at Townsville by the construction of a new goods shed. This is necessary for the economical handling of goods in Townsville. It is not right that it should cost twice as much to handle goods in Townsville as it does to handle goods in Rockhampton. The Administration is not at fault. The whole trouble is that we have not had sufficient money in the present year to go on with these necessary improvements, and the blame for that can be laid at the door of the political friends of hon. members opposite, who were instrumental in sending to the other side of the world that famous delegation which succeeded in restricting the amount of loan money that we could secure.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member cannot discuss that matter on this vote. He should discuss it on the Loan Estimates. The expenditure in question comes out of the Loan Fund.

Mr. HYNES: In connection with the handling of the goods by the Railway Department at Townsville a deputation waited upon the General Manager for the Northern Division on 6th July last, and his reply is worthy of mention here. We stated that, in order to secure a reduction of cost in the handling of goods in Townsville, it was very necessary to have a new goods shed. This is what Mr. Crowther said in reply to the deputation—

“Mr. Crowther, in reply, stated that since he had been in charge of the Railway Department in Townsville the question of the cost of handling goods in the Townsville goods shed has had his attention. At the present time the cost was higher in Townsville than at any other goods shed in the State, and the Commissioner for Railways had asked him to explain the reasons. The principal reason, as he had explained to the Commissioner, was the unsuitability of the present goods shed. It is an old shed which was built nearly forty years ago, when the traffic was very small and when the station was in a different position to the present one. There is only one railway road into it, which causes great delays both in the loading of goods and in the clearing of the lorries bringing goods. Quite recently the Merchants' Association in Townsville had complained to him of the delays to their lorries in sending in goods to the goods sheds, and had urged the need of some improved facilities at Townsville. He very carefully considered the matter and had drawn up a scheme for a new goods shed to be placed at the Jetty line fronting Perkins street. This would necessitate the connection by road from the city. Many years ago there was an agitation in Townsville for the building of a bridge across Ross Creek from Stanley street, to give a direct road from the jetty, especially as the present Victoria Bridge had been condemned. He took the opportunity when being called to Brisbane to attend a conference in connection with Northern goods traffic to bring with him a plan showing what he proposed should be done to meet the case, and yesterday he had a conference with the Commissioner and submitted to him a plan showing a goods shed situated on the Jetty line opposite Perkins street at the 67 chains siding. This goods shed, with a modern shed should then provide for the

easier handling of all goods, and would also provide for a vehicular bridge across the creek at Stanley street. He told the Commissioner that by the removing of the goods shed it would enable him to improve facilities in the Townsville yard, and it was intended to run the Ingham line, which will be the line to Cairns in a very short time, straight from the station along the fence, instead of it running through the middle of the workshop, as at present, where it is a danger to the workmen, and it would be most convenient to the department in the working of the North Coast trains. He also pointed out that it would also give him a chance to extend the platform for mail trains, which could not now be done, owing to the position of the goods shed. He further informed the Commissioner that the City Council of Townsville would, he thought, be favourably disposed to the scheme, because of the advantages such a road would give in connecting Ross Island with the city. The Commissioner instructed him to give an estimate of the cost and furnish full particulars so that the matter could be gone into, and this he intended to do on his return to Townsville.

“Personally, Mr. Crowther is convinced that the time has arrived when a new goods shed is necessary, which will be a great advantage when the North Coast line is completed. There are many advantages to be derived by placing the shed on the line to the jetty, which is the line to the port, where goods sheds should be situated. It would also get rid of a very unsightly corner in the city.”

We contend that it is not fair that the people in the North should have to pay more for the handling of goods than what is paid in the South.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope that I made myself clear to the hon. member. The building of a goods shed will possibly be an item which will be paid for out of the Loan Fund, and the hon. member must discuss the matter on the Loan Estimates.

Mr. HYNES: I am not referring to the actual spending of loan money, but to the need of facilities to enable the railways to be worked more economically, which will prevent deficits.

Mr. FRY: I got it in the neck last night.

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out to the hon. member for Townsville that the money for a goods shed will come out of the Loan Fund, and therefore he cannot discuss the matter on this vote. The hon. member can raise the whole question on the Loan Estimates.

Mr. HYNES: It relates to the working of the railways and the matter of deficits. In the North we have trains running to the north-western portions of the State which are practically empty on many occasions. The slump in the metalliferous mining industry is responsible for that position. This Administration is not responsible for it. I would remind hon. members that, if the Denham Administration had accepted the offer of Sir John Forrest to build a railway from Camooweal, the whole of the Barklay Tableland would, in my opinion, have been settled at the present time.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! May I explain to the hon. member that he cannot deal with

Mr. Hynes.]

anything in the way of railway construction on the Administration Vote. He must deal with it on the Loan Estimates.

Mr. HYNES: I was endeavouring to show that the railways would pay better if previous Administrations had given more attention to railway matters in connection with providing facilities for people who are functioning in our primary industries and who are settled in the remote parts of the State, and also for those engaged in our agricultural industries.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): We all recognise that this is one of the most important departments we have to deal with. In fact, coupled with the Department of Public Lands, I suppose you can say it is the most important. I often think that to get a true conception of the whole position this department should be discussed along with the Departments of Public Lands and Agriculture, seeing that they are so inextricably mixed together. However, taking this department as far as possible on its own, there has been a very acute discussion. Members of the Opposition have naturally shown what the real position is, and have criticised the administration of the Government severely. Government supporters, on the other hand, have tried to make out the best case they can; but I cannot help thinking that any unbiased reader of the report of the debate will say that the Opposition have had all the best of the argument. You cannot get over the fact that, whereas this big public utility was paying its way when the present Administration took office, it is now going behind at the rate of over £1,500,000 per annum on the average. Let us take the last three years. In 1920-21 there was a loss in round figures of £1,700,000, the next year a loss of £1,700,000, and the last year for which we have the figures there was a loss of £1,400,000, making an average loss of over £1,500,000 per annum. The hon. member for Wynnum pointed out that we cannot keep piling up losses in all our public departments. I might casually remark that the same state of things prevail in regard to State enterprises. We cannot go on piling up loss after loss year by year without finding ourselves at a dead end. I think we are only doing our duty when we probe, as far as possible, into the causes which have brought about this result. Some hon. members have said that the railway freights are too high, others that they are too low, also that wages are too high. I do not think that the position is attributable to these factors; at any rate, if it is due to that, it is only to a small extent. I think myself that this peculiar position is due to the policy of the Government as a whole—that it is due to their discouragement of land settlement and to their insistence on perpetual lease in preference to freehold tenure.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member is not going to discuss land settlement.

Mr. SWAYNE: I am not, but I would like to draw attention to the following lines in the last report of the Commissioner for Railways that we have, and I think, Mr. Kirwan, you will see that in order to discuss this matter intelligently, we must cursorily, at any rate, touch on these matters. On page 11 of his report for 1921-1922, the Commissioner says—

“We cannot look to the railways paying working expenses and full interest on

[*Mr. Hynes.*

capital until there is a very substantial increase in the volume of business handled.”

Again he says—

“Fully-loaded trains throughout the State, however, can only be secured by a substantial increase in tonnage.”

I would like to say that you cannot bring about a rectification of the position only by increasing fares and freights; you can increase freight earnings by encouraging the utilisation of those areas of land which are adjacent to our railways.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Permit me to point out to the hon. member that the administration of this vote has nothing to do with land settlement. When the Estimates of the Department of Public Lands are before the Committee, he will be able to point out how the policy of the Government interferes with the freight on the railways. I think the hon. member himself will admit that this vote has nothing to do with land settlement.

Mr. SWAYNE: I quite recognise the force of your argument, Mr. Kirwan, but the trouble is that when we get to the Lands Estimates and start to discuss them in their bearing on the railways, we shall be ruled out of order because they do not concern the Railway Department. As I have already said, the interests of the two departments are interwoven.

The CHAIRMAN: I promise the hon. member that if he adopts that line of argument, I shall not prevent him from pursuing it.

Mr. SWAYNE: At any rate, I would point out that possibly—even probably—the cause of these continual losses on the railways is to be found in the fact that between the end of 1914 and the end of 1921 the total area of land occupied in Queensland decreased from 358,331,163 acres to 342,454,167 acres, a decrease of 4 per cent., although during that period there was an increase of 14 per cent. in the population. The total area of land under cultivation in Queensland decreased from—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has been long enough in this House to know what a ruling of the Chair means. If he offends again, I shall ask him to resume his seat. He will be quite at liberty to discuss land settlement and freehold tenure, and all the rest of it, on the Estimates of the Department of Public Lands, but certainly not on the vote for the Chief Office of the Railway Department.

Mr. SWAYNE: I do not intend to do that. I desire to touch upon it as bearing on this big annual loss of over £1,500,000 on the railways, and all I can say is that there has been a decrease in land settlement, which I believe has a bearing on the losses of the Railway Department. The hon. member who just resumed his seat talked about hon. members on this side of the House whining about the railway deficit, and being exercised in their minds because of it. Is it any wonder that they should be exercised in their minds to a certain extent, when they see the manner in which the department is going to the bad year after year? The hon. member went out of his way to find various reasons for the position. Amongst others, he seemed to think that possibly the fact that a greater proportion of the population of New South Wales and Victoria is in

Sydney and Melbourne, respectively, than that of Queensland which is to be found in Brisbane had something to do with it. I do not think there was very much in his argument, but, at any rate, I would like to point out to the Minister that if Queensland is fortunate in that respect, her position is entirely due to the wise policy of previous Administrations, which hon. members opposite call the old Tory Governments. They were the Governments which established the seaport towns of Townsville and Rockhampton, each of which serves a large district at the back, so that the produce of those districts need not go through Brisbane, as the only port in the State. That means that we are in a fortunate position—to which the hon. member referred—as compared with other States, but, unfortunately, although previous Governments gave us such a fine foundation on which to build, and avoided the evil which the hon. member dwelt upon, ever since the Administration whom he supports have been in power we have been going back in that regard, and are gradually drifting into the state which he deprecates or deprecates in Victoria and New South Wales. I have figures here showing that in spite of the foresight of the Governments of the past, there has been an increasing drift to the large towns under Labour Administration. Our statistics show that, whereas in 1911 there were only 141,565 persons in the cities, 90,530 in the towns, and 363,192 in the shires, in 1921 those figures had increased to 214,000 in the cities, 125,000 in the towns, and 425,000 only in the shires. For the purposes of comparison, let us look at those figures on a percentage basis. In that period of ten years the population of the cities increased by 51 per cent., that of the towns by 38 per cent., and that of the shires by only 15 per cent. If what the hon. member indicated be a virtue, then it most certainly is lacking under this Administration.

Hon. gentlemen opposite are very prone to make comparisons between the railway systems in this and other States in order to demonstrate the success of the system in Queensland. I have figures here in regard to South Australia, from which I find that Queensland has an area of 670,000 square miles and a population of 800,000, whilst South Australia has an area of 380,070 square miles and a population of 502,000. Moreover, Queensland is infinitely richer in some respects than South Australia, because she has 164,000 square miles of land where the rainfall is over 30 inches a year, whereas South Australia has nothing of the kind. I find that South Australian railways returned to the consolidated revenue £760,000, equal to an interest on the capital expended of £3 15s., whereas in Queensland the return was only £344,000, equal to a return on capital of only £1 7s. 1d. It cannot be said that the difference in the positions of the two States depends upon a difference in wages, because a comparison of the average earnings of the manual workers in the two States—I think you can take the figures as indicating the rates on the railways as well—shows that there is very little to choose between the two.

I find that the worker in South Australia earns £166, whereas in Queensland he only earns £161. Those figures show that apparently the wages in South Australia compare favourably with the wages paid in Queensland, and at the same time South Australia

is paying £3 15s. per cent. on the money invested in the railways, and [4.30 p.m.] Queensland is only paying £.

4s. 1d. per cent. As hon. members opposite are very fond of making comparisons with other States, I thought it was just as well to bring this matter up. I know that the leader of the Country party has made a comparison between our system and the system in New South Wales to the disadvantage of Queensland. South Australia does not charge higher freights than Queensland. I do not wish to go into that matter because the leader of the Opposition has made a full comparison of the freights paid throughout Australia. It will be found on reading those figures that Queensland does not charge less than the other States, but more. I find in connection with goods carrying heavy freight charges that in Queensland the charge per 100 miles is 89s. 4d., and in South Australia it is only 77s. 3d. For 200 miles and 300 miles somewhat the same ratio obtains. When I come to the low freight charges I find that for 100 miles Queensland charges 10s. 2d., and South Australia only charges 8s. For 300 miles I find that Queensland charges 30s. 3d., and South Australia 21s. 1d. There is something wrong when Queensland is at such a disadvantage.

One of the factors that bear on this situation is the heavy taxation. The discouragement to enterprises of all kinds, the discouragement of primary production which results in the railways not obtaining the freight that they would otherwise carry, and the discouragement of secondary industries, are all factors bearing on this matter. We have been able to show that the increase in the number of factories in Queensland does not compare favourably with the increase in other States. All those factors are largely tending to make the position of our railways unsatisfactory. I believe that the Commissioner is doing everything he can to make the railways pay. I do not think that any other man in his position could do more than he is doing. He points out in his report that he has reduced the cost of the train mile. I know from my own observations that he has largely increased the engine loads. That is a step in the direction of keeping down expenses. On the other hand I would like to point out that there is a set-off, so to speak, on that saving of expenses to the disadvantage of country residents, who are being deprived of the railway advantages that they have had in the past. I know that the Commissioner cannot help it; he has to do his best. The curtailment of those advantages to people living in the outside districts partly accounts for the increase in the train loads.

Another factor that year by year is increasing in its bearing upon the general position of the revenue obtained from the department is in connection with the high capitalisation of our railways. Fully one-fifth of the cost of construction is being wasted under the present system. Meaning that if a road costs £10,000 per mile to build instead of £8,000 and the money is costing 5 per cent., that railway has to earn £100 per annum more to pay interest. I cannot deal with loan expenditure here, but possibly when we reach the Loan Estimates we shall be able to instruct the Minister in many ways. I doubt whether we shall ever reach those Estimates—it is a good many years since we did. I cannot help smiling, Mr. Kirwan, when you seriously ask me to wait until we get to that vote.

Mr. Swayne.]

The CHAIRMAN: It is a matter largely in the hands of the hon. member and his friends in Opposition.

Mr. SWAYNE: I would like to deal with matters affecting the North and North-west of Queensland. At Rockhampton two lots of passengers change trains—one lot going West to Longreach, and another lot going North to Mackay. Probably when the North Coast line is completed to Townsville the alteration in the time-table may relieve the position in the latter case. The people have to wait two or three hours in Rockhampton. The department have done something for the passengers in the way of providing refreshment-rooms and catering conveniences, but I would like it to consider further the convenience of travellers and erect bathrooms and changing-places. It is not very pleasant for a passenger, after having spent one night in the train in the hot weather, to undergo another night in the train without changing. I think the matter could be arranged at Rockhampton without any loss to the department. I understand that there is plenty of room for the purpose. The department could make a charge, say, of 2s., or whatever charge is necessary to recoup them. At the present time by the time passengers paid for a car or cab to go to a hotel and paid for a room so as to be able to have a bath and change they would expend 8s. or 10s.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): During this debate various phases of the railway position have been under discussion, and we have had many comparisons with other States. We have had a comparison of the wages paid. We have also heard various reasons advanced for the deficit on our railways. I have some comparisons between the wages paid in Queensland and Victoria, but I do not propose to quote them all. I have gone very carefully through the various items, and have taken the figures from the latest awards in Queensland and Victoria. Taking the figures by and large I find that in a few instances the wages paid are less in Victoria than in Queensland, but in the instances in which a large body of employees is concerned, the wages are considerably higher in Victoria than in Queensland. I propose to quote a few by way of comparison, and to show that the statement made by the Minister that the railway deficit is the result of giving greater benefits to the workers in Queensland is not correct.

When a definite statement is made it is just as well that we should look into the figures and see what the position really is.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You want to compare 1914-15 with 1922-23—that is the test.

Mr. ROBERTS: I want to compare the wages paid during the periods that these deficits were made. We are past the 1914-15 period, and I have not got the figures before me. The Government of the day in Queensland are a Labour Government, and they are finding the wages of their employees. The boast is continually being made that the employees under their administration are much better conditioned than the employees in the other States.

Mr. COLLINS: Quote the population of Victoria, too.

Mr. ROBERTS: A man has to live, independent of the population. I will just quote the rates paid to-day to a number of

[*Mr. Swayne.*]

the employees in Queensland as compared with similar employees in Victoria. They are—

Grade.	Queensland.	Victoria.
	Day.	Day.
Air Driller and Tapper	15/10	17/8
Anglesmith	18/8	18/8
Blacksmith	18/8	17/- to 18/11
Boilermaker's Help ..	15/2	14/6
Boilermaker	18/2 to 19/2	18/8
	Hour.	Hour.
Bricklayer	2/4	2/6
Engine-driver—	Day.	Day.
Class 4	16/2	16/6 to 17/-
Class 3	17/2	17/6 to 18/-
Class 2	18/2	18/6 to 19/-
Class 1	19/2	19/6
Fireman	14/- to 15/-	14/- to 15/6
Fitter	18/2	17/- to 18/7
Fitter in Charge	19/2 to 20/2	20/- to 21/-
Fitter and Turner	18/2	18/7
Fitter's Assistant	14/10	14/-
Forgeman	20/10	19/6
Furnaceman	16/6 to 17/8	15/6 to 17/9
	Hour.	Hour.
Labourer (Casual) ..	1/8½ to 1/11¼	2/0¼
	Day.	Day.
Cleaner—Lighter	13/6	14/- to 14/6
Loco. Crane Driver ..	15/10	15/- to 16/-
	Week.	Week.
Machine Borer	90/9	93/-
	Hour.	Hour.
Mason	2/4	2/7½
	Day.	Day.
Messenger	13/5	13/- to 13/6
Patternmaker	18/10	20/1
Signalman—		
Class 4	14/2	14/6
Class 3	15/-	15/-
Class 2	16/-	15/6
Class 1	16/10	16/6
Special	17/2 & 18/6	18/-

I think it is only fair to say that the clerks in the railway service here never reach the maximum of their classification, because it is withheld from them. There is also, in addition, a 5 per cent. reduction operating with regard to the salaries of the clerks in Queensland—

SALARIED GRADES.

Grade.	Queensland.	Victoria.
	Annual.	Annual.
Ambulance Officer ..	£310—350	£347—392
Chemist	345—450	400—467
Clerk—		
Juniors	65—160	82—252
Class 6	200—260	262—292
Class 5	270—300	307—322
Class 4	310—350	337—352
Class 3	360—400	372—392
Class 2	410—460	402—422
Class 1	470—520	442—467
Depôt Foreman—		
A Grade	340—425	437—542
B Grade	340—405	392—492
C Grade	310—385	332—392
Draughtsman—		
Junior	104—170	140—183
Adult	200—270	222—282
1st Grade	310—385	302—400
Engineer—		
Various	405—700	492—667
District	500—700	542—592
Station-master—		
5th Class and Under	235—255	242—332
4th Class	265—285	347—362
3rd Class	295—310	377—392
2nd Class	325—340	412—437
1st Class	365 and over	467—492
Ticket Inspector	260—300	277—317
Timber Inspector	280—365	317—332
Yard Foreman	250—300	277—322

Those are only a few of the grades which I have picked out from the table I have had

prepared. I have not picked out those grades which show up favourably to Victoria. I have quoted them as I went along, whether they were less or greater in Queensland. What I want to show is that, taking them by and large, the advantages so far as wages go certainly are in favour of the employees in Victoria. It cannot be honestly stated, as it has been repeatedly from the Government side, that these deficits are due to the better conditions of the men who are employed as against the conditions of the men in Victoria. There is another striking point that I noticed when the hon. member for Townsville was speaking. He quoted a certain paragraph from the report of the Commissioner for 1922. I have here a table prepared by the Commissioner for Railways. He says that, if the fares and freights had been increased to the same extent that they have been in the other States, then the comparison would be equally favourable. I want to take exception to that. If these increases were allowed on the traffic, then the loss would have been still greater in Queensland as compared with the other States. What is the position? In 1914-15 the railways were earning on the net capital £4 0s. 8d. per cent., and in 1921-22 they were only earning 15s. 4½d. Let us look at the position in the other States. In 1914-15 the railways in New South Wales were earning £3 12s. 1d., and in 1921-22, after they had passed through the war the same as we did in Queensland, they earned £4 17s. 7d. I have already quoted the figures for Victoria, and shown that they were paying quite as good wages in comparison as were paid in this State, and the earnings of the railways there in 1914-15 were £2 per cent., while in 1921-22 they earned £4 0s. 5d.

In South Australia they were earning—

	£	s.	d.
In 1914-15	1	16	2
In 1921-22	3	15	7

In Western Australia—

In 1914-15	3	6	0
In 1921-22	2	12	10

That shows the position so far as that is concerned.

When the present Government were sitting in Opposition a few years ago, they complained about the number of men who were watching the lengths of our railways. Let me give a comparison between Queensland and other States in this matter. I am not going to say anything against the Commissioner for Railways in this regard, but I want to show that the present Government were always claiming credit for helping the employees, and that this attitude is not borne out by statistics:—

	Employees, per Mile of Railway.	Train Mile per Employee.
Queensland	2·71	613
New South Wales ..	7·23	591
Victoria	6·25	600
South Australia ..	4·6	588
Western Australia	2·2	586

Western Australia is the only State showing fewer employees per mile of railway than Queensland. Then we have to take the position as far as wages, earning power, and men employed on the railways are concerned. There is not the least doubt that we have

fewer men employed than other States. The Minister admitted it by interjection last night.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I used the remark in reply to the statement that we were overstuffed.

Mr. ROBERTS: We had the great gentleman who is now Secretary for Railways criticising our Government at considerable length when we were in power because we dared to run the railways at a lesser rate per mile than the other States. The thing that is wrong, in my opinion, is that the Government are interfering too much with the control of the railways. The Government talk as though they expect continual deficits.

Mr. COLLINS: You ought to be made to prove your case.

Mr. ROBERTS: I will tell the hon. member what the Premier said when the elections were on. He told the people and employees of Queensland that we should not expect the railways to pay. I say that we must expect the railways to pay. I do not desire to dismiss any men to achieve that object, but I am not standing for a policy which says that we should not expect the railways to pay. The Premier, on the 26th April, when facing the electors and in the endeavour to camouflage the position, said that it was as absurd to expect the main roads of the State to show a profit as to demand a profit from our railways.

Mr. CARTER: How do you propose to make them pay?

Mr. ROBERTS: The hon. member for Burrum spoke about political interference, and I have in my hand a copy of the notice which was referred to by my leader last night. It is a notice numbered 1,623, and was issued on the eve of the elections. It reads.

“INSTRUCTIONS TO RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

“FOR USE OF OFFICIALS ONLY.

“It has been decided that where possible employees are to be granted a holiday, without loss of pay, on election day. Those employees who are required to work will be paid at the rate of time and a half.”

No business man would do such a thing, and I cannot imagine the Commissioner for Railways issuing such an edict without the direction of the Government. I cannot imagine the Commissioner taking it upon himself to issue that edict. That is one of the interferences with the Railway Department which is not warranted when the Government are running the railways at a loss.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is merely an exercise of governmental power.

Mr. ROBERTS: I have a large number of railwaymen in my electorate, and I want to know why they are not treated the same as the rest of the employees in Queensland? They do not demand, and would not expect to be treated differently to the other wage-earners of the State. Why should any wage-earner have a holiday on election day?

Mr. COLLINS: Why should he not? It only comes once in every three years.

Mr. ROBERTS: Because it is unthinkable. The elections are generally held on Saturday,

Mr. Roberts.]

and, if this came to be a general practice, the whole of the business of the State would come to a standstill. Employees have plenty of time to vote out of working hours.

Mr. COLLINS: How would some of the navvies in my electorate get on? They would be unable to exercise their votes by reason of their employment and locality.

Mr. ROBERTS: I quite agree that, if it is the policy of the Government that employees are to be paid on election day, men who work on election day should get additional money. Why should they not get double pay? That would be more equitable if there was any honesty in the policy at all. I consider the whole principle is wrong, and I do not stand for it. I do not think the railway employees stand for it. I think that the railway service should get away from this feeling of debt, and that we should all look upon the railway service as something of which we are proud.

Mr. COLLINS: You have not yet proved your case about interference.

Mr. ROBERTS: I wish to mention another thing that is not a paying proposition and in connection with which political interference is brought to bear.

Mr. COLLINS: You had the service filled with your political friends when your party was in power.

Mr. ROBERTS: The secretary of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Engineers definitely charged the Commissioner for Railways with effecting economy by the continuance of short-time employment and by running faulty engines. Hon. members will possibly remember it, but in any case I will refresh their memories. I thought it was not fair to the Commissioner for Railways and that it was an astounding statement to make; so I asked in this House whether the statement issued by the secretary of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Engineers had been proved, and the Secretary for Railways denied the

[5 p.m.] statement that cleaners were continued on short time. I will take hon. members now to a period a few months later, to show what the position was then. A notice was issued to the officials at Toowoomba—the very place where these men were employed—some of them are men. They have gone past their boyhood days but have not received promotion. There was an instruction issued that they were all to be employed. There again I contend political influence was brought to bear.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not correct.

Mr. ROBERTS: The Minister stated on the advice of the Commissioner that these men were not required, and that the statement that the engines were dirty was not true. There were no more engines running at the time this notice was issued than there were previous to my asking the question in this House when the secretary to the Locomotive Engineers' Union made this statement, because I made inquiries. If there was not work for these men twelve months before the election and no more engines were running and no greater mileage was being run by the engines, why were these men put on on the eve of an election? I say definitely that the edict went forth that every man who could be found work on the eve of the election was to be found work.

[Mr. Roberts.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is false. Read the memorandum or statement you complain of.

Mr. ROBERTS: What statement?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You said instructions were issued that men were to be employed irrespective of whether they were required or not.

Mr. ROBERTS: I did not say that. My conclusion is that they were not required.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your conclusion is ridiculous.

Mr. ROBERTS: My statement is that the Government issued instructions on the eve of an election that every man was to be employed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is false.

Mr. ROBERTS: The hon. member for Toowoomba, who is now Assistant Home Secretary, took credit to himself because he was able to get these men employed, and I came to the conclusion that the edict went forth that every available man—every disgruntled worker—was to be employed to try and win support at the elections.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You ought to prove that statement or withdraw it.

Mr. ROBERTS: I cannot go any further than I have gone. It is for the Minister to disprove it. He says these men were not employed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say no such instructions were issued.

Mr. ROBERTS: The hon. gentleman has the right of denial. I am making the statement, and let him deny it. I am accusing him and his Government, not the Commissioner, of undue influence.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: Read that paragraph in the paper.

Mr. ROBERTS: Like the hon. member, I cannot carry every newspaper in my pocket.

I wish now to touch on the question of rail motors, and I think the hon. member for Toowoomba will agree with my remarks. Last year I asked a series of questions in regard to these rail motors, and I regret that it has taken such a long time to settle this question. We have the experience of New South Wales and Victoria, and we know they are profitable investments so far as the department is concerned, and of considerable convenience on railways where there is only a light traffic. We have similar conditions on our railways adjacent to Toowoomba, such as the stretch to Pittsworth and along towards Gowrie Junction from Willowburn. A large number of workers travel over those lines to and from their employment every day, and I am anxious that the Commissioner should give this matter speedy attention.

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

Mr. DASH (*Mundingburra*): I listened very attentively to the speeches delivered by members of the Opposition in criticism of the Government and of the administration of the Railway Department, and I must say that I fail to see that they have proved their case in any shape or form. The hon. member for Oxley seemed to be very pleased with what he saw, and, as he is deputy leader of the Opposition, I presume he speaks with the sanction of the Opposition. He stated that

he found the railways were working in splendid order, but he found in North Queensland the efficiency not so good as it is in Southern Queensland. He is a second Jeremiah, like Senator Pearce. Commonwealth Minister for Defence, who not so long ago spoke about the "go slow" policy of the waterside workers at Bowen, and I may say he was very ably taken to task by the hon. member for that district. The great cry in connection with our railways is that they do not pay. We know that the railways do not pay, and, so far as North Queensland is concerned, it is remarkable that they pay as well as they do at the present time. One of the reasons for the deficiency in the North is the slump in the mining and meat industries. When the meatworks were working, full trains of trucks had to be taken right from the meatworks out to Dajarra and the furthestmost parts of the railways in order to bring back stock; and when the mines were working, these trucks on the way out would be fully laden with coke and coal, and would take mining timber, firewood, and the necessary provisions for the large number of people working in the mines. It is common knowledge that the closing of the mines meant a serious loss to the Northern Railway. The General Manager in the Northern division has been at his wits' end to try and cut down expenses and make the railways earn as much as possible. We also know that we have not the same class of rolling-stock, especially engines, in the North that there is in the South. It is years since any new engines were sent to North Queensland, and the men have the greatest difficulty in doing the work with the engines at their disposal. They will have to continue in the present position until the line to Townsville is completed. We know it is very costly to ship engines by boat to Townsville. The General Manager in the North was compelled quite recently, owing to the development that has taken place in North Queensland, to get a large number of trucks up by steamer to cope with the work at Cairns and in the hinterland. We cannot expect the same work from the class of engine that they have in the North as we can from the engines in the southern portion of the State.

Mr. KELSO: The Minister said all the engines were good last year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said we have more effective engines than your party had.

Mr. DASH: The men in North Queensland have great difficulty in coping with the work, and let us hope that, when the line is completed to Townsville, North Queensland will be provided with a stock of up-to-date engines. I want further to say with regard to our workshops in Townsville that I hope that the Government will not adopt the policy of bringing the greater portion of the work required in the North down to the Ipswich workshops, and that they will not construct all the new carriages there. We have the workmen in North Queensland, and with an outlay of a few thousand pounds in up-to-date machinery we would be able to do work as effectively as in any other part of the State. The tradesmen there are first-class workmen, and we have space to build additions to the workshops when the time arrives. The General Manager for the Northern Railways has taken up with the Commissioner and the Government in the

matter of improving the railway facilities at Townsville. It will not be long before we have the train running from Townsville to Brisbane, and the railway yards will have to be remodelled to cope with the changed conditions.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in discussing that matter, because the expenditure in that connection involves loan money.

Mr. DASH: I am talking about the remodelling of the yards.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will be in order in discussing the question of maintenance.

Mr. DASH: This will be maintenance work. The remodelling of the yards will necessitate a large amount of money being spent from revenue. I know from discussing this matter with the General Manager with regard to money for different jobs that this money comes out of revenue. I quite agree that for new works the money will come out of loan, so I will not touch upon that.

When through connection is established with Townsville great alterations will have to be made in the railway yards there. I am pleased that the Commissioner and the Government are giving serious consideration to the matter of remodelling the yards, and placing better facilities at the disposal of the General Manager to enable him to handle the trains more efficiently than he can do at the present time. I also notice that quite recently in the north-western portion of Queensland, in the Cloncurry district, a development has taken place with regard to the finding of silver and lead ore. If that turns out as we anticipate it will cause greater activity in North-west Queensland and enable the railways to earn more than they are earning now.

Another thing which the Government have taken into consideration, and which previous Governments never did, is to provide cheaper fares to enable people who live in the Western country to visit the seaside once a year. Under the old Tory system the people in the West had no facilities placed in their way, and there was no reduction of fares to enable them to visit the seaside; but our Government have reduced the fares considerably to enable families to enjoy some of the comforts which city dwellers have.

Another matter which I wish the Government to take notice of is the handling of the railway traffic in Townsville. At the present time, and for some time to come, large amounts of coal will be shipped over the wharves in Townsville. The Harbour Board have been alive to the situation and have had erected a very large crane by which the coal can be handled by the waterside workers, and that will cheapen the cost of coal to the shipping people and buyers from overseas.

Another matter in regard to which we must commend the Commissioner for Railways and his officers is the time-table they have drawn up for the Brisbane to Townsville service. We find by the tentative time-table drawn up that, if you leave here about 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon, you can land in Townsville on Sunday morning at 6 o'clock. I would like the matter to receive full consideration. Personally, I think that, if the

Mr. Dash.]

train left here on Saturday and arrived in Townsville on Monday, it would suit the Northern people better than arriving on Sunday morning, because business would be completed in Brisbane at 1 o'clock by people desirous of going North, and they would be in Townsville when business resumed on Monday morning. I hope that that suggestion will be fully considered.

We find that the Railway Department have also taken into consideration the matter of quicker transit for lengthsmen. The lengthsmen have a very hard task when they have to pump against a big head wind. There are open spaces for miles on which not a tree is to be seen. The award sets out that the men shall pump one way in their own time and the other way in the Commissioner's time, but at times it is a very difficult task after doing a hard day's work to pump home against a stiff head wind. It is to the credit of the Government that they are going to give the system recommended by the Commissioner to improve the conditions of the lengthsmen a trial. The proposal is to enable lengthsmen to come together in big camps where there will be better facilities for schooling and other advantages which they have not got at the present time. It is to be hoped that the experiment will be successful, even if a monetary loss is involved. We believe that the lengthsmen living in remote parts of the State should have some comforts, even if it is at the expense of the taxpayers of the State.

Mr. KELSO: Who suggested that?

Mr. DASH: The suggestion came from the officers of the Railway Department. I understand that the General Manager of the Northern Railways took a very big part in the matter, and that some of the lengthsmen also made suggestions with regard to it. We heard a whine from Opposition members about the houses the lengthsmen are living in at the present time.

Mr. ROBERTS: It is more than a whine from the women who have to live in them.

Mr. DASH: I am going to reply to that. The houses which hon. members opposite are complaining about the lengthsmen having to live in were put there by their Government, and it is only by this Government that any attempt has been made to provide decent accommodation for the lengthsmen. When hon. members opposite were in power, the houses which the lengthsmen were compelled to live in were hovels and were a disgrace; yet to-day we find hon. members opposite trying to blame this Government for something which was done by their Government when in office. Our Government have spent a large sum of money in trying to improve the conditions of the lengthsmen in the remote portions of the State. We hear a lot of talk about what they have not done in regard to the lengthsmen and others. When hon. members opposite were in power and were faced with financial difficulties they immediately reduced the wages of the lengthsmen. They also increased the lengths by 50 per cent., and they knocked off a man in each gang, expecting the men left in the gang to do 50 per cent. more work, and railways were run at that time in a more dangerous condition than they have ever been run under Labour administration.

[Mr. Dash.

Mr. ROBERTS: You have done all that yourself. You have reduced the number of men, reduced the wages, and increased the lengths.

Mr. DASH: Hon. members opposite seem to be taking credit to themselves for the railway men being better off to-day than they were under their own Administration. When they were in power they would not allow the railway men to appeal to the court for the purpose of having their wages and conditions adjusted. I can remember the time when the railway men asked the Denham Government, of which the hon. member for Wynnum was a member, to allow them to go before a judge, not to give a decision, but to hear their grievances in connection with their work, and the request was refused point blank.

They even went so far as to ask the Government at that time to allow them a wages board, or a board of some such description as they had in New South Wales, to inquire into their conditions, but their request was refused. Last night the hon. member for Oxley—and, I think, the hon. member for Kurilpa also—made reference to a prosecution of a railway conductor which took place quite recently. When the report of the Department of Labour is before the Committee we hear criticism coming from the Opposition to the effect that only the employers are compelled to abide by awards, and that the employees can flout them and the Arbitration Court without the Government taking any action. But now we find immediately a union takes action to deal with the conductor of a train who was guilty of a breach of the award, his case is dragged into this Committee by hon. members opposite. Nevertheless, when the Estimates of the Department of Public Works come before us, we shall hear a whine from hon. members opposite about employees breaking awards with impunity.

We have heard a good deal, too, about political interference with the railways. I cannot find any political interference with the management of the department whatsoever, and the Opposition have not given any instances of it. They have made general statements—which anybody could make with regard to any business at all—that political interference takes place. I am not above exercising political interference if I think a thing is wrong and against the policy of this Government and this party, and I am not going to give away my rights in that connection; but I fail to see where any political interference has taken place in the Railway Department. I have approached the Northern General Manager with a view to finding work for men out of employment. If hon. members opposite call that political interference, I am only too glad to be associated with it; but not one case has been quoted during the debate to show that the Minister or any member of this party has been guilty of giving instructions to any officer of the department or of doing anything in the nature of political interference with railway work.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*): I wish to deal with some of the points which hon. members made concerning the policy and the administration of the department, which have been carefully noted by myself and the Commissioner; and if I do not touch upon all the

points raised, I hope hon. members will understand that their remarks have not been overlooked, nor will they be ignored.

Let me first deal with the more important points raised concerning the policy of the department and its administration. I listened with pleasure to the criticism offered by some hon. members. The speeches of the leader of the Opposition, of the hon. member for Oxley, and of the leader of the Country party were interesting, and appealed to one's reason, for they showed a desire to criticise fairly and rationally and for the good of the department. Other hon. members opposite, however, did not attempt to deal with the policy of the Railway Department, but took the opportunity to deal with minor matters of railway administration, and there were one or two speeches which were mainly abuse of the Commissioner, the officers, and employees. But we can safely overlook the small percentage of slander and abuse which come from irresponsible members of the Opposition. Two points in particular were mentioned during the discussion—the question of the deficit and the question of management. Hon. members opposite ought to be thankful that there is in the dictionary such a word as “deficit,” because I do not know what they would have done to find some peg on which to hang their criticism of the Government if it had not been for that word and for the phrase “political interference.” It is true that they brought forward no semblance of argument in support of their assertion that political interference exists, but they think that repetition will ultimately have its desired effect, and that the people will really believe that there is something behind the word and the phrase which they use in so reckless and loose a manner. Probably their attitude cannot be cavilled at, when one considers political warfare and party political tactics.

Mr. KERR: If you gave the Commissioner a free leg for a couple of years, he would make the railways pay.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am willing to give the hon. member a half century of free leg to do that, and if he shows no more ability than he showed in his criticism last night, then heaven help the Railway Department and the State. The hon. member—who is a young man, and uses more noise than logic or sound argument in his speeches—would do well to listen to the hon. member for Oxley, to the leader of the Opposition, and the leader of the Country party, and follow their speeches rather than rush into every subject recklessly, inadvisedly, and carelessly. If the hon. member did so, the points that he does make would loom larger in the discussion instead of being obscured by a lot of wild, reckless, unfair, and unfounded statements. At present, instead of illuminating or enlightening his speeches, these loose remarks becloud the other portions.

I want to refer now to some of the statements and suggestions which have been made with a view to wiping out the railway deficiency and improving railway administration. In doing so I cannot help remarking that there seems to be a remarkable evolution in the thought and expressions of hon. members opposite concerning the railway administration and the question of making the railways pay. It is true that one or two hon. members—the hon. member for

Enoggera and the hon. member for Wynnum—argued that the railways should be made to pay, but that contention was not general amongst hon. members opposite. The majority of them realise that the Railway Department itself is really only one branch of the public service, and is linked up, as the hon. member for Mirani said, with the Department of Public Lands, the Department of Agriculture, and other departments. Generally there was evidence of an evolution in thought and expression amongst hon. members opposite concerning railway economics and railway policy.

Let me deal with one or two Opposition suggestions to reduce the deficiency. The hon. member for Murilla suggested free carriage of necessaries to people in the country. Not a brilliant suggestion to reduce a deficiency and improve the finances of the department in a business-like way from the viewpoint that the railways should pay! The second suggestion was made by the hon. member for Wide Bay—that we should increase the capitalisation of our railways and build more railways.

Mr. CLAYTON: You are wrong. I did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member urged the construction of new railways, and that has also been urged by other hon. members. As a matter of fact, if I granted the request of hon. members opposite for new railways, I would have a programme which would cost £10,000,000. That is the way they would reduce the deficiency and cut down expenses—by adding another £10,000,000 to the capitalisation of the department! Is it any wonder that hon. members on this side complain that hon. members opposite are unfair and do not make reasonable suggestions?

Mr. CLAYTON: I showed you how you could finance that railway.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member showed how he could tie himself up in a logical knot which he could not unravel. The hon. member is just as unfortunate in interjecting as he is in speaking. Let me get on with the next point that was raised or suggested as a [5.30 p.m.] means of wiping out the railway deficiency. The hon. member for Burnett suggested that we should run more trains where we are already losing thousands of pounds. That is another brilliant suggestion as to how to improve the railway administration and cut down working expenses. The Opposition suggest to reduce the railway deficiency by increasing the capitalisation, by running more trains where there is already a big loss, and by giving free carriage in the Western districts.

Mr. MORGAN: Are you against that?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not expressing an opinion one way or the other. I say that you are not going to reduce the railway deficiency by giving free carriage on the necessaries of life. The three suggestions or lines of argument do not square with the contention that the railways should pay. I am not out to say that the line of argument suggested by the hon. member for Murilla is fair or unfair, but I say it is not going to reduce the railway deficiency. While the hon. member for Murilla advocated free railways in relation to the necessaries of life,

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

we find the hon. member for Enoggera suggesting that the railways should be made to pay.

Mr. KERR: That is better than passing it on to the taxpayer.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member suggests that there should be an increase in fares and freights to bring about the result.

Mr. KERR: You are not game.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not a matter of gameness. The stupidity of the hon. member for Enoggera does not get us any further. It is not a matter of gameness or stupidity. The hon. member does not distinguish between gameness and stupidity in his line of argument. I shall deal with that point further as I proceed. I intend to give some attention to the points that have been raised by other hon. members opposite. I shall take some little time in connection with the matter.

Mr. KERR: You should keep cool.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I think that the importance of the railway administration justifies the time that I shall take in dealing with the points that have been raised. It is not very often that the Secretary for Railways has an opportunity of replying to the inaccuracies and the misstatements made concerning administration. I do not very frequently reply to the misstatements and the inaccuracies that go forth unanswered through the columns of "Hansard," but it is simply because I do not want these misstatements to go unanswered on the present occasion that I intend to place my reply in the columns of "Hansard." Let me tell the hon. member for Enoggera that he should realise that, if he extends courtesy in debate, it will be reciprocated. That is something that he wants to bear in mind as a new member.

Mr. KELSO: Why do you not answer the suggestion raised by the hon. member for Enoggera?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon. member will wait, I shall deal with all the points raised in the debate.

In moving this vote I showed by figures and statistics that there has been a substantial improvement in railway administration during the past two years. Hon. members opposite lightly brushed those figures aside. I can quite understand that from a party political point of view. I want, however, to emphasise the fact that there was a great improvement in the last two years in railway returns concerning net revenue, in the percentage of working expenses to revenue, and in various other ways. Hon. members opposite do not for a moment give the Commissioner or his officers any credit for that substantial improvement.

Mr. KERR: We blame you.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is not capable of intelligently blaming anyone in his present state of mind.

Mr. KELSO: You complimented the leader of the Opposition on his speech.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I did.

Mr. KELSO: Why attack the leader of the Opposition?

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have a right to reply to the remarks that have been made, and I have the right to reply to them in the same way as criticism has been advanced and interjections made by hon. members opposite. John Bright once said no institution ever gave the community such a fine service without gratitude as the railways.

Mr. VOWLES: That was not in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No, but it applies to Queensland. It is as true for Queensland as any part of Australia or the world. The hon. member for Dalby, like his colleagues, will not admit the great service the Railway Department is rendering the State, nor will he admit the improvement that has taken place during the past two years. As a parliamentarian I am not taking much exception to that. I want to emphasise the figures that I gave yesterday. There has been a romance of improvement.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Since you have been in charge.

Mr. MORGAN: "Romance" is all right.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The figures are taken from the various railway returns and the Commissioner's report.

Mr. KELSO: Romancing in figures only amounts to fiction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The figures I gave were in respect to earnings, expenditure, the percentage of working expenses to earnings, net revenue, and the number of miles open for traffic. Let me in addition deal with the question of train loads. The Commissioner in his "Weekly Notice" pointed out just recently that there had been a substantial improvement in wagon loads. There has been an increase of 20 per cent. in many instances. In connection with the train load to engine capacity in many instances there has been an increase of 20 per cent. and even up to 40 per cent. The number of passengers per train mile has also improved. Let me tell hon. members opposite that the department carried more passengers per train mile during the last financial year than was the case in 1914-15.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Has there not been an increase in the population since 1914-15?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There has been an increase in population under a Labour Government.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You should put up in large letters, "Alone I did it."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite want to say in a loud voice, "Alone we did it," but I am going to show by comparisons that they have done very little for the State of Queensland, in relation to railway administration.

I want to quote one or two authorities on railway management. Let me now get away from the heat and fervour of politics and see what the "Trustees' Quarterly Review" of July, 1923, has to say about railway administration. It says, *inter alia*—

"It must be admitted that, with few exceptions, the lines have opened up lands more or less suitable for productive settlement. They have made wool and mutton a payable proposition on many thousands of square miles where formerly only cattle

could be run, and they have reduced the risk of pastoral pursuits by making the removal of stock in time of drought a practicable remedy. The public estate has thus been increased in value and usefulness, but owing to our method of public account keeping the railways as an investment have never received credit for such services."

It goes on to comment—

"It has been the practice amongst critics of our State Government to contrast the pre-war position (when opened lines very nearly earned sufficient to meet the interest bill on their cost) with the result attained in recent years. In the statement already quoted the total difference between the earnings of the railways and the cost of working was just under £688,000 as against an interest bill on their account of something over two millions sterling. This has been attributed mainly to the effect of political interference in railway management, and it cannot be denied that this has been a source of considerable mischief in the past; but a very cursory glance at the 1922 report of the Commissioner shows that quite different causes have operated to reduce the net earning powers of our railways."

"As against the complaint that the railways are over-staffed it has been pointed out that, whereas in 1921-22 each employee in the railway service represented a revenue earning of £363, the corresponding figure in 1914-15 was only £256. The cost of operating the railways has increased enormously in every particular, and wages have been subject to Arbitration Court awards, yet the average increase in fares has been only 17 per cent. and in rates for freight 19 per cent. Substantial reductions have been made during the last few years in rates for carriage of livestock and dairy produce, and such increases as have been made have not been applied to staple requirements—such as flour, sugar, and other commodities in daily use."

The value of that statement is that it comes from men who have business capacity, standing, and experience. That is their declaration concerning railway administration. It does not harmonise with the remarks of the hon. member for Wynnum.

Mr. MORGAN: That extract is not word for word.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Those extracts are taken out of the "Trustees' Quarterly Review," and they are written by men who are much more capable of expressing their opinion of railway administration than the hon. member for Murilla; but that is not in any way disparaging to him, because these men have had a life-long experience in business away from the atmosphere of Parliament.

Mr. MORGAN: They got their information from the report of the Commissioner.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: So do the hon. members opposite. The writer of this article is probably a strong anti-Labourite.

Mr. MORGAN: How do you know?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said probably, because most of the people

who are connected with this company are not Labour supporters. Yet we find that the writers of the article paid such a fine tribute to the management of the railway service.

Mr. MORGAN: Will you tell us what the "Railway Advocate" said?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will tell the hon. member what the Commissioner said at a dinner given by the butter shippers in 1922. He said—

"To a casual reader our heavy deficits are apt to be taken as a reflection on the administration, but I have no hesitation in saying, and it can be borne out by our figures, that the service is more efficient to-day than ever it has been, and compares favourably with the railways of other States with upwards of ten times the volume of business per mile of line."

The Commissioner is a free agent. He is able to express his own opinion without any bias or control at all. He made the statement honestly, conscientiously, and deliberately, after long years of service in the Railway Department, that the service was never more satisfactory or efficient than it is to-day. Therefore I think that these opinions will carry weight with the readers of "Hansard" who read the remarks of hon. members opposite. I am certain that the electors will be rather inclined to take the view that the writers of the article in the "Trustees' Quarterly Review" and also the Commissioner are correct. I am not going to rely exclusively upon the "Trustees' Quarterly Review" or the statement of the Commissioner as to the soundness of the management of the Queensland railways. I have other information which I intend to offer.

Let me take first of all the question of the number of employees in the service. The question of over-staffing has been touched upon and ventilated on one or two occasions. Hon. members opposite generally have recognised that their argument will not stand investigation and have dropped it, but there have been one or two references to the question, and I intend to reply to them. I have information available to combat, and successfully combat, that assertion.

Mr. MORGAN: Can you give us any information later about the coal supply?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Certainly. I have got information concerning the coal supply, and also concerning the price, quality, and consumption of coal. Just to show what is taking place in other States let me indicate to hon. members that where the administration of the railways is under the control of Tory Governments, the same arguments have been adduced as have been used against the Queensland Government. The Melbourne "Age" of 14th October, 1921, says—

"Even during the last few years, in which it is impossible to point to any great expansion, the increase of the cost of the staff has gone on more rapidly than ever. The size of the staff is also steadily increasing, as is shown in the following table:—

1918	...	...	...	...	13,926
1919	...	...	...	...	24,697
1920	...	...	...	...	27,233 "

That is the record of the Tory Administration in Victoria. In Queensland, instead

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

of showing anything in the nature of over-staffing, we are able to show just the reverse.

Mr. MORGAN: It is a matter of whether the work is there for the men.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is shifting his ground, or he is not basing his argument on the same ground as other hon. members opposite. First the statement was made that there was over-staffing; now the reply comes that there is no over-staffing and that the staff is justifiable because there is work for the men. I am replying to the suggestion that there has been anything in the nature of over-staffing.

Mr. VOWLES: Can you give us any figures concerning effective running?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; I will give some figures concerning effective running. Let me give a chapter from Tory administration concerning train miles and employees. We have heard hon. members opposite wax indignant about the present Administration, but what did they do when they had the opportunity? We find from the records that the following are the facts:—

	Train Miles.
1912-13	11,464,084
1913-14	11,346,334

Decrease for 1913-14 ... 117,750

Now what about the employees? We find from the same records that the following are the facts:—

	Employees.
1912-13	13,982
1913-14	14,965

Increase for 1913-14 ... 983

That is an increase of 983 employees side by side during the same year with a decrease of 117,750 train miles. Those figures indicate that the hon. members opposite were responsible for a good deal of unsatisfactory management when they had the power and control of the Railway Department. It also indicates what we can expect with a change of Government. Now let me give another comparison, because it is only by comparison that we can arrive at a sound judgment. The figures I have given are honest and sound. I am not going to give any figures that I cannot stand up to and prove to be correct. I would be foolish to do so. I want to confound the critics of the Government with the records of previous years under Tory administration. Jevons points out that one can only ascertain the relative value of things by comparison, and it is only by comparison that we can convince the hon. members opposite of the truth or otherwise of our statements. I wish to give the record of the last three years of the control by the Tory Government in connection with the number of employees engaged. The figures are:—

	Employees.
1911-12	12,900
1914-15	14,936
Increase	2,036
1914-15	14,936
1922-23	16,838
Increase	1,902

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

An increase of 1,902 during the eight years' administration of the Labour Government as compared with an increase of 2,036 in the last three years of the Tory administration. Where is the proof now of the over-staffing of the railways that our friends asserted? We see that the increase under the Tory Government was 134 more in three years than the increase for eight years under Labour administration. The average yearly increase in the number of employees is—

Under Tory administration	678
Under Labour control	... 238

Decrease in favour of
Labour control ... 470

I am certain that those figures are a revelation to hon. members.

Mr. MORGAN: Alongside of those figures you ought to tell us about the reduction in train mileage.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will give the hon. member the information as I proceed. I do not want to confuse the point. I want to show that under Tory administration political friends were shoved into the Railway Department in thousands. Yet hon. members opposite have the audacity and effrontery to accuse the present Government of having over-staffed.

Mr. MORGAN: Perish the thought!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If hon. members opposite had kept quiet on the point, I would not have dealt with it, but I have to give these figures in self-defence and in defence of the railway administration under the present Government. It is necessary to show the increase of employees in Queensland under a Tory Administration as compared with the increase under Labour control.

Mr. TAYLOR: To make your comparison complete you should give the mileage of railways opened during the two periods.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will come to that very point, and will give the hon. member the figures—

Employees per mile of open railway.

1914	3.17
1923	2.85

This shows a reduction per mile of railways under Labour administration as compared with the period under anti-Labour administration. The comparison is very fitting and convincing. The Labour Government had 2.85 employees as against 3.17 employed by the Tory Government per mile. I think that hon. members opposite ought to apologise—(Opposition laughter)—they ought to be ashamed of their charges of over-staffing.

Mr. VOWLES: What about tonnage and freight miles?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I shall proceed from point to point. I am now giving the information asked for by the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MORGAN: Give your train mileage.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I shall give hon. members the train miles as I proceed. The leader of the Opposition asked a question which I have answered.

Mr. MORGAN: I ask you to give the train mileage.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will give hon. members all the information they desire as I proceed. I desire to mention that, linked up with the question of train mileage, is the question of larger engines, larger loads, and other matters which I shall deal with subsequently. We have the proof that the Railway Department under the present administration has fewer employees per mile of railway than they had during the period of administration of the party opposite, who so audaciously criticise the Labour administration. I will now take—

Revenue per employee.
In 1914 it stood at £246.
In 1923 it stood at £321,

or an increase of £75 per employee.

Mr. MORGAN: That indicates an increase of freights.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It indicates greater efficiency, because the freights have not been increased in Queensland to the same extent as they have in other parts of Australia. It also shows that the arguments generally of hon. members opposite are not soundly based. The hon. member for Murilla is very anxious to know something about train miles. Let me give him the tonnage of goods handled per train mile for the two periods—

In 1914-15 it was 379 tons.
In 1922-23 it was 386 tons,

or more under Labour administration than in 1914-15 under Tory administration.

Mr. MORGAN: You said that that was owing to more powerful engines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say that, amongst other things, it is owing to the use of more powerful engines. I did not introduce the subject at all; but as the hon. member has challenged me to deal with the question of train mileage, the figures I have given have exploded his assertion that the Tory Government were in a better position than the present Government in the matter of goods handled per train mile.

Mr. MORGAN: You are a good juggler of figures.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not a juggler of figures. I have facts on my side. Does not Burns say—

“ Facts are chieft that winna ding,
An' daurna be disputed ” ?

There is no gainsaying facts, figures, and documentary evidence. They are all on my side; I am not juggling. Juggling can be easily upset, but it is not possible to upset facts from the report of the Commissioner for Railways and from railway statistics which are available.

Proceeding further with the question of management, I want to make a comparison between Queensland and the other States of Australia. Let me mention, first of all, Tasmania. Hon. members opposite, particularly the hon. member for Dalby, have loudly acclaimed what they term the “ independent commissioner ” system. I pointed out yesterday that hon. members opposite had the opportunity for many years to make the Commissioner for Railways independent if they so desired. They did not do so; they allowed him to be subject to the instructions

of the Secretary for Railways and the Executive Council. In Tasmania, under this so-called wonderful system of independent commissionership, they recently had to suspend the Commissioner. We find that one man was given absolute powers, with the result that they had to suspend that official and hold an inquiry into ten or twelve charges that were levelled against him by the Government. That statement is very interesting, and it shows that all systems have their weaknesses. Human nature is imperfect, and while human nature is imperfect, all institutions, all men, and all systems must necessarily be imperfect. Queensland compares favourably with other States so far as the administration of its railways is concerned.

Let me quote from the Royal Commissioner's report of last year on the Western Australian railway administration. In Western Australia the railways are under a Tory Administration, and they had to appoint a Royal Commission to go thoroughly into that administration. The extract I have is from the “ West Australian,” and reads—

“ ROYAL COMMISSIONER'S REPORT.

“ A SCATHING CRITICISM.

“ *Neither Economical nor Efficient.*

“ Sweeping Recommendations.

“ Board of Three Commissioners.

“ A sweeping indictment of the present State railway administration marks the second and final report of Mr. George W. Stead. Mr. Stead was appointed a Royal Commissioner on 18th February to inquire into and report upon—

MANAGEMENT.

“ In view of the evidence tendered from sources inside and outside the service, and from personal observation, the Commissioner can arrive at no other conclusion than that there is an entire lack of confidence in the management, which is neither economical nor efficient.”

These are the reformers who were going to show the Queensland Government how to run the railways! Trouble in Tasmania! Trouble in Western Australia! Trouble in every other State where the railway system is under Tory control!

There is just one other passage from the “ West Australian ” giving an extract from the report of the Royal Commission that I should like to refer to, because it is very complimentary so far as our freights and fares are concerned—

“ The Queensland rates are much lower than those obtaining in this State, viz., to transport a bullock in this State for a distance of 600 miles costs 46s. 5d. whilst for a similar distance in Queensland the charge is only 29s. 10.6d. Similarly, to transport a sheep for the same distance costs in Western Australia 4s. 7.7d., whilst in Queensland the charge is 2s. 9.9d. Their passenger and season ticket rates are also considerably cheaper than in this State.”

Mr. TAYLOR: They are too cheap.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Some hon. members opposite have tried to prove otherwise. They have tried to prove that our freights and fares are higher than

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

in Western Australia; yet here is a Western Australian Commission which has gone carefully into the whole matter pointing out that our rates on cattle and sheep and our passenger rates are cheaper than they are in Western Australia. I consider this a very fine tribute paid by an independent authority to the Queensland railway service.

[7 p.m.] I have several extracts from the Melbourne "Age" concerning the railway administration of Victoria. The first quotation is from the Melbourne "Age" of November, 1921—

"The annual report of the Commissioners was submitted to Parliament more than a month ago. It revealed facts and figures of the most startling nature."

Those are very strong statements. In September, 1922, the Melbourne "Age" said—

"It is true the Commissioners were blessed with a record revenue. The railway earnings for the year ended June last amounted to £10,857,852, an increase of £1,005,945 on the revenue of the previous year. The increase was not so much due to added business as to the imposition of higher freights and fares."

"The increase of freights and fares in Victoria is one of the factors that is still operating to maintain the high cost of living and is, therefore, one of the obstructions in the way of our return to normal conditions."

That is rather significant. The improvement in the position which has taken place in Victoria in a nominal sense in the past year or two has been due, according to the Melbourne "Age," to an increase in fares and freights. Further, the Auditor-General of Victoria offers some criticism upon the management of the Victorian railway service. The Melbourne "Age" of 14th October, 1922, reports on the Auditor-General's criticisms as follows:—

"It must be evident from this review of the figures of the railway service that for the past seven years the department has been drifting into a position that would never have been tolerated under ordinary competent business management. The drift must be stopped before the solvency of the community is further involved."

There we have the Melbourne "Age" pointing out that the nominal improvement, which has been much boasted about by some hon. members opposite, was due first to increasing fares and freights, and secondly, according to the Auditor-General, to improper interference with the practice that had existed in railway administration for some years. I have a later quotation in this connection. On the 13th of this month the Melbourne "Age," commenting on the Victorian railway returns, remarked, *inter alia*—

"Any satisfaction that might be felt in the increasing revenue will be qualified in the public mind by the reflection that the increase has come out of the public pocket without any reasonable equivalent in service. The revenue per traffic train mile has risen from 7s. 4d. in 1914 to 13s. 10d. at the present time. Surpluses might well be commonplaces where charges soar so glaringly."

There again the Melbourne "Age" points out even in the present month that the improvement in the nominal returns of the Railway Department in Victoria is due to

increased fares and freights and also to an interference with the practice which has governed railway finance for some years in Victoria. Those remarks are very apropos when we are considering Queensland railway administration and the criticism which has been levelled against the Railway Department.

I want now to give a chapter from the history of Tory mismanagement in Queensland, which I would not have given but for the remarks of the hon. member for Wynnum. The hon. member quoted from the Auditor-General's report, and I also will quote from the Auditor-General's report to show what took place when the hon. member for Wynnum was one of the white-haired boys in the Tory Government in 1913-14. (Opposition laughter.) The Auditor-General, in his report for 1913, stated—

"There was a shortage of material, amounting to approximately £10,000 in stock of permanent way material. . . . An officer of the Railway Audit Staff has been engaged, by direction of the Commissioner, for fully two months endeavouring to trace issues covering the shortage. This appears to me to be severely unsatisfactory and calls for a drastic alteration in the system."

Then again, on page 51, he stated—

"In perusing this report I was struck with the magnitude of stocks held by you and the enormous increase in your Stores Suspense Account"

"There are several other matters connected with your stores system to which I would like to invite your attention at a future date, but they are overshadowed by the enormous sum of £786,000—over £400,000 of which is without parliamentary sanction."

"In my opinion the Loan Fund Account has been operated on without the authority or knowledge of Parliament."

Those are the great business directors who presume to instruct the Queensland Labour Administration how to run the railways! Again, in the Auditor-General's report for 1914, it is stated—

"The purchase of the Renard road train and recently the McKean motor-cars have unfortunately proved a costly experiment to the department. The price paid for the former was £4,106 7s. and the cost of making roads for the running of same £2,762. During the time it was in use working expenses amounted to £957 5s. 6d. and the earnings £209 6s. 3d."

"The total expenditure to the middle of May last in connection with the purchase and erection of the five McKean cars, including Customs duty, was £35,727, being £12,352 in excess of the contract price. The Renard road train has been scrapped in the workshop yards for some time—after failing to perform the work expected of it."

That is an interesting sidelight on the anti-Labour administration of the Railway Department. Then again hon. members opposite lost money over the tank engines.

Hon W. H. BARNES: They are still running

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It cost £50,000 to widen the tunnels, etc., to let them run.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Who recommended them?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is no use hon. members opposite trying to shift their ground. They have been talking about the costly management under Labour administration, but what have they to say to these illuminating facts with regard to their own administration? Here we find the Auditor-General severely castigating the acts of the Liberal Administration when the hon. member for Wynnun was a member of the Cabinet. All those things existed in an intensified degree in 1914 under an anti-Labour Government. It is almost as bad as what has happened under the Federal Tory Administration. We recollect what is taking place in regard to the sugar purchases. We know all about the Canungra scandal, where practically £500,000 was wasted, and we have not forgotten the scandals in connection with war service homes. The following appeared in the "Daily Telegraph" of 29th July last year:—

"A serious defect was found by the committee in the accountancy branch. The officers appointed to take charge of it had neither technical qualifications nor the experience necessary for the position. The result was in many respects disastrous, costing in the early stages being chaotic."

Costly failures are the result of Tory administration in the Federal sphere.

Mr. MORGAN: Leave it to the Secretary for Public Works.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will leave it to him, and he will probably deal with it later on. Let me, however, pin hon. members opposite down to these extracts from the report of the Auditor-General in 1913-1914, where it appears that their administration was responsible for an extra cost of £50,000 in altering roadways for these tanks. At the present time we are dealing with the Tory maladministration of the Railway Department. I do not say that any administration, whether of railways or anything else, can prevent mistakes happening, but hon. members opposite have tried to prove that, whilst there are mistakes under Labour Government, they were faultless, and so I am justified in bringing forward the quotations I have made. I would not have done it had it not been for the fact that the hon. member for Wynnum attacked Labour administration. (Opposition interruption.)

Mr. MORGAN: In those days we could get fair reports, but to-day we cannot get good reports.

Mr. CORSER: We cannot get a report later than last year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite come to the Premier and ask him to bring my Estimates on before their ordinary time. I agree, and when the Estimates come on, hon. members squeal about not having the Commissioner's report. This early bringing on of my Estimates was the result of an arrangement with the Opposition.

Mr. MORGAN: Members of the Opposition could get their material from the reports in years gone by.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What the hon. member wants is not information, but castigation and criticism of Labour administration and of the Government.

Mr. MORGAN: No. We want information.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I think the hon. member is not out for results. He wants to see the Government criticised.

Mr. MORGAN: We want information about departmental works.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: These remarks concerning the Auditor-General are hardly worthy of notice, because he is a conscientious and honourable man.

Mr. MORGAN: I was referring to the Under Secretaries' reports.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We hear a good deal about the necessity of making the Commissioner for Railways independent. The hon. member is reflecting on the Commissioner.

Mr. MORGAN: I said nothing about the Commissioner's report. I spoke of the Under Secretaries of the departments.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Who makes the report? Is it not the Commissioner? It is not an Under Secretary.

Mr. MORGAN: You know as well as I do that the Commissioner is not as independent as he was eight years ago.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He is. I have read a good many railway reports, and I have never read a better one than that of last year for its comprehensiveness and the information supplied.

Mr. CORSER: You have told us that you have read this year's report, so it cannot be as good.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is the level of the criticism we have to contend with! Hon. members are defeated in logical argument, and they resort to those little statements which are so suited to them. They know all the while that they are defeated, but like Goldsmith's schoolmaster—
"E'en though vanquish'd, they can argue still."

Mr. MORGAN interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I surely have the right to reply to hon. members. If I refused to reply hon. members would not be satisfied, and when I do reply they are not satisfied. I am conscious of the importance of the Railway Department, and, having studied the problems of railway administration and railway economics, I am justified in placing my views in "Hansard" so that they may be read side by side with the remarks of hon. members opposite. It is not often that I get an opportunity to deal with these matters. The failure to reply might be construed to mean lack of interest in connection with railway administration, railway management, and railway problems.

Hon. members opposite have emphasised the argument that there has been a deficit in railway administration. That is a fact. No one denies it.

Mr. KELSO: It does not trouble you.

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is an ungenerous remark. It does trouble me, as it does trouble the Commissioner, his officers, and members of Parliament, and we are doing all we possibly can to reduce the deficiency, and the figures for last year show that we have done so with some effect. A deficit is not the only test of management. I think it was Pope who said—

“Some figures monstrous and misshaped appear
 Considered singly or beheld too near,
 Which, but proportioned to their time and place
 Due distance reconciles to form and grace.”

The figures considered at a due distance and in proper perspective reconcile a deficit to form and grace. The figures are only monstrous and ill-shapen when considered singly or beheld too near. Let us consider the figures in relation to land administration, agricultural administration, mining administration, and see what an enormous factor the railway service is, and we shall find that there is nothing monstrous or misshapen about the railway deficit at all. I am going to endeavour in the time at my disposal to prove that statement. I want to show hon. members opposite that private enterprise has shown some very great deficiencies lately. Hon. members opposite know that enormous losses have occurred in various parts of the world where there was economic chaos as a result of the war and post-war problems. The economic equilibrium has been disturbed, with the result that there has been chaos and disaster more or less throughout the world. The Railway Department and Government departments are not the only institutions that have been losing money. Let me mention one or two instances. We know that the Broken Hill Proprietary Company during the last year has lost as much as £150,000, and the Mount Morgan Goldmining Company, Limited, during the last two years has lost £100,000. Hon. members opposite cannot seriously argue that those losses are due to mismanagement or incompetency, for they are due to things over which the management has no control. Railway losses are due to difficulties over which the Government have no control, unless we substantially increase fares and freights, and we say that would not be an improvement in our policy.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: You should have encouraged production.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I shall refer to the figures quoted by the hon. member for Warwick concerning tonnage, and I shall show that we carried more tonnage last year than was carried in 1914-15.

Mr. MORGAN: You have bigger engines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: At the present time I am dealing with the question of increased production. I want to show the hon. member for Warwick that the tonnage now shows a satisfactory comparison with that of 1914-15. There was a big amount of traffic carried in 1914 which included departmental freightage, which is not included in the tonnage return for 1922-23. If we took the basis of 1914-15 for purposes of comparison, we would find that the tonnage was greater for the year just closed than

for 1914-15, and was certainly a big improvement on 1921-22.

Mr. MORGAN: There should be an improvement year by year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. Hon. members opposite cannot fairly and reasonably argue that the conditions existing in Queensland now and which have existed for the past few years have been due to any act of the Government. We know that throughout the world the same conditions apply. We know that the dry weather, the depressed markets, and other conditions have hampered many of our industries.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: We have had inflated markets.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take the mining industry. In 1914-15 we carried a larger tonnage of minerals.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: That is a strong indictment against your Government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. gentleman says that is a strong indictment against the Government. What is the position of the copper market? In other States and in other parts of the world the same paralysis exists, and mines are closed down all over the world. That is not confined to Queensland or Australia, but is world-wide. Hon. members realise that, although they do not admit it. They know quite well that the conditions which govern Queensland have been world-wide in their nature and character. Take the United States, the very home of private enterprise; in one year there were 9,000 failures, and the liabilities amounted to 378,000,000 dollars. Will hon. members say that was due to mismanagement? I do not think that they will. The great majority of these failures no doubt were due to world-wide conditions and not to bad management. Let me quote briefly from the report of the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia. The report says, *inter alia*—

“The company is a long way off from being able to show an adequate return on capital invested in railway construction in Western Australia.”

There we have a private railway company showing a loss. We are also aware that a statement was made in the Press a few months ago that the railways of Canada were practically valueless.

The Federal Shipping Line for 1921-22 showed a loss of £1,171,000, and in 1922-23 a further loss of £1,626,000, or a total loss for the two years of £2,797,000 on a capital of £12,700,000.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Wouldn't it be wise for you to compare the railways of the other States and not the shipping?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Would it not be wise for the hon. member to reply to that argument and explain why there was a loss on the Federal Shipping Line in two years of £2,797,000 on a capital of £12,700,000? That is a bigger loss comparatively than was sustained on our railways with a capital of £50,000,000.

Mr. MORGAN: Look at the profits that the Federal Shipping Line made during the war.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite know quite well, from

[Hon. J. Larcombe.]

the viewpoint of logical reasoning, that my conclusions are absolutely sound and fair. I am pointing out how private enterprise and State and national enterprise are all showing losses. Here we have a greater loss comparatively on the £12,700,000 invested in the Federal Shipping Line, controlled by the true blue Tory Administration in the Federal sphere, than there has been on our railways with a capital of £50,000,000.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Stick to the railways.

Mr. KELSO: What about the losses on the State trawler?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Nundah ought to know better than make an interjection like that, because it is only by comparisons that you get a true and fair conception of things. The interjection was most narrow, petty, and unfair. The hon. member knows that they would not tolerate that argument in the Institute of Accountants.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Give the Commissioner goods to carry and he will make the railways pay.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Government are doing all they can to increase production, and doing it well too. Let me point out how the wonderful Federal Tory Government are going to deal with the question of the loss on the Federal Shipping Line. They are going to write down the capital from £12,700,000 to £4,000,000, and probably by this means they will show a surplus next year. Just fancy the Railway Department writing down its capital from £50,000,000 to, say, £16,000,000! We could easily secure a surplus in that way.

Mr. MORGAN: The Federal Shipping Line made a good deal during the war.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They made the losses which I have mentioned. Hon. members opposite cannot reply to those figures. They are in a logical corner.

Mr. MORGAN: You are not dealing with the Railway Estimates.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite know quite well that the deficiency on the railways fades into insignificance compared with the losses on the Federal Shipping Line under the control of the Federal Tory Government.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You might tell us about the losses on the State stations.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If I were permitted, I could deal with the State stations, but I am not. That is a very old trick in political strategy; when you are put into a corner and have little escape, try some feinting tactics, just like a pugilist in a ring.

Mr. KELSO: You are a pastmaster in the art.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not wish to refer to anything extraneous to the subject under discussion. Let me quote to hon. members facts regarding one—the Canadian Shipping Board. They lost in 1921-22 £4,800,000 on a capital of £14,000,000. Good old Tory Government! Good old Tory enterprises! The United States Shipping Board lost £20,000,000 per annum. When we know these facts and figures, and bring to mind all the figures that have been quoted by hon. members opposite, we realise how sound and satisfactory is the railway administration in

Queensland compared with the administration of other bodies which might be mentioned. I do not state that all the losses mentioned are due to mismanagement. I say that they are due to causes over which the managers have no control; they have been caught in the same world-wide stream that engulfed Queensland. I want to emphasise these facts and figures. They leave hon. members opposite with not a feather with which to fly, and with not a semblance of argument to go on with their old criticism on the subject of deficiencies.

I am going to give another chapter from Tory railway deficits in Queensland. (Opposition laughter and dissent.) Hon. members opposite ought to realise that this is a question that should not be dealt with lightly. They have to realise what railway deficits have taken place in other States and countries in other parts of the world. Let me mention here that just two years ago it is announced that in England there was a deficiency of £40,000,000, in France £42,000,000, in the United States £45,000,000, and in Canada, in 1921, a deficiency of £22,000,000.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Why do you not compare Queensland with the other States?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I shall compare Queensland with the other States, but first I intend to take a survey from "China to Peru." I intend to quote from the "Daily Telegraph."

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Deal with Australia (and other interjections).

The CHAIRMAN: Order! During the debate hon. members on the Opposition benches generally have been thirsting for information, and they should now give the Minister an opportunity of furnishing it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The "Daily Telegraph" of 9th May, 1922, dealing with the South African question, states—

"SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS.

"DEFICITS PILING UP.

"Report of Speech by the Minister for Railways, Mr. Jagger.

"The present position of the railways was one of grave concern, deficits for the past year amounting to nearly £2,000,000."

There again we find the same tendency as in England, France, and America. Now let me take New Zealand. In New Zealand, according to the "Daily Telegraph" of 28th July, 1922, a report by the New Zealand Minister for Railways stated that the loss on the railways was approximately £1,000,000 per year. Hon. members will see that we find further Tory Governments in other countries with railway deficiencies. To come back to the Australian States, as hon. members opposite desire, taking the Commonwealth figures for 1921 we find—

	£
"The Commonwealth railways lost	455,000
The Western Australian railways lost	408,000
The South Australian railways lost	561,000
The Victorian railways lost	651,000
The New South Wales railways lost	577,000"

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

We find that all these deficits have taken place in the home of Toryism— [7.30 p.m.] I admit that there has been an improvement in the meantime in the nominal returns for Victoria, and that for the last financial year there was a small surplus, but that was due largely to the increase in the fares and freights which were imposed. Let me give the Victorian deficits for a few years past—

	£
1914	842,000
1915	337,000
1916	337,000
1917	137,000
1918	163,000
1919	212,000
1920-21	651,000

Now let me pass to Western Australia—

	£
1918	289,000
1919	359,000
1920	400,000
1921 (approximately)	400,000

What a record for Toryism! We find in all those countries overseas and in every State in Australia that there have been huge deficits under Tory Administration, and, if we bear in mind that fact when considering the Queensland deficits and considering the criticisms of hon. members opposite, we find there is nothing exceptional in railway deficits. We find them the general order of things throughout the States and throughout the world.

Mr. KELSO: Only in degree.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will give the hon. member some percentages concerning Queensland. The hon. member for Wynnum asked me to go back a bit, and I am going back to 1901—

	Railway Deficit.
	£
1901	630,000
1902	513,000
1903	437,000
1904	387,000

It is staggering to find the enormous deficits that have taken place under Tory Administrations in Queensland. Let me give hon. members the percentages for the various years—

	Percentage of Deficit to Expenditure.
In 1900-1	59.58 per cent.
In 1901-2	51.69 per cent.
In 1902-3	55.30 per cent.
In 1903-4	47.79 per cent.
In 1904-5	34.61 per cent.
In 1922-23	only 31.72 per cent.

What have hon. members to say in reply to those figures? They come here and criticise the Government for having a railway deficiency when it is only 31.72 per cent. of the expenditure as compared with 59.51 per cent. and 55.30 per cent. under their own administration. Hon. members opposite have out-Heroded Herod in the matter of railway deficiencies. Hon. members opposite would carefully conceal these figures, but I have dragged them from obscurity and put them into "Hansard."

Mr. CORSER: There was a big drought in 1901-2.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I admit that is quite true; but war influences and post-war influences and the condition of

the overseas market have seriously handicapped the present Administration. Hon. members opposite will not accept that argument; they will not accept reasons the Government have given from time to time for the railway deficiencies, but they want to bring forward extenuating circumstances for the deficits in 1901 and 1902. I admit that what the hon. member for Burnett says is quite true. Things were bad then, and they had some very dry seasons, but so have we during the last few years. As a matter of fact, no other Government in Queensland was ever overwhelmed with war difficulties, post-war difficulties, drought difficulties, and every other difficulty as the present Administration have been. We have never had a fair "go" while we have been in power. As the "Trustees' Quarterly Review" points out, it is ridiculous to make a comparison with 1914-15 and use it against the present Administration, because the pre-war standards have gone. We have post-war standards, and we have enormously increased costs in railway construction, in railway material, and in other necessary things.

Mr. KERR: It is the same in New South Wales.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is the same in New South Wales, but they have had deficiencies too.

Mr. KERR: They have a surplus.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This year they have a surplus, but they had a long series of deficiencies, and I want to remind the hon. member for Enoggera that in New South Wales they have increased fares and freights to a higher extent than we have in Queensland. Does the hon. member not know that they have a smaller area, a bigger population, and a lesser mileage? He knows, as a student, if he considers all these matters, the enormous advantage that Victoria and New South Wales have over Queensland in the matter of railway administration.

Mr. KELSO: They have a broader gauge and a greater capital cost.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but they have a bigger population to carry that extra capital cost. Hon. members opposite during the election campaign said, "We are going to build more railways; we are not going to dismiss any men; we are not going to reduce wages; we are not going to increase fares and freights; and we are going to bring about a railway surplus." It is impossible for hon. members to do all that they promised and produce a railway surplus.

Mr. KELSO: Give us the net earnings and the percentage on capital.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have given those figures already, and I do not intend to go back. These comparisons reveal many things. They reveal the fact that railway deficiencies exist in all countries—in Tory-governed States and in other parts of the world—and that they existed in Queensland to a greater extent under previous Administrations than has been the case under Labour rule. We must not forget the fact that deficits amounting to £8,000,000 were built up under anti-Labour Administrations in Queensland. When there were no great war influences to deal with, that enormous deficit was built up in this

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

State under an anti-Labour Government. I am not saying whether it is right or wrong that it should have been built up, but it was built up; and, when we hear that fact in mind, we realise there is no fault attachable to the present Government for having railway deficiencies during the last few years. It is not denied by the Government that we have had deficiencies, but we say our opponents had deficiencies also.

Mr. KERR: But taxation was much less then, and they had a general revenue surplus.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That does not affect the question under discussion at all.

Let me deal with the reasons for the deficits. Let me summarise in a few words what I desire to say.

"1. No increase in fares and freights for nearly four years.

"2. Substantial reductions in freights to help the mining, meat, and dairying industries.

"3. Low freights on agricultural produce.

"4. Subsidy on agricultural lines—by meeting losses from Consolidated Revenue.

"5. Comparatively low passenger fares.

"6. Abolition of railway guarantee tax.

"7. Increased working costs—cost of fuel, stores, and material.

"8. Increased wages—better conditions to employees.

"9. Effects of war.

"10. Large area; small population; large railway mileage.

"11. Building for the future as well as the present."

I would like to emphasise point 11—"Building for the future as well as for the present." In our Burnett scheme, on the North Coast line, in the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme, in the Tara-Surat railway and other such schemes, we are building not only for the present but for the future and posterity.

Mr. KELSO: Did not the Tory Government do that too?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Tory Government never conceived such schemes for the people of Queensland as these great schemes I have mentioned. I would like hon. members to point to any land settlement scheme like the Upper Burnett scheme.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I rise to a point of order. The hon. member has challenged us to compare the system of railway construction, and, when we endeavoured to criticise it, we were prevented by the Chairman, who stated it was a matter for discussion on the Loan vote. Is the Minister in order in discussing the Loan vote?

At 7.40 p.m.,

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

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Have we not just let a contract for nearly £400,000 in connection with a sugar-mill? That will help to transform Northern Queensland. By increasing production and

providing increased tonnage for our railways we shall increase the population and prosperity of Queensland.

Having touched upon the reasons for the deficit in Queensland, I want to touch briefly upon one or two of them in detail. First of all, take the increased working costs with respect to the following items:—

Fuel cost—				£
1914-15	...	...	...	215,000
1922-23	...	...	...	401,000
Increase	...	...	...	186,000
Stores and Contingencies—				
1914-15	...	...	...	452,000
1922-23	...	...	...	714,000
Increase	...	...	...	262,000
Salaries and Wages—				
1914-15	...	...	...	1,743,000
1922-23	...	...	...	3,558,000
Increase	...	...	...	1,815,000

Mr. COSTELLO: We are not responsible for that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The increase in the last eight years has been greater than the actual value was in 1914-1915. I say that, owing to the increased cost of living and the way in which the service was starved before the present Government came into power, that increase is justifiable and unavoidable. If you are to have a contented service and harmony and efficiency, you could not have withheld the increases which have been granted.

Mr. KELSO: What about the revenue?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In Queensland the increase in revenue from increased rates has been the lowest in Australia. We have not increased our revenue by means of increased freights and fares every year.

The hon. member for Burnett referred to the matter of the increased cost of material. I want to give the reason why those increases took place. It was due largely to the increased prices of stores and material. In 1915 the percentage increases for the following items were:—

Item.	Percentage of Increase.
Flat-spring steel	223
Steel plates	144
Wire nails	118
Mild steel bar	104
Barbed wire	103
Cement	61
Rails	63
Coal	87

Can any hon. member seriously read those figures and then say that a comparison with 1914-1915 is fair to use against the present Government? I have here a circular which was issued by the Victorian Government to justify their increases in fares and freights, in which they point out the enormous increases which have taken place in the past two years in Australia. They give reasons similar to what have been given here in Queensland.

Mr. KERR: Do they justify it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They justify the increase in fares and freights. I can understand the hon. member

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

for Enoggera being favourable to increased fares and freights.

Mr. KERR: I did not say so at all.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I understood the hon. member for Enoggera to say so yesterday.

Mr. KERR: You cannot show me where I said it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I can give the hon. member the speeches of other hon. members opposite, and I will do so.

Let me mention the matter of the repeal of the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act. This is an aspect of our railway administration that we should take pride in. We have saved in revenue the sum of £2,736,357 as the result of the repeal of the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act. That has been a bold policy, yet the revenue has suffered to that amount.

Mr. CORSER: That is the Country party's policy.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The true Country party—the Labour Government—repealed those provisions.

Mr. CORSER: In what year did you repeal them? Did you repeal them in 1913?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There was no repeal before the Labour Government came into power. The Labour Government repealed the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We voluntarily surrendered that enormous revenue that I mention. Hon. members opposite cannot deny those facts.

Mr. TAYLOR: Show the losses in revenue which have occurred through the repeal of the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will give the figures supplied to me by the department with regard to the losses—

LOSS TO REVENUE.			£
1912-13	...	...	57,214
1913-14	...	...	83,409
1914-15	...	...	79,734
1915-16	...	...	120,000
1916-17	...	...	191,000
1917-18	...	...	296,000
1918-19	...	...	345,000
1919-20	...	...	350,000
1920-21	...	...	354,000
1921-22	...	...	470,000
1922-23	...	...	390,000
Total	...	...	£2,736,357

It is true, as the hon. member for Enoggera says, that it is a matter of policy, and the Government, rather than continue that most unfair class tax, repealed it, but we sacrificed an enormous revenue thereby.

Mr. KING: What about the Belmont tramway? Will you take that over?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a matter I cannot discuss at present.

Mr. KERR: Do you know that the Enoggera guaranteed railway paid you about 10 per cent. or 11 per cent.?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not speaking of the lines that pay. I am speaking now of the losses on the lines that were guaranteed and that are not

paying now. We are losing £2,736,357 which we would have got had we pursued the policy of the party opposite and continued the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act.

Mr. CORSER: You imposed a land tax and got over £2,000,000 by it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Railway Department has nothing to do with the land tax. Further, there is a substantial exemption in connection with the land tax, whereas the railway guarantee was an iniquitous tax, imposed on every producer in a district without any exemption. Let me pass on to other important points.

I have given the increased working costs and the loss of revenue through the repeal of the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act, and I want to give the concessions in freight which the Government have been responsible for during the last twelve months in the dairying, cattle, and various other industries I have mentioned. The freights on cattle, frozen beef, pigs, cream, fodder, starving stock, and dairy products were all reduced by the Government, and our loss was over £200,000 during the last financial year because of that reduction. Will hon. members opposite say we did wrong? We lost that amount of revenue, but the country was in difficulties, the farmers were suffering, and that assistance enabled those producers to remain on their farms, and the concession was absolutely justifiable.

Let me give another reason for the deficiency. Take the branch agricultural lines. In 1914 there were fifty, in 1922-23 there were seventy-eight. The mileage in 1914 was 2,292, and in 1923 it was 2,268. The capital invested in 1914 was £14,000,000 and in 1922-23 it was £21,000,000. The loss last year on these branch agricultural lines was over £1,000,000. So that hon. members will see that an enormous proportion of our deficiency is caused by the losses on agricultural lines which are doing so much to provide settlement and develop the country. It is, as it were, a subsidy for country development, and I ask hon. members to bear in mind that the New South Wales anti-Labour Government are even now contemplating the passing of legislation which will have the effect of giving to the Railway Commissioners every year an amount approximating the losses on the agricultural lines. That is to say, if the deficiency on such railways amounts to £1,000,000 a year, the Government will pay to the Commissioners £1,000,000 as part of their revenue. They contemplate adopting the policy which we have been pursuing in Queensland for years but which hon. members opposite repudiate, but the wisdom of which the Tory Government of New South Wales have been forced by pressure of circumstances to realise. I ask hon. members to bear in mind these things—the loss of revenue by reason of the repeal of the guarantee provisions of the Railways Act, the loss of revenue because of the freight concessions I have mentioned, the agricultural line subsidy, the increases in wages and prices of fuel and material. All these things are very important as bearing on railway administration if we are to get a correct perspective and a true sense of proportion in our analysis of the railway position. As a matter of fact, rightly understood, there is no railway deficiency at all. It amounts to a subsidy for State development. Take the expenditure on education. Do hon. members opposite seriously contend that the

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

Department of Public Instruction should pay or show a profit? We go on year after year spending over £1,000,000 on education, for which we get no direct return nor any profit in the same sense as a private educational institution does. But we get an indirect profit—the education of the boys and girls, which is an enormous asset, and enables us to pay that sum of £1,000,000 annually without any direct return. The railways stand in a similar relation to our community. They may not give us a direct return, but agricultural settlement, land development, mining, and all other phases of State policy are inextricably bound up with railway policy and give us an enormous indirect return for our railway expenditure.

Let me call to my aid the "Daily Telegraph" in support of my contention. On the 8th November last it said, *inter alia*, in a sub-leader—

"There is a sense in which the present Minister for Railways is right: the railway is a public benefit and not all its prime cost should be recouped directly by revenue."

There is an opinion that railways should not be asked to recoup to the revenue all the expenditure they involve in the way which is suggested by some hon. members opposite.

Just let me give one quotation in conclusion on this point from the deputy leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Oxley, who, speaking in the Assembly in February, 1921, stated—

"We know quite well that in matters of finance, in matters of making our railways and such like institutions pay, the question of immigration is of vital importance, and to contemplate a state of such dimensions, with such a scattered population, that in my judgment clearly gives the reason why so many of our enterprises fail at the present time."

Mr. KELSO: Are the Government carrying out that policy?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Of course. We have provided for it in our Burnett scheme and other schemes. People will come here, attracted by the law of superior advantage, from all other parts of the world.

Now I want to mention another reason for the deficiency. I want to show how our policy in regard to fares and freights compares with that of other States. When the question was raised yesterday by the hon. member for Murilla, he said that passenger fares did not count, that in the country it was only freight rates that counted. I want to say that at least 30 per cent. of our revenue comes from passenger fares, which therefore are a very important consideration. The Government have been considering the women and children of Western Queensland by allowing a 50 per cent. reduction on excursion fares once a year to enable them to get away on a holiday. Our railways suffer in revenue by reason of that fact.

Mr. KELSO: Do you not think that there is an increased revenue because of it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think so. More people may travel, but on the whole the revenue will suffer. Let me give a comparison of the first-class

fares for distances of 200 miles in the different States—

	£	s.	d.
Queensland	1	12	0
New South Wales	2	3	11
Victoria	1	17	9
South Australia	1	19	3
Western Australia	1	13	4
Tasmania	2	1	0

There we find that in the important consideration of passenger fares Queensland stands lowest in Australia. That is a fact we should appreciate and be proud of, for the users of our railways are entitled to the lowest fares we can afford. Then take the second-class figures for the same distance—

	£	s.	d.
Queensland	1	0	6
New South Wales	1	7	3
Victoria	1	5	0
South Australia	1	6	0
Western Australia	1	0	10
Tasmania	1	7	6

There we see the advantage that Queensland again has over other States, and, if we increased passenger fares and showed a surplus on the railways, it would only be transferring the burden which we are now imposing on the wealthy members of the community and placing it on the users of the railways, who in many cases would be men and women living in the outback portions of Queensland. I am not going to give the whole of the figures in comparing freights and fares in the various States, but I want to say something about freights. On cattle the freight per 100 miles is as follows:—

	s.	d.
Western Australia	12	6
Victoria	11	1
New South Wales	10	11
South Australia	10	9
Queensland	8	2
(or, with the 30 per cent. reduction now given) ...	5	8

So we see that the cattle-owners of Queensland are at a great advantage as compared with those in the other States. So are the sheepmen and so are the dairymen, because our freights on sheep, cream, and agricultural produce are the lowest in Australia. All these facts, combined with the fact that the increases in our fares and freights since 1914 have been the lowest in Australia, and that the revenue has increased as a result of increased fares and freights, have an important bearing on the question of railway administration. I quite understand that it is not possible for hon. members to grasp all these figures, even if they so desire, but my object is not particularly to speak to members of the Committee so much as to place these figures in "Hansard" so that a comparison can be made. The information is valuable to members of the Government party as well as to other members of the Committee who may desire to peruse it.

Now I come to the important question of the Opposition's way out of the railway deficiency. I want briefly to indicate what hon. members opposite think should be done in order to produce a railway surplus. Let me quote first from a speech of the hon. member for Warwick, reported in "Hansard" for 1917, pages 2759 and 2760—

"He was afraid that they were shirking to a large extent the real point which ought to receive first consideration from the Committee. He contended that

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

the railways should be made to pay. He believed that the only proper way of achieving the end the Commissioner and the Government should have in view was by an all-round increase in fares and freights."

And then the Hon. J. G. Appel, speaking in September, 1918, as reported in "Hansard," page 2542, said—

"Speaking as a country member he would have no objection to an increase of freights provided every member of the community was treated in the same way. They wished to see them pay, and, if necessary, the freights would have to be increased in order to enable that end to be achieved."

Hon. J. G. APPEL: And did I not advocate that this administration of the railways should be left in the hands of the Commissioner?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is part of the policy the hon. member thought was necessary in order to make the railways pay. Now let me quote from the Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin" of 11th July, 1923. *Inter alia*, the editor wrote—

"Why should these producers and these users of the railways have received this 'subsidy,' as Mr. Larcombe terms it? Why should there have been this preferential treatment? It is not given in aught else. A user of any other public utility has to pay his share of what that public utility costs and generally a little over. Because he is a producer he does not get the service for less than the man who does not come within that category."

"But what excuse is there for giving a 'subsidy' to the man who has been long years on the land, who never from the beginning had any struggle worth speaking of, and who, all the time, has been reaping a rich harvest from his labours?"

That is the viewpoint given by the "Morning Bulletin," and that is a viewpoint with which I disagree. Many of the settlers on the land have not had a rich harvest, and it would be unsound and even cruel at the [8 p.m.] present time to increase fares and freights upon country users. The leader of the Opposition, speaking in 1921, is reported in "Hansard" as saying—

"The Minister, on the previous evening, had referred to his (Mr. Taylor's) advocacy, some considerable time ago, of an increase in fares and freights. He was exactly in the same position to-day with regard to fares and freights. His opinion was that, before many months had gone by, fares and freights would have to be raised again."

"The Secretary for Railways: I said that our proportionate increase in the last five years was the lowest."

"Mr. TAYLOR: He believed that statement was correct, but under present conditions, and under the burden they were carrying, they did not want their freights and fares to be the lowest."

"The Secretary for Railways: That is where I differ from you."

"Mr. TAYLOR: The Minister might differ from him as much as he pleased. As he went on he would endeavour to show why he held that opinion."

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

Further on in the same volume of "Hansard" the leader of the Opposition is reported as saying—

"The Secretary for Railways: Yes, we are assisting to develop Queensland by keeping down fares and freights. We could make up that deficit in no time if we increased the fares and freights."

"Mr. TAYLOR: The Government should increase them."

"The Secretary for Railways: It would handicap production."

"Mr. TAYLOR: It would not."

"Mr. Winstanley: Your argument is that the money should be taken from the pockets of the primary producers."

"Mr. TAYLOR: He believed in paying for services rendered. If services were rendered to any individual in the community, that individual had a right to pay for those services."

At 8.2 p.m.,

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

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I think those quotations show that hon. members opposite stand for increasing fares and freights in Queensland as a way to eliminate the railway deficiency. That is not a sound method. It would only intensify the position instead of removing any evil that may exist.

I want now to reply to some other remarks made by hon. members opposite during this debate. I have taken up considerable time in dealing with various points, but I want to get those points into "Hansard."

Mr. DASH: It is quite necessary.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am giving facts and statistics, and not merely statements and arguments by myself personally or by any other member of this Government. I want these facts to be read by the readers of "Hansard" so that they can get a more correct appreciation of railway administration than they have had in the past. We know quite well that there is not much likelihood of the Press generally reporting in full the reports on railway administration. Only a fragmentary appreciation can be obtained by reading Press reports.

The hon. member for Burrum referred to what he termed the shocking housing accommodation provided for railway men, and the hon. member for Townsville very properly mentioned that those houses were built by hon. members opposite when they were on this side. They were built by their Government when they were in power and had charge of the railway administration.

Mr. MAXWELL: Why perpetuate it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are not. I will tell the hon. gentleman what we are doing. During the last four years we have spent approximately £50,000 on accommodation for railway employees. Compare that with what has been done by hon. members opposite. During the last three years that they were in office they spent only £10,000. Now hon. members opposite complain of the want of attention to the accommodation for railway fettlees and others.

Mr. MAXWELL: "The Railway Advocate" tuned you up for the way you are going on."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: "The Railway Advocate" tunes the hon.

gentleman up occasionally. Has the hon. gentleman read the complimentary remarks that have been said about me from time to time? No. He refers to one or two pieces of criticism. He does not read any of the letters of appreciation that I receive from time to time from the railway service of Queensland. Let me now deal with one or two other points. It will be a long time before the Opposition ask for the Railway Estimates to be brought on again out of their order. (Laughter.) I think they will be quite prepared in future to allow the Railway Estimates to be taken in their proper order.

Mr. CORSER: We do not mind you stonewalling them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have cut down my notes to a minimum. (Laughter.)

Mr. KELSO: Your speech will go down to posterity.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The time I have given to this matter has not been more than the seriousness and the importance of railway administration warrants. Hon. members opposite would not expect me to sit down and listen to their criticism for two or three days without replying.

Mr. TAYLOR: You have taken the wind out of the sails of the Secretary for Public Works.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Burrum complained that coal was conveyed from Ipswich to the Gympie district, whereas he argued that coal should have been purchased from Howard. The hon. member overlooked the fact that the coal from Bundamba cost the department 20s. 2d. per ton, and the coal from Howard cost 27s. 7d. per ton. How could you expect the Railway Department to pay that difference of 7s. 5d.?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: A few years ago the department sent coal from Bundamba beyond Maryborough.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The department takes the basic price of coal and then considers the freight, and makes the best possible bargain. That is done by the Commissioner.

Mr. ROBERTS: There was another reason for getting the coal from Bundamba.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Burrum also referred to excursion trains in the Childers district, and stated that the Railway Department had given the monopoly to the Australian Labour party in that district in connection with running trains during the summer season. Such an unfair statement is absolutely incorrect. No such monopoly has been given. The Australian Labour party in that district has only been placed on the same footing as any other organisation. I would not have dealt with this matter only that the statement was made unwarrantably, and I want to give it a denial. The hon. member also spoke about the quality of the coal. The department has appointed coal viewers to examine the coal at the pit head, with the result that there has been a considerable improvement in the quality of the coal used by the department. The department has issued a guide to locomotive men, giving instructions as to the

method of firing, and giving many other hints. As the result of that action there has been substantial economy effected in the coal consumption.

On this question the Commissioner has furnished me with a report from which I quote this extract—

“The efforts made to lessen the consumption of coal have resulted in a reduction from 57.2 cwt. to 54.2 cwt. per 100 engine miles during the past twelve months, the difference being equivalent to about 21,000 tons of coal, worth over £22,000.”

That is an indication that there has been no laxity, and that the Commissioner, his officers, and the whole of the staff are anxious to economise and bring about the best possible results for the department.

The hon. member for Burnett spoke of the condition of the engines, carriages, wagons, and stations. He said the department should look to their rolling-stock and stations. Such a remark would lead to the conclusion that the Railway Department was lax in attending to engines, carriages, wagons, and stations. As a matter of fact, this matter is carefully followed by the Commissioner and his officers. I have a report here dated 9th July last, which I called for, dealing with engines, carriages, wagons, and stations. The Commissioner in that report said that the engines, carriages, wagons, and stations are in a better state of preservation to-day than they were in 1914. Although no parade is made of the attention given to these matters, attention is constantly given to them, and a report is called for from time to time, and an indication given to the Minister and the Cabinet by the Commissioner as to the condition of the rolling-stock, stations, and all other such matters.

Mr. KELSO: Did he mention 1914?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He mentioned 1914, because I asked for a report in consequence of the remarks of hon. members opposite last year. It was stated then that the engines, carriages, wagons, and stations in 1914 were in a much better state of repair than they were in 1922.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: They have all just recently been painted.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The report is dated July last, and the Commissioner and his officers say that no less attention is given to these matters to-day than was the case in 1914. The Commissioner and his officers are anxious to preserve the engines, carriages, wagons, and stations.

There have been many other points mentioned during the discussion, but I will not touch upon them now. I can assure hon. members that they will receive careful consideration. It is the policy of the officers of the department to have the remarks of hon. members carefully analysed, and if convenient, we do not hesitate to act upon them. (Hear, hear!)

Question put and passed.

SOUTHERN DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I beg to move—

“That £2,995,897, be granted for ‘Southern Division.’”

Hon. J. Larcombe.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): After listening to the remarks of the Minister one would not like to refer again to railway matters. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) I do not think for a moment that he has defended the whole position.

The CHAIRMAN: Order

Mr. KERR: I am going to discuss a matter in regard to the administration so far as it relates to the Southern Division. I want to refer to the metropolitan traffic, and I will refrain from touching on the Chief Office. Anyone who has travelled for a number of years over the suburban lines must admit that the facilities are totally insufficient to meet the requirements of the community.

Mr. PEASE: It is all right out at Northgate.

Mr. KELSO: You live out there.

Mr. PEASE: I have never had one late train.

Mr. KERR: The conditions have only to be examined during the busy part of the day at Central Station to recognise that everything in this connection is not as it should be.

Mr. PEASE: You are wrong.

Mr. KERR: The conveniences do not meet the requirements. Another system is necessary in order that those requirements can be wholly met. I am not going to say that people are waiting on the station to be taken to their homes in the suburbs—that would be untrue. At the same time travellers at certain hours of the day have to suffer because the trains are overcrowded.

Mr. PEASE: Have you ever been in a tram-car?

Mr. KERR: I am not talking about tram cars.

Mr. PEASE: You ought to compare the railways with the trams under private enterprise.

Mr. KERR: The tramways are not under the administration of the Commissioner, although his secretary is chairman of the Trust. I do not want to tackle this question from the point of mismanagement. In my opinion the very best is being done to cope with the situation.

I want to direct the attention of the Minister to a question which is of vital importance to Brisbane and the metropolitan area. When speaking previously on this question, I mentioned the fact that a large amount of the revenue of the railways—possibly between 70 per cent. and 80 per cent—comes from the metropolitan area of Brisbane—that is within a radius of 25 miles. If that is so, and the trains are overcrowded and the system is unable to cope with the situation, it is reasonable to ask the Government to take further steps to meet the situation. I am not going to weary the House with figures after the speech of the Minister, as the hon. gentleman made an effort to prove practically everything from his point of view. I am going to quote a few figures to show that my demand—and it is a demand—should receive the consideration of this Government. I do not want to go into the question of the deficit or the over-capitalisation of the railways. If it is a fact that my proposals will mean a greater capitalisation and a greater deficit, it is time that another Government came into office to try and deal with the question. If that event happened, money

that has been unwisely expended would not be expended in those channels but would be spent in reproductive works. That is the whole question in a nutshell, but I have no desire to discuss it now. I have given a good deal of thought to the question that I have raised, and I asked the Minister recently—

“In view of the electrification of the suburban railways of Victoria, have the Government any policy in this connection so far as Queensland is concerned?”

The answer of the Minister was—

“No action is contemplated in this direction at present.”

Considering the way that Brisbane, as the capital city, has progressed during the last few years, I am justified on behalf of my constituents in asking for a better system to meet the requirements of the people residing in the suburbs. I have taken at random from the report of the Commissioner certain figures since 1914. I want first of all to take a station in my electorate, Alderley. The statistics show that since 1914 the number of passengers, exclusive of season-ticket holders—I emphasise that—has increased by 81,000. Indooroopilly, another station in my electorate, has increased its traffic during the same period by 117,000. The figures show that the traffic from Eagle Junction has increased by 186,000, Yeronga by 62,000, Manly by 49,000, and Nundah by 79,000.

Mr. PEASE: You are not the member for Nundah.

Mr. KERR: I know that.

Mr. PEASE: But you say that these stations are in your electorate.

Mr. KERR: I am here not only to represent my own electorate—I look after that all right—I am here to represent the interests of Queensland as a whole. I hope that I am not so narrow that I only look after my own electorate. I realise that the metropolitan area, within a radius of perhaps 10 miles from Brisbane, is paying a very handsome return to the Railway Department. Were that not so, we should not be able to make many of our extensions or to build railways into the country where they are badly required. I am not placing country against city; I merely want to point out that the metropolitan area is providing revenue that enables us to keep our country railways going. Let me take the guaranteed railways. Through effluxion of time, the guarantee on the railway from Mayne Junction to Enoggera has expired. The railway was opened on 5th February, 1899, and was guaranteed under the Railways Guarantee Act of 1895. The guarantee lapsed through effluxion of time on 4th February, 1913. There was no occasion for that guarantee, because the line paid £5 19s. 5d. per cent.—a handsome return. In 1914 it paid handsomely. Since that date the number of passengers has gone up by 197 per cent., and the revenue has increased by 152 per cent. That refers to traffic to Alderley. Enoggera traffic has increased slightly. Enoggera and Alderley conjointly—and this is applicable to every other section of the metropolitan area—have increased by 134 per cent. in their passenger traffic, by 264 per cent. in the amount received from passengers, and 204 per cent. in the amount of revenue outwards. If it was paying a handsome return of nearly 6 per cent. in 1914 and there have been further increases—even taking into consideration the additional

[*Hon. J. Larcombe.*]

working expenses—I estimate that the line to Enoggera is paying in the vicinity of 9 per cent. or 10 per cent. to-day. The line has been capitalised from £54,110, when it ran to Enoggera, to £480,844 in 1922 after the extension was made. The loss in working to-day is on account of the addition of the Dayboro section. Dayboro is a country district and is entitled to the railway. I do not think that we should debar the country districts from having a railway, but the city people should carry a portion of the burden of taxation incurred by the extension. To-day we are losing £30,129 on that railway. There has been a duplication from Mayne Junction to Newmarket and £59,000 was voted towards carrying out the work. That extra duplication has capitalised the railways a little more.

We should endeavour to overcome the overcrowding that now exists on our suburban railways to avoid having such a number of people having to stand for considerable distances when travelling in our trains. I think the policy of the Government is wrong in this matter. No benefit will accrue so long as the Government continue their policy of taking no action in this connection. Now, I am not here to make love to the Government. (Government laughter.)

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: You are a flirt.

Mr. KERR: I am here to advance reasons why the Government should carry out improvements on the railways. If the Government in their wisdom are financially embarrassed, that is their "pigeon," and the people should not suffer for it. The Government should set about instituting a cheaper system for the metropolitan area. The advantages would be numerous. At present there are 27,000,000 passengers carried in Queensland annually, and of that number 70 per cent. to 80 per cent. are carried in the metropolitan area. I am speaking on behalf of that area and from an economical point of view. More duplications and more stations are required. We need a station between Taringa and Indooroopilly. We need a duplication of the Enoggera railway. The Alderley station is insufficient for the present requirements. It is unfortunately placed, and there is a likelihood every day of an accident occurring there; the platform is too low. The difficulties of the Enoggera line have not been overcome. I realise that the attention of the administration depends upon the financial policy of the Government—consequently the attention that was necessary has not been given.

In 1912 a Commission was appointed in Victoria with a view to considering the electrification of Victorian suburban railways. The result was that the system was adopted. The original estimate was somewhere in the region of £2,250,000, inclusive of powerhouse and equipment. For nine years they have been progressing in this work. I believe the original length was to be 143 miles, and over 100 miles have already been constructed. They have converted certain carriages, and the additional efficiency, judging from a perusal of reports, is remarkable. There are other important factors. A more frequent service is established, therefore people do not have to stand up in the trains as they are doing here to-day. The cost is less; especially does this reflect itself in regard to off hours. Instead of six cars being in use, they have reduced the number to four. Then there is automatic signalling and a higher

speed. There is a saving in every half hour of four or five minutes, which would be of great assistance to our Commissioner in his metropolitan policy.

Perhaps it is not fair to make a comparison between Brisbane and the larger cities of the world. I have here a plan of the underground railways of London, and, if hon. members have not seen it, they may look at this plan. I am not suggesting that we should start an underground system. It will probably be fifty years before that is needed, but the time is opportune for improving our present system. I ask the

[8.30 p.m.] Minister, with a view to altering our present system, to go to the South side at a busy hour of the day, to go to Brunswick Street, or to Roma Street. Everyone knows that Roma Street Station is not pleasing to the eye. Go to the Central Station at a busy time of the day, and I am sure the Minister will come to the conclusion that some alteration is necessary to enable the Commissioner to handle his traffic in a proper manner; yet the Government say they have no policy in this connection.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: Who said they have no policy?

Mr. KERR: The Minister, in reply to a question of mine, said no action is contemplated at the present time. I would like the Minister to indicate to the Committee whether he is not of the opinion that the people who contribute the revenue should have greater consideration. We have a precedent not only in other parts of the world but in other parts of Australia. Although our population may be small as compared with that of Melbourne, we have to remember that we have 70,000,000 passengers in Queensland, and the trains in the metropolitan area are well patronised. Electricity is becoming more popular every day, and, instead of building a further deviation from Mayne to Newmarket at a cost of £60,000, we would be well advised to convert our railways to an electric system. The return would justify it. The short electric lines in Melbourne are paying a great deal more than interest and working expenses, and we are justified in seeking progress in this connection. I have given this matter a good deal of consideration, and I commend the proposal to the Minister, and trust that he will give an assurance that this question will not be overlooked by the Government. I sincerely hope that he will give it the attention its importance deserves.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): In dealing with the administration of the railways I must refer to a remark made by the Minister. He claims that the amount debited to the Railway Department for loss on railways built under the guarantee principle, since they have been constructed, amounted to over £2,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Since the repeal of the Act.

Mr. CORSER: That makes it worse; because since the Government have been in power—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not wish to block the hon. member, but he will hardly be in order in traversing a statement made on a previous vote.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister claims that over £2,000,000 was lost on the few railways that were built under the guarantee. How can that be possible when on the whole

Mr. Corser.]

railway administration during that time there was a total loss of only £3,000,000. I do not know how he made his computation. How can we be expected to take his figures as correct?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The computation was made by the Minister and his officers.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister wishes to take credit for wiping that off.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say it is a loss to the Government.

Mr. CORSER: It is made up in another way. The Government introduced other taxation to make it good.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will not pursue that line of argument.

Mr. CORSER: It has been claimed that the wiping out of the guarantee is to the credit of this Administration.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have already ruled that the hon. member is not in order on this vote in replying to any criticism offered on a previous vote. If the hon. gentleman wishes to reply to the Minister, he should have risen when the Minister resumed his seat.

Mr. CORSER: I am not saying this in criticism of the Minister at all. I say for the information of the Committee that it is just as well, particularly as there are so many new members who were not here in 1914, to remember that the abolition of the guarantee—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not going to get round my ruling in that fashion. If the hon. member refers to it any further, I will ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. CORSER: I was only going to say that I moved the abolition of the guarantee, but I am not going to say it now. Fourteen on the Government side voted against it and only seven supported our party.

The CHAIRMAN: Order: Will the hon. member address the chair?

Mr. WRIGHT: How did the present Secretary for Railways vote on that question?

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member knows that I would be out of order in answering that question. It is just as disorderly for hon. members on the other side to interject as it is for me to take any notice of them. Since I am not permitted to pursue that argument—since I am not permitted to say that I first moved the abolition—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member does not obey my ruling, I will deal with him. I hope I shall not have to call him to order again. The hon. member knows sufficient of parliamentary practice to know that he has an opportunity of dealing with that matter if he so wishes.

Mr. CORSER: We are not able to deal with the administration of the traffic, maintenance, and locomotive branches, involving an expenditure of nearly £3,000,000, as we should, owing to the fact that we have not got the Commissioner's report.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You asked for the Railway Estimates to be brought on.

Mr. CORSER: We asked for the Estimates and the Minister said he was ready. He was ready but his report was not. He went through the report himself and said it was the most complimentary report the Govern-

ment ever received, but nobody else knows anything about it. We have to accept that statement because we have no knowledge of the report. We cannot deal with the vote as we should because the Minister has not provided us with the report of the Commissioner.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You always get it in October.

Mr. CORSER: We are supposed to get it when the Minister claims he is ready. I was going to deal with the guarantee principle, but as I am not permitted to deal with that question I will not say it was the fault of the Government that it was not abolished long before, because fourteen Labour members voted with Mr. Denham against my motion for abolition in 1914.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*): In reply to the hon. member for Enoggera I want to say that the Government are not viewing lightly the question of the electrification of the metropolitan and suburban railway service, but it is financially impossible for us to take any action at the present time. In Victoria they have a very small area, a very big population, and a very big revenue. They certainly have electrified portions of the metropolitan system, but it has been a very costly job. It has cost at least 100 per cent. more than the original estimate. Queensland, with its small population, large mileage, and a £50,000,000 capitalisation, is not able immediately to consider the question of the electrification of our railways.

Regarding the question of handling the traffic and over crowding, that is a complaint that frequently arises, not only in Queensland, but in other parts of Australia. I have a letter written to the Brisbane "Courier" last year concerning the overcrowding of trains. It is rather a complimentary letter and is written by Mr. William L'Estrange. In this letter he points out that the overcrowding in Queensland in the metropolitan area is no greater than it is in other States in Australia, and certainly was not as great as on the tram system at that time. The question of providing adequate accommodation for passengers will always receive careful consideration. The Commissioner stated a few days ago that 260,000,000 passengers have been handled on the railways without any accident resulting from defective rolling-stock. That is a very fine record, and shows that very often charges of "dangerous rolling-stock" are made without real justification. I will have the question of the electrification of the metropolitan and suburban services inquired into and an approximate cost made out, but I do not want to mislead the Committee. I do not want any hon. member to think there is any possibility, during the currency of the present Parliament at any rate, that we shall be able to electrify our services in the metropolitan and suburban areas.

Mr. KERR: Will you publish the report?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL DIVISION.

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

"That £827,076 be granted for 'Central Division.'"

Question put and passed.

[Mr. Corser.]

NORTHERN DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I beg to move—

“That £916,554 be granted for ‘Northern Division.’”

Question put and passed.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

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

“That £22,630 be granted for ‘Department of Public Works—Chief Office.’”

This is a decrease of £88 on last year's vote. If there is any matter in regard to which hon. members desire information, I shall be very pleased to give it.

HON. W. H. BARNES (Wynnum): There are one or two matters about which we should get some information at this juncture. The Minister is unlike the Secretary for Railways, who supplied us very fully with information. The Secretary for Public Works, apparently, is going to proceed on opposite lines and ask us to fish out information for ourselves. We would like to know what the personal expenses of the Minister himself have been in connection with the department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will give you that now—£607 2s. 1d.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am very much obliged to the hon. gentleman. I at one time had the honour of presiding over this department, and during all the years I was there the probability is that my total expenses with that and other departments did not amount to that sum. One can quite understand why there has been such a desire to keep this kind of information back.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Of course, the question of value enters into it. (Laughter.)

HON. W. H. BARNES: That adds to the enormity of the offence. (Laughter.) If the general public had to gauge the value, we know what the decision would be. The hon. gentleman may be very good in some directions, but it is just as well that he should be advised or he may get very vain.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If I got very vain, I would be merely following your example.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It will be a happy day for the Minister, and it will be a good day for the State, when he follows my example. The Department of Public Works has to do with the question of the employment of labour, which is a very vital matter just now, and notwithstanding the fact that there is an Act under which unemployment is relieved, it is patent that there is a very large number of unemployed people to-day, and the position is becoming exceedingly acute. I do not know the real reason for it. There may be some reason which the Minister can explain. The fact remains that a great number of people find themselves without work, and I cannot conceive of anything more distressing than men being unable to get work.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: They are coming here from New South Wales.

HON. W. H. BARNES: This is a Ministry of excuses. The Assistant Minister, who has recently entered the Cabinet, says that they

are coming from New South Wales. That may be so, but we know of people who have been resident in Queensland for a great many years who unfortunately find themselves out of work. This is one of the things which we ought to tackle in earnest and see if there is any way out of the difficulty.

It is of interest to know what the attitude of the department is likely to be in connection with buildings in the future. First of all, I would refer to the Hamilton cold stores, to which the following reference was made in the report of the Department of Public Works in 1922:—

“Estimated cost: Buildings, £125,000; refrigerating machinery, electric plant, expansion piping, conveyor, etc., £75,000; wharf, £34,000; railway siding, £21,500; total, £255,000.

* * * *

“The office block is nearing completion, and the cold storage and machinery buildings are in course of construction. All reinforced piles are driven, the reinforced concrete floor of the compressor house and the machine beds are cast, and a commencement has been made with pouring the flat-slab ground floor of the storage chambers and the walls of the compressor house.”

The total expenditure to 30th June, 1923, was £211,097. I would like to ask the Minister if he anticipates getting the Hamilton cold stores completed for the estimated cost.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We are entitled to the fullest information, because charges have been made in previous discussions on these Estimates that there has been a good deal of mismanagement in connection with those stores.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is not so.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We were told about purchases which were made which were not necessary.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You are referring to Mr. Fletcher's statement about cork board. That was explained last year.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It may have been explained last year, but we want to know, quite apart from that, if either too much or too little was purchased.

Let me draw attention to another fact. We are told that the Government have been finding it difficult to obtain stone for the completion of the Treasury Buildings block from independent sources, and that they have been successful in getting hold of a quarry which is going to give them a very large supply. We would like the Minister to take us into his confidence—we ought to be told—as to the cost, and whether the estimated supply is likely to be obtained and, generally, if the stone is such that the building is going to be carried out for the estimate. I notice in the report of the department that the estimated amount to complete the block is £230,000. I would like to know whether an estimate was prepared in the usual way by the department before the building was entered upon, because I think the Committee ought to know whether it is likely to be completed within the amount stipulated in the estimate. These are days in which a good deal of correspondence and

Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

discussion are taking place with regard to day labour and contract. The Government's policy is day labour, nevertheless it is only right that we should know for purposes of comparison what the estimate was and whether it is likely to be exceeded. I admit that the intentions of the Government are to erect it by day labour, but we have the right to know how long it is likely to take and how long it will be before the building will be available for occupation.

The Works Department, as I have pointed out previously, has not made much progress since the days of the Denham Government. The progress has not been at all satisfactory in the respect I shall proceed to indicate. The cost of building has gone up very materially, but the amount expended by the department has not been at all commensurate with the increase in the cost of building. In other words, I make the charge to-night that the public works have been starved, at any rate so far as expenditure out of revenue is concerned, and there is not the amount of building going on from revenue that there should be. I admit that there has been some extra expenditure from the Loan Fund, but from a revenue point of view there has been distinct starvation. I know that there is a desire on the part of many people, including members of Parliament, for new schools in one direction or another, and we ought to know in these days of increased revenue whether the majority of the buildings are to be erected from revenue or from loan. I hope we shall get information to the effect that the starvation I have mentioned is not going to continue.

Before I sit down I wish to ask another question in connection with the new system of dealing with the unemployed after they have been in the State for a certain period. I think I have a right to know how the system is working—whether the contributions which are being made by the various parties have been very great—whether the Government think the amount which they are likely to receive will be sufficient to meet the demands made on the fund. We notice all round a tendency to make increased levies upon the people, and I would like to know whether the workers are likely to have to pay an increased levy to meet the requirements of that fund. I know, of course, that if increased revenue is required from them, it will be required from other sources also. The matter is such a vital one that I think the Minister should take the Committee into his confidence. He should also let us know whether the demands which are going to be made in other directions for relief are likely to continue, so that we can judge whether on the whole the demands of the Government as a result of unemployment are going to be increased or decreased.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Outdoor relief comes under the Home Department.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I admit that it is a Home Department matter, but they are linked together. Then I want to refer to something which has been mentioned time after time in connection with the Department of Labour. The reports which come in with reference to unemployment in different parts of the State are sometimes exceedingly painful reading, because we find that in so many places so many persons are out of work. Take Brisbane and other

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.

centres from which the reports come and you find that unfortunately a great number of persons are unemployed. We have a Labour Government in office, and they are receiving a tremendous amount of revenue—nearly double what the Denham Government received in their last year of office—and under those circumstances there should be no unemployment. But, notwithstanding that revenue, and in spite of Labour administration, more persons are unemployed to-day than in the past. I would like to know whether the hon. gentleman can give us any assurance that under the new condition of things there are brighter days ahead for the worker.

I hold that the administration of this department has not gone in the direction of helping the worker; it has rather been to his great disadvantage. We have the right to know what is likely to be the policy of the Government in the future in regard to these things.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I would like some information from the Minister regarding the Hamilton cold stores. I understand that at

the present time there is a large [9 p.m.] staff employed at the Roma

Street railway cold stores, and I would like the hon. gentleman to state whether it is his intention to transfer those men to the Hamilton cold stores when that building is completed. I understand that within a very short time a portion of the Hamilton cold stores will be utilised for butter storage. I want to advocate the retention of the services of those men employed at Roma street. I hope the Minister will take into consideration the question of transferring these competent men who have been employed in the Government service for a considerable time to the Hamilton cold stores.

There is another matter that I would like to mention. I remember distinctly last year, when the Estimates in connection with the Department of Public Works were being considered, the Minister did an injustice to me by saying that I desired to mislead the House when I stated that loan money was being utilised for the building of schools and asylums, in the way of endowments for hospital buildings, and for bridge repairs and other works, when for many, many years prior to this Government coming into office that work was carried out from consolidated revenue. One must recognise that construction or repairs in connection with schools, asylums, bridges, and in connection with endowments for hospital buildings, should be a charge upon the taxpayers of this State. That is to say, that work should be carried out—more especially in connection with endowments for hospital buildings and schools—from consolidated revenue. To-day the Government are building schools and erecting other buildings out of money borrowed in the old country which is giving no return. I ask the Minister where he thinks he and his policy in regard to this matter are going to end. I think it is deplorable that such a policy should be found necessary, more especially in the face of the large amount received in revenue. It is regrettable that the Government should be called upon to obtain money from one source for a certain purpose, when that money should be paid by way of revenue by the wealthier class of the community.

Mr. COLLINS: Oh! Say that again!

Mr. KERR: We find that the Government have miserably failed to carry out a public works policy. The policy of carrying out the works I have mentioned from Loan Funds has only been initiated since the Labour party came into office, and when they found that they could not get the money from another source to carry on. It is regrettable that they have found it necessary to depend upon loan money from America and England, instead of upon the money extracted from the taxpayers to carry on those works. It is a sad commentary on a Labour Administration. The Government say that they are doing the best possible. It is regrettable that they could be compelled to call upon the people in America and England for money to erect schools, asylums, etc.

Mr. COLLINS: Do you propose an extra tax on the wealthy?

Mr. KERR: The community are taxed more than they can stand, but the money is going into the wrong channels.

Mr. COLLINS: Do not look so hard at the hon. member for Wynnun and the hon. member for Warwick.

Mr. KERR: I am looking at the hon. member for Bowen.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will look at the Chair.

Mr. KERR: I am looking at you, too, Mr. Kirwan. On perusing the Estimates for 1914 in connection with this department, I find that the staff connected with work carried on out of revenue numbered eighty-one, whereas to-day, when there is allegedly more work going on, I find that the staff has dwindled to sixty-nine. Since this Government came into power they have not only followed the policy of constructing buildings out of loan money, but they have transferred some of the staff previously engaged in revenue work to Loan Fund, the salaries of those officers now being paid out of loan money. If that policy is followed to a definite end, I do not know where the Government are going to finish. We find that it costs £22,630 to pay the salaries of the administrative staff of the Works Department engaged on works constructed out of revenue, whilst in 1915 it cost nearly £3,000 more. No one can tell me that the duties have not increased since that time. Notwithstanding the fact that there has been a considerable increase in salaries during that time, there has been a saving of £3,000 in that particular section of the department. If you examine the figures concerning the same matter in connection with work carried out from Loan Funds, you will find that it is many thousands of pounds more than the figure for the other section of the department, and is much more than it was in 1914. It is out of reason to think that a policy of economy is being followed by spending loan money which is unproductive, when it could be spent in other avenues which would provide work. I am not going to sit down without giving the Minister some figures to prove my statements. In 1915, 28 per cent. of money expended on buildings was expended from Loan Funds, and the remaining 72 per cent. was expended from revenue. In 1923 the position is reversed, and only 36 per cent. is now expended from revenue, whereas 64 per cent. is expended from Loan Funds. The Minister said that I

was deliberately misleading the Committee when I spoke on these Estimates last year, but if he can prove to me that I was deliberately misleading the Committee in the figures I have given, I shall be quite willing to admit it. I am quoting the exact figures, and the Minister cannot deny my statement. Since the Minister made that statement I have never had the opportunity of combating it, but I have never forgotten it. I am not going to permit the Minister to tell me that I deliberately misled the Committee when my figures and statements were based on facts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will tell you shortly where the fallacy is creeping in.

Mr. KERR: If the Minister can prove that he is a better hand at that work than the Secretary for Railways. In 1915 £190,438 was spent on public works from revenue and £73,353 from loan money. The total expenditure from revenue was 72 per cent. as compared with 28 per cent. from the Loan Fund. In 1923 the position was reversed, and a total of £96,008 was expended from revenue, or 36 per cent., and £164,794, or 64 per cent., from Loan Funds. Before I sit down I also want to state that in 1915 we spent over £2,000 more than the Government are spending to-day for the same purpose. The total amount expended by this Government in 1915 on public works was £263,000, while in 1923 it was £2,000 less. I will ask the Committee if the departure from such a sound principle as has been laid down by every Government practically, barring the Labour Administration of Queensland, can be justified in any shape or form. The Commonwealth Government have laid it down that loan money has only to be expended on such works as post offices, which give a return. If the Minister desires to expend loan money to the extent of £100,000 on such a building as the State Insurance building, and it is going to house the State Insurance Department, the Main Roads Board, the Public Curator, and the other officers who now occupy it and pay rent, he will justify the action of the Government in using loan money, as the Government will secure a return on the money invested and the taxpayer will not be called upon to foot the bill. If, on the other hand, he is going to expend loan money on unproductive works such as restoring bridges and building schools the taxpayer will have to foot the bill. At every opportunity I am going to take exception to this policy. I have pointed out that we have reached a stage, after eight years' administration under a Labour Government, when we should pause and take stock. If the Government can substantiate their policy in using this exorbitant amount of loan money in face of the fact that in 1914 and for many years previous to that this money was never used for the purposes that it is now used for, well and good.

The officials of the department have certainly reconstructed it. I have nothing to say against them. The Works Department to-day is on a sound basis. The Under Secretary was kind enough to show me at one stage his costing system. I found no fault with it; it seemed to me that the system was based on a sound knowledge of the requirements. It is purely a question of the Government. I hope that the Minister will not be like another Minister and state that hon.

Mr. Kerr.]

members on this side of the House were out to criticise the officials of the Government departments. Those officials are lower paid than officers holding corresponding positions in any other part of Australia. Instead of grumbling, the officers are giving their very best. The work of the department is being done well, but the policy of the Government in spending loan money in that connection demands a full explanation. Before I conclude I would again like to ask the kind consideration of the Minister to the question of utilising the services of the employees at the cold stores at Roma Street in the Hamilton cold stores.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): I have had the opportunity of reading the report of the Under Secretary for Works, and I find it contains matters of very great interest. One of the first matters that strikes me, and it has not been touched on by previous speakers, is in connection with the State High School in South Brisbane. I am not saying a word against the erection of the high school, but I would like to refer to the report of the proceedings of laying the foundation of that building, which took place last Saturday. The Secretary for Public Instruction is reported to have stated that, if more land was required for the purposes of that school, it would be taken from the park.

Mr. COLLINS: What is wrong with annexing that portion on which the bowling-green has been built? What the ratepayers should do is to pull the fence down.

Mr. KING: That is wanton destruction.

Mr. MAXWELL: And would lead to litigation.

Mr. KING: If the hon. member for Bowen only exercised a little common sense he would find that he has a right to go on to that bowling-green if he wishes and no one can stop him.

Mr. COLLINS: The first thing the ratepayers ought to do is to remove the fence.

Mr. KING: You have no right to do that: it is open to you. The park is one of the lung spaces for the public, and Brisbane wants a good many more lung spaces than it has at the present time.

Mr. COLLINS: That is quite true.

Mr. KING: The Secretary for Public Instruction proposes—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! I do not wish to stop the hon. gentleman, but I think he will admit that the matter of resuming that portion of the park came under the administration of the Department of Public Instruction. So far as I know, the Department of Public Works has nothing to do with it except to erect the building.

Mr. KING: I will not transgress.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can discuss that matter on the resolutions when they come up, if he wishes.

Mr. KING: I am simply discussing the matter because it arises on the report of the Under Secretary for Works, but I will not pursue the subject any further. Further on in the report I notice that certain remarks are made about the erection of new schools to the number of twenty-one, and that additions have been made to twenty-six other schools. I am very glad to see that. I am grateful to the Minister for certain repairs made to schools in my electorate. I do not want to

be accused of working the parish pump, but I would like to express my gratification and the gratification of my electors for the work done at the Dunellan school. We had some money spent there, but it was needed. We also want further additional expenditure in connection with other schools. I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the Coorparoo school.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am listening all the time.

Mr. KING: The hon. gentleman was not listening to the nice things that I was saying about my gratification and the gratification of the people generally in connection with the improvements to the Dunellan school. I want the hon. gentleman to go on with that good work and let us have some additions. The Coorparoo school badly needs such additions. The accommodation is too little and out of proportion altogether to the requirements. If the Minister wants to make a name for himself, he can get busy and let us have some money out there for improvements.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Hear, hear!

Mr. KING: There is another school I should like to mention—one that is in my electorate—the Junction Park school. It is a curious thing that just before the last State elections the Junction Park people were very anxious to have some fencing done and could not secure attention to it. At last they said that, if they were supplied with the material, they would do the work. The material was supplied and they prepared to set about the work, but just before the elections they received a letter saying that the fencing would be carried out at the expense of the Government, which was done. I think that that action was very considerate in my interests, because it helped me to get a few votes. I desire to press the claims of the Junction Park school, where the accommodation is woefully lacking. It is the centre of a big district, and the accommodation is altogether insufficient for the demands made upon the school.

Regarding the application which has been made for a new school at Sandy Creek and which was passed by the Department of Public Instruction, the application being sent on to the Works Department for approval and for them to find the money, this was turned down, and the reason given was that accommodation could be found in the adjoining schools. The only adjoining schools are Dunellan and Junction Park, and these schools are taxed to their utmost and cannot take any further students. I ask the Minister to take these things into consideration and to take a more generous view of the position and see that that school at Sandy Creek which we have asked for so long will receive further and more favourable consideration.

Going further into the report, it is satisfactory to note that maternity wards are mentioned. The report says—

“A feature of the department's operations during the past year was the construction of a large number of maternity wards at country hospitals, in pursuance of the Government's policy of providing this much-required assistance to residents of country districts throughout the State.”

That is quite satisfactory. So far as maternity wards and baby clinics are concerned,

[Mr. Kerr.

these matters will at all times receive the hearty co-operation of hon. members on this side of the House.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Hear, hear!

Mr. KING: It is satisfactory to note that plans and specifications have been prepared for maternity wards at thirty-five hospitals and that the majority of these are now in course of erection; also that they are being built according to a standard design for nine-bed and five-bed wards, readily admitting of further additions. With regard to baby clinics, we find that these are being erected in seven different principal centres of the State. A satisfactory feature is that in the head centre, which is being established at Fertitude Valley, provision is also being made for the training of nurses to take charge of other clinics in the State. These are matters, I think, which will be viewed with a great deal of satisfaction by hon. members on both sides of the House.

There is one further matter that I wish to refer to before resuming my seat, and which is also mentioned in the report. That is in connection with electric light undertakings. I notice that the Government have granted a good number of Orders in Council to local authorities in connection with electric light undertakings, and reference is also made in the report to the assistance given by the Electrical Engineer of the department, which assistance has been freely availed of. As one who is concerned in a local authority to which an Order in Council was granted and which has availed itself of the services and assistance of the department's Electrical Engineer—I am referring to Mr. Greer—I should like to express to the Minister the appreciation of the Coorparoo people in allowing Mr. Greer to give his services in this matter. Mr. Greer has been exceedingly good, not only in this particular undertaking by the Coorparoo Shire Council, but generally in connection with the undertakings which have been carried out by the Joint Metropolitan Electrical Authority, comprising a number of metropolitan local authorities. Mr. Greer's services have been extensively availed of, and he has been exceedingly useful. I am quite sure that the component bodies making up this Joint Metropolitan Electrical Authority are very grateful and appreciate his services.

I again desire to press upon the Minister the urgent necessity of effecting certain improvements in the Coorparoo and Junction Park schools and of providing a new school at Sandy Creek.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): In reading the report, one must be struck with the prominence given to improvements in works in the city. There is no lack of work in connection with the construction of buildings in the city. These things meet the eye pretty well at every turn. I suppose it is right that the city should enjoy a very considerable expenditure over and above the

[9.30 p.m.] expenditure in country districts;

but the country people are constantly complaining that the great bulk of Government expenditure is taking place in and around the larger centres of population while to some extent the country districts are being neglected. I can assure the Minister that there is a good deal of dissatisfaction in the country arising from this fact. In making comparisons, they say, "You fail to get this, that, and the other thing done in your centre, while on every hand in Brisbane

huge buildings are being erected at Government expense." My object in speaking is to point out that the Government may, with advantage, direct attention to the many necessary buildings required in the country. I am not far wrong when I say that for four years in succession I have had to advocate the construction of buildings in my own electorate, and I have failed heretofore. Whilst sympathetic consideration may have been given to the matter, yet the works have not been carried out. Again and again I have referred to the necessity for the erection of a teacher's residence at Mount Gordon, a settlement a few miles out of Warwick. It is a very nice school and well equipped, but there is no teacher's residence, and the teacher has to jog in and out to the school every day of his life. In the interests of the district itself and in the interests of the preservation of the school, it seems to me that a teacher's residence should be adjacent to the school. I hope the Minister will once more make a note of the fact that again a request has been made for a teacher's residence at Mount Gordon. Then from the Maryvale centre of my electorate there comes a request also for a teacher's residence. I have not been on the doormat in connection with that matter to the same extent as in regard to Mount Gordon, but the residents are very pressing in that important matter. It is an important matter to the people of the district. I am sure that, if the Secretary for Public Instruction were here, he would be able to confirm my statement that again and again for several years the department has been pressed to supply a very much needed want in connection with additions to the Warwick High School and Technical College. Everyone is aware that scarcely in any place in Queensland has education made the strides that it has done in Warwick. While a very fine example was set in the first instance by the Government in the erection of the high school and technical college at Warwick, in the last few years they have been altogether behind others who have done distinguished work in connection with education. The various colleges at Warwick are expanding, and the people are showing a responsive spirit which is a very fine example to the Government. I am extremely anxious that the Government should not keep behind, but should be right to the front and make every provision which may be requisite for the pupils of the high school and technical college at Warwick. I hope the Minister will give attention to this matter.

Another matter I wish to refer to is the painting of buildings. I notice that quite a small sum—about £30,000—is put down for that purpose, being the same amount as was provided last year. It is pitiable to see buildings going to decay just for the want of painting. The old Technical College and High School at Warwick, now used as a Government building, is a disgrace in that respect. It is not a very old building, but it is practically in a state of decay through want of painting.

I was very pleased to see the photograph of the very fine college that has been opened below the Range. I wish to take the opportunity of mentioning that there has lately been discovered adjacent to Warwick an extremely fine marble deposit. Bores have been put down with good results.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What kind of stone is it?

Mr. G. P. Barnes.]

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is white marble. Borings have shown that there are 150 feet of solid marble. I only mention this with the view that we may be able to introduce the use of marble in connection with our buildings.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We use quite a lot of Ulam marble now.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I am glad to hear that, which only adds to the importance of what I am pointing out to the Minister. I hope the hon. gentleman will cause some inquiry to be made in regard to this matter. There may be deposits of a like nature not very far from the same locality. At any rate, a find of great importance has been made.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Is it all white?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is white marble. At any rate, it is one that seems to be very highly prized. It is fairly convenient to the railway line, and possibly when other railways are built some day it may be still more convenient. I hope that the department will give some consideration to the matter of using this material in connection with public works.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I would like to ask the Minister one or two more questions. I notice that the discussion has gone along the lines of the needs of various districts, and I should be wanting in my duty to my district—I am referring more particularly to Wynnum South—if I did not remind the Minister that the district is growing very quickly, and that the accommodation at Wynnum South school—more particularly the land—is very meagre.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Was there not a new school built at Wynnum about two years ago?

HON. W. H. BARNES: Not at Wynnum South—additions were made to the present schools. I am not advocating now a new school—what I am advocating is an increased area of land. It is perfectly certain that, unless there is an increase in the area of the land and something is done to give the children more room—it is really a matter of economy—the department will find itself before very long under the necessity of looking for new territory somewhere else. About twelve months ago land could be purchased for about half the price at which it is offered to-day, and I ask the Minister to give some assurance to-night that this matter will be arranged. I want to assure him that an extension of room is necessary from the standpoint of the children, but the point which I wish particularly to impress upon him is the loss that will come upon the department unless something is done soon.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: All the facts will receive full consideration.

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is another matter to which I wish to draw attention. I notice in the Estimates that the amount required for railway fares and freights, printing, stationery, etc., was £2,000 last year and this year only £1,350 is required. I assume that the whole amount of the vote was not spent last year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The amount we have set down this year is about equal to the amount spent last year.

[*Mr. G. P. Barnes.*]

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am very much obliged for the information. I thought possibly that would be the explanation. There are one or two other matters I would like to mention, although I do not know whether I shall be in order in discussing them on this vote. Assuming that I am, I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to a paragraph in the report of Lady Inspector Mrs. E. E. Funnelle, of Brisbane, to be found on page 36 of the report of the Director of Labour—

“One thing more I should be very glad to see altered—that is, young girls from eighteen years of age have still to work until 11 p.m. Some of them, living a long distance from the city, have to catch cars and trains after that time. In my opinion the late night work for girls should be done away with altogether.”

The inspector is dealing with work in hotels, clubs, cafes, and boarding-houses, and I endorse her remarks most heartily. I think that she has done signal service in bringing the matter under our notice.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The matter was before the Arbitration Court last week.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I was not aware of that. I am putting the matter forward here from the standpoint of the general good. It is unfair that girls should be employed anywhere at that hour of the night, and I hope the Minister will look into the matter and see that some relief is given. We have no right to keep girls out to that hour, particularly since these are days when we are out to improve the hours of work.

There is another paragraph in the report by Mrs. M. Charlton, of the Female Labour Exchange, on the same page, to which I want to refer. Dealing with female labour generally, she says—

“The cry is for domestic help in good homes, where the highest wages are paid and the best conditions exist, but still the help is not available. While on this subject I would like to call attention to the supposed domestics who are being sent out to Australia. When interviewed at this office, they calmly say they cannot do domestic work, and some go as far as to say they have no intention to try—they have been clerks, typists, shop assistants, and do not want housework. When asked why they had signed on their papers that they were willing to do domestic work, they say they did so for the trip to Australia. These new arrivals have not the remotest idea of what a domesticated lady help is.”

I know that Mrs. Charlton is a very excellent officer.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is so.

HON. W. H. BARNES: She realises what is a real difficulty in many homes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That shows great laxity at Australia House.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is pretty well known that for some reason or other there is a general aversion on the part of females to going into domestic service.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is so.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Recently there was an inquiry in the old country as to the reasons for that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is due to pretty well known causes. In past years girls engaged in domestic service were treated as little better than slaves.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Minister is drawing a very long bow. When he says that the girls were treated as slaves, I resent it. The Minister is making a mistake. To-day many families in the community are getting into small quarters. From the point of view of child life particularly that is most unsatisfactory, and anything that can be done to help give sufficient accommodation in the home and in other respects is going to be very helpful to the life of our people of Queensland. If you are going to strike at the foundation of the home, you are going to do something which is going to be to the detriment of the interests of the community. Mr. Walsh, in putting in this report, has done a distinct service to the community. I have no sympathy with the employer or his wife who does not treat his domestic servant as she has a right to be treated. We should see that the women coming from the old country are certainly not unfitted for that work, and that they are not sent out here under a misapprehension.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I think Mrs. Charlton put the matter very mildly.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Probably the Minister has had a conference with Mrs. Charlton. I am taking the paragraph as it appears in the report. The finding of sufficient help for the home is a big question, as the Minister may probably agree. It is a question that must be faced in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is a very difficult question.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I admit that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The girls prefer to work in factories or shops.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I realise that they are free agents, and cannot be compelled to take up any particular occupation. Anything that can be done in the way of making conditions more satisfactory will be in the interests of Queensland generally.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): I would like to deal more particularly with the question of school buildings. I think I have in my electorate more schools than can be found in any other electorate, and it is necessary for me, on many occasions, to approach the department with the object of having more schools erected to serve the needs of the children living in the country districts. Provision for the education of the children of the country is not as it should be. The hon. member for Enoggera said that he was opposed to the construction of schools out of loan money. If the Government cannot see their way to construct schools out of revenue, then I do not want to see this Government, or any Government, deprive the children of the country of schools because they are unable to build the schools out of revenue. Any money expended from the Loan Fund to provide education for children in the country is money which will be for the benefit of Queensland as a whole. I am going to be more modest in my remarks than the hon. member for Warwick. He advocated the building of residences in connection with State schools. The difficulty that I have experienced is to secure the erection of the necessary schools

in my electorate, and if I ask for residences to be attached to some of those schools, probably children in other parts of the electorate will have to suffer thereby. Although I quite see the need for residences being attached to schools, I do not want to worry the department to any great extent in that connection, as my desire is to get schools erected first. In many instances we can find the necessary accommodation for teachers and thus obviate the construction of residences. On several occasions the people in various centres of my electorate, after having had their requests for schools turned down from lack of funds, have accommodated their children for the purpose of education in public halls. At Widgee and Manumbar public halls have been erected for the education of the children. When funds are available, I hope that the Minister will take into consideration the necessity of erecting schools in those two centres. It is very hard on a member when he has to put in so much time in making so many calls on the various departments in order to secure school accommodation for the children. I am going to refer now to the Beenam Range school, Cedar Pocket, near Gympie.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That school has been approved of.

Mr. CLAYTON: Before that part of my electorate was excluded from the electorate of the hon. member for Cooroora, that gentleman had been moving in the matter of this school. The committee informed me that in 1922 the Department of Public Instruction stated that they had approved of the school, and it remained with the Department of Public Works to find the funds to enable its construction to be proceeded with. It was only to-day that I heard from the Minister that its construction had been approved of. One has only to look at the time entailed through a member having to visit the department to try and secure approval of its construction. The same remarks apply to the Dagon school, on the Mary Valley line. That has also been a considerable worry to the hon. member for Cooroora, and I have had to visit the Department of Public Instruction continually to try and persuade the Minister to get the Works Department to build the school. I was glad to hear from the Minister to-day that that school has also been approved of. I want to thank the Minister for approving of those schools, and I also want to tell the hon. members on this and the other side that, if they are as insistent as I have been in calling on the department in connection with these matters, they may be more successful in having their requests acceded to.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I hope that you are not using that as a threat. (Laughter.)

Mr. CLAYTON: I wish to touch on the Elambah school, now Upper Cinnabar. The size of this school is 21 by 14, and it is built on low blocks. No doubt hon. members representing country constituencies know the type. It cost £414 17s. 6d. I venture to say that, had tenders been called for that school, it would have been erected for somewhere about £300. I was at the opening of the school, and a contractor present told me that he was prepared to build 100 schools of a similar nature for the Department of Public Works at less than £300 for each school. If the Minister would look into these matters, he would be able to effect a great

Mr. Clayton.]

saving, because there are many men prepared to undertake the erection of these schools at a much lesser price than the Government are at present paying.

Regarding this school, the soldier who owned the property upon which it was built made a gift of the land to the department. When the school was erected he naturally looked to the department to erect a fence around it because the children attending that school had to ride long distances and had to leave their ponies or horses on his land. I had to approach the department many times with regard to the erection of this fence. At length the owner of the land became so desperate that he threatened to impound the ponies belonging to the children. This meant that the children could not attend school because there was no accommodation for their ponies. Eventually I was successful in securing the approval of the department for the erection of the fence. I understand that the cost will be £56. I feel sure that I could get the work done for half that amount if the contract were let out to soldier settlers in the district. If such action were adopted by the department and they allowed these soldier settlers to participate in this type of work, they would be more popular than they are at present.

I wish to refer to another school in my electorate, the Myrtle Creek school. I have evidence of children fainting there, also of the teacher fainting owing to the excessive heat. I have approached the Department of Public Instruction and they have sent a request to the Department of Public Works that a verandah should be attached to the school. Unfortunately that request was turned down with the excuse that they could not expend any money on the school. Shortly afterwards I had a letter saying that permission had been granted to improve the playshed at the Newtown State School, Maryborough. That is the sort of treatment meted out to the people in the country. This necessary improvement to a country school is turned down while a playshed is being added to a school in a town centre. I suppose those are the conditions that we might expect from such a Government as the one at present in office.

I understand that, by arrangement, this debate is to be concluded at 10 o'clock, so I will continue my remarks to-morrow.

At 10 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.

JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUNDS BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

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

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to provide for the proper control and disposal of funds raised

towards the relief of the lamentable disaster resulting from the recent earthquake disaster in Japan.”

Briefly the idea is to make provision for the proper control of the money collected in aid of the persons suffering from this disaster. A Bill exactly similar to this was passed dealing with the funds collected in connection with the Mount Mulligan disaster. It makes provision for the appointment of trustees. There is a committee already established, and I understand that committee will carry on the work. All funds collected and goods in kind will go through that committee, and the funds will be subject to audit by the Auditor-General. The Commonwealth Government have already sent a large shipment of goods, drugs, etc., to Japan.

Mr. KERR: Did they take any from Brisbane?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. The Prime Minister has informed the Government that the shipment cost £127,000. The Commonwealth Government granted £50,000, Queensland has granted £10,000, and South Australia £5,000. The other States had not made any grant when the Commonwealth Prime Minister wrote, but they have inaugurated Lord Mayor funds in the capital cities. At any rate, the “Austramount” has taken these goods, and the money collected will, I understand, go towards paying for the large amount of stuff which has already been sent. It is a good idea, and I think we can all agree that aid sent speedily is the best in the long run. If we wait till we collect the money before sending goods a good deal of the misery attendant on this terrible disaster will be over, and the sufferers will have passed beyond human aid. The Commonwealth Government have sent a shipment of goods away, and, while we would have liked to despatch our own manufactured goods at the same time, still I think we can all agree that the best thing was done in sending away a ship forthwith with the necessary commodities. I do not think that anything more need be said on the matter. It is probably not necessary to pass a Bill, but it has been found a good thing to have the control of the funds under one body and to have the accounts audited by the Auditor-General.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I am sure that the proposed measure of which the Minister has given notice will have the support of hon. members on this side, because I certainly think it is very desirable that such a Bill should be passed.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

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

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns) presented the Bill, and moved—

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

Question put and passed.

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

The House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.

[*Mr. Clayton.*]