

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 5 OCTOBER 1923

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ARSENIC PRODUCED AT STATE MINE.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*) asked the Secretary for Mines—

"1. What quantity of arsenic was produced at the State arsenic mine during last financial year?"

"2. What quantity was (a) exported, (b) sold for prickly-pear destruction; (c) sold within the State for other purposes; and what was the average price charged respectively?"

"3. What quantity of arsenic is at present on hand?"

"4. Of this, what quantity is available for sale for purposes of destruction of prickly-pear, and at what price?"

"5. Can arsenic be purchased at the same price for the purpose of destruction of undergrowth and noxious plants other than prickly-pear—(a) by local authorities; (b) by individuals?"

"6. What was the reason for the delay in the finalising of the accounts of this and other undertakings mentioned on page 76 of the Auditor-General's report?"

"7. Will he furnish to this House as early as possible during the present session a statement of the results of the operations of these undertakings during last financial year?"

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

"1. Production, 434 tons 18 cwt.

"2. (a) Exported, 139 tons 3 cwt., at £40 8s.; (b) pear destruction, 75 tons 17 cwt., at £10; (c) sold within State, 295 tons 18 cwt., at £38 15s.

"3. Approximately 121 tons.

"4. The whole production, if applied for, at £10 per ton, plus cost of containers, is available for pear destruction.

"5. No. The price of £10 per ton rail fees is only for prickly-pear destruction purposes.

"6 and 7. Statements of results of mining operations will be furnished with the other State enterprises, delays being occasioned by alterations in personnel of staff at end of last financial year."

FRIDAY, 5 OCTOBER, 1923.

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

QUESTIONS.

FINE IMPOSED ON SETTLER IN INKERMAN IRRIGATION AREA.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

"1. What was the amount of the fine imposed upon a farmer in the Inkerman area (referred to in his reply to my question of 25th September) for a breach of section 35 of the Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilization Acts, 1910 to 1915?"

"2. Was any of the fine subsequently remitted or refunded to him?"

"3. If the Council of Agriculture ask that the total amount of the fine be refunded to him, will the request be complied with?"

"4. What was the precise nature of the offence for which he was punished?"

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

"This information has already been supplied. The hon. member has already asked this question. He will find the answer in 'Votes and Proceedings.'"

Mr. SWAYNE: I most certainly did not ask this question before. In the previous question there was no reference to this case.

{*Mr. Kirwan.*

RACECOURSES BILL.

THIRD READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): I beg to move—

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

Question put and passed.

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under the Supreme Court Act of 1921.

Regulation under the Auctioneers and Commission Agents Act of 1922.

Order in Council under the Magistrates Court Act of 1921.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—EIGHTH ALLOTTED DAY.

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

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

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

Mr. EDWARDS (*Namango*): In my opinion the country people are not receiving the consideration that they deserve in connection with the building of schools. I know that this question has been debated over and over again in this Chamber, nevertheless hon. members, whether they be on the Government side or the Opposition side, would not be doing their duty if they did not constantly bring this matter under the notice of the Secretary for Public Works and his department to see if it is not possible to obtain greater consideration for country children. We must all admit that we ought to give greater consideration to the people living in the country districts, so far as education is concerned, and we should assist to keep them in the country districts by making their life more congenial and giving the children the education they deserve. Up to the present time they have not received that necessary assistance. I know that on occasions questions concerning this matter have been asked in this Chamber. I know that the Department of Public Instruction has requested the Department of Public Works to carry out a job sometimes involving only a few pounds for doing repair work and the work has been held up month after month and then the reply generally is that the latter department has not the money available to carry out the work. If the Minister realised what effect the lack of school buildings has on the country people and the country children, he would make a special effort to see that the work is carried out. This has been going on in all country districts to my knowledge for years, and I am sure it has been going on to the knowledge of many other hon. members. I have here an application from a school committee, setting out that they have on a number of occasions over a period of years requested that certain work should be carried out. The secretary of the school committee says, in his letter to the Under Secretary, Department of Public Instruction—

“Many years have now elapsed since the first application for this much desired and much required improvement was made, and on many occasions since then the matter has been brought under your notice. The sum total of all this correspondence and of the various visits of inspectors from the Works Department is that we are where we were seven years ago.”

Mr. COLLINS: What was it for—a school or a fence?

Mr. EDWARDS: It was an application for the lining of a State school—quite a small and insignificant matter, but a big thing to the children attending that school. That is only one instance. Many such cases could be quoted. I hope that the Secretary for Public Works will see that every effort is made to carry out the work immediately after the inspector decides that it is necessary. It would not be fair for me, as a

country representative, to speak only of my own district on this matter, because I know that the same conditions apply practically throughout the length and breadth of Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What school do you refer to?

Mr. EDWARDS: I am referring to the Coolabunia State school. To be fair to the Secretary for Public Works and his department, I am bound to say that at the present time the work is recommended to be done. I hope that it will be done, and done at once. These are little matters, but the Minister must realise that they mean everything to the children in the country. I hope that the hon. gentleman will see his way clear to have these works carried out by contract, as has been suggested on many occasions from this side of the House. The children attending country schools would then not only be able to obtain the benefit of the necessary facilities, but the department would find that system very much better and cheaper than the present system of day labour.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Certain work has been approved of in connection with the Coolabunia school that you have referred to.

Mr. EDWARDS: I have already said that. Very often, after it has been decided to erect a school in a locality, the work is hung up for a number of years, and it is quite natural for parents to make other arrangements for the education of their children, while in some cases the families remove from the district. Sometimes that has the effect of reducing the number of children in the locality and a school is withheld, to their detriment. I do not wish to discuss this matter at length, as it has been sufficiently brought under the notice of the Minister. I hope that the whole of the money asked for on this vote will be expended, and that hon. members, after receiving letters stating that works will be carried out “when funds are available,” will not discover that £23,000 remain unexpended.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What department did you say that occurred in?

Mr. EDWARDS: It was carried over from the Department of Public Instruction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It was not carried over from my department.

Mr. EDWARDS: It was money that could be used for this purpose.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Money can only be used for the purpose for which it is appropriated.

Mr. EDWARDS: Too much money cannot be spent for the purposes I have indicated. Mistakes may occasionally be made in building schools in the wrong position, necessitating their removal. All these things have a tendency to militate against the welfare of the country districts. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider the matter of providing accommodation for the country children and see that there is no delay in carrying out work during the present financial year.

Mr. McLACHLAN (*Merthyr*): I have listened very attentively to the debate which has taken place, and I have also read with pleasure the speech of the Secretary for

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Public Works on this vote. Those speeches that I did not hear during the debate I indulged in the recreation of reading. During the debate there has been a discussion as to the relative merits of the day labour and contract systems. Hon. members opposite have taken great pains in trying to show from their own standpoint that day labour is not in the same street as the contract system. In fact, some of them have gone so far as to offer gratuitous insults to the workmen engaged in carrying out works, not only in Brisbane and Queensland, but in other parts of the Commonwealth.

They have endeavoured to stress the point that workmen working under the day-labour system will not give efficient work, and will not give a fair day's work for the money they are receiving. Although hon. members opposite have made those statements, they have failed, so far as I can gather from hearing and reading their speeches, to prove their contentions in any instance. I intend to give some figures this afternoon to show the advantage accruing to the public through carrying out public works on the day-labour system, as against the contract system.

During the last few years gigantic works have been carried out in the city of Brisbane by public bodies, the cost running into many thousands of pounds. Some of the work has been done by day labour, and when the figures have been analysed, it has been proved that the taxpayer was receiving a much better deal under this system than under the contract system.

I remember that, when Mr. Paget was Secretary for Railways, a discussion arose as to the merits of the day-labour system—as the Minister has said, it comes up every year—and Mr. Paget clearly demonstrated that several railways had been built on the day-labour system, and that many thousands of pounds were saved which would not have been the case had contractors carried out those works, and in many cases the work was better done.

During the last few years the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board has been doing a great amount of work in Brisbane—the hon. member for Toowong touched on this question in his speech. I do not want the hon. member to think for one moment that I am one of those people who go into sewers—he said he would leave the sewer work to those people who go into sewers—because I am not any more used to sewers than the hon. member; but I propose to deal with contract work in connection with some of the sewerage undertakings.

Mr. MAXWELL: Why not deal with them all?

Mr. McLACHLAN: I have taken out some figures to show the saving to the people under the day-labour system. Some time ago tenders were called for a certain length of sewerage work to be done in the city, and the engineer of the Board was asked to submit an estimate. It was found that the engineer's estimate, tendering on the same specifications, was £15,000 less than the lowest tender. Needless to say, the Board had the work carried out by day labour, resulting in a considerable saving to the taxpayers, and the work was well and efficiently done, and according to the specifications. The Metropolitan Water Supply Board also had occasion to call tenders for another piece of work recently, and when the tenders were

submitted, a discussion took place in the boardroom, when some members succeeded in securing that the work—the Breakfast Creek sewer—should be done by day labour. Subsequently, at another meeting of the Board, some members were evidently sorry for what they had done, and they reopened the question with a view to having this work, which they had already decided should be done by day labour, carried out by contract.

Some discussion took place, but it was found that the engineer had already placed a considerable amount of plant in position for the purpose of going on with that work by day labour, and it would have been an expensive undertaking to have removed the whole of that plant without, at all events, giving day labour a trial. However, a compromise was effected, and it was decided to complete one section by day labour and to let contracts for the other two sections. Tenders were subsequently called for the section to be done by day labour, when it was found that the estimate of the engineer was £31,000 below the lowest tender, and the engineer carried out the work at a saving even on his own estimate. That is conclusive evidence that under the system of day labour in connection with these jobs there is a considerable saving to the people as against contract. In the early stages of the carrying out of the sewerage work two tenders were let—one to a man named Adams, of New Zealand, for a section of the main sewer from Nudgee road to Breakfast Creek, and another to a man of the name of Atherton, who was representing the English firm of Rhys Jones, McTaggart, and Burch, for a length of the main sewer from Pinkenba to Nudgee. As everybody knows, each of these contracts was abandoned by the contractor, and the work that was done was faulty in the extreme. So much so that, when they threw up their contracts, there were two law cases over the business, and the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board won each case, but was not successful in getting any compensation. The Board had to finish the work that was not completed by these contractors, at great expense to the people because the workings were left in an unsafe condition. The work had not been carried out as it should have been carried out, and the work had to be finished by the Board by day labour. It seems to me that in those days there was not a sufficient number of members of the Board who were in favour of day labour, because, if there had been, this work would have been done by the Board's own officers, and effectively done, and a considerable amount of money would have been saved to the ratepayers. Tenders still are called for work in connection with the Water and Sewerage Board, but I am given to understand that contractors are very chary about tendering so far as the deep sewerage work is concerned. They tender at the present time for what is known as reticulation work—that is shallow work—and they prefer, if they can, to get the easy work and leave the more difficult problems to be carried out by the Board itself. If the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board can—and it has proved that it can—effectively carry out sewerage work in this city by day labour and save money to the ratepayers by that system, then all work should be done under the day-labour system. Amongst the members who constitute the Board at the present

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time there are some who stand for day labour all the time, and there are some members on the City Council who stand for day labour also, and they endeavour to see that all work in the City of Brisbane, which is being paid for by the ratepayers, is done in the most efficient manner and in the cheapest way possible.

I was speaking the other day to a gentleman in this city who is in a fairly large way in business here. Not only has he business interests in the City of Brisbane, but he has business interests in the adjoining State of New South Wales. He is not an advocate for the carrying out of work under the day-labour system, because he is a direct opponent of the Labour party and its methods. The other day some work had to be done in Sydney in which he had a big interest. Tenders were called for the work, and when they were opened the directors of the company were satisfied they were far and away in excess of the price for which the work ought to be done. They decided not to accept any of the tenders but would carry out the work themselves. Immediately after they arrived at that decision, one of the contractors interviewed these business men and said that he had made a mistake in his tender and asked to be allowed to re-tender. This gentleman said, "No, you were given an opportunity to tender. Although I am not in favour of day labour, I am going to have this job done by day labour." He had it done by day labour and saved money thereby. I have here an extract to show that it is not only in Australia that this saving by day labour can be obtained, but it is also the case overseas. I read this extract in the "Daily Standard" the other day. I notice that the hon. member for Toowong is smiling, but I know he reads the "Standard" and has probably read this.

Mr. MAXWELL: I read all the papers.

Mr. McLACHLAN: This is the extract—

"THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING.

"The City Council of Swansea, in Wales, recently decided on a housing scheme of its own. The tender for the work seemed too high, so it was done by day labour, with the following result:—

	£
Contractor's price	269,400
Actual cost	133,246

Saving to ratepayers £71,154"

These figures cannot be refuted. That is a statement of what has actually transpired.

I have referred to the opinion of a former Secretary for Railways, who made a declaration in this Chamber as to the great saving that had been effected in railway construction by day labour, and we have evidence in the extract I have read of the saving which is being effected in Wales, across the sea. It must be generally admitted that, when work is done by day labour, a fair day's work is given by the men, who do the work efficiently and cannot be accused of shirking work under that system, as has been stated by hon. members opposite.

A good deal of trouble has taken place recently in connection with the Brisbane Town Hall, which has become historic because it has been spoken of for a great many years and is not yet an accomplished fact, although

there appears to be a possibility of its being completed in the near future.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is to be hoped so.

Mr. McLACHLAN: The leader of the Opposition smiles at the prospect of the Town Hall being completed. It will probably be completed before the hon. member leaves this terrestrial sphere. (Laughter.)

Mr. MAXWELL interjected.

Mr. McLACHLAN: The hon. member for Toowong, who has just interjected, has a good deal to say about things being red, and about the Red Flag, but I would remind him that there is a good deal of red about the Union Jack which he so often refers to.

The figures I am going to quote show how careful men who represent those who have to find the money to carry on any work should be in revising tenders before accepting them.

Within the last three or four [4 p.m.] months tenders were called for the superstructure of the Town Hall according to plans and specifications submitted by the architects, and the result shows the disparity which can be disclosed in tenders put in on the same specifications by men who have been contracting for years—men who are known to be of the highest integrity in the city. The tenders received were as follow:—

Tenderer.	Amount.	Period to complete work.	Per cent.
	£	Years.	
McLeod Bros...	825,000	5½	10
A. Midson ..	790,600	5	7
D. D. Carriek ..	574,920	5½	9
Thos. Keenan ..	548,975	5	6

Hon. members will see that on the same plans and specifications there was a difference between the highest and the lowest tenderer of nearly £300,000, and that there was a difference of only half a year in the time for the execution of the work, but a difference in the percentage rate between 6 per cent. and 10 per cent. It is just possible that those who are spending the ratepayers' money in doing work by contract are going to involve them in a much heavier expense than is necessary, since the evidence goes to show that the work could be done much more efficiently and cheaply by day labour.

Now let me quote a table to show how the cost to the ratepayers would work out on the percentage basis—

Tenderer.	Per cent.	Estimate.	Amount to Tenderer.	Total Expense.
		£	£	£
McLeod Bros. ..	10	825,000	82,500	907,500
A. Midson ..	7	790,600	55,342	845,942
D. D. Carriek ..	9	574,920	51,744	626,674
Thos. Keenan ..	6	548,975	32,938	581,913

Mr. KELSO: Did not the architects give an estimate of the cost?

Mr. McLACHLAN: The architects did not make an estimate. Anybody can see what these figures mean. If one of those tenders had been accepted, we would have been paying the contractor yearly the percentage

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amount divided by the number of years in which he undertook to complete the job. That, in effect, would be the salary he would receive each year for carrying out the work. I am prepared to say that it is quite possible to get in Australia a man for £3,000—for £4,000, at any rate—some persons have been saying that you could get a man for £3,000—to oversee the work. But putting it at £4,000 a year, such a man would only cost the rate-payers £20,000 as against £82,500 if the highest tender had been accepted. These are illuminating figures, and just show what is possible under the contract system. Let me mention that the original estimate for the whole building was £450,000, inclusive of foundations, which were estimated to cost £150,000. After the completion of the foundations tenders were called for the super-structure, but the City Council then decided to alter the specifications and have certain alterations made. The architects prepared a new specification, and one of the previous tenders was asked to submit a straight-out price, based on the new specification.

Mr. MAXWELL: That estimate was submitted by the architects.

Mr. McLACHLAN: The architects submitted an estimate in the first instance of £450,000 for the whole building, including foundations, which were estimated to cost £150,000. The point I want to make is that even under the present arrangement by which Mr. Carrick undertakes to build the super-structure for a lump sum of £495,000, there will be a shortage of £111,000 between the amount of the original loan and the actual cost of the work. Those figures clearly show that the contract system has proved a failure in the case of the Town Hall, and I only rose to put them into "Hansard" to let the people see what can be done under day labour and what is being done in the erection of the Town Hall by contract.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I have always pointed out, in connection with the question of day work versus contract, that there are cases in which one is preferable to the other. What I blame the Government for is their hard-and-fast adherence to the day-labour policy in instances where contract work would undoubtedly be preferable. I have already stated that I am quite prepared to admit that there are instances where day labour would be the best. It has been pointed out that the running of a big undeveloped country like Queensland is much the same as running a farm. On a farm we find that some branches of the work can be best done under the piecework system, and some branches can be better carried out under the day-work or weekly system. I know that the Secretary for Public Lands had some experience in farming. He was cane-growing close to where I was at one time, and I would like to ask him if, when he was getting his cane cut, he got it cut under the day-labour system, or if he was to grow cane again whether he would get it cut under the day-labour system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Since then I have often cut it under the piecework system.

Mr. MAXWELL: Which paid the best?

Mr. SWAYNE: I think we can take it that the hon. gentleman got his cane cut under the piecework system, and if he grew

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cane again he would have it cut under the piecework system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Everyone gets his cane cut under the piecework system.

Mr. SWAYNE: There are classes of work that lend themselves to the piecework system, and other classes of work than can best be carried out under the day-work system. I do not blame the Minister personally for this system; he is simply a victim of the policy of his party. The party have laid down the rule unwisely that every job they take in hand must be done by day labour. In this vote, what concerns Country members mostly is the evil that we are not getting the number of schools that we should get for the money that is voted. I notice that the vote for school buildings has been increased from £40,000 to £45,000. I am not laying the fault in connection with the erection of school buildings at the door of the Minister, but in the past the country districts have been badly served in this respect. Children have had to sit on the ground when they were being taught, and crammed together in buildings or tents under conditions that were unsanitary, to say the least of it, simply because sufficient money was not voted for that purpose. In spite of what has been said, I maintain that by a judicious admixture of piecework with the day-work system the money would go much further, and a lot of these evils and drawbacks that some of the country residents have suffered would not have occurred if many of the jobs were let by contract.

I did not hear all that was said by the hon. member for Merthyr, but I believe he put up a case for the day-labour system. As every year goes by you have instances brought under your notice where it is proved conclusively that piecework is the better. I remember quoting some little time ago on this question no less authority than the late Hon. John Storey, who was leader of the Labour party in New South Wales, and who was Premier of that State for a time. This is what he said about the piecework system—

"If the workers wanted to go on improving their position they must strive for increased production at the present critical state of things nationally rather than commit the mistake of making production almost impossible by carrying out work very steadily. If piecework had to be adopted the workers would find that the system was not dangerous, but that the evil lay in the wrongful application of it. If the workers were able to control it properly, he could say, as a tradesman, that their experience of piecework would incline them never to go back to the day work again."

I remember the time when steel ships were being built in New South Wales during the war. In these shipyards the question of piecework came up, more particularly in regard to riveting. It was of national importance that these ships should be built as speedily as possible. The work was going on too slowly, and it appeared as though it would be generations before the ships were launched, and not only that, but the employers were not making very big wages. The Nationalist Government then in power decided that the work of building the ships should be done by piecework, with the result that these ships were got off the stocks in good time, and the men's wages went up from

£3 10s. to over £8 per week. There is this very important point also in this connection: At that time they were carrying on shipbuilding in the United States of America at a great rate, where we are told they carry out their work most proficiently and economically; yet these Australian-built ships were turned out under the piecework system at a cost of £12 per ton less than the ships built in the United States. That shows that piecework is the best under certain conditions.

The hon. member for Merthyr had a lot to say about the cost of supervision in connection with contract jobs, and, so far as I could follow him, he referred to the erection of the Town Hall and the high cost of supervision in connection with that building. Coming to a more recent date than my last quotation, let me quote the hon. member for Fitzroy, a member of the Labour party, in his remarks about the cost of supervision on Government jobs reported in "Hansard" for 1920 at page 862—

"He did not want to enter into a controversy on the question of day labour versus contract. The Minister put it in a nutshell when he said day labour under efficient management gave the best results, and so it did. But what the Minister had to find out was whether Government management gave efficient management. He had worked for private enterprise, and he had worked for big industries, and had worked with the worst tools and equipment, too; and if he were giving an estimate for Government work under Government conditions, he would allow a 20 per cent. bigger estimate than he would if he were contracting under private enterprise."

Yet that hon. member is pledged to the day-labour system. Hon. members opposite are tied down and have no freedom in the matter. They know they are wrong. The hon. member for Fitzroy went on to say—

"They had got as their inspectors and foremen men who were not in sympathy with the Administration, and when they were in sympathy—there were some who were in sympathy, and they were tiptop men."

Mark these words—

"they were so bound down by redtapeism and departmental officialism that they could not move until they had sent about half a dozen wires or letters to headquarters in Brisbane. That was one of the reasons why they were not getting good results in the building business connected with Government contracts, and what applied there applied also to the railways. An efficient man in private enterprise would not stand some of the Government foremen for five minutes. Why, the Government had an army of inspectors that no contractor would stand on a job, and they did not inspect at all. That was one of the reasons why the day-labour principle at the present time did not give the same results as the contract system; but day labour—under proper conditions and carried out by thoroughly faithful men and competent inspectors with sufficient authority to make alterations in order to meet emergencies as they arose—would, in a general way, equal the contract system."

These are conditions inseparable from Government control, and because of which hon. members on this side consider

efficient day work impossible under State control, more especially when it is so largely political as it is under the present Government. That is why these jobs are costly. It does not matter whether schools are built out of loan money or revenue. If they are built out of revenue, it means additional taxation. We all know already how this vicious circle is growing, and how high taxation checks enterprise and creates unemployment. If works are paid for from revenue it is bad, but if, on the other hand, they are paid for out of loan money, considering the high rates of interest the State is paying, it is again bad. It is therefore doubly bad. It is piling up a huge burden on posterity which is unfair to those coming after us. While I am on the relative merits of day labour and contract, I wish to quote a cable from London which appeared in the "Telegraph" of 12th October last year—

"PIECEWORK.

"COMPARED WITH DAY LABOUR.

"London, 12th October.

"A striking comparison between the results of time and piece work was revealed in the report of the joint investigation committee of employers' and workmen's organisations in the engineering and shipbuilding trades. Mechanics engaged in fitting watertight and sliding shutters on working time occupied 496 hours, while on payment by results they occupied only 150 hours. When the shipwrights were laying decks, the output was doubled when on piecework. In one case, two similar vessels were being built. The one on time took 2,601 hours and the other on piecework 1,151 hours. Riveters on time put in 176 rivets per squad weekly, and on piecework 722 rivets weekly. There was evidence that the earnings on piecework were 3½ to 100 per cent. above the earnings on time."

That is just on a par with the experience in New South Wales, to which I have already referred. It shows that, judged on the standard of efficiency—and efficiency and economy are needed in Queensland just now—generally speaking, piecework is the best system. There are exceptions, but judging from the earnings of the workers, it is also best from their point of view. If a vote of the cane-cutters were taken as to whether they prefer day work or piecework, I am almost sure that they would say, "Give us piecework every time." We know that at one time the Australian Workers' Union, in accordance with the policy of the party to which they belong, did advocate day work for cane-cutting in the Arbitration Court, but they dropped it when they found it was unpopular among many of their own members.

We want to get the utmost value for school buildings from the vote of £45,000 that we are now considering. The hon. member for Nanango referred to the hardships and injustice suffered by country residents through lack of accommodation for children. I urge on the Minister again to find out whether many of these outside jobs could not be let by contract. If the hon. gentleman would accept the contract system to a modified extent, he would find that the £45,000 would go a great deal further than it does under the present system.

Before I resume my seat, I wish to refer to a matter that, although not entirely done away with, is in abeyance for the time being.

Mr. Swayne.]

I refer to the compulsion on residents to put up schools for the education of their children. That policy is a relic of the old provisional school days. Twenty years ago it was fairly common, but for a long time I had not heard of residents being compelled to erect their own school buildings. Quite recently this practice has been reverted to on an increased scale. The rule is that if the inspector who is sent out to report on the probable attendance at the school considers it will not exceed twelve, the local residents are required to erect the building. I am not saying whether that is right or wrong, but in many instances the parents of these twelve children are probably pioneers, and having just started are hard up. It is not their fault that there are so few children in the neighbourhood, and it comes hard on them to have to find the whole cost of building. In the more populous centres the schools are erected without question. The point I wish to make is that these inspectors do not always make a correct estimate. One such instance has come under my notice in respect of a school at Mount Jukes. The settlers there were in a small way and could ill afford the time, as they were very busy, but they erected a very fine school building. They were compelled to do so because the inspector had reported that there was not likely to be a greater attendance than twelve. There were twenty-two children attending the school within a short time of its opening. Seeing that the attendance was such as to entitle a school being built, the residents should not have been asked to put up the school. No doubt the officials in Brisbane acted in good faith on the report of the inspector, but the inspectors are not liberal enough in their estimates, and make them unnecessarily low. That is the sort of thing that country members object to.

We hear a great deal about high schools and grammar schools in the cities. We quite recognise the necessity [4.30 p.m.] and the advantages of secondary education, and do not for one moment object to it, but we do say that primary education should be looked after first. The pioneers who build up our country centres and open up our backblocks should have the first call. The city depends upon these men for its very existence.

I hope that in future the estimates of attendance will be dealt with a little more liberally than has been the case in the past.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We are liberal enough so far as attendance is concerned.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (Queenton): We have had a fairly comprehensive debate on this vote, but I should like to add one or two words before it goes through. I have listened to the comments that have been made, and I must confess that the criticism from members of the Opposition in regard to the Works Department has not been of a very severe character. If hon. members have to complain only of their schools not being lined, I am sure that is not a severe criticism. Certainly a school when lined is much nicer; it is more compact and is warmer in the winter; but it is not at all useless when unlined. I am quite satisfied that a number of people in outside districts are glad to get even the outside walls.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is so. Their residences are not lined.

[*Mr. Swayne.*]

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Nine-tenths of the residences in the country districts are not lined, and many of those country people have not the slightest conception of a lined wall. If they have a wooden wall they think they are well off. Many of them have iron walls, which are hot in summer and cold in winter. I think that hon. members opposite have not much to complain of, all things being considered.

Some criticism has been offered in connection with the expenditure of money by the Department of Public Works, and a complaint was made that this money is spent in the city rather than in the country. As a country member, I should take exception if I thought that was true, but the population have to be considered as well as other things. If anyone goes carefully through the list published by the Department of Public Works, he will have to admit frankly that the work has been honestly and considerably distributed as far as town and country interests are concerned. Naturally larger and more substantial buildings have to be erected in town centres. I think that the Minister has not only attempted to put up buildings where they are needed, but he has put them up where they are most needed, consequently the vote has been expended carefully and conscientiously.

I am glad to say that, while I have not got all that I have asked for so far as the expenditure of money in my electorate is concerned, I have secured some things. In my electorate, as in others, there are numerous requests and also some complaints about not receiving what is asked for, but I think that he is an exceptionally fortunate member who gets all he asks for.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WINSTANLEY: We do not get that either in or out of politics, and it would not be good for us if we did.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We would become too selfish.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: I am confident that the Minister would have been willing to spend more than he did if the Treasurer had been prepared to give the money to him. In my electorate there are buildings which need a coat of paint, but I have no hesitation in saying that the Minister knows the value of a coat of paint as well as anyone else in this Chamber. He knows that it is false economy to spoil the ship for a coat of tar. But in our own cases when we own houses there are times when we cannot spare the money to paint those houses, and the cost of doing so is subsequently increased. Other expenses have to be met; we cannot do without our tucker or our clothes in order to paint the house, and the Minister finds himself in a similar position. I am sure that, if the money were available, he would be quite willing to spend it not only in putting up buildings but in keeping them in excellent repair. When you have the buildings up, it is a sad thing to see them going into disrepair and depreciating for want of a coat of paint. (Hear, hear!)

A good deal has been said from time to time on the question of day labour versus contract. The instances which the hon. member for Mirani has trotted out have practically no bearing whatever on the subject, for the simple reason that occupations like cane-

cutting and shearing are not a fair comparison with work which the Department of Public Works has to do. That department has to pay some regard to quality as well as quantity. I do not think this applies to all contracts, but everybody who has been in the trade knows that some contractors, when they get a chance, point and scamp the work.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WINSTANLEY: I have heard contractors say that no matter how good the inspector put upon the job may be they will get the better of him. I am quite sure some of them lay themselves out to beat the inspector. I know of cases where contractors using English Portland cement have had a few empty Portland cement cases in their yard. That Portland cement cost them 21s. a cask and they have bought German cement at 15s. or 16s. a cask, emptied the cheaper cement into the Portland cement casks and used it in their contracts.

Mr. KELSO: Was that done on any of the public buildings constructed under contract?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Yes.

Mr. KELSO: That is a libel on the officers in charge.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: I have seen an inspector condemn bricks that it was proposed to use in a public building, and, while he was away, those bricks were put into the wall of the building. I know of a building in the North constructed when things were slack in the city by a Brisbane contractor, who undercut the local men. That builder put bricks that had been manufactured locally into that building, and, if they had not been cemented on the outside wall, I guarantee the building would have tumbled down. Those bricks came from only about a mile and a-half away, and there was a barrow-load of dust in every dray after the bricks had been taken out.

Mr. TAYLOR: Someone else beside the contractor was not playing the game.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: That may be. It only goes to show that somebody else can be got at. I know that this occurred, because I was one who had to suffer through that kind of thing. The same type of work has been done over and over again. I have known people contracting for work who, when the inspector has turned his back, have dumped big lumps of rock into the concrete foundations of the building and covered them over before the inspector came back. If work is scarce, contractors cut prices down to the very bone and make their profit by scamping the work and by extras. Contractors put their heads together and fix their prices before submitting tenders when work is plentiful. Many of them do that kind of thing.

There is also this aspect of the question to be considered—that, when work is done by the Government under the day-labour system, there is no inducement for anybody to slum his work and the Government get a good substantial job done. A good many of the statements that are made from time to time about workmen not doing a fair thing are not true. I know there are some contractors who, when they get a job and pay day wages, want the last ounce of energy and the last drop of blood out of the men before they get away from the job at night. That

is not fair to the men any more than it is fair to the people. It has been pointed out already what the contractors in the first place did for the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board.

Reference has been made to the question of whether public works should be built out of loan or out of revenue. In days gone by, although the bulk of the public works were supposed to be built out of loan, when there was any idea that there was going to be a surplus which would have to go to the Public Debt Reduction Fund, certain public works were built out of revenue instead of out of loan. That happened on more than two occasions. It was not that the Government wanted to pay for those works out of revenue, but because they did not want the surplus to go to the Public Debt Reduction Fund.

The hon. member for Murilla made the most illogical speech of any member on the other side of the House, for the simple reason that on the one hand he condemned the Government for the money they were spending on public works and on the other hand he condemned them because they were not spending sufficient. That hon. member had something to say about the completion of the Treasury block at the corner of Queen and George streets. If the Government do not set a good example in connection with the architecture of the buildings in the capital city in which all the administrative buildings are located, I do not know who is going to do it. I am one of those who think that the architecture of a city has a great influence on the people who live in the city and on those who visit the city. It strikes me that in days gone by the architects who designed a great many of our public buildings were anything but what they should have been. Anyone who looks at the court-houses and other public buildings, particularly outside Brisbane, would imagine that he was in Holland and not in a tropical country. Look at the buildings in the country districts in Queensland; they are solid, squat, square buildings, with no pretence at architecture about them. They are stupidly solid and there is nothing elevating, nothing uplifting, and nothing inspiring about them. John Ruskin, who was an authority on this subject, said that he would prefer to live in a cottage and have Warwick Castle to wonder at than live in Warwick Castle and have nothing to wonder at. The influence which fine architecture and splendid public buildings has on the minds of the people who live near them and see them occasionally is perhaps more than we imagine. I am sure that anybody who walks along a street like Collins street, in Melbourne, and looks at the fine buildings in that street cannot but be influenced to some extent and uplifted and inspired by the splendid architecture of some of those buildings. You would think they were cathedrals in the first instance, but, when you come to look at them, you find they are mercantile houses, insurance buildings, or something of that sort. It is a very fine thing for the Government, if they can manage it, to put up decent public buildings in the capital city. One must also remember that these buildings are being put up not merely for ornament, but that there is a utility side to them. It is an infinitely better thing for the Government to have buildings of their own than to be renting buildings all over the place. The

Mr. Winstanley.]

Government are to be commended for completing the Treasury Buildings block at the corner of Queen and George streets.

Mr. KELSO: Do you blame the Tories for the old style of buildings that you complain of?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Whom else can I blame? They put them up.

Mr. KELSO: Did they not have architects in those days?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: They controlled the Department of Public Works.

Mr. KELSO: They did not instruct the officers as to what sort of architecture they desired.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: If they did not do it, they should have done it. The Government are not doing their duty if they do not instruct the officers of the department as to what kind of buildings they want.

Mr. KELSO: I do not think members of the Government claim to be architects.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: The Government ought to secure all the land in George street and William street from Parliament House to Queen street, so that the public buildings may be concentrated in one part of the city. If this were done, it would be of considerable advantage from an architectural point of view, and would be much more convenient to the public. The Department of Public Works is to be commended for the work it has done, and I want to give my meed of praise for the courtesy and consideration which all the officers of the department have extended to me whenever I have gone to them. While they have not given me all I have asked for, the probability is they have given me just about my share considering all the other demands made upon them.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I certainly think that the Department of Public Works has done very excellent work in connection with the works carried out by that department for a number of years past. I do not know where the buildings referred to by the hon. member for Queenton are to be found. We have only to take the Parliamentary Building, the Executive Building, the Treasury Buildings, and the Insurance Building; these buildings are a credit to the men who designed them and to the men who carried out the work. I do not care whether you go to Collins street, Melbourne, or any other street, you will see no better buildings than are to be found in Brisbane. If you go to Sydney, you will find the buildings there with stucco stuck on top of them, and this is a refuge for all the pigeons in Sydney. You find the public buildings down there covered from top to bottom with the excreta of birds. Take the Insurance Building here. There is no refuge on that building for a sparrow, and a very beautiful building it is. It is the same with most of our public buildings in Queensland. I certainly think they are a credit to the men who designed them and the men who carried out the work. Collins street, Melbourne, cannot teach us very much in connection with public buildings. Most of the buildings there are only brick coated with plaster, but here we have some very excellent structures of freestone—stone of a character of which Queensland has every reason to be proud.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Executive Buildings will compare favourably with anything in Australia.

[*Mr. Winstanley.*

Mr. TAYLOR: And there is no Parliament House in Australia equal to the Queensland Parliament House, both as to convenience and everything else associated with it.

Reference has been made during the course of this debate to the amount spent on buildings in the city of Brisbane and the amount spent on buildings in the country. I claim that I have as much desire as any member in this Chamber to see that country interests get a fair deal and a square "go." In the report of the Department of Public Works for the past year it is stated that £84,000 was spent on school buildings in the country and about £11,000 or £12,000 on school buildings in the city. Surely in the face of those figures country hon. members cannot say that all the money is being spent in the city.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: As we want new schools in the country they have to be built.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is not a fair thing for hon. members to get up in this Chamber and say that everything is done for Queen street and the city. No matter what Government was in power it would be committing political suicide if it ignored the country interests and neglected the building of schools urgently required in the country. In my electorate there are two beautiful State schools, and we only had £50 spent on them last year, so that no one can say that the Windsor electorate gets a large amount of money in connection with the expenditure on schools. The report of the Department of Public Works contains a list showing the amount of money which has been spent in the country and in Brisbane respectively on public buildings. While there has been considerably more spent in Brisbane on public buildings, anyone who reads the report impartially cannot but admit that the country has had its fair share of expenditure, especially when you realise that quite a lot of the expenditure which has been incurred in the city of Brisbane is in the country interests. What are the Hamilton Cold Stores for? I have nothing to put in them. I have an ice chest at home for butter and milk. The Hamilton Cold Stores are not built specially for the people of Brisbane. They are built for the primary producers of Queensland in order that the perishable products which they are sending to Brisbane may be stored there and brought out when the markets are favourable, or wait until the time arrives when they can be put on board a ship and taken overseas to be sold. I do not think the country districts have much to complain of in regard to unfair treatment either under this Government or previous Governments.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No Government would do an injustice to any section of the community.

Mr. TAYLOR: On going through the report I find that there are several branches under the control of the Department of Public Works. I would like to get some information from the Minister when he replies in connection with a question which was asked by the hon. member for Cooroora a few days ago with regard to the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The Minister replied that the employers have contributed £33,701 3s. 8d., the employees £33,701 3s. 8d., and the State £15,000. Section 5, subsection (7), of the Act provides—

"A contribution shall be made in each

year to the fund out of moneys provided by Parliament for the purpose, and the sums to be contributed in any year shall be paid in such manner and at such times as the Minister may determine."

Subsection (8) states—

"Save as is hereinafter provided the total of the contributions to be made by workers and the total of the contributions to be made by employers and the total contributions by the State shall be of equal amount, so that workers, employers, and the State shall each contribute one-third part of the fund."

As I have said, the employers have contributed £33,700, the employees £33,700, and the State £15,000, but I do not see any provision for payment of the extra amount which is required to make the State's contribution the same as that of the other contributors.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That will be provided in the Supplementary Estimates.

Mr. TAYLOR: Thank you. The report of the department states—

"The building programme during the year has been of the heaviest during the history of the department. Operations were hampered considerably owing to difficulty in procuring building materials, and to the acute shortage of skilled labour occasioned by the heavy demands of private builders engaged on outside works."

I take it that that is a fairly healthy condition of affairs, and it is not peculiar to Queensland, as I understand that the same difficulty probably is being experienced in most of the large cities of the Commonwealth. However, it is pleasing to know that conditions have improved somewhat of late, and that the delay which has occurred through the conditions referred to will be obviated to a very large extent in the future.

There is a reference in the report to maternity wards at country hospitals and baby clinics, which commend themselves to everyone in this Chamber. This is work which should have been carried out quite a long time ago. However, it is satisfactory to know that at this particular time the need for the erection of these buildings has been recognised and the work is being carried out.

I wish to refer to the Workers' Dwellings Branch. The people of this State are to be congratulated on the wonderful success of the Workers' Dwellings Act. The report issued by the State Advances Corporation, which is under the control of the Department of Public Works, gives some remarkable figures in regard to the working of the Act. It states that the Act was introduced in 1910. The value of buildings approved to 30th June, 1923, was £3,264,619. The total advances to the same date amounted to £2,796,955. The total assistance asked for in the 1,121 applications dealt with during the year amounted to £559,393, and approval was given to 754 applications, amounting to £350,865. Only six applications were refused, and 106 were withdrawn, leaving 255 applications awaiting consideration. The total applications received for the year, 1,121, were considerably more than for any period

since 1916-1917. The average amount applied for was £499, and the average percentage approved was 67.26 per cent. The total instalments paid during the year amounted to £284,634. As I have said, the total amount advanced since the inception of the Workers' Dwellings Act amounts to £2,796,955, and the security value of these dwellings amounts to £4,014,091. The total indebtedness of borrowers at the end of the last financial year amounted to £1,352,459 in respect of 5,337 dwellings. The interest arrears—and this is the point I wish to draw special attention to—at the end of the year only amounted to £409. By 31st August last, further amounts had been received, reducing the arrears to £56, showing a very healthy state of affairs.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Very satisfactory. In connection with the War Service Homes in Queensland there is a deficiency of £16,000.

Mr. TAYLOR: At 30th June, 1923, the combined amount of arrears for interest and redemption in connection with this large amount of money amounted to £2,290, and by 31st August last payments had been made which reduced the amount to £556. Houses to the number of 9,058 have been completed since the Board commenced operations in 1910, and up to 30th June last only 281 had been taken possession of. Of these only two were taken possession of in the last financial year. Of the total number of foreclosures seventy-four were realised without loss, and there were only thirteen dwellings at the close of 1922, and at the present time only twelve in possession of the department. From the inception of the Workers' Dwellings Board in 1910 up to the close of 1919 the losses written off amounted to £476, of which amount £446 was the result of the flood and cyclone in Rockhampton in 1918. The report furnishes a very interesting comparison of the increased cost of building since 1910. The total number of completed houses since the Act came into operation is 9,055. The total number of houses which have been paid off is 3,796, or nearly 300 a year, and the total number in course of payment is 5,259.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: As a matter of fact, the average time taken to pay off the indebtedness is only twelve and a-half years.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is very gratifying to know that the Act has proved so beneficial in the interests of the workers of Queensland. Several other reports come along to us of the work of the department. There is one from the Chief Inspector of Machinery and Scaffolding, Mr. Henderson, which is another most satisfactory account

[5 p.m.] of the year's work. It shows that very close supervision is being exercised over machinery and scaffolding, as is proved by the very small number of accidents which have taken place. It is pointed out that in some instances those accidents are due—I would not say to carelessness or neglect—but to the fact, perhaps, that the men have become so accustomed to their work that they do not take the precautions which they should take, and as a result accidents happen.

Then we have the report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops, which covers the whole of Queensland, and the report on the operations of the Workers'

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Accommodation Act, which affects particularly the shearers in the West and the sugar-workers. It is pleasing to know that the reports, by and large, go to show that those who have to comply with the Act are with very few exceptions doing their utmost to see that it is carried out fairly and well. There are cases where leniency has to be shown, and where it can be demonstrated that leniency is necessary it is being extended.

I am not going to get on to the question of day labour, except to say that there is no reason why day labour should not be as good as contract labour. The whole thing rests on the administration and supervision.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: The whole thing rests entirely there, and, provided proper supervision is exercised, there is no doubt whatever but that day labour should show a saving in the carrying out of public works.

Lately a State Stores Board has been brought into existence for the purpose of purchasing material necessary for the various Government departments. If the men who are running that Board in the interests of the Department of Public Works, the Home Department, and other departments know their business and do their work, they can save this State in the purchase of material—not thousands of pounds but tens of thousands of pounds annually. There is a tremendous amount of good to be done by the operations of that activity if the men who are appointed know their business and are allowed to carry it out. I always say, when you find you have a good man, let him alone. He will work it out all right.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You want a man with plenty of initiative and not too much referendum.

Mr. TAYLOR: That is so. Let the members of the Board have their heads and I am satisfied that the saving to the State in the course of a year will amount to tens of thousands of pounds.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): Some hon. members have asked for information, and there are points in the speeches of others to which I would like to reply. The first matter of which I would like to make mention is the complaint of some hon. members about the disparity which they allege exists between the attention given to the towns and that bestowed upon the country. I agree with the leader of the Opposition that to take up that attitude of mind is to show very little discernment or sense of equity, because, after all is said and done, it is the duty of every Government to see to it that the people in the various parts of the State are catered for with regard to education and other requirements which are filled by the Government. The speeches of the hon. member for Mirani and the hon. member for Nanango would lead one to believe that everything was done in Brisbane and nothing in the country.

Mr. SWAYNE: I did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The facts are that of thirty-one school buildings which have been erected during the year or which are in the course of erection all are in the country. Of the total, twenty-one have been completed and ten will be completed shortly. Of the money

[*Mr. Taylor.*

spent upon additions and alterations to school buildings and other buildings, £11,833 has been spent in Brisbane and £84,376 in the country. That shows that the contention that the country is being neglected is only a chimera of their own sordid imaginations.

The hon. member for Nundah made certain references to the building of what is now known as the State Insurance Building. It was originally erected for the State Government Savings Bank, but was taken over by the Commonwealth Bank as a result of the agreement between the State and the Commonwealth Bank and then repurchased by the State at a cost of £150,000, the payment of which is to be made in four equal annual instalments, which are provided for in the votes of my department. The hon. member for Nundah spoke with all the airy assurance of those who lack wisdom and knowledge. Had he had wisdom, he would have taken notice of the interjection by which I tried to put him right and would not have fallen into the mistakes which he made. If "Hansard" is looked up, it will be found that the hon. member said first of all that, when the figures for the foundations were taken out the day labour estimate was inordinately high, and that contractors beat the day labour staff all to pieces. The facts are that G. A. Baumber beat the Day Labour Department by £40 in a job which it estimated to cost £6,189 14s. 9d., his tender being £6,149. If the hon. member gets any satisfaction out of that, he is entitled to it. The tenders for that work ranged from £6,149 of Mr. Baumber to £8,245 of Mr. Thomas Keenan, and the tender of the Day Labour Department was the second lowest. Now we come to the superstructure, in regard to which the hon. member fell into grievous error.

Mr. KELSO: He is quite willing to admit that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He said that a deputation of master builders waited upon Mr. Theodore, then Secretary for Public Works and now Premier, and asked that the work be done by contract, and he alleged that Mr. Theodore said that his policy was to carry out the work by day labour, and by day labour it was carried out. Those are the statements made by the hon. member, and, if he desires to challenge them, I will quote them from "Hansard"—I have merely given the effect of them. As a matter of fact, tenders were called. The Day Labour Department put in a sealed tender, which was handed to Mr. Fowles, who was at that time the Under Secretary to the Treasurer, and was opened at the same time as the tenders of private contractors. The tender of the Day Labour Department was—
£107,732 for "A" job.
£98,309 for "B" job.

Alternative tenders were called for a building of seven stories or eight stories respectively, and the eight-story building was finally adopted. The next tender was that of James Mason and Sons—

£113,567 17s. 7d. for "A" job,

or a difference in favour of the Day Labour Department of £5,835 17s. 7d.

The tender by the Construction Branch was even less than that. At the time, Mr. Quinn, the present Under Secretary, was in charge of the Construction Branch, and he it was who very carefully prepared the estimate

for the Public Works Department. He went into the thing so fully that, had the Minister of that day decided to do the work by day labour and had cables been sent to England, the material would have been shipped straight away, and no delay would have taken place in the erection of the building, and, consequently, the losses that were later on incurred by the contractor would not have been incurred. That is the position. The then Under Secretary, Mr. Brady, added 5 per cent. to Mr. Quinn's tender, making it still £5,835 lower than the lowest tender from a contractor. That is entirely different from the suggestion made by the hon. member for Nundah. The deputation that was held was a deputation—not to the present Premier but to the hon. member for Wynnum—from the Master Builders' Association, who waited on him and asked that tenders should be invited.

Mr. KELSO: Did I not say that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Many things were said against the day labour policy. The hon. member for Wynnum in his reply is reported *inter alia* to have said—

"They had reminded him of the high cost in New South Wales of some of the work recently carried out in that State, but there were no such figures available in connection with this department. So far as he knew there was no such thing in existence as the Government stroke. He quoted a few cases to support his view. On the new refreshment-rooms in the Gardens, though the work had been increased on the original plan by £200, they had still saved £270. In the Lands Department job the lowest tender was £484, but they carried out the work for £286. In the Geological Branch they saved £234 on a job as compared to the lowest tender.

"It had been said that in these works no charge was made for the work of officers engaged, but that was not so. Everything was properly apportioned.

"Something had also been said about work at Goodna, which was being carried out by day labour, but they would save

something like £9,000 on the job. If they thought the specifications were not adhered to, he would be glad to drive a party of them out to inspect it.

"It was only fair to the officers to say that many thousands of pounds had been saved by the system at present in force.

"One big work had been mentioned which he would refer to. That was the Rockhampton Technical College. The estimate was £12,753, and the lowest tender £15,703, and it was expected that fully £3,000 would be saved on those figures.

"At Goodna, the estimate for one ward was £16,621 and the lowest tender £20,799, and they expected to considerably cut under the estimate. He promised to fully consider their request to call tenders for the foundations of the Savings Bank building."

The first interview with the hon. member for Wynnum was in regard to the foundation.

Mr. KELSO: He did call for tenders?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes. With regard to the superstructure, I pointed out that the department's estimate was less than the lowest contractor's tender by approximately £6,000.

Mr. KELSO: There is no proof that you could have carried it out for that price.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The contractor has not carried the work out at his price. Hon. members will see from what I have quoted that the hon. member for Nundah was all at sea.

Mr. KELSO: No.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I endeavoured by means of interjections to get him on the right track. The facts are that under day labour the estimate was £6,000 less than under the contract system. The contract was signed on 29th April, 1915—twenty-three days before the general elections. The following table shows the comparison between the price submitted by the lowest tenderer and the actual cost of carrying out several works by day labour:—

Jobs.	Lowest Tenderer.	Price.	Cost. Day Labour.	Saving.
Goodna—Two new Wards, Nos. 1 and 2	G. Baumber ..	£ 41,598 0 0	£ 32,324 9 7	£ 9,273 10 5
Goodna—New Ward, No. 8 ..	A. Keddle ..	12,876 0 0	11,085 9 11	1,790 10 1
Rockhampton—Technical College ..	J. Doyle ..	15,703 0 0	12,139 8 6	3,563 11 6
Rockhampton—Savings Bank ..	J. G. Hobbs ..	5,975 0 0	5,595 17 9	379 2 5
Babinda—State Hotel ..	W. Kerr ..	7,282 4 9	13,146 12 6	4,135 12 3
Ipswich—Hospital for Insane ..	A. Keddle ..	21,088 12 6	16,748 18 10	4,339 13 8
Totals	£114,522 17 3	91,040 17 1	23,482 0 2

Mr. KELSO: Tenders were called in every case?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes.

Mr. KELSO: Now give us some of the losses.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: A further interesting statement was made the other day, when the Premier officially opened the Johnstone River town bridge at Innisfail. This steel and concrete bridge, costing £32,000, is one of the largest traffic

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bridges in Australia. In the construction of that bridge, 140 tons of steel and 360 tons of cement were used. The greatest depth of a pier is 72 feet. At the ceremony the chairman of the Shire Council, Mr. L. J. Duffy, in asking the Premier to declare the bridge open for traffic, stated that the bridge was built by day labour at a saving of £8,000, as against the lowest tender received.

The hon. member for Nundah then went on to attack the workers employed by the Government. His suggestion was that the workmen employed by the State Departments went slow on the job, and as a result excessive costs were built up. He mentioned a case that he alleges occurred in connection with certain railway construction, but he never gave any particulars of the case. If any hon. member has proof of such a thing taking place in the department, and he brings me evidence of it, I will have the fullest possible investigation, and, if the facts are as alleged by the hon. member, the people responsible will be dealt with. It is all very well to get up in this Chamber and state a hypothetical case that "So and so told me that somebody told my brother-in-law's aunt's sister that so and so's nephew did so and so." That is the kind of evidence that is put forward in this Chamber with regard to alleged going slow on the job. The leader of the Opposition summed up the situation in an entirely sane and satisfactory way. He said that day labour, under proper supervision and control, must at all times be satisfactory. In that connection I wish to quote from a statement made in the London "Times" by Sir William Beach Thomas, in an article entitled "Australia to-day"—

"At Bundaberg (Q.), where I had stopped a day or two, I saw immensely heavy crops of sugar growing in what seemed to me a temperate zone. The cane was being cut by an amazingly athletic group of men who, I fancy, along with fellow-workers on and about this coast, have the distinction of being the only white men in the world engaged in this occupation. Incidentally, it may be worth saying that on these sugar fields, as later in the shearing sheds beyond Blackall (the terminus of the 'Turkey Express'), more effective energy was being exercised, per man per minute, than I ever saw before. Newspapers and talkers had succeeded in creating the impression that, generally speaking, work was at a standstill owing to a prevailing habit of going slow, of striking 'on the job' or off the job. It was my particular good fortune to see work of a really athletic or gymnastic quality, performances that might quite fitly be compared with the forceful energy of Patterson on the lawn tennis court. It is at least a curious comment on modern civilisation that all the world should talk with admiration of the game-player, and no one at all of the shearer who was keeping up an average of 214 sheep a day. It recalls the comment of the great historian Thucydides, who recorded that the victorious General Brasidas was acclaimed by the people 'almost as if he were an athlete.' What a land Australia would be, even with its tiny handful of men and women, if those reputations of Patterson and the shearer were reversed!"

Sir William Beach Thomas, a visitor from

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overseas, made those comments about the Australian workmen and spoke of them in the highest possible terms of praise. He further pointed out that for services well performed and work well done, no matter in what sphere of industry, men are entitled to the praise and esteem of the community. Much better results would be obtained in the community if the workmen in Australia were encouraged instead of, by innuendoes, having slanders cast at them by the Tory speakers in this House and the Tory Press.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I come now to the statements made by the hon. member for Murilla. There are various forms of argument sometimes used in this House and by different parties in this House, but the Country party have become notorious for their method of criticism of what might be called "the lie by under-statement." They seize on a clause in a compound sentence and quote it as if it contained all the facts bearing on the situation. It then goes forth to the world that so-and-so is a fact in accordance with their quotation of a partial statement. The hon. member for Murilla, speaking on the report of Mr. Smith, the manager of the State Advances Corporation, gave this quotation from it—

"The difference between the total amount approved and the amount actually paid is accounted for by contract prices, being less than approved estimates,"—

Then he went on to build up an argument that a vast sum of money had been saved by the result of carrying out the work by contract, and the whole of that money was a saving on the estimates of the department. Now, there is a comma where the hon. member left off, and the manager goes on to say—

"together with the amount of applications approved and not taken up and the portion of loans not yet paid on houses uncompleted at the close of the financial year."

It will be noticed that there is a vast difference between the whole statement and the portion of it quoted by the hon. member for Murilla. I contend that is a misrepresentation of the true position, and, in fact, an endeavour to mislead the House and, through the House, the people of the State. The hon. member's statement was seized upon by the Press and published all over Queensland. The true quotation reads—

"The difference between the total amount approved and the amount actually paid is accounted for by contract prices being less than approved estimates, together with the amount of applications approved and not taken up, and the portion of loans not yet paid on houses uncompleted at the close of the financial year."

The two factors discarded by the hon. member for Murilla account for the major portion of the £500,000. For the year ended 30th June, 1923, the amount of advances approved, but not yet paid on uncompleted houses, amounted to £69,440, and the amount of advances approved, but not taken up, amounted to £70,306. This item alone, on the same ratio per year, for the year mentioned would aggregate £913,978, or double the amount mentioned in the report, indicating clearly that it was not a saving owing

to the work being done under contract, but from amounts approved but not taken up. Those are the facts of the position and they are entirely different from what the hon. member sought to convey to this House. The department, as pointed out by the hon. member for Windsor, is one which carries out a very useful function. We all know that the Workers' Dwellings Department has been eminently successful. It has provided a large number of good homes for the people and will continue to do so. The finances of that department are in a sound condition, which gives me satisfaction, and the management under Mr. Smith is all that can be desired.

The hon. member for Windsor asked for some information with regard to the Unemployed Workers' Insurance Act. He will find that subsection (8) of section 5 reads—

"Save as is hereinafter provided the total of the contributions to be made by workers and the total of the contributions to be made by employers and the total contributions by the State shall be of equal amount, so that workers, employers, and the State shall each contribute one-third part of the funds."

"Save as is hereinafter provided" are the important words to remember. Section 8 states—

"There is hereby appropriated out of the Consolidated Revenue, as and by way of grant to the fund, the sum of £15,000 for the financial year ending the 30th June, 1923; and the amount of such appropriation for each and every financial year thereafter shall be determined as prescribed."

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What is the state of the fund at present?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We are in receipt of an income, roughly speaking, of £18,000 per month. The estimated income for the ensuing financial year is £250,000. That is quite satisfactory. That explains the point that the hon. member for Windsor asked for information about. The statute provides that for the first financial year the Government should make a grant of £15,000. That was done and paid into the fund. It is still there, and since the commencement of the financial year the Government have been paying their contributions as provided by the Act. That covers every relevant point raised by hon. members, and I think I have given all the information asked for. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. WEIR (*Maryborough*): Unfortunately, on account of some criticism offered by hon. members on the other side of the House, members on this side find it necessary to make some attempt to prove that the workers in this State have not adopted the policy of "go slow." It is to be regretted that some hon. members opposite—some of them new members—will persist in this catch-cry of "go slow."

Mr. FRY: I hope that you do not include me.

Mr. WEIR: I do not take the hon. member too seriously. It is unfair, in view of the statement read by the Minister made by a traveller in this country who was big enough to appreciate the fact, to say that there is any "go slow" in this country as propounded by hon. members opposite. The cry is only a bogey. What bigger reflection

can there be on Australian citizens, and Queenslanders particularly, than to be slandered by men who happen to be in Parliament for the time being—perhaps by accident? If it were true, I take it that, as members on this side of the House take credit for being the leaders of union thought, it would be a bigger reflection on us than on the men themselves. The charge is not only untrue, but if there is one State in the Commonwealth which can throw the lie back it is this State. The productivity of the workman in this State is head and shoulders above that of any other State. Let us examine the position and see what it means. There are other States in the Commonwealth—New South Wales, and, particularly recently, Tasmania—whose organised industries are years ahead of the organised industries in this State. This is due to two factors

[5.30 p.m.]—one the age of the industry, and the other the up-to-date methods which their growth of population has allowed them to adopt. Those things are not possible in some cases in Queensland on account of our small population. In spite of those handicaps, the authentic records of "Knibbs" show that the workman of this State is better, so far as productivity is concerned, than any other workman in the Commonwealth—despite the "stinking fish" cry of our own people.

Last year I used these estimates and endeavoured to prove to this House what I am trying to prove this evening. This year I have again gone to some considerable trouble to frame a set of figures which will prove that this State, far from being ruined by the workers, owes more to the workers for its prosperity than to anyone else, and that this State is taking more out of the workers in the matter of industry than any other State. I have graded these figures and have segregated the items, to make my case clear, into raw materials, fuel and light, wages, and then surplus. The surplus is what I shall call "swag." The man at the top of the pole runs away with all the plunder—the "swag." Some belongs to us, the workers, and some to them, but they take too much.

The case that I have built up is based on the No. 15 issue of "Knibbs"—the last that we have. There are some later figures that are not in this issue, but are in some form in the Bulletin No. 92, which is, unfortunately, not quite as complete as "Knibbs." Where it has been necessary I have brought my figures up to date by taking the No. 92 Bulletin figures. This is to show that there is no desire on my part to put up a bogus case. Rather I want to prove to hon. members that they should stifle this cry of "go slow." I think there is not a man in this House who has not a whole-hearted desire to see industries in this State beating industries in other States. We know what successful industry means. The feeling amongst the people in Maryborough the other day when we received the good news that this State had been successful in the tender for the Tully River sugar-mill was remarkable. Over night it made hundreds of our people happy for the first time in many months. They had been without any prospect of work, and now they have confidence that their job is going to last for a couple of years. I think that we all take a keen interest in wishing that our industries should do well.

Mr. Weir.]

I am making my case, first of all, on what industry owes to the Queensland worker as against what it pays; secondly, on what it pays to the worker.

On page 403 of the Commonwealth "Official Year Book," talking now of maximum output, or—a better term—total production, the total production per head in the different States worked out—

	£
New South Wales	951
Queensland	921
Victoria	753

showing that the highest figure was in New South Wales, which was £30 above Queensland, but approximately £200 higher than any other State. The remainder of the States show—

	£
South Australia	735
Tasmania	699
Western Australia	672

I do not propose to weary the House by quoting a series of figures; I shall merely give the essentials. The latest issue of the Bulletin—No. 92—brings those figures up to date. I have used it and worked down the figures, proving that Queensland has gone to the head of the poll, right out of sight, instead of being second. The figures show Queensland £854, followed by New South Wales with £892. This shows that all the time our progress is due to the worker. In the last issue of the "Official Year Book" we were second, and now we stand head and shoulders above any other State.

In my opinion, the total output is not the best ground for comparison—it is better to take productivity or cost production. But I made the previous comparison at the outset to show that our workers are returning a fair thing.

Further on we see in the growth of total output over these two periods that Queensland has grown by £127 per man, the next State being Western Australia with £106, and so on until we reach Victoria with only £10. This shows that all the time we are more than holding our own. Proceeding, and dealing with production, we find that on page 405 of the "Official Year Book" there is a note of special interest, which I shall read to show the opinion "Knibbs" has on the figures I have given—

"Value of Production of Manufacturing Industries.—The difference between the figures given in paragraph 5 and the corresponding figures in paragraph 4 represents the amount added to the value of the raw materials by the process of manufacture. This is the real measure of the value of production of manufacturing industries."

It is really the added value that I am trying to give. The next production value shows Queensland with £364 per man, compared with New South Wales with £322 per man, Victoria with £289 per man, and so on down to South Australia with £262 per man. At that time we were considerably ahead. We are still growing, and are still beating other States on the productivity basis. The growth has been £44 per man in this State as against the next State, Western Australia, with £42, and so on to a growth of £8 per man in South Australia.

I contend, and I think rightly, that I can very well pass on from those figures, having

[Mr. Weir.

proved, as I set out to do, that the productivity of the man is better in Queensland than in any other State.

I am going to give further figures to show that the working man is putting in better service in Queensland, and also to show that the man on top is still getting a much larger chop out of the "swag" than he should.

I am now going to compare the cost of production with the value of output. Raw materials are lower in this State than in any other State except Western Australia. The cost of fuel and light are less in Queensland than in any other State.

At 5.35 p.m.,

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

Mr. WEIR: On the other hand, unfortunately, we find our wages are the lowest of all the States based on the production of the man. While the other essentials, raw materials, fuel, and light read—

	Per cent.
Queensland	60.51
New South Wales	66.09

and so on, with Western Australia 58.35, the lowest. Wages are as follows:—

	Per cent.
Queensland	16.89
New South Wales	18.59
Victoria	20.17

and so on, up to Western Australia with 25.09

These figures show we are not the highest by any means. Fuel and light figures show—

	Per cent.
Queensland	1.93
Victoria	2.06
Tasmania	2.17

and so on, up to South Australia, the highest, with 3.15

Those factors have a material effect on the cost of production, and I contend that we are not having a fair deal in Australia.

Dealing with the distribution of the "swag," the position is reversed. Queensland being the highest with a total of—

20.67 per cent.,

Tasmania being next with—

17.93 per cent.,

down to South Australia with—

10.79 per cent.

In other words, we are the highest on the scale so far as "swag" is concerned, although our productivity is the highest and our wages value less than any other State in the Commonwealth. Bulletin No. 92 somewhat alters that, but the ratio is practically the same. I mention the "swag" question, and say that the "swag" is virtually the rake-off. I know that there are such questions as interest on capital, but that applies in every other State as much as it does in Queensland.

In the case of the "swag," we find that of the total output the captains of industry take for their share—

	Per cent.
Queensland	20.67
Tasmania	17.93
Victoria	16.08
Western Australia	14.17
New South Wales	12.70
South Australia	10.79

In South Australia a very well-organised State, the "swag" was only 10.79 of the total output, whilst in this State, where the productivity is highest, the rake-off to the employers was 20.67 per cent. That is not a fair thing. If our men are showing better results than the men in the other States, we claim that they are entitled at least to the same percentage of wages based on the total output as is received in the other States. This is the only instance where we do not show to advantage. It might be said that the cost of buildings, machinery, and so forth has to be taken into consideration. I have looked at the thing fairly from all angles, and I can say, in ratio, the cost of buildings and material is precisely the same in all the States. There is not a great deal of difference. In almost every case the output represents, approximately, two and a-half times the value of the plant and buildings annually.

Page 15 of Bulletin No. 92 shows the percentage of wages to added value. The figures are—

	Per cent.
New South Wales	52.81
Victoria	51.96
Queensland	46.49
South Australia	54.41
Western Australia	65.08
Tasmania	53.42

On the total cost of production, the men doing the hard work in this State get the least in the Commonwealth.

Let us go further, and see how the argument is borne out. Those figures show, if they show anything, that it is an insult—it is not a fair thing, to say the least of it—for hon. members opposite to carp about the "go slow" policy. The figures themselves belie that, and in decency we ought to stop it. The next point I want to prove is that industry can carry more responsibility, and should carry more responsibility.

Let us see what industry pays to the workers for services rendered. In a table on page 397 of the "Official Year Book," the Commonwealth average for wages is £169 per head. The amounts paid in the various States are—

	Per head.
	£
New South Wales	182
Western Australia	173
South Australia	167
Queensland	161
Victoria	159
Tasmania	151

Queensland pays £8 per man engaged in industry less than the Commonwealth average. Only two States pay a smaller percentage to the man who does the work. If we take the output into consideration, we should in decency be at the top of the poll, but we are not. We are more than half-way down. Bulletin No. 92 shows a bigger disparity—

	Per head.
	£
New South Wales	186
Western Australia	192
South Australia	178
Queensland	177
Victoria	173
Tasmania	157

We are next to the two bottom ones in this scale, although we are still producing higher. That is not the only issue, because if we take

up the figures again, we see that on page 880 there is a table which shows the effective wage. The effective wage, and not the nominal wage, is the best basis for argument. The nominal wage does not matter. The effective wage in this State is the highest according to the present record, but that is not due to the fact that industry has attempted to do the decent thing. It is due to the fact that a sympathetic Government have manipulated or handled the other side of the argument—that is, the food side. If it had not been for the interest we have shown in this State in handling the cost of foodstuffs, our position would be, in ratio, worse than it is to-day. I am prepared to admit that the effective wage looks better on paper than it is in the other States; but this is due to the efforts of this Government, and not to industry. What is more, I say the men are entitled to still more. I am saying industry can pay still more. No matter what the Government do in shortening the price of foodstuffs, industry should carry its due responsibility. To show that there is a surplus, you find in the last schedule to the report of the Commissioner of Taxation for this year a statement which shows that manufacturing industries in this State—private concerns and companies—are yielding, approximately, £250,000 in taxation. In my own opinion, that money should not be there in the form of taxation; it rightly belongs to the men in the industry. I am contending that, according to the figures, a rise of 1 per cent. on the total output means about 5 per cent. increase in the wages of the men. We have figures showing that if we got down to where the other States are in the matter of "swag," we could give a big percentage off the "swag" to the men, and every 1 per cent. we cut off means 5 per cent. increase in the wages. We are entitled to a better percentage than we are getting, and we can build up a good case by comparing what the other States are doing with what we are doing ourselves.

I have prepared quite a long table, which I do not propose to inflict on the House, but in preparing this table, I have taken the order as per table on page 404 of the "Official Year Book, No. 15." In this table we find in No. 1 class of industry 9.4 per cent. of the output goes to the employer, and 4.3 per cent. goes to the employee. In one case we find 48 per cent. of the total output goes to the employer, and 27 per cent. to the employee. I shall take flour-mills and sawmills as a case in point to bring the figures down to something definite. Everybody in this House knows that the captains of industry associated with flour-mills and sawmills are fairly rich men—men in the main who make a good lot of money out of the industry. Their industry is a fair mark to take to prove that my contention is right, and in the "Official Year Book" we find a table re sawmills, on page 413, which shows—

"Wages, plus fuel and light	£852,288
Raw materials	1,535,933
Total	£2,386,221 "

Total output value, £2,971,079, or in round figures an output of £3,000,000 for a wages bill of £852,288. As against that, although the wages bill is a little over £750,000, we find the "swag" to the captains of industry runs into £500,000. These men have not nearly the interest or the risks that the men have, yet in this one industry they draw

Mr. Weir.]

£500,000 from the workers, while the men themselves only draw a little over £750,000 in wages. That shows that my case is sound. The same thing applies if you take flour-mills—page 422. In conclusion, I want to state that any statement or any suggestion that the men in this State are not acting fairly or are “going slow” is a dastardly outrage, and an insult to the men.

At 5.48 p.m.,

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

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): I do not think any hon. member on this side of the House would say anything disparaging the Australian worker. The Australian workman has no superior in the world, and the Queensland workman is equal to the best. That is the general opinion of members of the Opposition, and I have not heard any member of the Opposition refer to their own kith and kin in any other language, but for political purposes we have members on the Government side twisting our statements in order to get some paltry political advantage.

Mr. WEIR: You were out of the Chamber when I was speaking.

Mr. FRY: I was not. I heard what was said, and I am not going to sit down quietly when statements such as that are made. Being Australian-born myself, I always stand up for Australians.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: There are more members who are Australian-born on this side than on your side.

Mr. FRY: As a matter of fact, the majority of the party to which I belong are Australian-born. I believe in going where the best quality is. I say that industry has a duty to its employees, and a first charge upon it should be wages. Then there are other charges. The capital invested should receive a fair return of interest. When the State advances money, an interest of 5½ per cent. or 6 per cent.—or 10 per cent. in the case of farmers who cannot meet their liabilities—is imposed. Then there are overhead expenses, stationery, rates, taxes, and so on, all of which have to be made out of the industry. I contend that the whole thing depends upon organisation and supervision. The Australian workman is equal to the best in any other part of the world, but, unfortunately, the organisation and supervision under Government control are not always as efficient as they should be. I can say that from experience.

Mr. DASH: What experience?

Mr. FRY: Let me give a case in point as to organisation. Would the military machine be what it is to-day if it was not for efficient organisation?

Mr. WEIR: What about the War Service Homes? Is not that a military machine?

Mr. FRY: What about the Soldier Settlements? That was not a military machine—it was the civilian element which dealt with that. The efficiency in the world to-day depends upon organisation of industry. The efficiency of Parliament itself depends upon proper control. If firm control is taken away from an organisation, what happens? The same spirit which permeates the heads of an undertaking will go through the rank and file, not because the rank and file are inclined to weaken, but the spirit is catching. We shall get slackers, even in regard to a Minister of the Crown. When he is not efficient and up to his job and does not supervise his department properly, the effect is

[*Mr. Weir.*

felt by all the staff. The hon. member for Nundah has contended that the lack of organisation in Government enterprises is due to inefficient control. Take the public service, for instance. One man will get more efficient work done in his department than another man, because he is more fitted to supervise and organise than the other. In connection with State enterprises and the control of State departments, all depends upon the organising and supervising ability of those who are in charge of the work which is being done. In contract work and day labour the workmen are the same and the material is the same, the only difference being in connection with the organisation. One man may organise and do the work economically while another will do it at a much greater cost. There is no suggestion on the part of hon. members on this side that the Australian does not rank amongst the highest workers in the world. The Australian is an industrious man. If he was not industrious, he would not be so desirous of acquiring his own home and conducting his affairs to the best advantage. If you put the Australian down in any part of the world, it will not be long before he is thinking for himself, and finding a way to improve his position and get to the goal he desires. It is useless for politicians to try and make political capital out of a matter of that sort. The thing is so obvious that such endeavours can only come from men who are very crude in their ideas.

I want to say a little on behalf of my own electorate. We have discussed the question of day labour versus contract to a dead finish, and have arrived nowhere. While the Minister has given cases where day labour perhaps has been cheaper than contract work, we have on the other hand cases where contract work has been cheaper than day labour. One important fact is that, when hon. members opposite have wanted work done for themselves they have called for tenders. In the last Parliament we listened for twenty minutes to a Government supporter telling us about the virtues of day labour, yet we know that he has employed contractors to get work done for himself. The hon. member concerned said that contract is all right for private work but that it is no good for public work.

I wish to refer to the infant school in my electorate, to which an extension of 21 feet has been added, but it is inadequate and will not meet the situation. I have previously pointed out that the present structure is not suitable, and that it should be pulled down and a model school built in place of it which would last for many years to come. What is the good of patching the present structure by putting on a piece here and there, when eventually it will have to come down and a new school be built in its place? Why should we wait another five or ten years, and in the meantime spend large sums of money in patching up the present building? If we were dealing with a place of our own, we would say it was useless to spend £500 this year and £1,000 next year, when eventually we shall have to put up a model building. We would have plans prepared of a model building, and treat the matter from the standpoint of economy. If matters were viewed from that standpoint in regard to State control, a great deal of money would be saved in the long run. If we adopted that policy in State affairs, in a few years we would be

able to avoid a lot of unnecessary expenditure which takes place from time to time. If the Minister has not already given instructions to do so, I hope he will push on with the building of a covering to the shed at the West End State school. Different Ministers have visited the school, and the urgent need for a new school for girls and infants and repairs and improvements to the sheds has been pointed out by me. If they went there on a rainy day, they would have to put up their umbrellas. I would like the Minister to go over there on a rainy day. He then would not hesitate about spending a few pounds for the comfort and welfare of the children in this direction. The roof should be attended to immediately, if for no other

[7 p.m.] reason than in the interests of efficiency. It allows the wet to come through, and, as a result, the wood-work underneath will fall into a state of decomposition or dilapidation. A parallel case will bear out the point I am making. The police station at West End was neglected for years and the borers and white ants were allowed to get into it. I wandered into the police station on one occasion—occasionally I make it my business to inspect every public building in my electorate, whether police station, school, or any other—and I found in the floor a hole big enough for a man to go through as a result of the borers getting into it. The building was empty at the time. The white ants were also in the walls. The repairs to that building could have been done originally for £50, but they eventually cost the department approximately £300. Organisation and supervision are the key-notes of the whole business. I suggest therefore that the Government should pay some attention to the school—deal with the matter in a big way, and give us a new model school which will be sufficient to meet requirements for a very long time. They have the land there, the situation is a good one, the population is growing, and the demand for accommodation becomes greater every year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The matter of repairs will be gone into very carefully.

Mr. FRY: I thank the Minister, but I hope that he will add that the matter will be considered favourably as well as carefully. I do not want to hear any statements from hon. members opposite misrepresenting the opinion of hon. members on this side as to the ability and quality of the Australian workman. Their statements are not worthy of statesmen or men who claim to represent the Australian public. No one believes them. They should not emanate from the brain of a man or men who hope to be considered as lawmakers and controllers. Such a statement is a libel on the Australian workers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am glad to hear you castigating some of the hon. members on your own side.

Mr. FRY: I am referring to the hon. gentleman at the present time. (Laughter.) If he resents the castigation, I shall not continue it any further, because I know it is taking effect. I do not care how he views the matter, so long as he gives us credit and gives himself credit for being big enough to look at this question in a big way.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am glad you have seen the error of your ways.

Mr. FRY: I have seen the error of my ways by looking at the hon. gentleman's

I am one who benefits by the experience of the past, and, while the Minister may be going along one road, I am going along the road that leads to prosperity and soundness and the ultimate well being of the State and the people as a whole.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There is hope for you even yet.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The other day the Minister rather accused me of making a false statement in this Chamber with regard to certain work that had been carried out. He said that the conditions of the contract system in connection with that work were totally different from the conditions under the day-labour system. I want to point out that he was mixing me up with some other hon. member. On the three occasions on which I have placed tenders in the Department of Public Works for the pulling down, removal, and re-erection of schools, the conditions have been identical with those operating in the department. I would like the Minister to give the facts in connection with the pulling down, removal, and re-erection of the three particular schools in connection with which I lodged tenders with the department. Two of the tenders were accepted, and the work carried out by the tenderer. The other tender has so far not been carried out. The work I refer to was in connection with the North MacLagan school, and the removal of the schools from Cattle Gully to Wirrileigh and from Rangemore to Nutgrove. There are three definite examples which I challenge the Minister to reply to. Let him give the estimated cost of the pulling down, removal, and re-erection, and let him give the tenders put in in connection with the three jobs, two of which have been carried out. I know that there are plenty of other examples that can be given. I have quoted three definite examples in connection with which I have lodged tenders. If the department was able to select its men, I think conditions might be very different. The Minister knows perfectly well that in carrying out jobs by day labour he has to take the men as they appear on the list. He cannot select them according to their efficiency. You cannot expect to get the most efficient workmen in that way. When a private contractor picks his men he picks those whom he is able to keep on.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We do not keep a man on if he cannot do the work.

Mr. MOORE: You do not keep him any longer than you can help. The Minister knows that, if certain men are required on a job, he has to take the next men on the list. He has to take them in rotation, whether they are good or bad.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You are wrong there; they have to be good.

Mr. MOORE: I am perfectly certain that the department has to take the men in rotation. That is one difficulty that it has to contend with. I do not know really what the hon. member for Maryborough was trying to prove, but he was proving that the workers in Queensland get less than the workers in the other States, for the amount of work that they do.

Mr. COLLINS: Out of the total production.

Mr. MOORE: Quite so. That is just what I am trying to get at. The Minister and hon. members on the other side of the House on all occasions are asserting that Queensland

Mr. Moore.]

is more prosperous because higher wages are paid in Queensland than in any other of the States.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member for Maryborough said that the effective wage was higher.

Mr. MOORE: The losses on the railways have been attributed to the high costs and wages. When it comes to the Department of Public Works the hon. member set out to prove that the artisans receive less wages in Queensland than in any other State in Australia. He cannot have it both ways. He must accept the position one way or another. I want to read from an article that appeared in the Sydney "Bulletin" of 13th September, 1923—

"Queensland, now in its ninth year of 'Advanced Labour' Government, is still the place where the artisan gets the record small share of the value of his output, chiefly because the tax collector takes so much, and a great deal of the rest is wasted. The factory worker is generally on as good a wicket as anybody, and this is what he gets out of every £100 by the very latest figures—

	Out of each £100 Gross Value of Output.	Out of each £100 Value Created by Manufacture.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Western Australia ..	29 19 10	65 1 7
Tasmania ..	25 18 7	53 8 5
Victoria ..	22 9 0	51 19 2
South Australia ..	22 5 7	54 8 4
New South Wales ..	20 3 5	52 16 2
Queensland ..	17 17 10	46 9 10

"Other things may come and go, but Theodore's mismanaged State can always be found in the same old place—at the foot of the wage list."

It seems most extraordinary that, when hon. members opposite are endeavouring to find out why the losses are so great in certain industries in Queensland, they say it is because the wages paid are higher than in any other State; but, when they come to the Department of Public Works to endeavour to prove something else, they claim that the wages are lower. The position must be absurd one way or the other. A great deal of the difficulty of the Department of Public Works lies in its adhering to the fetish of day labour. There are facts which they cannot help. I believe that, when a second-hand building is pulled down and re-erected, the men get double time under the award for working old timber. The contractor in a country district must therefore have a great advantage because he does the work himself.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The men do not receive double wages, but there is an increase to compensate them for the wear and tear of tools in working old timber.

Mr. MAXWELL: 2s. 6d. a day.

Mr. MOORE: I was informed by one of the officers of the department that they had to pay double rates, and that that accounted for the high prices that were always put in. I would like to give a personal experience to show the difference between day labour and the contract system. I purchased two ready-to-erect cottages in Brisbane—I do not

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want to give an advertisement to the firm by mentioning names. They were exactly of the same value, and were erected within 15 miles of each other. One I had erected under contract for £50, and I decided to get the remaining one erected by two local men, who said that they could do it just as cheap. The contract one cost £50, and the other one cost £115.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You were unfortunate in the men you selected.

Mr. MOORE: They were good workers, but they did not have the same incentive to work as the other man. The man who had the contract went up from Brisbane and erected the house in about three weeks, but the other men took nine weeks. It is exactly the same with the Department of Public Works and the private individual. There is not the same incentive to the man working on day labour. That is where the difference comes in. The workmanship was just as good in one case as it was in the other. The Secretary for Public Works will recognise that, if these men are being paid by the day and they get the same whether they work twice as hard as the other man or not, they are not likely to put the same vim into their work as they would if contracting for the job. Everyone will recognise that. Even the judge of the Arbitration Court said that piecework was 20 per cent. more efficient than day work. A man will not put his best work into the job unless he has a chance to make more than the other man. Further, the contractor selects his men and can keep them in continuous work, therefore he gets the pick of the men available.

Mr. COLLINS: What becomes of the other men?

Mr. MOORE: They go to the Department of Public Works. (Opposition laughter.) They go to the Labour Bureau and are taken in rotation as their names appear on the list. That is one of the reasons why the department is handicapped. I am confident, by reason of my experience—I have not had any experience with large buildings in Brisbane, but I have had considerable experience with residences and schools outside—that the contract system in the country is ever so much more economical and efficient than day labour. The delay that occurs in connection with the Department of Public Works when it is constructing buildings in the country must also be recognised. Occasionally wrong timber is sent up. Time after time I have seen delays occur and men have become disgusted because the wrong timber has been sent along.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Can you give me a concrete case of that description?

Mr. MOORE: Yes, Muldu school.

Mr. GLEDSON: That was four years ago.

Mr. MOORE: Five hundred feet of timber for the ceiling arrived first and the job was hung up waiting for the other essential timber. The hon. member for Ipswich interjected to the effect that this was four years ago. I do not see what that has got to do with the case. The Secretary for Public Works asked me for a concrete case and I have given him one. It does not matter if it occurred ten years ago. I cannot go round the district to see whether these things are occurring, but I have given one case which actually took place. Where the department

has several jobs going on in the same district it is all right, but that does not usually happen, and the men have to wait about for material. All that means delay and expense. If a contractor was carrying out such work, he would see that everything was on the spot and that delay did not occur, thereby making the job more economical and efficient. I consider that it is a mistake to have two departments running one department. The Department of Education should carry out its own department entirely and have nothing to do with the Department of Public Works. Each should expend its own money. The Secretary for Public Works would not at all appreciate the position if he had to go to another department and ask for any expenditure that he thought necessary. He would put his foot down and say, "I have to spend the money, therefore I am the best fitted to judge how it should be spent." Where you have dual control, as at present, it is unsatisfactory to both departments. I do not desire to delay the Committee any more on this subject.

I understand that the Minister has given instructions that certain small repairs are to be carried out by local labour. I trust these instructions are going to be carried out, because the most absurd conditions have prevailed in the past in some cases, and the hon. gentleman must recognise that the present system is a wasteful and inefficient method of carrying out small repairs. I would like to see the Secretary for Public Instruction controlling his own vote, and then we could speak more plainly to him when things go wrong. At the present time we are somewhat diffident about complaining to the Secretary for Public Works, because half the blame rests with the Secretary for Public Instruction. We want to blame the right individual. All sorts of estimates can be produced to show the work was done under the estimate. If the department that makes the estimate carries out the work, you have no guide, especially if an estimate is not made by somebody else.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The cases I gave this afternoon covered cases only where tenders had been called.

MR. MOORE: The hon. gentleman could pick out the favourable cases. In some cases when it was found that work which was being carried out by day labour was going to cost more than the estimate, less work was done than was intended in the first place. That has been done in order to cut down the cost. I trust the Minister is not going to be obsessed with the idea that no good can be done by any class of labour except day labour.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have never taken up the attitude that "No good thing can come out of Nazareth."

MR. MOORE: If evidence is put before the hon. gentleman, he is disinclined to accept that evidence. If it is proved that work can be done by local people at less than half the estimate of the Department of Public Works, it is up to the Minister to accept the tender of the local people, supervise the work, and see that it is carried out properly. We have not sufficient money in Queensland to waste any.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No money is wasted.

MR. MOORE: Of course, if the policy of the Government is to keep a certain number of men employed and then to say the money

is not wasted, they will do so, but I want the Minister to see that the work is carried out in the cheapest and most efficient way.

MR. WARREN (Murrumba): The Minister knows perfectly well that the department is not doing a fair thing, yet he is in the unhappy position of having to justify the stand the department takes up. There is no building being erected in the country to-day that could not be constructed by the people in the country at a much lower price with the men working at award rates. They would be working under an award just as much as the men working for the Government. The work would be passed by an inspector of the department, and the work would have to be as good as the work done by the men employed by the department. Then, again, it is only right that the work should be decentralised. The carpenters in Nambour should do the work required there, and we should not bring men from Brisbane to do that work. We know that theoretically this rule is supposed to be acted on, but in practice it is not. I do not think the Minister will claim that it is done, although the department is supposed to do it. I want to stress the point that, while the two departments are doing the same work, there will never be any satisfaction. The Secretary for Public Instruction is sympathetic, but sympathy is no good unless we have something practical done. Unfortunately, when we go to the Department of Public Instruction we are told that we shall have to stir up the Department of Public Works. It is sheer humbug, and all the time the children of the people in the country—whom hon. members opposite call the backbone of the country—have to be educated in sheds which are hardly fit for a stable. The Secretary for Public Instruction knows that people would not put a good trotting horse in some of the places I am speaking of. The Government are supposed to be a humanitarian Government, but they do these things, and it is absolutely scandalous. These things are not done as a temporary arrangement—they have been going on for years. We are always talking about making the country districts more attractive. How can they be more attractive when the money is spent in the city? I do not wish to convey the idea that the department treats me worse than any hon. member opposite, but the country electorates are cribbed and cheated for the sake of the city electorates.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you know that of the thirty-one schools built last year not one was in the Brisbane area?

MR. WARREN: I am not saying that any of them were, but in one electorate there was a school which was doubled in capacity and you could not get children to fill it.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Where?

MR. WARREN: The hon. gentleman knows where it is. The hon. member for Kurilpa has given it to him before.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I do not know.

MR. WARREN: I think it is the school at Northgate.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That school was extended last year, and the number now attending is beyond the capacity of the school. The hon. member for Nundah can tell you that you are wrong.

MR. KELSO: They have asked for an addition.

Mr. Warren.]

Mr. WARREN: It has only recently happened that the attendance has increased.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That has been the case from the time it was enlarged. Your statement is absolutely untrue.

Mr. WARREN: I will withdraw that statement. (Laughter.) I do not want to say anything that is not true, and I am sorry I have referred to that case. The statement was made in this Chamber, and I never heard it contradicted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It was contradicted. It is absolutely false. It was stated in this Chamber that the addition was made because my children were attending the school.

Mr. WARREN: I am not going to say that all the money is spent on the city schools, but in the country centres, where the farmer is living, we cannot get the new schools which are so urgently required. The fact that I have made one mistake does not prove that there is not a real grievance. In some cases our schools are eight

[7.30 p.m.] years behind the times—I am safe in saying that one school is quite eight years behind the times; and, until we get better conditions for our schools in the country and so long as such schools are so far behind the times, I shall continue to say that the country is not getting a fair deal. Is it fair that the children of the great producing classes of Queensland should be brought up under worse conditions than those of the workers in the city or the big town? It is not fair. It is wrong treatment; and until the whole business is worked from the Department of Public Instruction we are not going to have satisfaction. The Secretary for Public Instruction should be able to spend money on the schools he believes to be most urgent. Take the case of two new schools I know of. I do not want to name them, for the simple reason that I do not want to prejudice their cases. I believe that the applications are most likely to be granted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You do not want them granted?

Mr. WARREN: I want them both granted, but one is more important than the other.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Which one?

Mr. WARREN: I am not going to say which one. I am not going to prejudice the interests of either.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If I tell you that I will give you one of the two, will you tell me which you want?

Mr. WARREN: I will, decidedly. But let me take those two schools as an illustration. Supposing the Secretary for Public Instruction, acting on the reports of his inspectors, decided that he would build one of those schools. He would send both proposals on to the Secretary for Public Works, who would decide which of those schools he would build.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No. In the case you cite, if only one school was to be built, the Secretary for Public Instruction would mark on the papers which of them he recommended.

Mr. WARREN: We are told by the Department of Public Instruction that, if

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the papers are sent on to the Department of Public Works, the Secretary for Public Works will decide which school is to be built. I say that the decision should rest with the Secretary for Public Instruction.

Mr. HYNES: The more schools you get in your electorate the sooner you will lose your seat.

Mr. WARREN: The more schools there are in my electorate the longer I shall be here. It would not kill me if I did get turned out—I would not die of starvation—but I want a fair deal for my constituents. All I ask is that the children in my electorate shall be educated under the very best circumstances. We can talk about the work being carried out by day labour or contract or piecework. I do not give a rap how it is carried out. (Government laughter.) I do not care whether it costs the department £200 or £400, so long as we get the school. I say that, although we are paying too much under the day-labour system and are not getting satisfactory results, it is so important that we should get schools that they are cheap at any price. The first business of the Secretary for Public Instruction and the Secretary for Public Works should be to see that the children of every country electorate are educated under the most modern and best conditions.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You cannot give us the illustration of the Yandina school now.

Mr. WARREN: The Yandina school would be an absolute disgrace to the bushmen of Africa. The interjection shows how little the hon. gentleman knows. Yandina is not in my electorate now. It is now in the electorate of the hon. member for Cooroora. That school has been a disgrace to any civilised, decent, respectable people for over three years. It has been overcrowded to an extent which has been a positive shame, and the people of Yandina had my sympathy and the very best exertions of which I was capable to bring about better conditions. (Laughter.) It is not a thing to laugh at—to have children huddled away under trees in a climate like that on the North Coast. It was in my electorate several years, and the Secretary for Public Instruction will bear me out when I say that I have interviewed him about it on so many occasions that I have forgotten the number, and that I have introduced I do not know how many deputations to him about it. He has always given that beautiful sympathy about which we read in scripture.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The "soft answer that turneth away wrath"?

Mr. WARREN: Yes, and makes you despair all the more. If there is anything calculated to break the heart of a country member, it is to go to a department for such a vital thing as the education of the little children and get sympathy but nothing else. The Minister knows perfectly well that we do not ask for the impossible or for anything that is unfair. The Secretary for Public Instruction cannot say that any statement I have made about the schools in my electorate to-night is exaggerated in the least.

Hon. W. BERTRAM: Are not your thanks due to the Minister for giving you the Dayboro school?

Mr. WARREN: Yes, but I do not think this is a full-dress rehearsal of gratitude.

WHEN I am very grateful to the Minister for what he has done to my schools, I do not think for a moment that he will say that he has done a rap more than should have been done.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What would be your fair share of schools?

MR. WARREN: I shall not go into that. Perhaps the Minister is not treating me worse than anyone else; but, if seventy-two electorates are as shamefully treated as Murrumba, then their treatment must be very bad.

MR. FRY: You should see the Kurilpa school.

MR. WARREN: There is more of Queensland than Kurilpa, and if I showed the hon. member some of the sheds and some of the schools in my electorate—

MR. HYNES: You should show him some of the country schools in Victoria under a Tory Government.

MR. WARREN: I have travelled Australia more than the hon. member. I do not wish to convey to the public or the Press that I consider that our schools are bad. That would be wrong. We have some very fine schools in Queensland. The only place where I saw worse schools was on the desert sands of Egypt, where they have a shade of some palm leaves, under which there is a form comprised of two forks in the ground with a stick across. Those schools are worse than some that we have. Many of our schools are dangerous to the health of the master and the children. Some of the schools let in the rain, and with the cracks in the wall I do not think there is any need for doors. The trouble in connection with the erection of schools is surmountable. The main trouble is the cost.

MR. DASH: You said you did not care what they cost.

MR. WARREN: I do not care a rap. If the Minister will give me schools, they will be cheap at any price. He has not got the money. He is as poor as Lazarus's dog. (Laughter.)

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You cannot get blood out of a stone.

MR. WARREN: If the Minister was to carry on the work more economically, he would have more money to spend on schools. Supposing that a school which now costs £1,000 to erect was to be erected for £600—they can be carried out for £600, and it is no use the hon. gentleman saying they cannot—there would be more money for other schools.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are not the schools that let the water in cheap enough for you?

MR. WARREN: I want the schools—not the water. I consider that we have one of the grandest educational systems in the world; still we want to do more in order to perfect that system. We do not want our children to be taught in sheds or public halls. In many cases these halls are not constructed in a manner that makes them suitable for educating children in. They are no good to the masters or the pupils.

MR. HYNES: Have not the present Government done more to improve the educational facilities than any previous Government?

MR. FRY: No.

MR. WARREN: If the hon. member for Townsville is satisfied with that, then he is very easily satisfied. I am not complaining that the Government have not done as much in my electorate as they have in other electorates.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS interjected.

MR. FRY: The hon. member for Murrumba is asking for two more schools.

MR. WARREN: I am not asking for two schools: I am asking for twenty. If I only required two schools, I would not care so much. If the Government would carry out their work in a more businesslike manner, I am quite convinced that, under the present conditions, they could effect the repairs and build new schools for less money than they are spending now. I have not risen in this Chamber simply to complain. I think hon. members opposite, and particularly the Secretary for Public Instruction, will admit that the schools I have been referring to are a disgrace, and the matter should be remedied. I hope that the Government will consider the position and not allow the two departments to work in the way they are doing now. The whole of the business can be carried out by the Department of Public Instruction; but if that department still requires the Department of Public Works to build the schools, it can do so. If the whole of the work was carried out by the one department, I think it would be more satisfactory than the present method.

MR. BRUCE (*Kennedy*): During the debate, quite a lot had been said about the question of contract and day labour, and figures have been quoted to a considerable extent. The object of quoting those figures was to show which system was the more profitable to the employer. I do not intend to quote figures; I intend to quote my personal experience regarding the effect of the contract system on the health and lives of the workers engaged under that system. Practically all my life I have followed the mining industry as a worker and organiser in the Cloncurry district. The contract system versus the day-labour system was a very burning question. It used to be my duty, as organiser, to examine the mines, and I found that the regulations governing the industry were broken in many cases, owing to the desire of both the employer and the employee under the contract system to increase profits and earnings respectively.

At 7.46 p.m.

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

MR. BRUCE: The award provides that the temperature was not to be more than 83 degrees wet bulb. The men were put on six-hour shifts, but under the contract system, on going up rises 80 feet and 90 feet, I have found the men working at a temperature of 93 degrees and 102 degrees wet and dry bulb. Men who are authorities on this subject say that human beings cannot exist under those conditions, yet the men were working in that high temperature. They were doing that with the object of increasing their earnings, as they were paid so much per foot for putting in the rises. We found, as representatives of the union, that throughout the contract system it led to the men endangering their lives by speeding up.

Mr. Bruce.]

Now let me come to the sugar industry. The earnings of the cane-cutters working under the contract system are very often quoted, but anybody in touch with that industry knows that every man engaged under the contract system in that industry is, firstly, young; secondly, a big physical specimen of the human race; and, thirdly, the speed at which he works is not to the benefit of human beings, having regard to climatic conditions. It would astonish any man to see how cane-cutters have to work to reap the rewards that they obtain under the contract system. One of the leading mine managers of the Cloncurry district once pointed out to me that he had so many hundred thousand tons of ore that would yield 5 per cent. of copper. He said that, if he could introduce the contract system, the ore could be taken out at 3 per cent. Then he told a story of the development of the district, and how the added capital could be applied to the development of the Cloncurry district. He talked of the employment of a great number of men. The crux of the whole position is that that 2 per cent. profit, with which he was going to develop the district, was to be gained by taking it out of the sweat and toil of these men under the contract system.

Let me now get back to the question of schools. I do not agree with the Opposition in their objection to schools being controlled by two departments. We all know that the Secretary for Public Instruction is very sympathetic and very desirous of providing schools and educational facilities for the benefit of the people of Queensland. The schools can be better built under the Department of Public Works. I have no doubt that the Secretary for Public Works is equally sympathetic, but unfortunately, as the hon. member for Murrumba said, the hon. gentleman has not sufficient money to carry out all the work. Still, I am very anxious—like other hon. members—to have many schools erected in the Kennedy electorate. There is a place in the electorate called Bamberoo. There is a very intelligent class of people at that centre, as instanced by the fact that at the last election I got forty-seven votes to my opponent's three. Those people want to bring up their children in an intelligent manner, and enable them to become as intelligent as themselves, and they want school facilities. I have been to the Minister and I have been urging their case, and I hope to see in a short time a school at Bamberoo. These people are not wage-earners, but struggling farmers. That shows that the Country party are not alone in appealing on behalf of the struggling farmers.

It is absolutely necessary to provide windmills at the schools in the Burdekin Delta, Inkerman, and Halifax districts, as the rainfall does not give a sufficient tank supply of water for the children.

I have had numerous requests for school accommodation in my electorate, and I only wish that the appropriation was larger, so that the Minister could afford the school facilities required. The most important function of Parliament is to improve the education of the children of the State. It is our first duty to make this an intelligent, prosperous, and enlightened State, so that we can stand with the rest of the world, and the method to achieve that is by education. Education is the basis of civilisation to-day. If the money voted is not sufficient, the Estimates should be increased. I feel strongly

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on the question of education; and I feel sure that members on the Opposition side of the House do as well in their requests as members on the Government side. Any man who has studied the social question knows how desirable education is. The man who has education knows the increased power that it gives him, and the man who has not had the benefit of education knows what a burden he has to carry in making his way through life. I hope the Minister will be able to meet all hon. members as far as possible, and more so those who have requests for an extension of the present educational facilities.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): I am sure that the Minister would not like this vote to go through without its being fully criticised. (Laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I revel in it.

Mr. DEACON: The Minister is entitled to all the assistance we can give him to make his department thoroughly efficient. I do not know whether it is thoroughly efficient or not, because it is very difficult to judge by seeing small works carried out in the country.

Mr. KELSO: The Minister says it is efficient.

Mr. DEACON: I am going to give him the benefit of what criticism I can to see if it will help him along, and if it does help him along, good luck to him. I have listened with interest to the argument as to the relative merits of contract and day labour. There is one fact I do know, and that is, that private individuals have no fear of the contract system or of the possibility of having inferior timber put into their buildings.

Mr. POLLOCK: They do not build by contract now.

Mr. DEACON: Yes, they do.

Mr. POLLOCK: The buildings in Fortitude Valley are not being done by contract.

Mr. KELSO: What about the Temperance and General building?

Mr. MCLACHLAN: What about the Town Hall?

Mr. DEACON: Hon. members might get a revelation some day about the Town Hall. However, it is not a matter that concerns the country. It does not matter to the country people whether the Town Hall is built or not. What the people of the country desire is to get as much work done as possible for the money that is expended in the country. The people in the country are not afraid of giving their work out on contract, nor are they afraid that the contractor is going to do them for the material. Very often the department could carry some works out efficiently by day labour, and in other instances it would save money if it was carried out by contract. I am quite sure that in the small jobs in the country the department would get the work done a good deal cheaper by giving it to the man on the spot, instead of sending a man from Brisbane at a good deal of expense. The hon. member for Kennedy said that contract work led to speeding up. If there is anything in that argument, it is proof that men employed by the Government on day labour are not giving as much value for their wages as the men who are working for a private individual. If that is so, the department should not be committed to a policy in

Building and repairing school buildings simply because it costs more. The vote for school buildings this year shows an increase, but I do not know whether it is yet sufficient to meet requirements. If it is not, we ought to make it sufficient. It is false economy for the department to be behind every year in the requests for educational facilities. If more schools are needed, it is better that Parliament should face the situation in one year, for the sooner the situation is met the better. The present buildings under the control of the department are not being kept in the state of repair that they should. School buildings, as well as public buildings, in every centre are urgently in need of painting. Apparently, the only reason they are not painted is because the expense is too great, and the Estimates have to be cut down accordingly. That is false economy. It is an economy that the State will pay very dearly for in the future. The Department of Public Works should know just how much it would cost to bring all the work under its control up to date. This House ought to have that information so that, if necessary, it can vote the money and acquaint the public with the situation.

There is another matter I wish to refer to, because here again is a system of bad economy on the part of the Government. If a public building is destroyed by fire, it is not replaced. The buildings are not insured. I understand that the department takes the view that it is too expensive to replace them. If the State is to continue that policy, it will lose money. If the department has not provided a sinking fund or some means of keeping its buildings up to date, it is in a much worse position than when the Government assumed office. It is impossible for that policy to be continued. If a building is burned down it should be immediately replaced, and there should be some fund to provide for that.

At 8 p.m..

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

Mr. DEACON: Reference was also made to the supply of water, including that from windmills. It would be a very good thing if that supply could be arranged.

Mr. COLLINS: It would mean the expenditure of more money.

Mr. DEACON: But, as we are already short of buildings, I suppose it is impossible to think of water supplies. On the Downs, if any school committee want a supply of water beyond the water-tank, they have to supply it themselves, and I recommend anyone else to follow their example.

I am not going to criticise the department any longer. I have done my best to point out to the Minister the weak points in his department, and I hope that in a year's time these will no longer exist. There is no department in such a state of efficiency that it cannot be made better, and I trust next year to see a better state of affairs than exists at the present time.

Mr. LOGAN (*Lockyer*): One of the main objections to most departmental work—and this refers particularly to school work—is that the Department of Public Instruction does not control the expenditure upon work to be carried out upon schools.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They could not build any more schools for the money.

Mr. LOGAN: Being controlled by the Department of Public Works, it means that school work is held over for a much longer period than it should be. We have all had evidences of delays caused through the Department of Public Works not being able to cope with the work required to be done. I have no fault to find with the department, but I think that, if the Department of Public Instruction and other departments which are controlled by the Department of Public Works so far as the expenditure of money for buildings is concerned, were in a position to control that expenditure, the matter of repairs to schools, painting, etc., would be carried out much more quickly and efficiently. Numerous instances have occurred where schools have been delayed in the matter of repairs, renewals, and so forth, owing to the fact that the department is over-taxed in regard to the quantity of work to be carried out. For this reason I say it would be better if the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Agriculture, or any other department, had control of its own funds.

Only last year I had occasion to approach the Department of Public Works with a view to getting the residence and the school at Lockrose painted. The chairman of the school committee said that it was fifteen years since the school had been erected and painted and twelve years since the residence had been similarly treated. The report from the Works Department showed that one building was in a particularly good state of repair considering the time that had elapsed since it had received attention, but that the other building required painting, and that it was unwise to go on with the one building and not with the other. The work was therefore allowed to stand over. I have a letter to that effect dated October, 1922. That work has not yet been done. I hope the department will see to it and keep these buildings in repair by having them painted. Material, particularly timber, depreciates when neglected in the matter of painting. I also desire to point out that only recently I was approached by the school committee of the Lower Tent Hill school and they informed me that the school teacher was in danger owing to the fact that his house was in a state of disrepair, and there was a considerable gap between the wall and the floor. It appeared to me that the studs were not tenoned into the plates underneath, consequently there was a gap of from 1 inch to 1½ inches right along between the floor and the wall. When one finds such a state of affairs he naturally approaches the department to hasten repairs. On reporting this to the Department of Public Instruction, that department reported to the Department of Public Works, but that department, owing to the small attendance in that particular district, thought it was not advisable to erect a new building. It is difficult to say what they are going to do, consequently the teacher's life and the lives of his wife and family are in danger. Probably a cyclone or a storm shifted the building at some time, and it only requires another blow to bring it down altogether.

I do not wish to labour the question of schools too much, as hon. members of the Opposition have spoken pretty freely upon it; but what mainly brought me to my feet is that the Minister made reference to a certain estimate for the removal of the

Mr. Logan.]

Lockyer General Hospital. He said that I approached the department and informed him that I was prepared to get a man to remove the hospital for £380, whilst the estimate from the Department of Public Works for the removal of this building was £750. I did approach Mr. Quinn, the Under Secretary, and pointed out to him that the original builder of the hospital had stated that he was willing—this was some twelve months previously—to remove the hospital at that time for £375. I did not say that he was prepared to do it at the time the Minister refers to. I said that I knew he was prepared to remove it at a considerably lower price than the estimate of the Works Department. Evidently the department got in touch with the gentleman I refer to, and it appears to me that he was asked to put in a tender. I understand that, no matter what the amount of his tender was, it was to be accepted, so like a wise man he put in a higher tender than he was previously inclined to do the job for.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Who gave you to understand that?

Mr. LOGAN: As far as I can understand, the Department of Public Works.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Nonsense! Absolute nonsense!

Mr. LOGAN: So far as I know, and so far as the hospital committee know, tenders were not called for the removal of the building.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You said that he would do the work for £380. He put in a tender for £523.

Mr. LOGAN: He understood that his tender would be accepted, consequently, like a wise man, he put in a tender higher than he would have done if there had been any competition.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: In addition to the tender of the man you mention another tender for £480 was put in.

Mr. LOGAN: It is rather strange to me that this other tender was not accepted, seeing that this gentleman was trustworthy and a thoroughly competent tradesman.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There was no other tender.

Mr. LOGAN: I do not want to argue with the Minister. I shall just quote what he said and leave it to the Committee. I have gone fully into this matter and I want to give the facts. I do not want to mislead the Committee at all. The Minister did not make any unfair remarks about myself, but he said—

“Take the statement of the hon. member for Lockyer, who said that a contractor in his electorate would be prepared to do a certain job for a hospital for £380. That was less than the estimate of the Department of Public Works. We supplied him with the specifications on which our estimate was based, and his estimate was immediately increased to £523—a difference of £143 on one small job.”

There was more than one tender put in for the removal of this hospital.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not to the Department of Public Works.

[Mr. Logan.

Mr. LOGAN: To the Department of Public Works.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Under Secretary says “No.”

Mr. LOGAN: I do not want to place the Under Secretary in an awkward position, as I have too much respect for him, but I want to explain the position clearly. On 21st November, 1922, the Under Secretary wrote to the secretary of the Lockyer General Hospital, Laidley—

“Sir,—With reference to your letter of the 23rd October last, and previous correspondence relative to proposed removal of Lockyer General Hospital to new site, I have the honour to inform you that two tenders have been received for the work, viz.—G. E. Neumann, amount £523, and A. C. Zillman, amount £465.

“I would recommend the acceptance of Mr. Neumann's price and have to advise that upon receipt of a cheque for the full amount (£523) this tender will be accepted and the work proceeded with under the supervision of this department.

“I have, etc.,

“R. N. F. QUINN,

“Under Secretary and Director of Public Works.”

It was owing to the fact that the Minister interested himself sufficiently in this matter to make the statement he did the other night that I have spoken now: I was not particularly anxious to delve into the matter, as the hospital has been removed and things are now quite satisfactory. But, had tenders been called, I know perfectly well, and the Committee knows perfectly well, that possibly we would have got that hospital removed for £400. I have the full correspondence here, and, if the Minister wants any more, he can certainly have it. I want to inform the Committee that what I said to the Under Secretary of the Department of Public Works on the occasion I visited him was perfectly correct. The man who offered to remove this hospital was the gentleman who originally built the hospital. He told the chairman of the hospital committee at that time—probably twelve months before I visited Mr. Quinn—that he was prepared to remove the hospital for £375—he was out of work at the time.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: When he was asked to put in a tender he increased the amount to £523.

Mr. LOGAN: Under the circumstances I give him credit for putting in a higher tender.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: According to your statement, you are giving a man credit for trying to take the department down. According to your statement, the work was worth £380 and he wanted £523 for it.

Mr. LOGAN: I said the man told the chairman of the committee that he was prepared, when he was out of work, to remove the hospital for about £375. I honestly believe that under the present system the officers of the department, when they arrive at an estimate, take care to be on the safe side. Anyone would do that, but at the same time the present day-labour system is certainly not in the best interests of the

public, because we have numerous instances of where public funds have been wilfully squandered.

Mr. COLLINS: Prove your case—"wilfully squandered."

Mr. LOGAN: I will prove my case. There was a little school in my district which has been closed. I made representations for a new school at a place not far distant from this school that was closed, and I asked for an inspector to be sent up to report on the matter. He went up and approved of the closing of the school and the removal of that school to the other site where I had been agitating for a school. I found out that the estimated cost of the removal of this school was £149. Whether that includes painting or not, I cannot say. As I desired to save public funds, I asked several local people if they would put in a tender for the removal of this school, and also to state their price for painting. I received several tenders for the removal of this school. I do not propose to give the names just now, but the Committee can have the information if they desire it. The first tender reads—

"For pulling down a school and putting up again, one tank stand, two w.c.'s, one window broken, and new timber put in where it is required and twenty new stump caps, two coats of paint on the outside of school all round. I agree to do the work for the sum of £65 10s."

as against £149 estimated by the Department of Public Works.

Mr. COLLINS: That is not proving your case.

Mr. LOGAN: I want to point out that another gentleman submitted a tender which I am prepared to hand to the department. He is quite willing to do the job for £30.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Which tender did you accept?

Mr. LOGAN: It is not within my power to accept any tender, neither did I intend to mislead these people whom I asked to tender.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Were you asked to get tenders for that work?

Mr. LOGAN: No.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What specifications were they?

Mr. LOGAN: There are no specifications required. The school simply has to be pulled down and re-erected, and one man is prepared to do that work for a little over one-third of the estimate of the department, and I am not sure whether the estimate of the department included painting. Is it in the best interests of the public that this sort of thing should go on? I certainly say it is not. Members on the Government side, particularly the hon. member for Rosewood, have asked time and again, "Is contract not the same as day labour?" I say, "Of course, it is." A certain man may take on a contract for the removal of a building or for the erection of a new building. He has to employ day labour to do it, and he is compelled to pay the award rates. I fail to see why that system of contract should be disallowed. I maintain that the policy of the Government in this connection is absolutely wrong and is resulting in a waste of money. There are many other instances to which I could refer, but I will not do so, because other hon. members have dealt fully

with the matter, and I do not want to reiterate what they have said. These are cases which have been brought prominently before my notice, and, after the Minister made the statement which he did the other night, I armed myself with material to prove my case.

As far as the Lockyer General Hospital is concerned, the people there are firmly of opinion that, if tenders had been called for the removal of the building, it could have been done for about £400, whereas the estimate of the Department of Public Works was £750. When we have cases like that, no one can say that the department is doing the best it can in the interests of the general public. Repairs to school buildings are urgently required in the country districts, yet the department, when approached, says that there are no funds available, while it squanders money in the way that I have shown. In my criticism of the department I have endeavoured to be perfectly fair, but the concrete cases which I have brought forward prove that the best interests of the general public are not being considered. There is a huge amount of money being spent on public buildings in Brisbane. For my own part, I do not approve of this expenditure at the present time. We know that practically all over Queensland we are faced with one of the worst droughts we have ever known in the history of the State. A person has not to go very far to see evidence of that. This year may appear to be all right, and there is evidence of prosperity about the city, but the city has not felt the pinch. We must wait till next year, when the returns come in, before we know where we stand. Who knows when the drought is going to break? I claim that the curtailment of expenditure in the city would be a wise thing at the present time.

Mr. COLLINS: Would that not throw men out of employment?

Mr. LOGAN: It might throw men out of employment, but how many men are thrown out of employment in the country? No one likes to throw men out of employment, and no one would do more than I to keep men in work.

Mr. GLEDSON: If you close down public works, you are going to cause unemployment.

Mr. LOGAN: We are not going to close down public works. What I say is, that they could be carried out under the contract system just as well as by day labour, and the work would be done in a more economical way. That being so, there would be more money available for public works, and it would give more employment. Money could have been saved, for instance, if the £125 above the estimate of £400 for which the building mentioned could have been removed had been saved, let alone the other item of £350 to which I have referred. That would have gone a long way towards repairing the residence at Lower Tent Hill school, which is falling to pieces to-day. No one can say that the policy under which the Government are carrying out public works to-day is in the best interests of the State. The public funds are going to be exhausted quicker under the day-labour system than under contract. We are practically spending £1,000 to keep men in employment for one week, when that amount of money spent by contract as I suggest might give employment for two weeks under the contract system.

Mr. Logan.]

I asked a question recently in connection with the damage done by engines to the Forest Hill railway gates.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member should have discussed that on the Railway vote.

Mr. LOGAN: I had a definite purpose in asking that question, and I hope in the near future to prove my case.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You will have to give better facts than you have given to-night.

Mr. LOGAN: The Minister does not appreciate what I have said.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Your statements are not based on fact—I say that definitely.

Mr. LOGAN: Tell me where they are not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will deal with you.

Mr. LOGAN: I am dealing with the Minister. I have eight or nine letters which I can read which would back up my argument.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Those letters do not back up your case.

Mr. LOGAN: I do not propose to take up the time of the Committee any longer.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I say definitely that the statements you made are not in accordance with fact.

Mr. LOGAN: If the facts are not right I am not to blame—the department is to blame. I sincerely hope that the Minister and the Government generally will see the wisdom of altering their policy. When they can get work done for half the money which they are now paying, why not make a change?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You cannot get it done for half the money. You are not stating facts. Your estimate is entirely wrong.

Mr. LOGAN: I will give the hon. gentleman the tender and he will see that I am right.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The tender is not based on any specification.

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

Question put and passed.

SERVICES—PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

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

“That £35,450 be granted for ‘Services—Public Buildings.’”

This represents an increase of £2,200 on the Estimate of last year, due, first, to the increased accommodation required for different departments necessitating increases in rent and also to increased costs of water, rates, gas, and other things mentioned in the schedule.

Question put and passed.

BUILDINGS.

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

“That £101,000 be granted for ‘Buildings.’”

This is an increase of £6,000 on last year's estimate.

[Mr. Logan.

Mr. MAXWELL (Toowoong): I notice an amount of £30,000 on this vote for “General repairs, painting, improvements, and incidentals.” I would suggest to the Minister that an opportunity be given to tradesmen to submit their estimates to his department, as that will have a tendency to reduce the cost of a number of these buildings. During the discussion figures have been given by hon. members opposite proving conclusively to their own satisfaction that a certain system is the proper course to adopt in connection with works carried out by the Department of Public Works. As against that, we on this side have given figures and produced documentary evidence to prove that the work could be done equally as well, if not better, under the contract system, as it would be under the supervision of officers of the department. I yield to no one in my admiration of the working men of Australia and particularly of Queensland. I do not associate myself with any remarks which have been made with respect to loafing or “slowing down,” and I want to make my position clear in that connection. If one is to be guided by the work that has been done by contract, compared with the estimates which have been submitted by officers of the department as to what the work being carried out at present is going to cost, then £30,000 will go a very little distance in completing the work which it is so essential to have done. It is only necessary for me to deal with a little recent history to illustrate my point. During the debate this afternoon referred to [8.30 p.m.] a reference was made to one of the finest buildings we have in Queensland—I say one of the finest buildings in Australia—the Executive Building. That block occupies a frontage to the Queen's Gardens and the Printing Office lane of 234 feet 2 inches and a frontage to William street and George street of 158 feet 2 inches, with a stone exterior on all four sides. It has five stories, with a basement. It cost £142,132 3s. 7d. I do not want to mislead—I recognise quite fully that the cost of building has changed considerably since the Executive Building was erected, both as to the prices of material and the price of labour.

Then take another building which has been recently completed. The State Insurance Building is eight stories with a basement, and has two frontages of stone similar to that of the Executive Building, the working of which necessitates a great amount of skill and labour. It has a frontage to George street of 109 feet 6 inches and a frontage to Elizabeth street of 137 feet 6 inches. It cost £140,965 9s. 4d. Those two buildings are a credit to any community, to the contractors, and to the officers of the Department of Public Works who supervised their erection. The department is now completing the Treasury Building block. The existing Treasury Building was erected in two sections. The first was built by Phippard Brothers for £99,000, and the second by Mr. Jude for £66,000, making a total of £165,000. The new building will have two frontages of stone of a character easier to manipulate than that in the Executive or State Insurance Buildings. It will have a frontage to George street of 109 feet 6 inches and to Queen street of 137 feet 6 inches. It will have four stories and a basement, and will continue the walls already completed, so that the two ends of it are practically erected and there is apparently going to be another small amount of

construction in the form of the garden portion at the back. Yet we find that under the day labour system that building is estimated to cost £230,000. If a building such as the Executive Building, covering a wonderful area and displaying magnificent stone work could be built for £142,132, and if the State Insurance Building could be built comparatively recently for £140,966—both buildings giving considerably more floor area than the proposed new Treasury Building—is the Minister going to perpetuate the system under which his department works?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You know perfectly well—

MR. MAXWELL: I know perfectly well that on the face of it it is a disgraceful condition of affairs. Is it any wonder that the people of Queensland are finding fault with the supposed extravagance in the Department of Public Works? There are the facts—the official estimate of the hon. gentleman's department and the cost of the erection of two of the finest buildings in the Commonwealth by contract.

MR. FOLEY: You never mentioned the Town Hall.

MR. MAXWELL: I leave that to geniuses like the hon. member. I am not associated with the Town Hall.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You are associated with the Employers' Federation.

MR. MAXWELL: If the hon. gentleman gets any satisfaction out of that interjection, I do not mind. Is the hon. gentleman a member of a union?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Of course I am.

MR. MAXWELL: Of course he is, and he wants to deny to me the same right. I am not going to "scab" on my mates—make no mistake about that! It is unions such as the Employers' Federation and the legitimate trade unions—which I believe in—that create a better understanding between man and employer. It has been stated this afternoon that the employer is out to slum and ruin the work he is doing. We have had conclusive proof to the contrary from the officers of the hon. gentleman's department, who have shown that the contract system has been very satisfactory by giving to the contractors the certificates on which they have received payment and which are an indication of the manner in which they have done their work. The hon. gentleman himself referred to the very excellent work which has been done. It is only right that the public should be made aware of the amount of money which it is estimated will be spent upon the completion of the Treasury Building block, as compared with the cost of the fine buildings I have mentioned.

Again I urge on the Minister, before he sends a construction gang from Brisbane to some place in the country, to consider whether it would not be as well to give some of the local people an opportunity to save his department money, irrespective of the policy of the Government. If, as I said before, they will do the work for considerably less or any less than the estimate of the Department of Public Works, then let them do the work. The department cannot do it as cheaply under the conditions under which it works, because, for one thing, travelling

time has to be paid for. The employer outside has to comply with the conditions of the Arbitration Court award. It seems to me that the employer is to be ostracised by a section of the community—from the society of gentlemen occupying the Treasury benches—notwithstanding that he is contributing considerably to the taxation of the State. And I have yet to learn that a great number of the employers of this State have made fortunes. I know a great many of them who have been working ever since they came here, and have to go on working; their pockets are not as well lined as those of some hon. members on the other side of the House. On this point, I want to remind hon. members of what I said in this Chamber in 1922. I want to quote these cases in the Townsville and Innisfail district.

A building erected under the day-labour system cost £102 per square, and a building erected for the Workers' Dwellings Board under the contract system was erected for £53 per square. These buildings were both supervised by officers of the department, and no man can say that the building that cost £53 per square was erected in an inferior way to the building costing £102 per square.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Where was that?

MR. MAXWELL: In the Townsville and Innisfail district. I refer the hon. gentleman to "Hansard" for 1922, at page 1224.

MR. POLLOCK: I shall refer you to the Town Hall.

MR. MAXWELL: The hon. gentleman has been out of the Chamber during this debate, and knows nothing about it.

MR. POLLOCK: You were absent when the Town Hall question was discussed.

MR. MAXWELL: The hon. gentleman is not going to drag me into that question. I can take care of myself.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. gentleman will address the Chair.

MR. MAXWELL: I am doing so. I want to impress upon the Minister the desirableness, in the expenditure of this £101,000, of giving the people outside and those in the city an opportunity of submitting an estimate in connection with the work. On another vote I have drawn the hon. gentleman's attention to certain buildings that are in a state of disrepair. I also drew his attention to the matter last year when the Estimates were before the Committee. We still have the same buildings in the same state of disrepair. As the hon. member for Queenon pointed out, negligence in connection with the painting and repairing of buildings has a tendency to create a bad impression, and to deteriorate the buildings. I hope the Minister will give attention to the suggestions I have made, as they are in the best interests of his department.

HON. W. H. BARNES (Wynnum): I would like the Minister to take a walk round this very building and see the impoverished state we are getting into in connection with some of our cushions. There is a cushion here that is a disgrace to Parliament House. It has been like that for about a fortnight.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You should report that to the Buildings Committee. They control that.

Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

HON. W. H. BARNES: No. The Minister has a happy knack of passing it on to someone else.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I pass it on to the people who are responsible.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman can only draw attention to it. The hon. gentleman knows that the matter he alludes to does not come under the control of the Department of Public Works.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If it does not come under the Minister's control, it ought to do so.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman should address his remarks to the Building Committee.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I shall take your advice, Mr. Kirwan, and at the close of this debate I will address the Building Committee. In the meantime, I consider it to be within my duty to draw attention to it.

There are one or two other matters that I would like to draw the Minister's attention to. To-night the Minister has made some reference to the contract system, more particularly in connection with the building that has been erected at the corner of George and Elizabeth streets.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; I corrected the hon. member for Nundah.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. gentleman may have corrected the hon. member for Nundah—I was not in the Chamber at the time. The point I want to make is that he made some reference—I am not suggesting that his reference was incorrect—to the fact that a tender was let at about £3,000 higher than the estimate of the department.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Approximately £6,000 higher.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I think the hon. gentleman is wrong. I think it was about £3,000 higher. But, taking him at his own word, I think that the acceptance of a tender for that work was one of the best things that ever happened the State of Queensland, because I venture to say that, if that tender had not been accepted, the results would have been very different. I was the Minister who signed that tender.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Three weeks before the elections.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It would have been a disastrous thing if that work had been carried out by day labour. I think the Minister was exceedingly unfortunate in making the reference that he did—

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Oh, no!

HON. W. H. BARNES: Because the fact remains that if it had been commenced during the war period that building would have cost very much more than the tender. I think that is common property, and the hon. gentleman to-night must have known that the acceptance of that tender meant a saving to the State.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You do not know all the circumstances.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I know that, generally speaking, when the estimate of the department and the tender are very near in a big work like that, it is very much safer to accept the tender rather than the estimate of the department. I do not want to criticise

unfairly. I am prepared to admit that in connection with the Goodna work there was a tremendous discrepancy between the contract price and the departmental estimate. I am prepared to admit that twice tenders were invited for that work, and ultimately the work was carried out. I believe it was carried out at a cost pretty much the same as the estimate of the department.

THE PREMIER: Less than the estimate.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am trusting to memory.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There was a considerable saving. I quoted the figures this afternoon.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Speaking generally, when you take the various works that have been entered upon under the day-labour system or otherwise, I venture to say that it will be found that the contract system is very much better than the day-labour system. Under the former there is an incentive. We have this experience—that hon. members opposite, when they want any work done, do not get it done by day labour, but by contract.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They have not the organisation to supervise the work.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I admit that. All the same, they have the means to get an architect to do the supervision for them. That is a very poor argument by the Minister. I do not think the hon. gentleman has yet joined the benedictists. If he had done so and had built a home, he would have found it very easy to have got someone to supervise the work. The point I want to make is that there has been a considerable waste of money in Queensland in connection with buildings by reason of the fetish which has been practised with respect to day labour on all occasions.

A couple of years ago men were sent to Southport to do certain repairs. They were two days waiting for timber. They had a right to be paid, as they were there ready and willing to do the work. The fact remains that there is not the same incentive in connection with day labour as there is in connection with the other system.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is no incentive to put in "crook" work.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am sorry that the Minister makes that reference, because I take it that the department—I know the department, and I know the officers well—will see that the work is carried out well, and they are there to see that the work is carried out according to specifications.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We have a number of tunnels on the Cairns Range that were built under the contract system.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not know whether it was before the days of the hon. gentleman.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Long before.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If the tunnels had been constructed in his day, they would have been twice as bad as in the days to which he refers. That is an isolated case. It is no use the Minister getting upon his feet and saying that everything done so far as the day-labour system is concerned means

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

profit. At times it has meant profit, and at other times it has been disastrous.

Mr. KELSO (*Nandah*): This afternoon the Minister with great gusto—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member cannot reply to what was said on a previous vote, or the discussion would be interminable. He can discuss this vote.

Mr. KELSO: The Minister said that I made a misstatement on the question of day labour as it affects State Insurance buildings.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must realise that I am not going to permit him to reply to every statement made by the Minister. If I did so the other members might avail themselves of the opportunity, and we would have the first vote discussed over and over again. The hon. member should have risen after the Minister resumed his seat and before I put the vote.

Mr. KELSO: I wish to make an explanation.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can do that at the proper time.

The PREMIER: On the motion for the reception of the resolutions.

Question put and passed.

COURT OF INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION.

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

“That £3,436 be granted for ‘Court of Industrial Arbitration.’”

This is a decrease on the vote for last year. The appropriation is based on the actual cost of the sub-department last year.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Miranah*): The appropriation for 1922-23 was £5,135, while the appropriation for the current year is £3,436—a decrease of £1,753. I would like to know if the reason for the decrease is the intention of the Government to make less use of the court in future. When the Act was amended to bring the Government employees within its scope, we were told that a very prominent point in the policy of the Government was that the Arbitration Court should deal with the Government employees in the same manner as they dealt with the employees of private employers. The other day a dispute occurred with the employees on the Government dredges and steamers. That dispute was not dealt with by the court. In the agreement arrived at, it appears that the court is being cut out in the future. Some reason should be given for that. I understand that this proviso appears in the agreement—

“It is mutually agreed that neither party will approach the Arbitration Courts for a variation during the terms of the agreement. In the event of a dispute arising upon any matter in the agreement the point of dispute shall be referred to the representative of the Government and the secretary of the Seamen’s Union (Queensland Branch). Should they fail to arrive at a satisfactory decision, the matter shall then be referred to an arbitrator mutually agreed upon, whose decision shall be final and binding.”

That seems to be an important departure in the policy of the Government, and some explanation is needed. It is a reversion to the old system of wages boards. It is also inter-

esting, while on this subject, to learn whether in the case of other sections of Government employees—the railway employees, or the Police Union—the same procedure is to be adopted and a special tribunal created, notwithstanding the fact that we are devoting money every year for the upkeep of this court. The Arbitration Court is part of the policy of the Government, and all matters concerning their employees should be dealt with by the court in the same manner as it deals with the employees of private employers.

Another matter to be discussed on this vote is whether it is right that preference should be given to political bodies. I can quite understand in the case of a trade union that a great deal can be said as to why it should have certain privileges. The unions devote a great deal of time and money to improving the condition of the workers, but they also say now, “We will compel you, whether you like it or not, or whether you believe in a certain cause or party or not, to subscribe to the funds of that party and to certain newspapers whether you read them or not.” It is gross tyranny to make that the price of a man being allowed to earn his living. I have here the rules of the Australian Workers’ Union. When I said just now that I understood why certain trade unions should have certain privileges I had in view the objects stated in rule 3 of the Australian Workers’ Union—

“(a) To regulate and protect the conditions of labour, the relations between workmen and employers and between workmen and workmen;

“(b) To regulate conditions on the conduct of the trade, business, or industry of the members;

“(c) To promote the general and material welfare of the members;”

and so on. There is no objection to that. Those are the objects that are desirable, and which everyone can support. What I do object to is where the rules state further on in paragraph (d)—

“To replace the present competitive system by the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.”

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I fail to see what the constitution of the Australian Workers’ Union has to do with the vote for the Court of Industrial Arbitration. I am certainly not going to permit the hon. member to discuss the constitution of any union under this vote. The hon. gentleman must discuss the administration of the Industrial Arbitration Court, and not the constitution of the Australian Workers’ Union.

Mr. SWAYNE: I was discussing the provisions of some of the awards.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman was not quoting the award, but the constitution of the Australian Workers’ Union.

Mr. SWAYNE: I was remarking that for a man who does not believe in the abolition of the present system, and who does not believe in Communism, it is the height of tyranny to compel him to comply with such conditions. If hon. members opposite knew that before they could earn their living they had

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to belong to a Liberal Association, or had to subscribe to the "Courier"—

Mr. GLEDSON: We were told that we would have to do that.

Mr. SWAYNE: They would consider it most tyrannical, and so it would be. It is equally tyrannical when you turn round and say that a man must belong to a political body which has for its object an avowedly destructive policy, and that he must subscribe to the funds of certain political newspapers before he can work in Queensland. Why should a man who does not agree with the objects of the policy of hon. members opposite have to pay money towards their electoral expenses?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has failed to satisfy me that he is dealing with the Court of Industrial Arbitration. The hon. member is discussing the constitution of the Australian Workers' Union.

Mr. SWAYNE: I should like to do so.

Mr. DASH: The hon. member knows nothing about it.

Mr. SWAYNE: I have the rules here, but I am not allowed to quote them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must discuss the administration of the Arbitration Court, awards, and so forth. If I am going to permit him to discuss the constitution of the Australian Workers' Union, other hon. members might discuss the constitution of the Employers' Federation, or something of that type.

Mr. SWAYNE: I could quote some other rules, but I do not now desire to do so.

Mr. HYNES: Tell us something about that 1916 sugar arrangement.

Mr. SWAYNE: I was quoting facts when I said that awards contained a provision limiting employment to members of certain bodies. Those bodies in their turn claim the right to dictate to their members as to what—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member does not respect my ruling, I shall deal with him. I desire him to understand that, if he wants to discuss preference to unionists, he can do so, but I am certainly not going to allow him to discuss the constitution of any union. If I did so, I should have to allow other hon. members to discuss the constitutions of various other unions. That would not be discussing the Arbitration Court vote.

Mr. SWAYNE: I think that I am discussing the question of compulsory preference to unionists.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to point out to the hon. member that I decide whether he may discuss that or not.

Mr. SWAYNE: I am giving my reasons as to why I object to preference being given in certain cases. I have quoted instances, giving any amount of reasons for such objections. Again, I have given other instances and have advanced facts showing that I do not think it is right or just that preference should be given in those cases. Had you allowed me to continue, Mr. Kirwan, I would have finished and sat down by this time. You have simply prolonged my remarks, because I had to obey your call to order. I do not think that anyone can say that it is a fair thing that a man should be

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cut out of all employment if he does not belong to a certain political party, and contribute from his earnings to the upkeep of that party or its Press.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. HYNES: Did not your association endeavour to bring in compulsory membership?

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): Before the vote goes through I should like the Minister to indicate to the Committee the policy of the Government in regard to the overlapping of the State and Federal awards. I regard it as a pretty big question, so far as the administration of the law is concerned. My attention has been drawn to two definite statements made by the Secretary for Public Works in regard to this matter, and I desire to quote them. It is a very difficult matter, indeed, to decide which statement is the one from which a person should draw his conclusion as to the action desired by the Minister in regard to the overlapping of the awards. This is a great deal more important than a mere question of wages; it is purely a question of economy, and should receive the consideration of the Committee. The Premier is concerned with regard to a statement that he made at a conference which he attended in another State. I understand that the Secretary for Public Works was also down there, and, although various other States agreed to a certain line of action, he took objection to the policy laid down. I desire to ascertain exactly where the Minister stands with regard to this overlapping. It is only right that we should know. The first statement is to the effect that the Minister objected to Federal interference, contending that—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What are you quoting from?

Mr. KERR: I think it is from the "Standard," but I have not got the paper. I am not quite sure, but these are the words that are credited to the Minister.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You are alleging that those are the words I said?

Mr. KERR: Yes. The hon. gentleman has not yet heard them. I am sure he will admit they are when he has done so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have my doubts.

Mr. KERR: The quotation reads—

"That industrial peace would not be brought about but the contrary, owing to interstate disputes being brought about to gain admission to the Federal Court."

The hon. gentleman cried out at that time that State employees would be deprived of the protection of the labour laws of Queensland. That was the contention of the Minister. That statement is credited to the Minister, and I do not think he will deny it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There was a lot more said in addition to what you have quoted.

Mr. KERR: Yes, but it merely amplifies the case.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You have left out certain salient features.

Mr. KERR: The Minister took the attitude that certain employees were deprived of the protection of the labour laws of

Queensland, according to the "Standard" of 7th June, 1923, yet he is reported to have used these words in an interview—

"I think that State employees should have the same advantages as are enjoyed by employees in private industries. If State employees and the employees of local authorities, or authorities constituted under a State law, are prevented from appealing to the Federal Arbitration Court, there is no guarantee that a tribunal will be set up (in other States) to which they could appeal for justice."

And these words appear in black type—

"It is just as well to speak plainly in these matters. Whether the contention be right or wrong, it is believed by a large section of employees throughout the Commonwealth that this proposal of the other States has been framed with the object of preventing State employees from approaching the Federal Court, and so that they may be deprived of the benefits of arbitration."

We have two distinct statements by the Minister—first, that they would be robbed of the advantages of the labour laws of Queensland, and then, if they went to the State court only they would be robbed by not being permitted to go to the Federal Arbitration Court. The Minister should tell us exactly where the Government stand in regard to these awards. The Premier was down at that conference in 1921. This is an extract from the minutes—

"Mr. Hughes: Then that is carried unanimously?"

"Resolved: Proposals made by the Prime Minister and accepted by the Premiers."

That was the establishment of a court constituted by the Commonwealth with jurisdiction to determine the basic wage and standard hours of labour with regard to any or all industries

I understand that at the end it was decided to draw up a list of industries of a Federal nature, and it was also laid down that State instrumentalities were not to be interfered with. That is some little time ago, and there has been a good deal of trouble since in regard to the Commonwealth and State laws in connection with this matter, and the question should be dealt with as quickly as possible by the present Government. At the last conference, at which the Premier and the Secretary for Public Works were present, a list of the industries was discussed. The list conformed in principle to the Constitution of the Commonwealth. Subsection (35) of section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution, dealing with the matter, reads—

"Conciliation and arbitration for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes extending beyond the limits of any one State."

In 1911 there was submitted to the people a referendum as to whether that section should be altered to read—

"Labour and employment, including—

(a) The wages and conditions of labour and employment in any trade, industry, or calling;

(b) Prevention and settlement of industrial disputes, including disputes in relation to employment on or about railways, the property of any State."

In 1911 the people rejected that by a large majority. In 1913 the same questions were submitted to the people with an additional clause added, whereby the conditions of employment and the settlement of disputes in the several State railway services might be brought within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Arbitration Act. That also was rejected by the people. In 1915 the Commonwealth passed an Act for again submitting the matter to the people, but it was never submitted to the people. The questions were withdrawn. On 28th October, 1919, it was again submitted to the people and turned down.

That shows definitely that, if a vote of the people means anything, it means that we should control our own employees. Speaking as an independent person, I am in favour of a Federal Arbitration Court, and of the abolition of the Queensland Arbitration Court in regard to wages and in regard to other matters which appertain to every person in Australia. If there are certain conditions of employment that are enjoyed by the employees in Queensland, I am in favour of their retention. There is no reason why they should not be. In every Arbitration Court, when dealing with the question of wages, the unions advocate the Federal wages, and we follow the Federal awards in Queensland to a very large extent. There is a great overlapping and a great expenditure of money in regard to these matters which could well be saved. I recognise that there are many barriers to be surmounted. Right throughout Australia at the present time in the same industries different hours are worked and different wages paid. There are different conditions in Queensland in connection with a particular article manufactured for export to those appertaining to the same industry in other parts of Australia. In my opinion, it is necessary to have a Federal court judge sitting in Brisbane, with a Queensland judge if necessary, to control industries of a Federal nature. To prove what I say, I shall quote the figures in connection with the different industries. Here are the working hours for engineers and metal workers in the different States—

	Hours.
New South Wales	47.14
Victoria	48.00
Queensland	44.00
South Australia	48.00
Western Australia	45.65
Tasmania	47.28

Mr. GLEDSON: You want them all to be forty-eight?

Mr. KERR: I am not discussing that question at all.

Mr. HYNES: You never do say what you want.

Mr. KERR: I want a court of a Federal nature. The hours are shown to be less in Queensland than in the other States. I frankly acknowledge that, but we must remember that, if it is a court of a Federal nature, in New South Wales they may award forty-four hours in that industry. It is necessary to correlate these industries.

Mr. HYNES: What about the delay in getting access to the Federal Arbitration Court?

Mr. KERR: If there was a branch of that court in Queensland, there would be no delay whatsoever, and the interests of Australia would be better served.

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Mr. GLEDSON: You do not know much about the Arbitration Court when you say there are no delays.

Mr. KERR: Why cannot it be remedied? If there are delays, they should be prevented. The Secretary for Public Lands gave an instance of that the other night. He said that if the State Advances Corporation were delaying action, it had to be stopped. If delays are occurring in connection with the Federal Arbitration Court, they should be stopped.

Mr. GLEDSON: It has been going on for fifteen years, and is not stopped yet.

Mr. KERR: Let us be optimistic for a change.

Now let us take the working hours in trades connected with food and drinks—

	Hours.
New South Wales	46.55
Victoria	47.14
Queensland	44.43
South Australia	46.41
Western Australia	47.21
Tasmania	47.94

There is a difference there of three or four hours, which means a considerable amount. There again the Queensland employees work the least number of hours during the week.

Now let us take clothing, boots, etc. These commodities are produced with the same machinery and under the same conditions in Queensland as in other parts of Australia, yet we only produce 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. of the whole of our requirements. We are importing the balance from the Southern States—

	Hours.
New South Wales	44
Victoria	45.35
Queensland	44
South Australia	44
Western Australia	44.36
Tasmania	46.29

That is to say the hours in New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia are the same, the other States being a little higher.

In the book and printing trade the weekly wage is as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
New South Wales	5	2	1
Victoria	5	4	7
Queensland	4	19	2
South Australia	4	19	4
Western Australia	5	10	10
Tasmania	4	18	8

Queensland is the lowest of any State in Australia in this particular industry, but I do not want to labour that fact. At this stage there is not as much time to go into the question as one would like except in a general way. However, the time is opportune for the Minister to state definitely what the Government propose to do in regard to the overlapping of awards. The operation of the Arbitration Act has had the effect in Queensland as well as in other parts of Australia of not giving a man a sufficient margin of skill. The Act does not lay down a basis of wage; it lays down the standard of living, and the wages are worked out by that and other means. The graduated scale of the higher craftsmen, such as moulders, fitters, brass finishers, and pattern-makers, should be higher than it is. They are above the labourer in skill, but under the Industrial Arbitration

Act they are not getting a sufficient allowance for their skill. More especially is this so in the Railway Department, which is in a deplorable condition in that regard.

Mr. DASH: We shall have to allow members of Parliament to appear as representatives in the Arbitration Court.

Mr. KERR: I hope that members of Parliament will be permitted to act as advocates in the court. The margin of skill allowed to-day is totally insufficient.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What do you think the margin should be?

Mr. KERR: There should be something in the Industrial Arbitration Act to give a lead to the court. I know that the Minister will say that there is not enough power under the Act to-day.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There is no power under the Act to do that.

Mr. KERR: The Act says—

“The court shall be entitled to consider the prosperity of the calling and the value of an employee's labour to his employer in addition to the standard of living.”

That is definitely stated in section 5, subsection (b).

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There is another section with regard to the scale.

Mr. KERR: There is another section which says that the court shall have power to make an award with reference to a calling or callings. If the power with regard to the margin of skill is in the Act, all I can say is that it is not operative.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What do you think the margin should be?

Mr. KERR: It is not for me to say, but I hold that the laying down of the margin for unskilled men and not giving sufficient margin for skill has had a bad effect in Queensland. The hon. member for Ipswich, who is keenly interested in the apprenticeship question, knows that it has had a bad effect on the men on the lower rungs of the ladder. Take a porter in the Railway Department, for instance, who is an unskilled man. He starts as an unskilled man, picked up from no particular kind of work.

Mr. HYNES: No class of labour is unskilled.

Mr. KERR: That is all right from a certain point of view, but not from the point of view I am advocating. A porter gets £221 per annum, and he occupies the lowest grade in the whole of the service. A night officer must learn telegraphy, station accounts, working of trains, signalling, shunting, and other technical work, and he gets £4 per annum less than a porter. After a porter has been in the service fifteen years he may become a station-master.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You forgot to get this in on the Railway Estimates.

Mr. KERR: I am quoting this in passing, as it is very apropos to the question of arbitration. A station-master who has been in the service fifteen years has to know all about shunting and checking work, and has the whole control of a station, and he only gets £14 a year more than the man who comes in and acts as a porter. I could go on ad infinitum in regard to this matter, and quote

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station masters' salaries in the other States. A higher margin of skill is recognised in some of the other States. The hon. member for Ipswich will confirm my statement when I say that one of the best things we could have in Queensland to-day would be a branch of the Federal Arbitration Court.

Mr. HYNES: You are confusing skill with responsibility.

Mr. KERR: I am not confusing skill with responsibility. If the hon. member had been listening, he would have known that I said that every man in the workshops has responsibility. The question of margin of skill is a most important one among the unions to-day. Many supporters of mine are unionists—men who have given a good deal of time in the old country to learning a skilled trade—and they have been in Australia for fifteen or twenty years. After having served an apprenticeship and paying money to learn the trade of moulder, brass fitter, or some other skilled craft, they are getting very little more than is earned by what is known as unskilled labour. This difficulty exists to-day, but it did not exist to such a large extent before this Government took office.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What new powers would you give to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court?

Mr. KERR: The principles which existed under the Act which was in force before this Government took office could very well be applied to-day. The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration has Federal authority, and is clothed with sufficient power to enforce its awards in Queensland. I would like to know whether the arrangement proposed at the Premiers' Conference has progressed in any shape or form or whether we are at a deadlock. Does the Premier want to rob the workers of the benefits of the Queensland labour laws, or does he want to rob them of the benefits they might obtain under Federal administration? I say the time is opportune when this big question should receive more consideration from the Government and when this dual control should cease.

Mr. SIZER (*Sandgate*): The question raised by the hon. member for Enoggera is worthy of more consideration than is given to it. The operations of the Industrial Arbitration Court largely affect [9.30 p.m.] the progress of Queensland, and it is with that in view that I want to say something on the question. I am not a believer in the system of fixed awards as being the best system for obtaining industrial efficiency that can be devised. I have been and still am a believer in the system of making provision for a minimum wage, that is, a wage giving an adequate living as prescribed by the court; but I want to see a better system introduced, which will permit of something in the nature of payment by results. It would not be difficult to give effect to it by arrangement with the court or under the old wages board system, by which both sides could arrive at some agreement. Despite what may be said to the contrary, I am convinced that most of the workers are prepared and anxious to give a fair deal. I say that undoubtedly in the majority of cases they do that, but the conditions under which they are working do not give them the benefits to which they are entitled. I say that a flat rate is not good. We have on the one

hand to take into consideration that, if the law lays down a fixed basis and everybody complies with it, well and good; but, if it is left to the discretion of the employers or employees to decide whether they will comply with it, it is merely a form, and no man will do what the other fellow is not doing. I want the power of the court increased so that the judges, having prescribed a minimum wage, will have power to make arrangements between employers and employees by which a system of bonuses or payment by results or profit sharing—call it what you will—can be introduced.

Mr. GLEDSON: They have full power under the Industrial Arbitration Act to do that now.

Mr. SIZER: I do not think so. No encouragement has been given to them to do it.

Mr. HYNES: The average employer will keep the workers down to the dead level of the minimum wage.

Mr. SIZER: The hon. gentleman is a supporter of the Government.

Mr. HYNES: I have had a good deal of experience in Arbitration Court matters.

Mr. SIZER: I am aware of that. Just recently I read a letter written by the hon. gentleman at one time in Mackay. That letter did not seem to give much encouragement or incentive to anybody, though that is beside the point. Hon. members on the other side are in a position to create an incentive for workers. I am putting up this plea because I believe that greater incentive means greater means of production and prosperity. I believe that the Government realise that the time has arrived when they must pay some attention, not only to primary industries but also to the establishment of new secondary industries. The very life-blood of this question is wrapped up in the Arbitration Court. I believe that better results could be obtained if we could arrive at an adequate basis for an equitable system whereby men would receive an additional remuneration over a certain minimum. Such a system would be beneficial to everyone. This is not an outrageous system. It is not even a new system. It has been practised in other parts of the world. The firms that have adopted it are prosperous, and the employees working under it are better off than the employees on a flat rate. Why hon. members opposite who have spent most of their lives in the industrial ranks are not prepared to move along those lines is beyond me! Hon. members opposite can read Lord Leverhulme's book. No one can gainsay the fact that his men are working under ideal conditions and that they get adequate and beneficial results from the profit-sharing system. There is no question of the employers sweating the employees in that business.

Mr. HYNES: Where did Lever Brothers get their millions from if it was not from the sweat of the workers?

Mr. SIZER: If one was to argue on that basis, we would not get anywhere. No one can say that their workers are being sweated in the true sense of sweating. There are no bad conditions resulting from this system. We can take many small illustrations of where the system has been in operation more or less successfully, largely due to the

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amicable arrangements existing between the employers and employees. The system is well worthy of consideration, and it is well to realise all its advantages. We could at least make a start by bringing back the old wages boards and making an honest endeavour—which I believe can be done—by getting the most skilled employees and practical employers to assess the value of an employee's labour. Why not incorporate that spirit in our industrial conditions and give the employees an opportunity of availing themselves of it? Many of the employers have machinery that is not working to its fullest capacity, and, if the machinery is not working to its fullest capacity, the industry is losing money. I maintain that, in order to work it to its fullest capacity, it is worth while for the employers to make arrangements on the lines I have mentioned, and it is worth while for the employees to work that machinery to its fullest capacity, because they will have some incentive in a monetary consideration. Whether men be communistic or socialistic, the one propelling power in this world is still that of the pecuniary remuneration that one receives for his labour. A person may be a Communist in principle, but he is only communistic with individualistic ideas because he hopes to gain by it. The more you can inculcate that idea into the workmen and the industry, the better we are going to be. I would like to see a trial made in the direction I have indicated to give an incentive to the employees to take a further hold of the industry, and in an amicable spirit give the profit-sharing system a trial. I would like to hear the opinions of hon. members opposite on this question. I do not know why it is they are always particularly silent in this direction.

Mr. GLEDSON: Ask your leader.

Mr. SIZER: I am speaking to the hon. member at this moment.

Mr. GLEDSON: Ask your leader.

Mr. SIZER: I am sure he is not the hon. member's keeper. Surely he does not want someone else to look after him? We must realise that profit-sharing is an important factor, and, if it was established successfully, it would be a milestone, not only in regard to the prosperity of the individual but to industry and the State. I cannot understand the reticence of hon. members opposite about discussing this matter and getting down to a workable basis. It can be done and great results achieved.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I would not have said anything on this vote but for the remarks of the hon. members for Sandgate and Enoggera, who accuse members on this side of having nothing to say, or of knowing nothing about arbitration.

Mr. KERR: I did not say that. That is ridiculous.

Mr. SIZER: I say distinctly that you have had a lot of experience.

Mr. GLEDSON: Members on this side of the House understand the question of arbitration just as well as hon. members on the other side.

Mr. SIZER: We realise that.

Mr. GLEDSON: I am pleased to see the reduction in the vote, because it shows a certain amount of decentralisation in regard

to the Court of Industrial Arbitration. The reduction is purely a matter of travelling expenses. I understand more of the work of the Court is to be done by the Northern judge and officials stationed in the Northern centres. The Court of Industrial Arbitration was brought in to give workers engaged in industry a fair deal, which they were not able to get from the friends of hon. members opposite before it came into being. The proposal of the hon. member for Sandgate simply means a reversion to the old system.

Mr. SIZER: No, no!

Mr. GLEDSON: Under that system the employer would be able to arrange with some of the girls and women in Brisbane to take out so many blouses, skirts, and other garments and pay them at the rate of 2d. per garment, or 1d. per buttonhole, or some such arrangement, and introduce a system of sweating. We have had this phase of the question thrashed out time after time, and have shown where employers have been able to induce unfortunate workers to take work home on the piecework, profit-sharing, or bonus system. I had thought that the old sweating conditions had been done away with, and that no man would dare to stand on his feet and advocate a return to them. Arbitration was brought about solely for the purpose of giving the workers a fair deal, although the workers have not yet got all they are entitled to. We have only to look at the position of arbitration to see for ourselves whether the worker gets value or a return for that which he produces by his labour. The court does not do anything of the kind. The court sets out to find out how little a man, his wife, and three children can exist upon. They give that to him and say, "Here you are; you go and exist on that. You will not get any more."

Mr. KERR: Do you advocate that Parliament should fix wages?

Mr. GLEDSON: I advocate that a man should get the full result of his labour.

Mr. KERR: You will not answer the question.

Mr. GLEDSON: An employee should not receive, as the court lays down, merely what is necessary for existence. The hon. member for Enoggera advocated the abolition of the court, and that we should bring in the Federal Arbitration Court and let them deal with matters in Queensland. Then the hon. member went on to amplify his argument and quote the hours. He said, "They are working forty-eight hours in New South Wales, and only forty-four in Queensland. How can we compete with New South Wales?" And then he advocates an increase of four hours a week for the workers of Queensland.

Mr. KERR: You forget the difference in wages.

Mr. GLEDSON: Abolish the Arbitration Court in Queensland! Substitute the Federal Arbitration Court! Accept the dictum that they have laid down of forty-eight hours and increase our working hours!

Mr. KERR: I did not say anything of the kind. You are a twister.

Mr. GLEDSON: These are the hon. gentlemen who get up and say they have got unionists in their electorates who support

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them and help to put them into Parliament. What for? To increase their hours by four hours a week!

Mr. KERR: I did not say that. You are a twister.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: Let us take some other statements in connection with arbitration.

Mr. KERR: I do not take much notice of you. You are a born twister.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member for Enoggera indicates that he stands for the skilled worker, the man with the big salary, and claims that the unskilled labourer is getting too much. Does the labourer not perform just as necessary work in Queensland or anywhere else as the skilled man? He has made the skilled man. Take the skilled man and find out where he would be if it were not for the unskilled man. Take the engine-driver, who is a skilled man. What use would he be if you had not the navy to lay down the track and keep it in order? Yet hon. members opposite get up and say that the labourer is getting too near the skilled man—that he is receiving too much.

Mr. KERR interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member for Enoggera does not obey my call, I shall deal with him.

Mr. GLEDSON: We have created an Arbitration Court which has considered these matters, and has fixed a basic wage which, in my opinion is not sufficient to keep a man, his wife and "kiddies" in this or any other State. We have enabled men, after hard work, to obtain through the Arbitration Court a certain percentage of additional wages for the men engaged in skilled work; but those skilled workers have only been enabled to become skilled by the assistance of those working with them. They are entitled to all they get, but the labourer is also entitled to anything that he gets. In fact he is entitled to more than he gets. I hope that the Arbitration Court of Queensland, so long as it is of any benefit to our workers engaged in our industries, will not be abolished, as the hon. member for Enoggera desires, but that it will keep going in its good work.

Mr. KERR: You know that I did not say anything of the kind. Why don't you tell the truth? You are deliberately twisting what I said.

Mr. GLEDSON: I am going by the hon. member's statement that he hoped that the Federal Court would take control of these matters, and that the Queensland Court would be abolished.

Mr. KERR: And replaced by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

Mr. GLEDSON: We do not want the Queensland Arbitration Court abolished, because it is the only Arbitration Court anywhere in Australia to which a man can get expeditiously and which makes awards expeditiously. The Federal Court does not do so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It takes three years to get an award through the Federal Court.

Mr. GLEDSON: As the Minister says, it sometimes takes three years, and I know of

one case where it took almost four years before an award was obtained from the Federal Arbitration Court. This is the court that members on the other side stand up for and which they say should take the place of the court we are discussing to-night—a court which, with all its faults, certainly has dealt with cases expeditiously. We have been able to get matters settled expeditiously, but whether they have been settled to our satisfaction or not is a different matter. I hope no notice will be taken of the hon. member for Enoggera, and that nothing will be done by this Government to abolish the Queensland Court or do anything in that matter at all.

Mr. SIZER (*Sandgate*): I would not have spoken again, but I refuse to allow the hon. member for Ipswich deliberately to distort my argument. He has become quite renowned in this House for deliberately attempting to mislead the Committee and for distorting arguments.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in stating that any member of the Committee deliberately misled the Committee or distorted argument. If the hon. member for Ipswich made any misstatement, the hon. member should have risen at the time.

Mr. SIZER: I say that the trend of my argument was distorted by the hon. member, because never at any stage of my speech did I advocate sweating. The hon. member would be prepared to argue that way far sooner than I, and I refuse to allow him to misrepresent the views I have expressed. The whole trend of the hon. member's speech shows clearly that the one concern of hon. members opposite is to get into this Chamber on the backs of the workers. They are afraid to face the issue and solve the problem. They want discontent to continue—they live on it. Members on this side are anxious to see reform. The hon. member for Ipswich admitted that the Arbitration Court was not giving satisfaction, yet he does not propose to amend it. He proposes still to stick to the flat rate, while we say there should be a regulation as to a minimum wage and for the prevention of sweating, as I mentioned distinctly, and in addition there should be an opportunity for the workers in any industry to obtain a reasonable proportion of the wealth they create, and which hon. members opposite speak so much about. Would it not be far better, in the interests of the people whom they represent, and whom they allege they are so solicitous about, and far better in their own interests if, instead of making misleading statements and distorting facts—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. SIZER: In deference to your wish I shall have to withdraw it, but, when I put forward an argument and the hon. member accuses me of saying something entirely different, and he continues to do so after I have called attention to it, I can only come to one conclusion.

Mr. GLEDSON: You make statements, but you are not prepared to stand up to them.

Mr. SIZER: We are prepared to stand up to any statements we make. Unfortunately we are not in a position of affluence. We

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have to work the same as hon. members opposite, and we are anxious to get a reasonable return for our own labour, and we naturally expect other people to be the same; but we as legislators should use our intelligence and attempt to improve the system in order to get a better result. The system which I advocate would give that better result, and the workers would have nothing to lose under that system. Their rights would not be interfered with in any shape or form. All I am asking is that the value of their labour be assessed according to quality, and that each worker be paid according to the wealth he creates. The only solution offered to the workers by hon. members opposite is something mythical—communism—and they tell the workers that they must own the whole of the world, knowing full well that the workers want no such thing. Communism would bring about chaos and would be detrimental to the workers and not to their advantage. We cannot progress along those lines, though I am prepared to admit we have progressed under the Arbitration Court. We should take advantage of the experience we have had and bring about a more amicable, more equitable, and more scientific system of bringing about the results which are necessary from the workers' point of view and also from the industries' point of view and the State's point of view.

Mr. DASH (*Mundingburra*): It is most remarkable to hear the sentiments of the hon. members opposite, especially after inviting members on this side to get up and speak. I would point out to the hon. member for Sandgate that it was understood in the early part of the evening that we should adjourn at 8 o'clock.

Mr. SIZER: Who understood that?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Your leader.

Mr. SIZER: This is the first I have heard of it.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: He knows all about it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. DASH: I wish to point out that we were honourable enough to carry out the undertaking, and that was the reason why we refrained from speaking on this vote; but, seeing that hon. members opposite wish us to speak, we have no objection to making a few remarks.

It is most remarkable to hear the speeches of hon. members opposite in connection with the Arbitration Court. If they would study the Federal Arbitration Act, they would realise the difficulties in connection with the Federal Arbitration Court. Of course they represent the employers, and it is always their aim to delay action by the court as long as they possibly can, because the awards of the Federal Arbitration Court are rarely made retrospective. If they are, it is only in isolated cases, and then generally in the interests of the employer. In connection with the Federal Arbitration Court it is very difficult to get an award made under eighteen months or two years. The procedure in filing a claim in the court is very difficult. You have to serve a copy of your claim on each employer in an industry if you want to get him bound by the award. The Federal Court has also no power to enforce its awards. There is no one appointed, as there is under the Queensland Act, to see that the wages prescribed by the court are paid. Action has to

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be taken individually in that direction. The court has no power to enforce an award after keeping the unions waiting for eighteen months or two years. Hon. members opposite talk about payment by results, and talk of the benefits which were obtained under the Wages Boards Act. We do not want to go back to what the hon. member for Wynnum did when he was Treasurer for the State. When a carters' award was made at Rockhampton by the Wages Board he refused to accept it. If that is the system which hon. members opposite want, I hope that they will never get on the Treasury benches to carry it out. When it was left to the employers and the Wages Board to determine the question of hours and conditions and the rate of wages, what did we find? Even to-day with our system of arbitration—which is the best in Australia at the present time—it is necessary for the court to insert in its awards a food allowance for employees. Some of the awards state the scale of rations or ration allowance. This practically applies to wealthy pastoralists and station-owners. Then we hear hon. members opposite talking about results, when we cannot even trust the employers in those industries to fix the scale of rations without going to the court and putting up an argument as to why our claim should be accepted. We have to force everything out of them. Then

[10 p.m.] there should be bathing accommodation for men working in industries where it is necessary for them to have a bath after their day's work, and that has to be prescribed in an award. If payment by results is such a good thing, why do we have to enforce all these conditions through the Arbitration Court? To listen to hon. members opposite one would think that they would be falling over themselves to see that the workers got the conditions which we have had to ask the court to prescribe in the awards. We had the hon. member for Enoggera getting very agitated because he said that the hours for certain workers were shorter here than in the other States of the Commonwealth and the employers were sending their work to those other States in consequence. If the hon. member for Enoggera wants to wipe out the Arbitration Court—

Mr. KERR: You have not been listening. You are putting a wrong construction on what I said.

Mr. DASH: The hon. member said he wanted the Queensland Court abolished. Did he not use the word "abolished"?

Mr. KERR: And a Federal Court substituted, sitting in Queensland with a Queensland judge.

Mr. DASH: What is the difference between a Federal Arbitration Court judge sitting in Queensland and a Queensland Arbitration Court judge sitting here? When our judges make an award they take into consideration the conditions of other States. I have here a cutting from the "North Queensland Register" of only a few days ago, contrasting the conditions operating in the pastoral industry prior to the institution of the Industrial Arbitration Courts with those which have existed since. The Barcaldine correspondent of that paper wrote—

"When I entered one of our banks recently I noticed a number of men waiting their turn to cash cheques, two sheds at least having cut out on the previous

Saturday. The men were all well dressed and well groomed, and I know they were not all married.

"I could not help casting my mind back forty years or so ago, and mentally contrasting the present-day shearer and shed hand (alias 'rousie') with what he was in 'the good old days.' To-day he lives in a different environment altogether. To-day he is paid a good wage, hence better clothes, better food, and mentally and physically a better man all round than he was years ago, when he received £1 per 100, and generally roughing it.

"I have in my mind's eye a shed I visited over forty years ago—one of the largest and best on the Barcoo. The whole place was fearfully cramped up, and I should say insanitary. The huts or sleeping quarters were of wood, iron, and bark, some with bagging on the earthen floor. Some of the men had tents, and 'dossed' with some degree of comfort, others were occupants of the huts, and one could imagine 'chairs' were plentiful. One carried out his ablutions by means of a basin stuck between three sticks forming a tripod.

"Meals were served in an annexe or bough shed; the food was as rough as the tin table utensils, but there was an abundance of it. The men's clothing was rough—the best they could afford, probably, and when the shed cut out the majority humped 'Matilda' to the nearest township or to another shed. The evenings were spent in smoking, cards, yarning, for there were no reading-rooms or schools of arts in those days. Then unions were formed—first the shearers, closely followed by the labourers; eventually all classes of labour, to be amalgamated into one great whole—the Australian Workers' Union. The men's conditions rapidly improved; they had literature provided by schools of arts—newspapers, magazines, books to improve the mind, or the best of fiction; and they physically, too, became better men.

"To-day the shed workers, shearers, and general hands enjoy all the comforts of a home, bar the 'missis'; they have their meals cleanly and well served upon delf; they have airy and roomy quarters, a comfortable bed fitted with mattress, sheets, and blankets, and when work ceases for the day he can enjoy what he can't often get in town—a shower bath. Some have motor bikes or shares in a car, and if they have neither, town cars go out and bring the men into town, for the shearer and shed hand do not walk nowadays; they can afford to ride.

"All this leads up to the splendid entertainment got up at Isis Downs jointly for the benefit of Isisford district hospital and Blackall newly formed ambulance. As is generally known, Isis Downs shed is one of the largest and best equipped in Australia, and is fitted throughout with electric light. Some forty shearers were engaged, and other employees numbered about sixty. A good sports programme was drawn up, and a concert and dance was arranged for the evening."

These are the conditions that have been secured by arbitration; yet we find hon. members opposite prepared to argue that we

should wipe out arbitration in Queensland and get back to the system of payment by results. The shearers in the old days were paid by results. The results were what the employers thought they were entitled to. They could not stand up for anything, because the employers said, "These are the conditions. Take them or leave them." That was how the position was carried on. We find in Queensland to-day the matter of serving a claim is a very urgent and necessary one, when you take into consideration that you may be delayed for six months or twelve months before you can approach the Federal Court. Is it not better for an industry and for the employers and the employees to have easy access to the court, and be able to approach it when a dispute arises?

The hon. member for Mirani made some reference to the agreement entered into between the Government and the Seamen's Union. As an old member of this Chamber, he knows that the Queensland Arbitration Court could not intervene on that occasion, because the Seamen's Union is registered under the Federal Arbitration Court. At the present time no application has been made to the State Court to deal with the seamen's case in any shape or form, and all this talk about the agreement with the seamen doing away with arbitration is nonsense. If the hon. member will look at the Act, he will find that it is quite competent for workmen in an industry to enter into an agreement with their employer without approaching the Arbitration Court. The court has power, if it so desires, to call a compulsory conference. We know that if a dispute arises in one State a Federal Court judge cannot intervene, even if it is a Federal dispute, until the dispute extends beyond the limits of that State. Hon. members can see why we do not favour the wiping out of the State Arbitration Court, and allowing the Federal Arbitration Court to deal with these matters. Anyone who has had any experience at all knows that it would be suicidal for Queensland to wipe out the State Court, and get back to the same old system as was advocated only a few months ago by the Employers' Federation—gloves off, and the strongest man wins. We know what would happen to-day if there were no Arbitration Court, when we see the large number of unemployed looking for work in many of the industries. Payment by results would then be, "These are the wages; take them, or hump your swag." Unfortunately that is what hon. members opposite are advocating to-day.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): I must accept the challenge issued by hon. members opposite. They have interpreted our reticence to mean ignorance of industrial matters.

Mr. KERR: Not at all.

Mr. HYNES: Most hon. members on this side have had a great deal of experience of the operation of the Arbitration Court in Queensland, and we have also had a varied experience of the operations of the Federal Arbitration Court. I certainly would not favour the suggestion of the hon. member for Enoggera that we should do away with the State Arbitration Court and extend the powers of the Federal Arbitration Court so that it could deal with all applications to an Arbitration Court in Australia. We know that there is a good deal of delay in getting

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access to the Federal Arbitration Court. We know that in the engine-drivers' case they were four years endeavouring to get access to the Federal Court. The wheels of industry were stopped for several months on many occasions, and hundreds of thousands of pounds were lost by reason of the fact that strike was brought on because easy and expeditious access to the Federal Arbitration Court was not possible.

Mr. KERR: Could not we get over that?

Mr. HYNES: The method of approaching the Arbitration Court in Queensland is simplicity itself. It is as expeditious as it is possible to make it.

Mr. KERR: Quite so.

Mr. HYNES: Any person can understand the operations of the Act, and the assistance of a member of the legal fraternity is not required when redress of an industrial grievance is desired. That is the reason why I remind hon. members opposite that during the time the Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916 has been operating we have had so much industrial progress and peace in this State.

Mr. KERR: And industrial unemployment, too.

Mr. HYNES: I strongly oppose the abolition of the Queensland Court of Industrial Arbitration and the extension of the powers of the Federal Court to deal with State matters. The hon. member for Mirani made some disparaging reference about preference to unionists through the Arbitration Courts. The hon. member and persons associated with him in the United Cane Growers' Association of Australia passed a resolution endorsing the principle. They favour compulsory membership of cane suppliers to sugar-mills. Even to-day their organisers are going around the districts and using economic pressure to compel suppliers of cane who are not members of their organisation to become members. One of their executive officers said, "It is high time we adopted the same tactics and methods as a certain organisation"—which the chairman will not allow me to mention in this Chamber.

We have endeavoured through the Arbitration Court of Queensland to bring about an amelioration of the condition of workers in this State. We have been able to stabilise industry and bring about industrial peace within the State. It has been a good policy for the whole of the community. There is no question about that. When I started out organising the industrialists a number of years ago the condition of the workers in Queensland was worse in many respects than in the older countries. I remember girls in a district I was organising who worked in the clothing trade industry for 15s. a week and find themselves, although board in that district cost £1 5s. per week.

Mr. KERR: I know girls who are working for 8s. a week now.

Mr. HYNES: The conditions of the employees in the clothing trade in Queensland during the time the Tory predecessors of the honourable members opposite were the Government were as bad as they were in England when Tom Hood wrote his celebrated "Song of the Shirt." Through the instrumentality of the Arbitration Court and the efforts exercised by this Government we have been able to bring about a condition of affairs which, although not the be-all and end-all of our aspirations, has improved

the position of the workers considerably and given them the decent standard of living they enjoy to-day. I am not going to enumerate instances. It is patent to hon. members opposite and everyone else that the Arbitration Court has been a fine institution, not only for the employees but for the employers also. It has brought about an era of industrial peace which was previously unknown in this State and is still unknown in other States.

Mr. KERR: There was more work and better conditions before its establishment than there is now.

Mr. HYNES: I have here a letter which was written to the branch secretary of the Australian Workers' Union, which supports my contention that it is absolutely necessary to have every industry in the State covered by an arbitration award. I must congratulate the Government upon extending the scope of the Industrial Arbitration Act to include rural industries.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HYNES: This letter was written by an immigrant. I shall not read it, but any hon. member may do so at his leisure. This immigrant was enticed out to these shores by the Tory Government of New South Wales. He was sent to Coraki road, Tweed Heads, at 25s. a week and tucker, but the person employing him deducted his fare and other things from his wages, with the result that the immigrant only received 10s. for five weeks' work.

Mr. COLINS: Shame!

Mr. HYNES: If there had been an award operating in that industry in that State, this man's interests would have been protected. Now he is asking the organisation to take up his case and fight it in the court, and in all probability it will come before a bench of local magistrates, who will not take a very sympathetic view of his case.

Mr. KERR: How do you know that?

Mr. HYNES: I have had experience of them.

I wish to compliment the Government upon appointing a judge for the Northern Division of Queensland. We who are living in Townsville and north of Townsville have been subjected to a great deal of trouble and delay in regard to our Arbitration Court matters by reason of the fact that we have had to come to Brisbane and bring our witnesses down when we desired to fix up awards and deal with industrial grievances. Recently the Government appointed Judge Douglas as an acting judge of the Arbitration Court of Queensland. That is going to be most beneficial to the people residing in the North. It will mean that we shall be able to have our cases heard more expeditiously and more economically than has hitherto been the case. I am of the opinion that the time has arrived when a great deal more attention should be given to industrial arbitration than is given at the present time. I think that an Arbitration Judge should be appointed for the Northern Division to conduct Northern matters, and to sit exclusively in the Arbitration Court, because I believe the work he would have to do would warrant his appointment as a full-time judge of the Arbitration Court.

I think that the industrial side of our Courts in Queensland has hitherto been

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neglected. For instance, a judge will travel out to Cloncurry to hear a case of cattle stealing, and it will probably take ten or twelve days to deal with that case. Yet often we find that, on account of not having sufficient judges on our Industrial Arbitration Court bench, a case involving the living of 1,000 men is hung up for three or four weeks. That should not be, and I commend to the consideration of the Minister that he should, as soon as possible, appoint a full-time Industrial Court Judge for North Queensland. This question has been thrashed threadbare by hon. members opposite, and my reason for getting up was to demonstrate that we on this side have taken a keen interest in the operations of the Arbitration Court in Queensland.

Question put and passed.

INSPECTION OF MACHINERY AND SCAFFOLDING.

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

“That £21,895 be granted for ‘Inspection of Machinery and Scaffolding.’”

There is an increase in this vote, which is accounted for by the department taking over the administration of the Weights and Measures Act.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): When the Weights and Measures Bill was going through the other day, the position of affairs seemed to be so unsatisfactory under dual control that we could get no reliable information in regard to the various districts. Now that the administration of the Act is to be taken over by the Department of Public Works I would like to know whether the administration is going to be carried out in the same manner as previously.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Chief Inspector is going into the whole matter now and will shortly submit a report to me. I think the tendency will be to appoint inspectors in all divisions of the State, who will be controlled by the department.

Mr. MOORE: The position previously was so unsatisfactory that any change must be for the better. It appears to me to be unfair that the Chief Inspector, who will have to reorganise the whole business, should remain on the same salary. The department was apparently so disorganised that no records were kept.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: When the department is reorganised I will consider the matter.

Mr. MOORE: It ought to be considered when we are passing the Estimates.

Question put and passed.

LABOUR, FACTORIES, AND WORKERS' ACCOMMODATION.

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

“That £23,120 be granted for ‘Labour, Factories, and Workers’ Accommodation.’”

Question put and passed.

THE GAS ACT OF 1916.

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

“That £1,618 be granted for ‘The Gas Act of 1916.’”

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I would like to turn to the Gas Act of 1916 and seek some information from the Minister—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You are not entitled to discuss the Gas Act under this vote.

Mr. KERR: I am entitled to discuss the administration of the Act, and, before I discuss the administration of the Act, I desire to quote section 11, which deals with meters. The section reads—

“No meter shall be issued for the use of a consumer by a company until it has been first tested and stamped by a gas examiner in accordance with the regulations.”

“Within twelve months, or such further time as the Minister deems necessary, after the commencement of this Act every meter in use on the premises of any consumer at the commencement of this Act shall be so tested, and, if found accurate, stamped.”

“All meters issued by a company and in use shall be again tested, and, if found accurate, restamped at intervals of not more than seven years.”

“All meters which, after testing, are found to be inaccurate shall be removed at the expense of the company.”

To my knowledge there has been a good deal of trouble and worry to householders who have gas meters installed, and there has been much disagreement with regard to the amount charged for gas from time to time. Householders have found it difficult to reconcile the amount charged for the gas supplied and the amount which they allege they have consumed in connection with gas stoves, lighting, or in other ways. Although the meters are alleged to be tested by the Government, from the information I have received and the inquiries I have made, it appears that the meters in the metropolitan area are not registering correctly. Out of 9,481 meters examined in 1922, 1,172 meters were rejected or found to be registering incorrectly. Although I have made inquiries, I have not been able to ascertain that the thousands of meters in the metropolitan area to-day have been examined by the Government as prescribed in the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They are being examined regularly. If you know of any case where there is cause for complaint, let us know about it and we will investigate it immediately.

Mr. KERR: That is a wide statement. The hon. gentleman knows that, when a meter is placed in a house, the people are not in a position to say whether it is registering correctly or not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If it is registering incorrectly, we will have it examined.

Mr. KERR: The time is opportune to deal with the many incorrect registrations which are alleged to take place in connection with these meters. In some instances where electric light has been installed to replace the

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gas, the meter has registered practically the same amount per month as was charged before the electric light was installed. There is inadequate examination in regard to these meters. There are only two meter examiners, and they cannot do their work properly, and perhaps the complaints are justified. I would ask the Minister to have a test made of at least 500 meters, to find out how many of them are registering incorrectly. I am not going to say the gas companies are doing it on purpose.

Mr. COLLINS: Don't start to apologise.

Mr. KERR: I am not apologising to anybody. It may be that the meters are over-registering or under-registering, but it is time that some action was taken under the legislation we have on the statute-book.

I notice that provision is made for payment of £150 to a gas referee. I would like the Minister to indicate when next his Estimates are before the Committee whether the £250 which was voted last year was spent.

At 10.30 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN said: 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 Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.
