

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 11 OCTOBER 1923

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt from His Excellency the Governor of messages conveying His Excellency's assent to the following Bills:—

- Stallions Registration Bill.
- Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts Amendment Bill.
- Closer Settlement Acts Amendment Bill.
- Jury Act Amendment Bill.
- Sugar Workers' Perpetual Lease Selections Bill.
- Japanese Earthquake Relief Funds Bill.

QUESTIONS.

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT OF REGULATION OF SUGAR CANE PRICES ACT.

Mr. BRAND (*Burrum*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

"1. Has he received any request from the United Cane Growers' Association asking him to amend the Cane Prices Act in certain particulars?"

"2. If so, is it his intention to bring forward an amending Bill during this session?"

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

- "1. Yes.
- "2. No."

EMPLOYEES AT SERGEANT AND COMPANY'S WORKS, BRISBANE, AND RELIEF FROM UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FUND.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Orley*) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

"In connection with the industrial trouble which is existing at Sargeant's works in Brisbane, where the President of the Arbitration Court has ruled that there is no justification for a strike, will the employees affected be entitled to relief under the Unemployed Workers' Insurance Act?"

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

"I would direct the hon. member's attention to the provisions of the Unemployed Workers' Insurance Act of 1922, particularly to subsection 4 of section 14, paragraph (c), and also to subsection 5 of section 14."

APPRENTICESHIP REGULATIONS.

ORDER FOR PRINTING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): I beg to move, without notice—

"That the paper laid on the table of

the House by me yesterday with regard to apprenticeship regulations, dated 28th September, 1923, under the Industrial Arbitration Acts, 1916-1923, be printed."

The object is to allow the regulations to be printed and to be on sale at the Government Printing Office.

Question put and passed.

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Seventh annual report of the State Government Insurance Office for the year ended 30th June, 1923.

Amended regulations, dated 14th September, 1923, under the Public Service Act of 1922.

Regulations, dated 4th October, 1923, under the Diseases in Poultry Act of 1923.

PRIMARY PRODUCTS POOLS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the Primary Products Pools Act of 1922 in certain particulars.

Question put and passed.

MEAT INDUSTRY ENCOURAGEMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to encourage and improve the meat industry, and for other incidental purposes."

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): Anticipating that the Minister's action would be that of silence, I called "Not formal" to this motion, in the hope that we might get some information regarding it. We know the intention of the Government with regard to dealing with other products by way of pools, and we want to know whether this Bill is in any way associated or allied with those operations. We would like to get some information from the Minister.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Question put and passed.

COTTON INDUSTRY BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): In rising to move the second reading of this Bill I recognise that it is one of considerable importance

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to Queensland, and one which will have a far-reaching effect on the cotton industry. Any Bill that affects primary producers and is destined to encourage a new industry is of importance to this House.

The possibilities of cotton culture in Queensland are almost limitless. I am justified in saying that there are in Queensland not only hundreds of thousands of acres but millions of acres capable of growing cotton. Cotton is a drought-resisting crop, and will grow on any soil which will grow maize. In fact, it will grow on many soils that will not grow maize. There are millions of acres of land in Queensland with a sufficient rainfall—and a rainfall of 20 inches per annum is sufficient—to grow cotton of a good quality. The only danger and the only risk in regard to cotton becoming a great and important industry in Queensland is whether we start on right lines or not. That is, we must produce the best article the spinners require, and we must take sufficient steps to prevent the spread of pests in Australia. It has been said that we have no Mexican border in Australia, and that Australia, being an island, is almost free, so far as we know, from the great cotton pests that affect the industry in other parts of the world. We have no boll weevil or pink boll worm, for instance, and, if we manage our affairs wisely and well, there is no reason why these pests should be introduced into Queensland, but this means drastic legislation.

Queensland is a country where wages are comparatively high as compared with the wages in other cotton-growing countries, with the exception of America, where wages are higher in the cotton-growing districts than here. It behoves us therefore, if we are going to succeed, to produce an article that will command a price sufficiently high to enable the industry to work under decent conditions and to pay decent wages. It is wise that we should start well and take no risks. We should be guided by the experience of other countries in framing and carrying out a policy which will make this industry a permanent and a very large one. I see no reason why the cotton-growing industry in Queensland in a few years, if it is handled properly, if the farmers do their part, and if the politicians and the Government also do their part, will not be worth as much in pounds sterling as the wool industry. I look forward to the time when our secondary industries will proceed side by side with our primary industries: in other words, to the time when Queensland will stand on her two legs, so to speak, of the primary and secondary industries. We must be prepared to see that people who are willing to invest capital in spinning and weaving cotton have sufficient cotton produced for them to handle so as to justify mills being erected in Australia to manufacture the raw article.

The main object of the Bill is, in short, to give legal backing to the policy of the Queensland Government, which, as I have already stated, has been responsible for increasing the annual value of the cotton output in Queensland from £853 in 1919 to over £250,000 for the crop which has just been harvested. That is a phenomenal growth and is due entirely to one cause. It is not due to the seasons, because last season was a bad one. If last season had been a good season, the cotton crop in Queensland would have

been worth probably £500,000. The one cause to which this satisfactory growth is due is the guarantee by the Queensland Government of 5½d. a lb. for cotton. That guarantee relieved the farmer absolutely from all responsibility in the matter of transport, ginning, shipping, and marketing of his cotton. For the first time in history the Queensland farmer has confined his work and responsibility to the growing of his crop. Whether that policy can continue indefinitely or not I am not prepared to say, but I do not think that it should. I think that the protective policy should continue until the cotton industry is placed on a sound financial footing and until the farmers are enabled to gin and market their own crops individually and co-operatively in a sound and satisfactory way. It is due to the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments to encourage the industry until sufficient areas have been established in the course of time to justify the establishment of spinning and weaving mills.

Mr. MORGAN: How are you going to break down this monopoly which you are creating to-day?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not going to reply to any interjections, because this Bill has been on the table of the House for three weeks, and any reasonable suggestions will be considered when the Bill reaches its Committee stage. If hon. members opposite have any reasonable views which they wish incorporated in the Bill, they will be able to advance them in the proper way.

The only motive which the Government have in this Bill is to place the cotton industry on a sound footing. It may be remembered that years ago Queensland Governments spent large sums of money on the cotton industry. I may say—I will quote the figures by and by—that past Governments spent up to £80,000 in one year in fostering the industry in the State. During the American War cotton-growing was an important industry in Queensland. It flourished because the price of cotton was high, but, when the war was over, prices dropped and farmers could not make the industry pay. Like everything else, when prices are high the industry pays. When the goldfields in Western Australia broke out men flocked there from other States and countries.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: What is going to happen when socialism comes about?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The farmer does not go into an industry for the sake of his health or for the sake of the fresh air. He goes into an industry because it promises to pay. The cotton industry is now paying because the Queensland Government had sufficient foresight and sufficient statesmanship to guarantee a price that would enable the farmer to make it pay, with the result that last year the crop was worth over £250,000.

Before dealing with the principles of the Bill I want to give a few facts with regard to the early history of cotton as a justification for encouraging cotton-growing in Queensland and to show, as I have already mentioned, that cotton-growing years ago assumed important proportions in Queensland. Because the price dropped after the

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American War, when American ports were again opened and the Americans got busy with their own cotton-growing, the cotton industry in Queensland languished and died. Before coming to the development of the industry in Queensland, it might be as well to give some figures showing the importance of the industry.

"COUNTRIES GROWING COTTON AND QUANTITIES PRODUCED.

"(Taken from Cotton Statistics, by John A. Todd—revised to 31st December, 1921—issued from the Book of the World's Cotton Conference, 1921, pages 5 and 6.)

Country.	Bales, 1921-22.
America	3,500,000
India	3,750,000
Egypt	660,000
Russia	200,000
China	1,500,000
Others	1,625,000
Total	16,235,000
Others, 1920-21	
Persia	100,000
Europe and Asia Minor	139,000
Mexico	250,000
Brazil	500,000
Peru	200,000
Other South American ...	29,000
West Indies (British) ...	4,000
West Indies (Others) ...	16,000
East Indies and Oceania	50,000
Japan	20,000
Korea	150,000
Indo-China	70,000
Africa (British)	77,000
Africa (Others)	20,000
Total	1,625,000

"Total world's production, 16,235,000 bales; bale averages, 500 lb."

"TOTAL NUMBER OF SPINDLES IN VARIOUS COTTON MANUFACTURING COUNTRIES.

"(Taken from page 25 of Cotton Statistics, by John A. Todd—revised to 31st December, 1921—issued from the Book of the World's Cotton Conference, 1921. Half-year to 31st July, 1921.)

Country.	Spindles.
Great Britain	56,141,000
Germany	7,000,000
France	750,000
Russia	1,413,000
Poland and Finland ...	1,140,000
Austria	3,584,000
Czecho-Slovakia	4,506,000
Italy	1,306,000
Spain	1,591,000
Belgium	1,531,000
Switzerland	1,344,000
Other European	1,303,000
Total European	83,114,000
U.S.A.	36,478,000
India	3,804,000
Japan	1,100,000
Canada	2,470,000
Others	1,291,000
Total Non-European ...	45,143,000

"World's total, 123,257,000."

One of the opportunities Queensland has now to embark on a new industry is because of the fact that the bulk of the population of the world are wearers of cotton. That is to say, in those countries peopled by coloured races the main garments are made of cotton. The total population of the world is 1,596,000,000, and out of that number 829,000,000 reside in India, China, Japan, and Egypt, and in those countries, when the people wear anything at all, they wear cotton garments. Every year there are more people wearing cotton, and coincident with that, due principally to the boll weevil in America, the American cotton crop is falling off. Therefore our opportunity to establish the cotton industry at the present time appears to me to be unique. It is a golden opportunity in a country where a good quality cotton can be grown. The indications are—of course we cannot forecast what the conditions may be two, three, four, or five years hence—but the indications are that the price will be maintained for a number of years, and in that time, if Queenslanders are alive to their opportunities, they will be able to place this industry on such a sound footing, as they can grow the very best quality cotton, that the industry will continue. I shall be very sorry indeed in days to come to have been associated with a movement which had such great possibilities if by some action, or failure to take some action by the Government with which I am associated, the opportunity to establish this industry on sound and lasting lines had been missed. That is why I recommend the Government to take the drastic step some people say we are taking to put an absolute embargo on the growth of ratoon cotton, which I shall deal with later on. The demand is increasing, and the cotton crop in America last year fell off by one-third, not altogether due to the depredations of the Mexican boll weevil, although the boll weevil played a most important part, but due also to the fact that the American farmers have gone in for other crops. The American farmers, like the Australian farmers—like farmers all over the world—when they begin to realise that some other crop pays better, or they think it will pay better, immediately cease growing that crop, because there is nothing to compel them to grow a crop if they find that something else will pay them better. The farmers in America have engaged in mixed farming, dairying, fruitgrowing, and other crops that pay better in some cases than cottongrowing. That, together with the depredations of the boll weevil, resulted last year in a falling off by one-third of the total cotton crop of the United States. To-day, instead of the United States of America being able to supply cotton to the United Kingdom, they practically require all their raw cotton to keep their own spindles going. In 1901 the Lancashire spinners became alarmed at the slides of the cotton manufacture in America; and because of the factors I have just mentioned operating there, they began to look around for some methods whereby cottongrowing could be encouraged within the Empire to enable them to get their raw material. As a result, the British Cotton Growing Association was formed in 1901 from various Lancashire associations with a guaranteed fund of £50,000, which was afterwards increased to £100,000. The object of this organisation was to encourage cottongrowing within the Empire. Their principal functions were inquiry, experi-

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mental and developmental work, and amongst other things they provided in the articles of association that no dividend should be paid for seven years. Their energies hitherto have been confined to India, Uganda, Nyasaland, West Africa, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and the West Indies. Quite recently they turned their attention to Australia, although they have not yet done a great deal in this country. I am going to deal with what they have done later on, and I am also going to deal with some of the very erratic statements made by the hon. member for Burnett on this question some time ago, when he tried to point out that this organisation was prepared to guarantee 1s. 6d. a lb. for Queensland cotton for five years. This organisation has not done very much so far to help the growth of cotton in Australia, but we are hopeful that the newer organisation will give some encouragement with regard to cotton-growing in Queensland later on. Hitherto their attention has been particularly centred in the countries I have mentioned within the Empire. I do not know of any country within the Empire that offers better possibilities or greater justification for assistance from the British authorities than Australia. Cotton can be grown in States in Australia other than in Queensland. It may be grown under irrigation on the Murray River, and probably in Western Australia they will establish the industry.

I have no hesitation in saying that Queensland should be the premier cotton-growing State in Australia if the industry is developed on sound lines.

I would just like to quote what has led up to the recent guarantee so far as the British Cotton Growing Association is concerned. The Premier visited the old country in 1920. The Agent-General was getting into touch with the authorities prior to that, and as a result negotiations were entered into with the British Cotton Growing Association. The general manager of the British Cotton Growing Association, under date 3rd May, 1920, wrote to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, London, offering for a period of two years as from 1st June, 1920, to guarantee a minimum price in Liverpool or London of 1s. 6d. per lb. (less insurance, etc.) for all cotton of first-class quality forwarded them for sale and which was produced from an annual variety of cotton seed issued by the Government; any surplus over 1s. 6d. to be remitted to the planter. I call special attention to the words "annual variety of cotton."

The Agent-General, in replying to this offer, regretted that the offer was not likely to give the stimulus to production that was desired, and if the association would extend the period of guarantee for five years the Queensland Government would be prepared to co-operate by setting apart an area of land for the establishment of a cotton group settlement in Queensland.

On 13th July, 1920, the Association made the following offer to the Premier:—

"That it will guarantee for a period of five years a fixed price of 1s. 3d. per lb. of lint for all clean cotton of good quality forwarded to them, freight and insurance paid, to sell in Liverpool. The cotton to be produced from long staple varieties for cotton, and to be produced from seed issued by the Agricultural Department. Any surplus over 1s. 3d. to be equally

divided between growers and Association. The Association's loss to be limited to an amount not exceeding £10,000. The guarantee to date from the 1st January, 1920."

I want to emphasise that, because the hon. member for Burnett, in making a vicious attack on the Premier shortly after his return from Great Britain, tried to convey to Queensland through "Hansard" that the Premier had misled the House, and that the guarantee was unlimited. Now the guarantee was limited to the sum of £10,000, which really was hardly worth anything at all to Queensland, because it was soon absorbed.

MR. CORSER: The Premier did not give the information to the House that it was limited to £10,000.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He gave full information to the House. The Premier replied to this second offer by pointing out that, in the opinion of his Government, it would be extremely difficult to place the cotton industry on a satisfactory footing unless 1s. 6d. a lb. was guaranteed. I want to point out that the guarantee of the Queensland Government of 5½d. a lb. for seed cotton at the present time is slightly more than 1s. 6d. a lb. for cotton lint, so that the offer of 1s. 3d. a lb. in the first place was absolutely worthless, and the offer of 1s. 6d. a lb. did not by any means clear the Queensland Government of their loss under the guarantee. The Agent-General took up the discussion on this matter with the executive of the British Cotton Growing Association, and a cablegram was received from him to the effect that the Association had decided to extend their guarantee for cotton to 1s. 6d. for a period of five years with practically the same conditions—that is, the limitation of £10,000 was to stand. I criticised this offer at the time,

[4 p.m.] and said it was very little use to Queensland, but that we would avail ourselves of it with the hope that something better would come along. In reply to that offer this cable was despatched to the Agent-General—

"1. Suppose only portion of Queensland cotton export goes to Association, will guarantee be available for that portion; and

"2. Is exporter or Association to have profit, if any, over 1s. 6d.?"

The Association replied to these questions as follows:—

"1. Guarantee applies to cotton shipped to Liverpool, whether whole or portion of Queensland crop.

"2. All realised over 1s. 6d. goes to growers."

Of course, as hon. members are aware, nothing was realised over 1s. 6d., so that the Queensland Government had to bear the loss over the £10,000. On 24th August, 1920, a cablegram was sent to the Agent-General to complete arrangements with the British Cotton Growing Association. Then we asked for a renewal of the agreement. The Agent-General was requested to make strong endeavours to have it extended for a further period of five years, but the Association cabled to the effect that it found it impossible to renew the agreement. At that stage the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation came on the scene. The British

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Government had promised to that body a vote of not less than £1,000,000 sterling out of the profits which the British Government made out of the Egyptian crop during the war. It may be remembered that the British Government practically commandeered the Egyptian crop during the war. Mr. Crompton Wood, who was here last year with the Cotton Delegation which visited Australia at the invitation of the Prime Minister, handled that crop for the British Government, and out of it they made a profit of something like £2,000,000, of which they decided to spend £1,000,000 in the encouragement of cotton-growing within the Empire. My main object in going round Queensland with the delegation was to impress upon Mr. Crompton Wood, Mr. Harold Parker, and others the absolute wisdom and justice of spending at least £250,000 of that £1,000,000 promised to the Corporation by the British Government in Australia. Representations have been made to that end, but so far all the Corporation has done—and I am grateful for it—is to place Colonel Evans at our disposal and pay his salary for three years so that we may benefit by the advice here of one of its experts. We hope the Corporation will do more than that. We have asked it to send an eminent entomologist to Queensland to enable us to deal with any local pests which may appear and to advise us what measures should be taken against them; but I am hopeful that the request made by me personally to Mr. Crompton Wood, Mr. Harold Parker, and others, and by the Premier through the Agent-General to the Corporation itself, that at least £250,000 should be spent in Australia by it to encourage cotton-growing here, will be granted. A Bill has now passed the House of Commons legalising this £1,000,000 grant. I have no doubt that the Commonwealth Government will honour the promise made by Mr. Hughes before the elections that the Commonwealth Government would co-operate with the various State Governments in giving a guarantee of a reasonable price for a term of years.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Mr. Bruce could make representations while he is in England.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a very good suggestion. I think that here I might mention that, as shown in the Auditor-General's report, the Queensland Government will sustain a considerable loss as a result of their guarantee. I have already said that the £10,000 guaranteed by the British Cotton Growing Association has been paid; but the Government will have to pay a good deal more. It appears to me, from the figures available at the present time, that we shall be liable to a loss of something like £57,000 up to date—that is, assuming that the Commonwealth share in the loss incurred in the encouragement of the industry in Australia, as they are in honour bound to do. I hope that the promise made by Mr. Hughes at Maryborough and Newcastle during the Federal election campaign will be honoured. Of course the promise made by Mr. Hughes at Rockhampton, according to Press reports—perhaps the hon. member for Normanby will see that it is carried out—was that, if the case stated to him with regard to raton cotton was true, he would see that his Government—instead of going back on the farmers, as he insinuated the Queensland Government had done by paying only 3d. per lb. for seed cotton, he would make up the difference between the 3d. and the 5½d.

Mr. CORSER: Do you say that Mr. Hughes said that?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I say it is in the Press. I will show it to the hon. member. It was published in the "Brisbane Courier."

Mr. CORSER: You produce it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I will produce it before I sit down—I am going to deal with a lot of things before I finish. The definite promise was published in the "Courier" that Mr. Hughes said that, if the position was as represented to him by Mr. Nuttall, he would have inquiries made by Mr. Goode, of the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, and would see that his Government made good the difference between the 3d. paid by the Queensland Government and the 5½d. which he said they originally promised.

Mr. KERR: Read the Press report.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I will give it to the hon. member, but I am going to deal with the question in my own way. I have said that the loss will probably be a good deal more than £50,000; but the Queensland Government are not concerned about it, because, after all, it is not a loss if it enables the farmers to establish a new industry permanently on sound lines—it is not a loss even if it be a quarter of a million; it goes into the pockets of the farmers of Queensland.

I have here a summary of the early history of cotton in Queensland prepared by the Department of Agriculture, and a table showing the amount of seed cotton produced in Queensland since 1862, the average price in Liverpool in each year, together with another table dealing with the production and prices since 1914, which I would like to get into "Hansard" without reading.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the information should appear in "Hansard" without being read?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:

"EARLY HISTORY OF COTTON IN QUEENSLAND."

"The first statistical information of cotton in Queensland is for the year 1866, when 14 acres were under crop. The Civil War in America gave great impetus to the cultivation of it under the plantation system, and the Government of the day fostered it by a bonus on exported cotton varying from £10 to £2 10s. for each bale of ginned cotton of 400 lb. in weight.

"In 1870 there were 14,674 acres under crops, and in 1871 6,505 bales were exported. The highest price obtained for raw cotton was in 1864, when 2s. 2½d. per pound was secured in Liverpool, and the total bonus paid in that year was £24,368. Owing to the cessation of the bonus and the resumption of the export trade by America, cultivation declined annually from 1870 until 1887, when there was no area under crop.

"The second period of cotton-growing was between 1890 and 1897, when the Ipswich Cotton Company was established and encouraged by a bonus for the first

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IMPORTS OF COTTON INTO AUSTRALIA
 TAKEN FROM STATISTICS PREPARED BY THE
 COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND
 STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1921-22.

Article.	Taken from Page.	Value.
Cotton luse	267	£ 295
Cotton, mercerised	76	54,860
*Cotton piece goods	94, 95, 96	10,031,864
Cotton seed	74	43
Cotton oil (seed)	109	10,300
Cotton socks and stockings	89	272,746
Cotton waste	70	58,623
Cotton wick	99	9,534
Cotton wool and waddings	102	18,115
Cotton yarn	76	255,878
Raw cotton	69	28,547
Total Importation	..	10,740,805
*Cotton piece goods includes—		
Grey unbleached	95	605,681
White bleached	95	2,729,934
Dungarees, moleskins, &c.	95	53,288
Oil baize and leather cloth	96	175,471
Cotton dyed or printed	96	6,467,490
		10,031,864

PARTICULARS OF WOOLLEN, COTTON, AND TWEED MILLS, 1920-21. TAKEN FROM THE OFFICIAL YEAR BOOK OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA, NO. 15, 1922, PAGE 427.

Items.	New South Wales, 1920-21.		Victoria, 1920-21.		Queensland, 1920-21.		South Australia, 1920-21.		West Australia, 1920-21.		Tasmania, 1920-21.		Commonwealth.	
	Number of factories	Number of employees	Actual horse-power of engines employed	Approximate value of land and buildings	Approximate value of plant and machinery	Total amount of wages paid during year	Value of fuel used	Value of raw material worked up	Total value of output	Value added in process of manufacture.	Number of factories	Number of employees	Actual horse-power of engines employed	Approximate value of land and buildings
Number of factories	9	1,650	17	3,342	2	321	2	244	4	226	34	5,783	..	..
Number of employees	2,795	222,474	5,679	462,845	582	..	280	..	281	..	9,617	..	..	..
Actual horse-power of engines employed	384,662	384,662	850,785	..	..	..	..	..	63,500	..	11,378,003	..	..	..
Approximate value of land and buildings	235,668	235,668	444,631	..	..	..	..	..	20,675	..	1762,131	..	..	..
Approximate value of plant and machinery	235,517	235,517	61,989	..	..	..	..	..	1,752	..	193,691	..	..	..
Total amount of wages paid during year	745,848	745,848	1,166,201	..	..	..	..	..	40,167	..	42,000,892	..	..	..
Value of fuel used	1,437,617	1,437,617	2,337,610	..	..	..	..	..	134,229	..	14,241,864	..	..	..
Value of raw material worked up	691,799	691,799	1,231,409	..	..	..	..	..	85,062	..	12,151,072	..	..	..
Total value of output	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Value added in process of manufacture.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

* Information not available for publication. † Including Queensland and South Australia.

I think I should say a few words now about the cotton guarantee itself. Because some hon. members on the other side of this House have endeavoured to take away from the Queensland Government the credit which is due to them. The Association I have mentioned has spent £10,000, and I am hopeful that the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation will be progressive enough to realise that this industry is so important to the Empire as to justify their spending another quarter of a million pounds of the amount voted to them by the British Government, and I am hopeful that the Commonwealth Government will push our claims in this regard. I am also very glad to know that the Bruce Government have honoured the promise made by the Hughes Government; but for all that nobody can take away from our Premier or from this Government the credit due to them for the action taken in 1920, when the Premier embraced the golden opportunity in the old country or from my recommendation to Cabinet to guarantee a price—and a good price—for seed cotton. Some critics have said that such a guarantee would create a slovenly habit amongst the farmers, as it was said the sugar-cane growers got into when they were receiving £50 6s. 8d. a ton for sugar, and that they would never be able to grow cotton at ordinary market values in years to come. The Government took a statesman-like risk in saying, "For a term of years we will guarantee a price that will be more than the cost of production"—and nobody can take from the Queensland Government the credit of that action. Whilst I am grateful to the British Cotton Growing Association for assisting, that credit is due entirely to this Government. The text of the guarantee has been published from time to time and there is no need for me to read it now. Briefly it means that since 1919 the cotton-growers have received 5½d. a lb. In that year the total value of the cotton crop was £853 odd, whereas last year it was over £250,000. That growth was due entirely to the guarantee and the arrangements to have the seed cotton ginned by the British-Australian Cotton Association, Limited, with which I shall deal later, and which relieved the farmers from all worry and anxiety which otherwise they would have had to face.

It relieved the farmer of all responsibility except the growing of the crop. We took the full responsibility of transport, ginning, marketing and guaranteeing the price. We took all the risk of loss with regard to the crop. I think those conditions are unheard of in any farming community in any part of the world. Briefly, the guarantee was 5½d. per lb. for five years. The price for the coming harvest will be 5½d. per lb. for 1¼-inch staple and 5d. per lb. for good quality cotton of less than 1¼-inch staple under certain limitations. Ratoon cotton, which I shall deal with later on, will not come within the operation of the guarantee.

Mr. MORGAN: The price for the coming crop is a reduction of ½d. per lb.?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It will practically amount to that, as very few farmers will be able to get 1¼-inch staple. They have not got up to anything near 1¼-inch staple in the cotton produced now, except some very small consignments of Durango cotton. That is not the fault of the farmer or the fault of the Government. The Government could not wait until they had sufficient Durango seed to produce

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the long staple. We had to start and do the best we could.

Mr. MORGAN: It is the only seed from which you can get 1½-inch staple.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I admit that the Durango seed and one or two other new varieties are the only varieties that will allow that to be done. I admit that the average farmer may only be able to obtain 5d. per lb. for the cotton grown from ordinary seed. That price for good quality cotton irrespective of staple is a good payable price. One condition with regard to that is that the area will be limited to 50 acres. If a man has 60 acres he has to take the risk of the world's price with regard to the extra 10 acres. I think that is a reasonable thing, because cotton-growing should not be carried out on the plantation system. Cotton-growing is a family industry, and one that should be carried out in small areas. The advice given by the Governor-General at Gladstone last year was sound advice, and I endorse it. Cotton-growing should be carried out largely as a side line, and in combination with other industries. Every farmer within the cotton belt should, if possible, grow a patch of cotton.

Mr. MORGAN: Can he do anything he likes with the cotton on the area above 50 acres?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No. The time is past in our stage of civilisation for allowing a man to do what he likes with anything if what he likes encroaches on the rights of the community. A man cannot do what he likes with his own children, if what he likes means cruelty, or his own house. The State could burn a man's house down if it was a menace to other people, is infected with plague for instance. It could take a man's handkerchief if it was in the interests of the community to do so. In order to protect and foster this industry, I have found it necessary to put certain restrictions on the people concerned. Those restrictions have been included in this Bill only after consultation with the experts that we have got to advise us.

I would like to say a few words about these experts. This Bill is the result of the advice obtained from them. I want to give a brief history of the experts who were here. It might be said, and has been said, that Queensland should not have started off and groped about in the dark in connection with this matter. It has been said that the Ministers did not know anything about cotton-growing and no man in the Agricultural Department understood cotton. That may be true. There is not a man—I yield to no man in Australia on this point—who has done more to place cotton-growing before the public of Australia than Mr. Daniel Jones—(Hear, hear!)—but anyone who refers to that gentleman as a cotton expert does not know the meaning of the word. Mr. Daniel Jones is a practical farmer—a cotton enthusiast and a man with a good lot of commonsense—but he is no more a cotton expert than I am. Anyone who knows anything about cotton will agree with that statement.

Up to the time that we imported men from the old country or had a visit from the cotton delegation and got their advice, we realised that the man who buys the article and pays the price is the man who calls the tune.

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Hon. W. H. BARNES: I think that you are a Daniel come to judgment.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am stating an obvious fact. The hon. gentleman will realise that the man who buys the article must have a say in it. I have a very vivid recollection of growing sugar-cane for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. They told me what variety I had to grow. On one occasion, after having planted a large area with cane that the Company thought a very good variety, they told me the density was not sufficient, and practically refused to take the cane from me. One variety known as Purple Ribbon the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company refused to take from the farmers, because it was below 6.5 density, and they told the farmers that they could not plant it. There was no outcry from the farmers then. They simply planted the cane that the Company would take. They realise that the Company who bought the cane practically had the whip-hand, because there was no other market for their cane. The Company simply told the farmers what they had to grow, and the farmers grew it. The same thing applies to-day with regard to cotton. We have to be guided by the requirements of the people who buy the cotton. With regard to the advice that we have received on this matter, I would like to name two or three, or probably more, world-wide authorities. First of all we consulted Sir James Currie. His record in "Who's Who" states—

"Born 1868.

"Educated Fettes College, Edinburgh, and at Edinburgh and Oxford Universities.

"Principal of the Gordon College, Khartoum, and Director of Education in the Soudan, 1900-1914.

"Member of the Governor-General's Council of Soudan, 1911-1914.

"Director, Training Munition Workers' Supply Department, Ministry of Munitions, 1916-1918.

"3rd Class Osmanieh, 1908.

"Created C.M.G., 1912.

"2nd Class Medjidieh, 1914.

"K.B.E., 1920.

"Commander of the Crown of Italy, 1920.

"Director, British Empire Cotton Corporation, 1923."

In his capacity as Director of the Empire Cotton Corporation, this cable was sent to him through the Agent-General by the Premier on 5th April, 1922—

"Consult Sir James Currie, Chairman Empire Cotton Growing Association, Board of Trade Offices, London, also British Cotton Growing Association, London, on question of securing scientist and cotton culture expert for service here."

The Agent-General, on the 23th July, 1922, cabled—

"Empire Cotton Growing Association furnishes for your highly confidential information following particulars:—Candidate at present Director of Agriculture, Bengal, having general control all cotton work. Previous post India Principal Agricultural College, Nagpur, and Deputy Director Agriculture Northern Circle Central Province. Was Director Agriculture Mesopotamia Expeditionary Forces years 1918, 1919, controlling original work conducted there on long-

staple cotton in Iraq. Possesses Cambridge University M.A. degree diploma agriculture. Has written brief history of experimental cotton cultivation plains of Bengal. Corporation undertakes defray salary Evans and any staff that might like to accompany him. Early answer desired. My personal opinion is that we should accept immediately, as Government will have expert assistance at little cost”

“On 29th July, 1922, the Premier replied to the above cable—

“Queensland Government agree to appointment. Will be glad to have services so eminent authority on culture. It is assumed appointment will be made by Queensland Government, and appointee will be subject to control of Government. Ascertain when appointee can take up position in Queensland. Matter is urgent, because farmers will plant large areas forthcoming season.”

The Agent-General cabled on 27th November, 1922—

“Evans hopes to sail steamer ‘Moreton Bay’ 2nd January”

Accordingly Mr. Evans was appointed Director of Cotton, and has full charge and responsibility in all matters relating to cotton in Queensland. Here is his record—

“During the last three years Mr. Evans was Director of Agriculture, Bengal, the biggest (of twelve) province in India. He was in the Central Province, the largest cotton-growing area in India, for twelve years, and during that time had a most intimate connection with cotton-growing.

“During the war he was Director of Agriculture, Mesopotamia, while that country was in occupation by the British. He had full control of agricultural matters there, having three or four thousand men under him. He was in charge of the original work conducted on the growth of long-staple cotton in Iraq. Mr. Evans has thus had experience of cotton both as a rainfall crop and under irrigation.

“Mr. Evans was at one time Principal of the Agricultural College at Nagpur (Div. Cent. Prov., Brit. India).

“He was created Companion of the Indian Empire by H.M. the Emperor in June, 1919.

“(1) Possesses Cambridge University M.A. Degree in Science and Diploma of Agriculture.

“(2) Author of a History of Experimental Cotton Cultivation on the Plains of Bengal.”

From the above it will be seen that Mr. Evans' salary is paid by the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. The only remuneration paid to him by the Queensland Government is £150 a year for house rent from the 3rd March, 1923 (that being the date of Mr. Evans' arrival in Queensland), and 30s. per day for expenses when actually travelling.

The Empire Cotton Growing Corporation was established under Royal Charter on the 1st November, 1921, and had received a Government grant of £987,715. It is also financed by a compulsory levy on all cotton imported into the United Kingdom. One of its main objects is to strengthen the Agricultural Departments in the British Dominions.

Mr. W. G. Wells has been appointed as a cotton specialist. He has specialised on the growing side of the cotton industry, and has a good knowledge of the industry generally. His duties are to advise the Government in matters relating to the industry. The following is his record:—

“Mr. Wells entered the services of the United States Department of Agriculture at the Experiment Station at San Antonio, Texas. This station devotes three-fourths of its energies to cotton problems, for Texas is the largest cotton-growing State in the Union. Mr. Wells, from the beginning, specialised in plant breeding matters, and worked through all the various enterprises of the United States Department as a plant breeder. He next became the plant breeder in charge of a station devoted to Pima (Egyptian) cotton. He also worked and bred Upland varieties in the Government station in Arizona. It may be stated that in Arizona cotton is usually grown under irrigation conditions. Mr. Wells subsequently undertook demonstration work for his department in various sections of Texas, California, and Arizona.

“In March, 1920, he resigned from the department and joined the South West Cotton Company, which is a subsidiary to the Goodyear Tyre Company. This latter company grows its own cotton. He worked with this company as a fieldman and demonstrator, and, at the time of his engagement with the Queensland Government, was in charge of one of their ranches growing cotton in Arizona.”

Mr. L. L. Gudge has been appointed Cotton Classifier, and his duties are to instruct in classing and grading. As a beginning, he will instruct classes to represent the Government at each gin for the coming season. The following is his record:—

“Mr. Gudge is twenty-eight years old, and the first seven years of his career was with Messrs. J. J. Williams and Company, cotton merchants, Liverpool.

“He next was for one year with Chambers, Holder, and Company, of Liverpool, in charge of their sales room. He left that firm to join O'Hea Bros., a Liverpool firm, with branches in England and America. He went to Texas for O'Hea Bros. in 1921 as classifier, and then entered the service of the lower Rio Grande Farmers' Society to act as their cotton classifier and buyer. He left the society to become a cotton buyer on his own account in the Rio Grande Valley in Western Texas. He temporarily returned to England, when the Agent-General's advertisement for a cotton classifier for the Queensland Government appeared in the Lancashire papers, and he was ultimately selected from the various applicants by the Agent-General, who in the matter had the advice of Sir James Currie, of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, of London.”

Mr. R. R. Anson, late of South Australia, has been appointed Assistant Instructor in Cotton, but he has not yet taken up his duties.

Mr. Himbury, General Manager of the British Cotton Growing Association, is also referred to. I only received the extracts I

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shall quote this morning. It is in reply to one of the letters of Mr. Evans in regard to planting ratoon cotton.

Mr. PETERSON: In ratooning they cut right down every year.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the point. That is not done, and there is no law to compel the growers to do it. I shall come to that point later on. I am just quoting for the information of the House, the opinions of authorities from the spinning point of view. The opinion of the spinners is effective on the point. The important thing from their point of view is that they do not like ratoon cotton because of its defects. Mr. Himbury says—

“There is certainly not a lot of ratoon cotton coming from America, but it has been tried in South Africa, Rhodesia, Australia, and one or two other places where there is a shortage of labour—and I believe that in nearly every case exception has been taken to the cotton. Of course I could not say there is not a market for it, because there is a market for all cottons—at a price.”

I am not going to quote further from that letter, because the other parts of it do not bear on the question.

Following on those letters we had a visit from the British Cotton Delegation. The delegation was invited to Australia by Mr. Hughes, who was then Prime Minister. He wanted representatives of the spinners and weavers of the old country to come to Australia and advise us on the important point as to what the spinners really wanted. I am going to read the letter of Mr. Crompton Wood to the Premier bearing on that point. The delegation consisted of Mr. Crompton Wood (managing director, Messrs. Smith and Rathbone), Mr. Ashcroft (director of the Australian Cotton Growing Association), Mr. Harold Parker (managing director, Messrs. William Calvert and Sons), and Mr. H. C. Armstrong (director of the Australian Cotton Growing Association). They came to Queensland and visited Gladstone, Rockhampton, Capella, Gordon Downs, Burnett, Garndah, Nanango, Dalby, Darling Downs, and the West and East Moreton cotton districts. They were greatly impressed with the possibilities of Queensland for cotton growing, and, as they were representative of the most important cotton industries of the United Kingdom, the benefits likely to accrue from their visits could hardly be over-estimated. Incidentally it may be mentioned that they were all very emphatic in their advice to the Government that the growing of ratoon cotton should not be countenanced.

Mr. Crompton Wood, head of the delegation, is head of Smith, Rathbone, and Company, one of the largest firms of cotton merchants and brokers in Liverpool. This firm imports Brazilian, Peruvian, American, and Egyptian cotton, and is quite alive to the merits and demerits of perennial cotton. Mr. Wood was controller of Egyptian cotton under the Board of Trade during the war. During the war cotton was contraband, and the greater part of the Egyptian cotton was used for aeroplanes, casings for war balloons, etc. During his tour in Queensland Mr. Crompton Wood was emphatic in his advice to Queensland not to grow ratoon cotton.

Mr. Crompton Wood's firm is one of the best cotton firms in the old country, and sup-

plies the Dunlop Tyre Company, Coates, Horrockses, and Colverts, not to mention a number of others.

I was with Mr. Crompton Wood during the time he was travelling through Queensland, and he was very impressed and alarmed by the fact that the Government had not definitely and positively laid down that ratoon cotton should not be exported from Queensland. He said, “If you do export it, don't let it go in the pack to Great Britain, because the spinners and buyers there, who are the most conservative in the whole world, will taboo the whole of your crop.” The Premier—he is keeping his promise now—told Mr. Crompton Wood that he would introduce legislation to prevent the growing of ratoon cotton. Mr. Wood was so impressed on the subject that he wrote, when at Rockhampton, the following letter to the Premier—

“After conferring with Mr. Gillies, we are requesting him to transmit to you our unanimous opinions concerning the steps which we think should be taken to overcome the danger of having ratooned cotton associated with the Queensland cotton crop. All of us are agreed that, in the interests of the growers and of all others concerned, the practice of ratooning cotton must be stopped at the inception of the industry. I have had no actual experience from Australian cotton itself on this point, but it has been universally found in all cotton-growing countries that the cotton when the plant is left in the ground from season to season deteriorates rapidly.

“As evidence of the inferiority with which all ratooned or ‘bolly cotton’ is regarded by cotton-buyers, it may be mentioned that it is not considered legal tender against sound cotton in the market of the world. It is not accepted as tender against a cotton contract. Obviously it would be bad business to risk a depreciation in the market value of the whole of your crop and the future reputation of Australian cotton by admitting ratooned cotton into the general cotton pack.

“In view of these facts, we should therefore suggest that, as your guarantee price stipulates for ‘good cotton,’ your Government might declare that ratooned cotton did not come within the scope of the guaranteed price. This special treatment of ratooned cotton would be in accordance with the custom of other cotton-growing countries. So universally is this recognised that in the United States of America, with over 35,000,000 acres under cotton, practically no ratooned cotton is grown.

“In Egypt the law enacts that all cotton bushes and the cotton refuse from the gins must be destroyed at the end of the season, the reason for this being to prevent the spread of disease—another serious objection—and the damaging of the reputation of the Egyptian crop.

“Should ratooned cotton be ginned with annual cotton in Australia and packed in the same bales the whole crop would suffer a depreciation, as spinners will at once look with suspicion at a crop that they know contains ratooned cotton.

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"As Raw Cotton Adviser to the War Office during the war, I had to give instructions to reject any bales of cotton which contained ratooned cotton. It is not the immediate cotton harvest alone that is likely to be affected by the practice objected to. Once damaged by inferior cotton being mixed with sound cotton, Queensland cotton would suffer a depreciation that might take years to overcome even after the practice was discontinued. I should like to be able to state on my return to Lancashire that there is no ratooned cotton mixed with the Queensland crop. If I could do this, I should feel that it alone would have justified my journey to Australia.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Sgd.) CROMPTON WOOD."

Mr. Wood said he would make similar representations to Mr. Hughes.

Then an eminent authority, Sir James Currie, wrote this letter to the Agent-General—

"Empire Cotton Growing Corporation,
Millbank House, 2 Wood street,
Millbank, London, S.W.1,
22nd June, 1923.

"Dear Sir,—In answer to your query of June 16th, I emphatically endorse the position re perennial cotton adopted by Messrs. Wood and Parker."

Mr. L. L. Gudge, who has been selected after a good deal of consideration as cotton classifier for Queensland, arrived here a few days ago. His opinion was also asked before he left the old country, and he wrote this letter—

"I have been requested to write you regarding the advisability of planting fresh seed each year, or leaving the stalk in the field to produce a crop the second season.

"The opinion of agricultural experts, cotton farmers, and cotton men generally in the United States is decidedly in favour of planting fresh seed each year, in fact the only farmer who leaves his plant in the field to reproduce the second season is the lazy and therefore unprogressive farmer."

I do not endorse that opinion of Mr. Gudge—he is speaking from American experience. I do not say that the Queensland cotton-grower who went in for ratooned cotton is either lazy or unprogressive. He did so because he wanted a crop which would pay him much better and cost less labour, but the question of the market is the all-important one.

At 4.28 p.m.,

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*) took the chair as Deputy Speaker.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:

The letter goes on to say—

"Cotton grown on the previous year's stalk is of an inferior character as regards length and strength of staple. In addition to this there is a decided decrease in the amount of lint cotton so produced per acre as compared to where fresh seed has been planted. The decrease in the monetary value of such a crop through its inferior quality outweighs the outlay necessary for planting each year.

"What most people consider the great disadvantage is, that cotton stalk left in the ground through the winter harbours insects injurious to the cotton plant."

I want to say, too, that the advice of our experts indicates that the root left in the ground also harbours insect pests.

Mr. PETERSON: What disease does it harbour?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Mr. Wells, who has had considerable experience in America, is also emphatic on this point of the inferiority and inadvisability of growing ratooned cotton. He is the cotton specialist to the Queensland Government. [4.30 p.m.] He was appointed after a full inquiry to the Agricultural Department at Washington, was strongly recommended, and he is not more than thirty-one years of age.

He comes here with not only a technical knowledge, having served his time in the Department of Agriculture at Washington and in various other States in America, but he also has had a practical experience with the Goodyear Tyre Company, which produces cotton for use in motor tyres. He cannot be placed in that category which is usually attributed to experts by the so-called hard-headed farmer, who says that an expert does not know anything at all, for he has practical knowledge in addition to theoretical knowledge.

He and Mr. Evans, in addition to the authorities I have quoted, are the men who have advised me, and with whom I have been in close contact during the last three months in drafting the legislation of which I am now moving the second reading.

I have the record of Mr. Daniel Jones here, who is described by some people as a cotton expert. He certainly has an excellent record as a Queenslander, and has been a good cotton-producer. But I am not going to accept the advice of hard-headed men like Daniel Jones as to what the cotton spinners of Great Britain want as against the authorities I have quoted, and I do not think that any hon. gentleman in this Chamber would seriously suggest that I should do so.

The other day we had a visit to Queensland of a number of scientists. Of course I am not going to accept these men as being in a position to tell me under what conditions scrub farmers in the electorate of the hon. member for Normanby can grow cotton; but it is encouraging to find that these scientists from all parts of the world, who came here to attend the Pan-Pacific Conference, held similar opinions to those given by the cotton experts. There were three of these scientists from Japan, one from the Federated Malay States, one from New Zealand, one from New Guinea, one from Java, and there was Dr. Butler himself, who is Director of the Imperial Bureau of Mycology, Kew, London. There was also one from the Philippine Islands. All of those experts conveyed to me, through Dr. Butler, that they were to a man behind the Queensland Government in their efforts to legislate against the culture and growth of ratooned cotton, and declared that we were acting on absolutely sound lines. I have other opinions of experts setting out all the arguments against ratooned cotton, but I do not intend to give them now. As a matter of fact, my time will not permit it.

I want to give a few opinions about ratooned cotton. First of all, Mr. Evans and Mr. Wells gave me these opinions in a joint report. They pointed out, firstly, the

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inferiority of the staple as compared with that of the annual cotton. Secondly, there is a danger of harvesting pests and contaminating other growths of cotton. If we allow ratoon cotton to be grown in districts where we are growing annual cotton—and we must bear in mind that there are only a handful of growers in Queensland who are growing or desire to grow ratoon cotton—there would be a danger of allowing the cross fertilisation of the pure varieties grown by other farmers.

Mr. PETERSON: How would that occur if they planted new seed every second year?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The third point is that ratoon cotton increases the possibility of the perpetuation of insect pests and other diseases. The fourth point is, that it tends to lower the standard of farming. These experts point out in their lengthy report to me that the British Cotton Delegation are to a man opposed to ratoon cotton. The opinion is qualified by the following extract:—

“It has been found that in nearly every case the lint of the ratooned crops of Upland cotton have been shorter, weaker, harsher, of lighter body, and was lacking in the twist of fibre. In fact, in many cases the quality of the ratoon cotton was such that it would only compete with the inferior classes of cotton such as are grown in India and China.”

I followed up my investigations by asking these experts the value of ratoon cotton, and they informed me that it is worth about 2½d. a lb. I ask those hon. members who are in favour of ratoon cotton whether they are prepared to grow it at 2½d. a lb.; if so, they have a pretty good case for the majority of farmers in Queensland if they say they can grow ratoon cotton for 2d. or 2½d. a lb., but not otherwise. They say this—

“There is no shortage of these types of cotton, which as a whole are used only in the manufacture of the cheaper grades of cloth, and consequently the prices for these cottons are always much less than the standard grades of the American Upland cotton. It is in these latter cottons that the great shortage is being felt, and it is believed that the greatest opportunities of establishing a cotton-growing industry in Queensland lie in these fields.”

I agree with that. I say there is no shortage of cotton such as is produced by the cheaper labour countries—India and China. Therefore it is necessary for us to grow the pure type. The greatest danger of growing ratoon cotton is the hybridisation of adjoining areas containing pure type cotton. This is one of the most important arguments against growing ratoon cotton. It might be argued that any man who desires to grow ratoon cotton should do so, but I say that he should not be permitted to do so if he is going to be a menace to his neighbours, and if he is going to spread pests and bring about hybridisation; but the great point is that he would injure the reputation of Queensland cotton on the world's market.

I ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these very important reports from Messrs. Wells and Evans on the ratooning question be printed in “Hansard,” so that the farmers of Queensland who read “Hansard” will see what the experts have to say in regard to ratoon cotton.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it the wish of the House that the report be printed in “Hansard”?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I thank the House for that permission. The report reads—

“Copy of memorandum prepared at Townsville on the 13th June, 1923, by Messrs. W. G. Wells, Cotton Specialist, and G. Evans, Cotton Adviser to the Queensland Government, on the necessity for prohibiting ratoon cotton.

“The reasons why the custom of ratooning or allowing cotton plants to stand over is undesirable may be divided into three heads—

1. Inferiority of the staple.
2. Endangers the maintenance of the purity of well bred strains of cotton.
3. Increases the possibility of the perpetuation of insect pests and other diseases.
4. Tends to lower the standard of farming.

“INFERIORITY OF THE STAPLE.

“The visit of the British Cotton Committee at the beginning of this season brought the question of the desirability of the growing of ratoon cotton into prominence. Before the visit of this committee, little heed had been paid to this question, and the growing of ratoon cotton had been practised to some degree during the periods in the past in which attempts had been made to establish cotton-growing in Queensland. The members of this committee, who were spinners and were acknowledged authorities in their professions, after inspecting samples of ratooned cotton, unqualifiably condemned the cotton, and stated that the English fine spinning mills could not use this class of cotton. Upon the recommendation of the committee, the Government therefore announced that the guaranteed advance for 1922-1923 did not include ratooned or standover cotton.

“During the present season, numerous opportunities have been afforded to inspect samples of ratoon cotton, both in the field and after picking, and careful comparisons have been made of the seed cotton of the planted and ratooned crops.

“It has been found that in nearly every case the lint of the ratooned crops of the Upland cotton has been shorter, weaker, harsher, of lighter body, and was especially lacking in the twist of the fibres. In fact, in many cases, the quality of the ratooned cotton was such that it would compete only with the inferior classes of cotton such as are grown in India and China (2d. and 2½d. per lb.).

“There is no shortage of these types of cotton, which, as a whole, are used only in the manufacture of the cheaper grades of cloth, and consequently the prices for these cottons are always much less than for the standard grades of the American Upland cotton. It is in these latter cottons that the great shortage is being felt, and it is believed that the greatest opportunities of establishing a cotton-growing industry in Queensland lie in these fields.

"Opportunities have also been afforded to inspect samples of seed cotton of the 'tree types' of cotton, such as the Egyptian, Sea Island, and Caravonica varieties. In every case it has been noted that the lint of these varieties, when obtained from ratooned plants, is very much harsher and coarser than is the standard lint of these varieties. In fact, in most cases the degree of harshness would be such as to preclude the use of cottons in their customary markets.

"Some confusion has been caused in regard to these types of cotton by reports of their values published in the newspapers. Unfortunately the true facts of the matter were not fully stated. The ratooned cotton which was reported on was of the Sakellariades variety of Egyptian cotton, and the price reported was, approximately, 2½d. per lb. under the market price of the same variety when grown as annual cotton.

"There is a very limited market for cottons of the harsh, long staple varieties, most of which are grown in countries with cheap labour. This type of cotton is used mostly in mixing with the better grades of woollen goods, and is not in demand by the English fine spinners, who are the most interested in the development of the cotton-growing industry within the British Empire, and who are consequently more apt to assist in the development of markets for Queensland cotton.

"THE NECESSITY FOR GROWING PURE TYPES AND THE DANGERS ARISING FROM HYBRIDISATION IN THE FIELD.

"The standard of living in the farming community of Australia is, on the whole, considerably higher than that of most other cotton-growing countries, and for this, as well as other reasons, it is obvious that if cotton-growing is to become a staple and well-established industry in this country in the future, every effort will have to be made to produce a long staple cotton of consistent uniformity which will fetch a big premium on ordinary Uplands. At present, the only seed available is of mixed origin, and consequently the staple varies greatly in length, strength, twist, and texture, and consequently is not realising the same price that a cotton of more uniform type will obtain. To meet this emergency, the State Department of Agriculture is now propagating as fast as possible a long staple cotton called Durango, which, it is hoped, will give good yields of the required quality on large areas of the coastal belt.

"In order to keep this variety pure, it will be necessary to prohibit, as far as possible, the growing of any other variety in a Durango district, as otherwise deterioration is likely to set in rapidly owing to hybridisation in the field and also to mixing of the seed at the ginning factory. If ratoon cotton is allowed to be grown, it will be impossible to keep the Durango or any other good type pure, as hybridisation is bound to set in, the pollen being carried by bees from cotton grown at considerable distances.

"It may be mentioned that this system of growing pure varieties in the community system has been recognised

in the United States of America and also in India as the ideal system and every effort is being made to carry it into effect.

"THE DANGER OF PERPETUATING PESTS AND DISEASES.

"The cotton crop, like most other cultivated crops of commercial importance, is subject to various diseases and pests. Some of these diseases, such as the Mexican boll weevil in United States of America and the pink boll worm in Egypt, India, etc., have not, so far as we know, yet been introduced into Australia, but the latter may appear at any time, and in any case Australia has several indigenous diseases of her own, which cause sufficient damage to warrant the closest attention being paid to them. Several of these, such as the maize grub (*Chloridae obsoleta*) and the small boll worm (*Earias hugelli*) attack the boll; the internal boll rot, which is a bacterial disease, and the angular leaf disease also are appearing and may develop into serious pests if not tackled systematically now.

"These boll diseases are very difficult to remedy once the attack has occurred, because the grub is inside the boll and cannot be effectively reached by sprays, etc. Preventive measures are the only feasible means of control, and these consist in destroying the pest in the resting stage during the cold weather months. If the pest can be destroyed at this stage, very few moths emerge in the spring, when the young cotton plants of the new crop emerge, and the result is that the later broods are comparatively few in number and the damage done to the cotton crop is small. Practically every other cotton-growing country of importance has found it necessary to bring in some form of legislation which aims at the uprooting of the annual crop after the third or fourth picking is completed, so that the land is free from growing cotton for three or four months before the next planting season arrives. Usually the practice is to turn in the cattle first, then to plough up the stubble and collect and burn the stalks and leave the land rough and fallow for two months or so before preparing a seed bed. It can be readily understood that by this system all pests are greatly reduced, as many are destroyed by burning the stalks and others which hibernate in the soil are destroyed by the ploughing and the action of the cold and sun or the work of certain birds.

"If ratoon or standover cotton is allowed it may be readily imagined that one such plant may be the means of infecting acres of annual cotton with pests early in the season and so causing excessive damage. It may be argued that the system of pruning ratoon cotton will result in this destruction, but it is very doubtful whether the pruning will be effectively done in all cases and whether the twigs pruned off will be collected and destroyed, and in any case the cultivation, if any, between the rows of cotton so pruned, will be difficult and will not be so effective in destroying hibernating pests as a thorough ploughing and the subsequent cultivation necessary to procure a seed

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bed for planted cotton. In other words, clean cultivation is the great preventive for keeping insect and fungoid pests in check, and this is practically impossible if cotton is ratooned.

"A résumé of the measures that have had to be taken by the various other cotton-growing countries of the world is given in the 'Queensland Agricultural Journal' for March, 1923.

"RATOONING COTTON HAS THE TENDENCY TO LOWER THE STANDARD OF FARMING.

"A large percentage of the land on which the expansion of the cotton-growing industry is taking place has been under cultivation but for a short period of time, or is new land under the plough for the first time. It is quite obvious that thorough methods of cultivation are highly essential in order to bring these soils to the proper state of mechanical and chemical condition, and it is believed that this can be accomplished only by properly ploughing and fallowing annually.

"This cannot be accomplished under a system of growing ratooned cotton.

"Owing to the ratooned plants having a more spreading habit of growth, it is impossible, without doing serious damage to the plants, of cultivating sufficiently close to the plants with machines to destroy the weeds and grass in the rows in the latter stages of growth. More hand labour is therefore necessary than in planted cotton, as the slender upright position of the plants allows closer and much later cultivation with machinery.

"CONCLUSION.

"The Government has embarked on a programme to develop the cotton-growing industry in the State, which will necessitate a large expenditure of money and energy in order to accomplish the desired effects.

"It is believed that this cannot be successfully accomplished to any degree unless a comprehensive system of control of the industry is evolved. This system should include provisions for the maintenance of the pure seed supply, eradication of insect pests, development of proper cultural methods, etc., and it is believed that if the custom of ratooning cotton is allowed to continue, that it will endanger the successful accomplishment of the development of any system of control, and that after years of effort and the expenditure of much money that the cotton-growing industry of Queensland will not be on a much better plane than that which exists to-day."

The following supplementary report was received from Messrs. Wells and Evans:—

"MARKET FOR RATOON COTTON BY MESSRS. WELLS AND EVANS.

"I am in receipt of your memo. of 28th June on the question as to whether a payable market for ratoon cotton can be developed.

"As I pointed out in the previous report on the ratoon question, the class of cotton of this year's ratoon crop is such that it can be compared with only the very poorest grades of American Upland cotton or the bulk of the cottons which are grown in India and China.

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"Mr. Himbury, the general manager of the British Cotton Growing Association, who has recently visited India, reports that the present cotton crop of India will total about five million bales, of which not quite half a million bales will be of the class meeting the requirements of the English staple cotton spinners.

"The price for the best grades of the bulk of the Indian cottons on the Liverpool market for 15th May range between 8.30 to 0.50 pence a pound as compared with 14.78 for middling American, the grade which most of the Queensland cotton of this year will attain.

"These prices mean that the grower would not realise more than 2 to 2½ pence a pound for seed cotton on a commercial basis, and, further, it is pointed out that the present market for such cottons is fairly high, and if there should be a slump in the prices of American middling cotton that far less could be expected for the poorer types of cotton.

"The advocates of ratooning can thus see the extent of the market in which they wish to compete—a market which is supplied by cheap labour and which can produce at a far lower price than can the Queensland grower.

"This holds equally true if it is attempted to grow ratooned Egyptian or Sea Island cottons, as, while the price is better for this cotton which is grown mostly in Peru, the labour is much cheaper and the market very limited—the total yearly production in 1922, according to the report of the International Institute of Agriculture, being about 45,000 bales.

"The great shortage of cotton lies in the American type of cotton, and it is in producing this class of cotton that it is believed Queensland has the best prospects of developing a cotton-growing industry.

"It must be remembered that the cotton-spinning trade is one of the most conservative industries of manufacturing in the world, and unless the influential men of this industry can be assured that only the best types of cotton are being grown and that efforts are being taken to establish the permanency of these types, little can be expected in the way of assistance from them in establishing a profitable market for Queensland cotton.

"The problem in Queensland is not whether a profitable market can be found for ratoon cotton now, but can Queensland produce a cotton of such grade and class that a premium will be secured which will insure that cotton-growing will be a profitable industry for the farmer of Queensland for years to come; and every effort should be expended in endeavouring to establish only the growing of this type of cotton.

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G. EVANS."

There are many important articles dealing with the ratoon question, and Dr. Stopford, a member of the New South Wales Parliament, without consulting me and without consulting the Government, has written a letter to the "Daily Mail" pointing out that ratoon cotton should not be grown in Queensland. He says in a few words, which I

endorse, that, if Queensland is going to succeed as a cotton-growing country, it must produce the best and only the best.

A conference of cotton farmers was held, over which I presided. This conference lasted six hours, and I listened patiently to all the delegates to that conference had to say. The Council of Agriculture also considered this matter, and a committee of that Council consider that the Government should defer this legislation. I have listened patiently to all the arguments of the Council of Agriculture. Their arguments were put forward by a deputation from the conference, and I gave six hours of my time to all they had to say, and all they had to say was placed before the Cabinet for consideration, with the result that when weighed with all the expert advice we had before us, we decided the Bill must be introduced.

I want to deal with the position of other countries in connection with this matter, and I want to read an extract from an official pamphlet published on cotton ratooning experiments conducted by the Department of Agriculture of the Union of South Africa, which was published in February, 1922. As South Africa is in a somewhat similar position to ourselves, we might be guided to some extent by what the authorities there are doing. In this House, unfortunately, very often we look for precedents. We are afraid to do things unless we can give precedents or show that other countries are doing likewise. I am going to show what other countries are doing, and have done in regard to this matter, and what I am asking the Parliament of Queensland to do to-day. This official pamphlet, issued by the Department of Agriculture of the Union of South Africa, says—

“Since 1918 a few experiments have been conducted at the Rustenburg Experiment Station in ratooning cotton—i.e., the method of growing cotton by cutting back the old cotton stalks and allowing new shoots to spring up the following year, instead of fresh planting. This method of growing cotton was practised by a number of farmers in the Rustenburg district and other parts of the Union for several seasons prior to 1918. Farmers reported having obtained increased yields by ratooning their cotton fields and, as a result of these reports, the majority of the growers of the Rustenburg district ratooned all or a part of their cotton. Inquiries were received from all parts of the country as to whether this method was to be recommended.

“We find that not a single acre of cotton is ratooned in America, where they produce annually from 8,000,000 to 14,000,000 bales, of 500 lb. weight each; also in Egypt this method of growing cotton is regarded as a great danger to the cotton industry, as is evidenced by the very severe legislation against it. However, our climatic conditions, and especially our irregular and late rains, do not always make our seasons ideal for cotton-growing in most parts of the country, including the greater portion of our bushveld and low country. It was decided therefore to give ratooning a thorough trial in order to have some reliable information of the effects under our peculiar climatic conditions.

“These experiments were carried out in order to determine—

(1) Whether increased yields could be obtained by ratooning cotton;

(2) Whether the quality of the lint deteriorated by ratooning;

(3) Whether any noticeable difference in the number of insects and their attacks could be seen between the first year and ratooned fields.

“In comparing the yields, we find that with the exception of 1917-18, the yields decreased every year, or, in other words, the first-year cotton gave the largest yields, the second-year cotton gave smaller yields than the first-year cotton, and the third-year cotton gave the lowest yields.

“During the past two seasons seventy-six cotton fields in various parts of the Union were inspected in order to obtain accurate data on the percentage of boll-worm damage in first-year and in ratooned fields, and to note the effects of cultivation thereon. These data are here briefly summarised. The average per cent. of bollworm infestation for all first-year cotton fields was under 5 per cent. (minimum $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and maximum 15 per cent.); and for all ratooned fields about 15 per cent. (minimum 1 per cent. and maximum 90 per cent.). . . . The following can be taken as a very fair estimate of the average damage done to cotton by the boll worms; for first-year cotton, under 10 per cent.; for ratooned cotton, up to 50 per cent. The data so far available proves beyond question that ratooning is a bad practice from the entomological standpoint, and that it is conducive to a very considerable increase in boll worm injury to the cotton crop.

“The difference in the amount of damage done between the first-year cotton and ratooned cotton was more evident when the first-year field was a considerable distance away from the nearest ratooned field. Where the two fields were fairly close together, in the early stages the first-year cotton had a smaller percentage of bolls attacked, but later on in the season the percentage increased very considerably. This is easily understood when it is considered that the ratooned field had an earlier start and had many fullgrown bolls when the first squares formed on the first-year cotton. In a number of instances a small field of ratooned cotton acted as a breeding place for insects which increased in great numbers and caused a tremendous lot of damage in the larger first-year fields. As a rule less insect trouble was found where good and frequent cultivation was practised.

“General Conclusions.—Our investigations show—

(1) That ratooning does not increase the yield of cotton;

(2) That where increased yields are obtained on ratooned fields, some other factor or factors, such as the season, cultural methods, late planting, etc., seem to be responsible, and not ratooning itself;

(3) That there appears to be a difference between the quality of first-year and ratooned cotton, and that the lint

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from ratooned fields shows signs of deteriorating and even of becoming shorter in staple;

(4) That as a general rule ratooned fields are more infested with cotton pests than first-year cotton."

I could go on quoting reports on this question, but I want to mention one or two countries that have taken drastic legislation to prevent the ratooning of cotton, more from the point of view of dealing with pests than anything else, I admit. I think the pest question is a secondary question. Our experts are inclined to think that that question is most important, but I regard the most important question is, that, if Queensland is to succeed as a cotton-growing country it must produce the very best, and produce the article the spinners and the buyers say they want and will pay a high price for. Dealing briefly with countries that have passed legislation on this question I quote the following—

"REGULATIONS REGARDING COTTON PESTS AND DISEASES IN BRITISH COLONIES AND INDIA.

"(Summarised from Article in Bulletin No. 2, volume 20, of the Imperial Institute, page 192.)

"In 1910 the pink boll worm was known to exist in India, German East Africa, British West Africa, and Hawaii. In 1922 it was recognised in Egypt and the Sudan, Mesopotamia, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, the United States, and the West Indies. In fact, almost every country growing cotton has been infected with it with the exception perhaps of Turkestan, Uganda, Nyasaland, and South Africa. The spread of the pest was chiefly due to the transport of infected cotton seed often contained in bales of ginned cotton, and has necessitated legislation, which, in nearly every case, has unfortunately been effected rather too late to secure freedom from attack."

I want to emphasise that—"too late to secure freedom from attack."

Dealing briefly with countries which have passed legislation, I would mention the Presidency of Madras, in India. By the Madras Agricultural Pests and Destruction Act of 1919 the Governor directed that all Cambodia cotton plants in certain specified districts should be pulled completely out of the ground and allowed to wither before the 1st August in each year. The reason for this notification was that the stem weevil and the pink boll worm were established as pests in respect to Cambodia cotton.

Then in Uganda (Africa) legislation has been passed providing that all cotton plants shall be uprooted and destroyed after the first season's crop has been picked, and on no account shall they be allowed to remain for a second season or for more than one year in the ground. I think that hon. members on both sides will take notice of this, particularly Opposition members, who talk about precedents and say that we are doing something unusual. I want briefly to call attention to a few countries which have passed drastic legislation.

In Anglo-Egyptian Sudan an order published in 1917 prohibits the transportation of cotton seed, seed cotton, cotton lint, cotton plants, and any parts thereof from the Red Sea province into any other part of the

Sudan except under the authority of the Director of Agriculture. A further order of 5th December, 1918, prohibits the importation of growing plants into the Sudan, but allows the entry of such plants from Egypt under stringent conditions. The Cotton Ordinance, promulgated in November, 1912, prohibits the importation of cotton seed except under a permit granted by the Director of Agriculture. No cotton seed may be used for sowing unless it has been approved by the same authority. Cotton shall be picked clean, free from leaves, bolls, and dirt, and none but clean cotton shall be sold or offered for sale. No cotton is to remain on the land longer than the one season. By the cotton regulations of 1913 all cotton plants must be destroyed in certain specified districts before the dates given in each year. Another paragraph in the regulations compels occupiers of cultivated land in the Tokar Plain to destroy all noxious weeds and other plants likely to harbour pests on their land. Cotton regulations published in March, 1917, gave the Director of Agriculture permission to alter the date before which all cotton plants, stalks, bolls, or parts of plants shall be destroyed by the owner. They also regulated the removal or destruction of all waste cotton seed, etc., from a ginning factory likely to harbour the pink boll worm, and made it only permissible to store cotton seed in a ginnyery after the ginning has been finished for the season where the doorways, windows, and other openings are covered by wire gauze mesh, which will prevent the egress of the moth of pink boll worm.

Then we come to Nigeria, in Africa. I find that by a native court rule of the Zaria Province of October, 1916, it was made a punishable offence to plant any but Government seed, or to mix cotton grown from Government seed with native cotton. In the West Indies also legislation has been passed as late as 1919 dealing with the same question. In Nyassaland, Africa, in May, 1920, an ordinance was issued providing for the destruction of cotton bushes in order to prevent their being grown more than one season, and prohibiting the distribution to natives of cotton seed which had not been approved by the Director of Agriculture. In Rhodesia cotton seed can only be introduced under the permission of the Director of Agriculture. In Tanganyika no cotton plant is allowed to remain in the ground beyond one year, and the Director of Agriculture may fix a date prior to which all the previous season's cotton plants shall be uprooted and burned. When disease is found to exist in any plantation the Director may order all the cotton plants to be burned, the plantation to be deeply tilled, and no cotton to be replanted for two years. With regard to the suggestion that this legislation is drastic, I submit that the legislation to which briefly I have called attention shows that we are wise in dealing with this question now. I have before me a report of the Rockhampton District Council dealing with this question, and I also have the replies which have been made by Mr. Evans and Mr. Wells to the various points raised, but I fear that my time is limited and that I cannot deal with that question.

Mr. TAYLOR: Give us all the information you can. Why not get an extension of time?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I have plenty more information which I am

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quite prepared to give the House on this important question. It may be as well, in view of the suggestion that I should get an extension of time if it is needed, to deal with some of the points raised by the Rockhampton people. The justification for that is found in the fact that this organisation—and an important organisation, I admit—has seen fit, I understand, to circularise all members of Parliament, and I have no doubt that members of Parliament have, during the three weeks this Bill has been laid on the table of the House, not only made themselves familiar with the provisions of the Bill, but with all the arguments, and they naturally want to hear all the arguments I have to put forward in favour of the apparently drastic legislation with regard to ratoon cotton. Taking the points as they have been submitted, Mr. Wells first of all replied to them, and Mr. Evans also replies to them. I am afraid that my voice will not permit of my reading them through, because they are very lengthy reports.

Mr. CORSER: You have to give us some idea with regard to the matter, as we have to reply to you.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You have plenty of ideas, and if you had allowed the second reading of this Bill to go through last night you would have had all the day to prepare your second reading speeches. If you think it necessary to read my speech after I have finished in order to reply to it, I am quite prepared to meet hon. members.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: While hon. members opposite claim that they want information they should not interject.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Do not be unkind. We are sitting listening patiently.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I know the hon. member for Wynnum always is, but some other hon. members opposite are not such good listeners. In making my speech under somewhat difficult circumstances, I am trying to do the best I can with a very important question. Dealing with the arguments put forward by the Rockhampton District Council of Agriculture, I want to say, as I told the deputation, that, from their point of view, I have absolute sympathy with them. I was a sugar-grower in a scrub area myself, and I say that, from my experience as a sugar-grower with a hoe, I sympathise with their point of view, and they would win if there were not stronger arguments on the other side.

Mr. EDWARDS: But are you going to ask them to do that after every crop?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill makes it quite clear what we are going to do. The Rockhampton District Council of Agriculture has made a protest against the decision of the Government to legislate against ratoon cotton. I propose now to read the resolutions passed by the District Council, paragraph by paragraph, and then to give the replies of Mr. Evans and Mr. Wells thereto:—

“ROCKHAMPTON DISTRICT COUNCIL
RESOLUTIONS OF PROTEST.

Resolution 1.

“This District Council places on record its protest against the decision of the

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

“Further, this District Council, from a close observation of the facts leading up to this decision, and having regard to the report of its representatives attending the Conference on the 15th August, 1923, embracing comments on the conduct of the Minister for Agriculture and the Director of the Council of Agriculture thereat, is of opinion that, for reasons appended hereto, a Royal Commission of Inquiry is desirable, and

“(1) Despite the weight of evidence clearly favouring ratooning, the interests of the farmers of Queensland have been sacrificed in the interests of a dictatorial combine.

“(2) By the complete rejection and utter disregard of the careful deliberation and subsequent recommendations of the Council of Agriculture and its units on the ratoon question, to institute experimental cotton plots for observation purposes over a period of years— withholding legislation in the meantime, a severe blow per medium of Government ineptitude has been dealt to the prestige of the Council of Agriculture, thereby discrediting its independence and discounting the influence of its activities.

“(3) By its decision and that much of the agreement published in the ‘Queensland Producer’ of 8th September, page 42, answers to questions C and E of the Central Queensland District Council, the Government has clearly created a monopoly by placing the industry under the control of an outside organisation, which, sooner or later, the farmers will have to combat by means of a levy on their resources.

“(4) That the Government has failed in its protection of the farmers' interests by accepting the bald statement that ratoon cotton is not legal tender and neglecting to make early departmental efforts by way of an independent inquiry following the despatch of trial consignments to various markets of the world.

“(5) That the Government has no evidence to prove that the ratooning we desire encourages disease and pest infestation more seriously than annual planting.

“(6) The action of the Minister for Agriculture in holding aloof his anti-ratoon evidence from a searching analysis by the Conference, and the fact that same covered no experience of systematic ratooning as applicable to Queensland' climatic conditions, and the further fact that the practical methods adopted in our own scrub belts defied comparison

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with the methods adopted in any part of the world, coupled with the rejection of the assurance by growers that they could profitably, and would, if allowed, ratoon cotton of a desirable quality without any guarantee or support from the Government, and further the Minister's refusal to submit the question to a referendum of all growers were features of a narrowness of Ministerial desire to find a solution of the ratoon problem.

"Under the circumstances this District Council pledges itself to exhaust every avenue of endorsement of its protest and desire for a Royal Commission of Inquiry, and seeks the support of the Council of Agriculture and all District Councils in furtherance of its efforts to give effect to such desire."

REPLY BY MR. EVANS.

"(1) It is stated that the weight of evidence is clearly in favour of ratooning. This I do not consider to be a true statement of the facts of the case. The vast majority of the cotton-growers outside the scrub areas do not favour ratooning. I have recently returned from a ten days' tour in the Maranoa district, and after interviewing numbers of growers in this dry area, I have come to the conclusion that they are not in favour of ratooning. One prominent grower at Wallumbilla, who has cultivated cotton for the last twelve years, is now, I believe, definitely of opinion that ratooning over a series of years is not so favourable as the cultivation of annual cotton, and is abandoning ratoon. This District Council has also deliberately ignored other points which are relative to the good of the industry as a whole, as apart from those of the individual cultivator in scrub areas. For instance, if ratoon cotton is allowed to go on promiscuously, it will be impossible to keep any new variety pure, as cross-fertilisation is very prevalent in the cotton crop. The result will be that any new variety of good quality, if introduced, will be deteriorated in the first year through the proximity of ratoon cotton plants of another variety. This is a point that has not been realised fully in Queensland yet, because the growers do not fully appreciate that the textile cotton industry is every bit as intricate, if not more so, than that of the woollen industry, and requires pure types of cotton.

"There is another point which has been brought to my notice by many growers in different parts of the State, and it is noteworthy that this statement is made by the best farmers, which, as a class, is the one we want to encourage in cotton-growing, because one of the chief obstacles before the rapid expansion of the cotton-growing industry at present is the poor farming that is practised in many of the cotton tracts. The good farmers will tell you that if ratooning is properly carried out, it is just as costly to cultivate as an annual crop—that is to say, if the plants are pruned back properly, all the branches and rubbish collected and burned, and the land is intercultivated between the plants. They also point out that after one year, at any rate, ratoon cotton is

not profitable, and this is also a point which is conceded by most of the ratoon propagandists themselves. They point out that at the end of the first year, or the second year at the latest, the plants will still have to be uprooted and got rid of, and that this is a far more formidable task than when dealing with annual cotton.

"(2) If the Government consider it absolutely necessary, experiments on ratoon cotton can be carried out on some of the State farms. I consider, however, that these experiments will be of doubtful utility, and am strongly averse to the withholding of legislation in the meantime. In any case, the Department of Agriculture and Stock is the obvious agency for carrying out careful experiments of this sort, as the greatest care and accuracy would have to be taken, and this can only be carried out properly on an experimental farm. The District Council has no organisation capable of carrying out these experiments, nor do I think it would carry the confidence of the vast majority of the cotton-growers in the same way that properly conducted experiments by the department would do.

"(3) In order to place the cotton-growing industry on a firm footing, and to give it the necessary impetus at the start, the only feasible way was to place the ginning and baling in the hands of a company with strong financial backing. I do not see that there is any danger to be feared by the growers of a monopoly. I understand that the British-Australian Cotton Association are only too willing for cotton-growers to take up shares in their concern. The obvious way out of the difficulty appears to me to be for the cotton-growers to form co-operative cotton-growing associations and for each association or group of associations to take up so many shares in the British-Australian Cotton Association. If they do this, they will be in a position to have their own directors on the Board, and they will further have the inestimable advantage of being in close touch with the ginning and baling of the cotton, and will keep in close touch with the markets. It must be remembered that the ginning and baling of cotton is a very intricate matter, and a great deal depends on how the cotton is ginned and how it is placed on the market. I am of opinion that the best way to handle the cotton crop of Queensland for many years to come will be by the continuation of a big organisation with a solid financial backing in which both business men and growers are represented.

"(4) There seems to be a good deal of misconception on this point. It is not a question of whether there is a market for ratoon cotton or not, or whether it is legal tender altogether. Doubtless, ratoon cotton, if sold by itself, will always find a market, but the price it will realise will approximate to that of East Indian cotton, and other cottons of low classes. The point really is that under Queensland conditions we know that we can produce very good annual cotton which, if it is kept pure and free from mixture, will always fetch a good

premium over middling American. As is the case with all outside growth, however, we have to establish our name on the world's market, and it will take us several years to do this, and to get the necessary 'goodwill.' If a big cotton market, such as Liverpool or Japan, finds out that we are mixing ratoon and annual cotton, our 'goodwill' will disappear, and the name of Australian cotton will be prejudiced. If ratoon and annual cotton is mixed together by the grower, and I am afraid that there have been some instances of this during the past season, it is often exceedingly difficult to detect it during the ginning and baling processes. We may be quite sure, however, that the spinner will find this out when he works the cotton up in the spinning mill, because the ratoon fibres are, on the whole, shorter, weaker, and lacking in twist.

"(5) With regard to disease, there is evidence all over the world that perennial cotton is a dangerous source for perpetuating diseases and pests, and it is for this reason that nearly every cotton-growing country in the world has brought in legislation within the last few years discouraging the growing of perennial cotton. I understand that the District Council proposes to ratoon by cutting down the branches to within 3 or 4 inches of the ground and burning the branches and rubbish. If we could be sure that this would be properly carried out there would be something to say, but I am afraid that this work will not be properly carried out, and that the ratoon country may prove a standing menace to the rest of Queensland from the point of view of pests. The mere pruning of the crop is not sufficient, however, as many of the pests hibernate during the winter in the ground at the base of the stem or between the rows. Cotton planted in scrub areas cannot possibly be ploughed up, and the great advantage of annual over ratoon cotton lies in the fact that in the former case the land is ploughed up, whereby these hibernating pests are exposed to the surface and are destroyed by birds, cold, or subsequent cultivation. This cannot be the case in ratoon cotton grown in scrub areas.

"(6) I consider that there is no case for a Royal Commission of Inquiry, as the only protest seems to have come from a small clique of growers from the scrub area in the Central district."

REPLY BY MR. WELLS.

"(1) I cannot see where a Royal Commission could settle this question any better than the recent conferences have. The question is not one that can be settled by arguments or presentation of ideas by men who have not the knowledge as to what is good cotton and what is not. If a Royal Commission was hearing the case and decided that ratooned cotton was the best for scrub farmers, it would not change the nature of ratooned cotton one bit, and that is the point at issue. Queensland has the best opportunity at present that she probably ever will have to develop into a cotton-producing State, and in order to take full advantage of this opportunity nothing

should be allowed to exist which may endanger the reputation of the quality of the cotton produced. Every cotton-growing country is suffering from the results of growing numerous varieties of cotton of different qualities, and the demands of the cotton manufacturing world is more uniformity of the characters of the cotton lint.

"One has to but read of the efforts of some of the main cotton-producing countries to rectify this serious shortcoming in the cottons of to-day, to realise how necessary it is and how great are the possibilities for the cotton-growing industry in Queensland if we can start off with a uniform product. I might point out that Brazil, which has been cited as the great home of ratoon cotton, is known among the cotton manufacturing trade as having very low grade and irregular lengths of cotton indeed; and at the recent exposition held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the cotton trade made very strong representations to the Brazilian Government to rectify this serious defect in the Brazilian cotton.

"The ratooned cotton which I have examined both in the field and at the gins leads me to believe that we would soon be in the same position in Queensland if ratooned cotton was allowed to be grown.

"It is highly essential that the grading and selling of the ginned cotton should be under Government control, in order that the growers may secure the highest returns for their products. This will necessitate the establishing and training of a fairly large staff of graders, etc., and unless the marketable cotton is of such quality as to return profitable remuneration to the grower, it is difficult to see where the Government will be justified in incurring the expense of such an organisation.

"(2) The sum total of all the arguments submitted by the Council of Agriculture was that certain sections of certain districts wanted to grow ratoon cotton. Weighed against this fact is the fact that there are thousands of acres of land in Queensland which are producing cotton, or are able to produce cotton, where the growers have no desire to produce ratoon after the true facts of the case have been presented to them, and it is the duty of the Government to protect these growers from the dangerous possibilities which may develop if ratooned cotton is allowed to be grown.

"(3) I am decidedly opposed to the establishing of plots of ratooned cotton on individual growers' farms. This is a question of such importance that such tests should not be subject to the possibilities of being non-representative through the efforts of unscrupulous persons. If it is considered necessary to experiment on such lines, the place for the conducting of the experiments is on the State farms, several of which are growing Durango cotton this season.

"I would point out, though, that sample bales of ratooned cotton are being sent to England through the Agent-General for spinning tests by mills which are not connected in any way with the

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British Cotton Growing Association or the Empire Corporation, in order that an impartial report may be secured. These bales represent ten bales of ratoon cotton grown in the Central district, two bales of Durango ratooned cotton grown at Capella, and one bale of Durango planted cotton from Boyne Valley as a check. I would consider this a representative test, as the ratoon cotton is the product of the persons who are advocating ratoon.

"(4) The statement that ratoon cotton is not legal tender has had no influence whatsoever as far as I am concerned. I have based my observations directly on the cotton which I have examined in the field and at the ginnyery.

"(5) The experiences of the other cotton-producing countries of the world all go to show that there is grave danger in allowing the ratooning of the cotton plant. Why should Queensland take the chance of developing serious insect pests which may affect the industry to such an extent that it will be unprofitable to a large percentage of the growers? There are many native insect pests at present in Queensland, and the services of skilled entomologists will be necessary to work out the proper methods of combating these pests. It appears the height of folly, in view of these facts, to allow methods of growing cotton which have been shown to accentuate the insect problem in other countries.

"(6) The bare statement of the fact that they could produce ratoon cotton profitably and of a desired quality is not conclusive at all, because I would point out that there was not one person representing them who could tell the merits of a sample of cotton. If every cotton-grower in Queensland could be persuaded to declare in favour of growing ratooned cotton, the Government would still be justified in declaring against the growing of ratooned cotton as long as it is buying the seed cotton. It would be further justified if it were not buying the seed cotton, as it would be protecting the great body of cotton-growers who wish to do the proper thing, but through the lack of experience have not had the opportunity to see or learn the true merits of ratooned cotton as compared to annually planted cotton."

Resolution II.

"That in view of the facts enumerated in the preceding resolution, this unit of the Council of Agriculture requests the Premier, the Hon. E. G. Theodore, to appoint a Royal Commission of Inquiry, representative of the Government and the farmers, with wide power to call and analyse all evidence, for and against the ratoon problem, previous to introducing any anti-ratoon legislation."

REPLY BY MR. EVANS.

"I consider that there is no case for a Royal Commission of Inquiry, as the only protest seems to have come from a small clique of growers from the scrub area in the Central District."

REPLY BY MR. WELLS.

"The facts of the case were all carefully considered by the departmental

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representatives, who understood the local conditions as well as the growers, before the Bill was prepared. The Minister was fully supplied with the growers' side of the argument at the Conference of 15th August, and I think will agree with me that nothing was presented which would justify the Government in refraining to pass the Bill as it was prepared."

Resolution III.

"That consequent upon the passage of the foregoing resolutions dealing with ratoon cotton, this District Council strongly supports the sending of a representative overseas, carrying samples of Queensland ratoon cotton, with the object of approaching the markets to test the marketing possibilities of this particular class of cotton, this course being considered very necessary in the interests of the growers.

"That the Government be asked to assist the District Council in its determination by subsidising the project to the extent of £1 for £1.

"That the hearty co-operation of the Council of Agriculture be sought in having the matter suitably referred to the Government, and to strenuously assist in having effect given thereto.

"That the assistance of the District Council in cotton-growing districts be also solicited in this and the preceding resolutions."

REPLY BY MR. EVANS.

"I object strongly to this suggestion. In the first place, it shows a calculated distrust of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, and in the second place, this District Council is not representative of the cotton-growers of Queensland, and would not, I think, carry their confidence. We should have to be absolutely certain, in case any action was taken on this point, that the cotton sent was really ratoon cotton and not a mixture of annual and ratoon cotton, and further, that it was representative of the average grade of ratoon cotton grown in the country, and not a specially picked sample."

REPLY BY MR. WELLS.

"I do not see the advantages of sending a representative with samples. A spinning test is being arranged for testing the ratooned cotton, and this would be far more conclusive than any examination of samples by men who might be prejudiced one way or the other in the matter."

The replies of Mr. Evans and Mr. Wells are, in my opinion, most convincing, and I shall take the first opportunity of sending them in full to the Rockhampton District Council.

Now, let me deal with the question of staple. "Staple" means the average length of the bulk of the fibres, and cotton-millers who understand the spinning of cotton have pointed out to me that ratoon cotton is not objectionable because the staple is short so much as because of the lack of uniformity, and that seems to be only natural, because bolls grown on a plant which is in the ground all the year round will of necessity not be uniform. Cotton machinery reduces the whole

of the cotton lint, but the staple which any machine can use is governed by the shortest staple in the material going through it. Thus the shortest staple determines the value of the whole lot. I think a great deal of the opposition to the Government's attitude on the question of ratoon cotton is due to a lack of knowledge amongst farmers as to what the staple really means. When I was in Charters Towers I went through some of the farms—unfortunately the drought has ruined practically the whole of the crops on them—and I met one farmer who was very enthusiastic. He pulled off a boll and said to me, "I think this is going to be an inch and a-quarter staple." I said to him, "Let me see." I took it myself and attempted to pull it out as the experts had shown me, and my conclusion was that the staple was at most a half of an inch. I told the farmer so, and he said, "Why, I thought that the staple was the width across the boll." Instead of being $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch, that cotton was less than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and we do not want short cotton like that.

Colour is another important quality in cotton, and it has been pointed out that there is a greater danger of staining in the case of ratoon cotton. Thinness and freedom from foreign or deleterious substances are also important, and in these respects ratoon cotton is inferior to annual cotton.

Now I want to mention one or two other matters. There is the question of pests, for instance, the question of varieties, and so forth, but before I get on to such subjects as those I want to deal briefly with the British-Australian Cotton Association Limited, and what has been said about it as to its being a monopoly. I make no apology for the action taken by the Government in making an agreement with the Association. It is well known to everybody who has taken an interest in cotton-growing at all, that for a number of years Queensland has been producing a handful of cotton and that the Department of Agriculture has been ginning it with an old-fashioned saw gin. But once we had guaranteed a price and there was a prospect of greatly increased crops—the production was going ahead by leaps and bounds—there were only two alternatives before us. One was that I should ask the Government to place on the Estimates a sum of probably £100,000 for the establishment of ginneries throughout the State and the other to accept the offer made at that time by the Association to establish ginneries throughout Queensland and to handle the cotton at what we believed to be a very reasonable price. Persons who have condemned the Government for their policy of State enterprise and for establishing sawmills to deal with products in other undertakings should be the very last to suggest that the Government should have spent £100,000 on State ginneries. I was not keen on the prospect myself, because I believed that the growers themselves should have the opportunity of establishing their own ginneries by co-operation. At that time they had not even offered to avail themselves of the Act on the statute-book by which they can obtain from the Government an advance of two-thirds of the cost of such an undertaking; and the reason is not far to seek. They did not know anything about ginning or the character of the machinery required, and therefore they very wisely left the Government to do the job for them. But I am hopeful that the farmers

will be so alive to their own interests that they will, before the expiration of this contract, which is very favourable to the growers—the Association has not made any profit, and in fact is having difficulty, owing to the drought, in raising sufficient capital to establish its ginneries and oil mills throughout the State—see their way to take a step in that direction. However, the offer was made to the Government at a time when the Government had made up their minds that they had to spend a large sum of money on State ginneries, and the Government decided to accept the offer and let the Association do the job for them. I was away at the time, and the Secretary for Public Works was acting Secretary for Agriculture, and I submit he made a most favourable contract on behalf of the farmers. My only concern is to do the best thing for the farmers, but it takes two parties to make a contract and this Association made the offer. We inquired into it as well as we could—we had not the expert advice of Mr. Evans or Mr. Wells at our disposal, and we had to do the best under the circumstances—and we decided to accept it. I submit that we made a good "deal" on behalf of the farmers of Queensland—as has been shown by experience. As to the contention that the farmers should have their own ginneries, let me remind hon. members that the Association has offered to them 49,000 shares upon terms which I shall mention shortly. I shall advise the farmers to avail themselves of this opportunity when in a position to do so and finally take over the whole concern and manage it themselves. There is no reason why they should not do so if they employ proper experts to manage the business. The farmers will have to realise that if they are going to control a thing of this sort they will have to pay to get experts—they will have to give high salaries to qualified men, as the Association is doing, to carry out the purely technical and expert work. The shares which the Association has offered to the farmers may be taken up on payment of 1s. on application, 1s. on allotment, and 1s. a month for eighteen months as required. The Association has issued 351,000 ordinary paid-up shares, and the directors are Sir Hugh Denison, K.B.E., Sydney (Chairman of Directors); Mr. C. Latham Baillieu, Melbourne; Sir Owen Cox, G.B.E., Sydney; Hon. T. C. Beirne, Brisbane; Hon. Crawford Vaughan, Sydney (Managing Director); Mr. B. Crompton Wood, C.B.E., Liverpool (England); Sir Rennell Rodd, G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., London; Mr. W. S. Robinson, London; Mr. Harold Parker, Preston (England).

That is a strong company, composed of Australians with English investors behind them. I hope the Association will be successful. I hope it will pay dividends—hitherto it has not been able to do so—and I think that all the facts show that the Government did the best thing they could for the growers. We are the trustees of the growers. We had to adopt one of the alternatives in the interests of the growers or leave them in the lurch. We either had to establish State ginneries or negotiate with the Association to do the job for us.

I submit that the agreement which has already been tabled—the details are familiar to every hon. member—is an agreement that has been framed by the Government as far as possible in the interests of the Queensland cotton-growers. There are one or two other

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matters that I intended to deal with, but I shall probably have to pass them by. I have dealt with the question of ratoons, the history of the cotton ginning agreement, and with the guarantee. I think I might now deal with the principles of the Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Queensland*): I beg to move—

“That the Secretary for Agriculture be granted an extension of time.”

Question put and passed.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I thank the House for granting me an extension of time, but I shall not impose on them to any great extent on account of that concession. Before I leave the question of ratoons, I would like to say that the authorities who have guided us in connection with this Bill, and who have advised us to be wise and start well, and have counselled us to prohibit absolutely the growth of ratoons in the interest of the industry, the interest of Queensland, and the interest of our reputation, are, briefly, Sir James Currie, Mr. Harold Parker, Mr. Crompton Wood, Dr. Butler, and Dr. Stopford, and the experts that I have already mentioned—Mr. Wells, Mr. Evans and Mr. Gudge. A number of other people have advised the Government, including the Agent-General, who made full inquiries, and came to the conclusion that ratoons should not be grown. Just before the last elections a deputation waited on the Premier, and to some extent, I think, endeavoured to hold a pistol to his head on the eve of an election. I am very proud of the reply that the Premier made to that deputation. He told them that, on the advice given to the Government, they had promised to introduce legislation this session to prohibit the growth of ratoons, and unless evidence could be brought forward to show that that advice was wrong the Government intended to go ahead with their policy and absolutely prohibit the growth of ratoons. The deputation then made a request that Australia being possibly different from any other country—as stated by Mr. Crompton Wood—the Queensland Government should wait and carry out experiments. That was the argument of the Council of Agriculture, who suggested that the Government should wait for two or three years and carry out experiments in ratoons to find out whether the advocates of ratoons were not right, and whether ratoons might not profitably and safely be grown in Australia as against all other countries in the world, and then, if it was found that ratoons should not be grown, legislation could be introduced. It is too late to lock the stable door when the horse is out. The Premier was absolutely sound in his statement when he said “No” to the deputation. He told them that the Government were going to prohibit the growth of ratoons, but experiments would be carried out by the Department of Agriculture under proper supervision in segregated areas, and then in the course of two or three years, if this legislation was found to be wrong, it could be repealed. That was a statesmanlike and courageous attitude to take up, and it summarises the attitude which has been taken up by the Government on the question of ratoons. The embargo against ratooning is

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the most important feature of the Bill. The Bill is a very simple one, plainly drafted, and one that any layman can understand. I made a special request to the Parliamentary Draftsman and the Crown Law Office that all Bills dealing with agriculture and the farmers should be made as simple as possible, so that the farmers, who ought to be familiar with them, could understand them. Legal people say that it is not altogether possible to do that. I cannot argue on that matter, as I am not a legal man. I asked that this Bill in particular should be made as simple as possible, so that the ordinary cotton-grower could understand it, and to a degree the Parliamentary Draftsman has succeeded.

At 5.16 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill is self-explanatory, and seeks to give legal effect to the Government's cotton policy. First of all, we guarantee a price. I am pleased to know that the Commonwealth Government have indicated that they will share in that guarantee. The details have still to be considered. We have to submit them to the Commonwealth Government, and I hope that they will be prepared to go as high in that guarantee as we are prepared to go. The New South Wales Government have indicated that they are not prepared to go as high as the Queensland Government. Why should they not be prepared to go as high? They have only grown a handful of cotton, and in my opinion New South Wales will not become a great cotton-growing State. It is when the area runs into thousands and thousands of acres that this guarantee becomes a serious problem to a Government, and therefore I hope the price that the various States and Commonwealth agree upon will be one which will encourage cotton-growing up to the end of the term of the guarantee in 1926, when I am hopeful that, if this policy is going to succeed at all, the industry will be on such a footing that the farmers will be able to finance their own crops, make their own markets, gin their own cotton, and in the course of time establish spinning and weaving factories, so that the manufactured article may be completed in Queensland. That may be away in the dim distant future, but it is within measurable distance if the farmers of Queensland will only embrace this opportunity now, and become expert cotton farmers. After all, if a man desires to succeed in anything, he can only do so by giving the very best that is in him. A man performs a very mean act if he does not give the best that he is capable of giving. The farmers will be able to achieve what I have indicated if they follow the very best advice given by experts as to variety, methods of cultivation, dealing with pests, and particularly as to the question of ratoons; and in the course of a few years' time I believe this industry will be on an absolutely sound footing.

First of all, the Government are guaranteeing a price for a term of years. Then, in order to give effect to the marketing of cotton, the Government take power under a clause similar to one in the Sugar Acquisition Act to acquire the crops. There is power to ratify the agreement already made. That is the legal power, but it is hardly necessary, because the agreement made is quite in accordance with the law. The agreement will run until the end of 1926, at which time

I am hopeful that the growers themselves will be able to control their own industry in their own way. It will then be time to consider whether the embargo on ratoon cotton should be lifted, but now is the time for the imposition of an embargo on ratoon cotton, so that we shall not be taking any risks as to the market and the introduction of pests and other things. There is power to make advances to the growers. There are important provisions dealing with the introduction of pests. As I have already pointed out, the pests have injured the cotton industry of Egypt, America, India, and in fact every part of the world where cotton has been grown for a number of years. They have played havoc with the crops. It is due to that fact that we have our opportunity now. There are other matters that I could have dealt with, but I have probably occupied more time than I am entitled to, although I make no apology for the length of my speech in view of the importance of the legislation. It is far-reaching. It has been fully and carefully considered by the Government. It has been introduced on the advice of the experts. I heard a very good pun. I do not know who is the author of it, but he is a very good Queenslander. He said that the person who, knowing all the circumstances, would advocate ratoons would "rat on" the best interests of Queensland. I have much pleasure in moving—

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

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What about that newspaper cutting?

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): In addressing myself to the second reading of this Bill, I do not want to take away any of the earnestness from the Minister, but I want to make my remarks from the point of view of a Queenslander and an Australian. I do not want to take away any credit from the British cotton-growing interests in all that they have done to bring about the development of the industry, or any of the credit for the interest that the weavers and manufacturers have taken. The Government and the Opposition should look to the interests of the grower first, and weigh the arguments for and against the different interests. No small amount of credit is due to the business enterprise of the British Cotton Growing Association, but its interests are separate and distinct from the interests of the grower. It is hard to realise whether this Bill is introduced on behalf of the growers, the Lancashire cotton spinners, or the British Cotton Growing Association. It is very hard to find from the speech of the Minister that there are any other arguments than those that can be secured by and through the agents of the spinning interests in England. The recommendations of the Council of Agriculture have been pushed aside. Last year, the Government with a great flourish of trumpets created an institution under which they said the farmers were to control their industry. They were to elect representatives who were to meet with experts associated with the Department of Agriculture, and control, guide, and safeguard their interests in Queensland. We find that the Council of Agriculture appointed a subcommittee to go into the matter of ratoon cotton. That committee came to the conclusion that ratoon cotton should not be condemned, but that the Government should continue the ratooning,

and, in the meantime, the Government should carry out experiments to see whether the exceptional conditions that are claimed by all growers who have had experience to exist in Australia are not different and do not present quite a different case to the evidence collected and used by the Minister, as he has done on previous occasions, on behalf of British and American interests. The Premier is reported in the Press of 10th May, 1923, to have said in reply to representations by members of the Central District Local Producers' Association—

"Before legislation condemning ratooning was finally settled the Council of Agriculture would have the opportunity of consulting with and advising the Government on the subject."

Now we find that the advice of the Council of Agriculture has been pushed aside altogether because the Government have made up their minds and are determined to oust ratooning under all considerations. Considering that the Minister did not give one argument or quote one interest on behalf of ratoon cotton—I am entrusted with that duty, and he cannot but admit that there are interests—it is essential for hon. members to look at the question from all points of view.

This is a most important Bill, which cannot be dealt with from a party point of view. It would not be to the advantage of those wishing to ratoon or to the industry if we were to look at the Bill from a party viewpoint. We cannot blame the Government for taking a stand after hearing the evidence that they have received from experts. I do not say for one moment that the Government should not have taken cognisance of those experts, but considering the time they have had that evidence at their disposal they should have secured first-hand information as to the conditions that exist in Australia which do not exist in other countries, according to the evidence supplied from those other countries. They should have endeavoured to prove the case for ratooning.

Mr. COLLINS: Why don't you prove it?

Mr. CORSER: I will endeavour to do so to the best of my ability. Ratooning under systematic and scientific methods is what is asked for by the growers of the State, and not the haphazard out-of-date methods that have been referred to by the Minister as mentioned in some of the reports of the experts as being the desires of the lazy man. Ratooning will enable an expansion of industry which cannot come without it. The development of primary and secondary industries will be the outcome of the expansion of the cotton industry, but a control is wanted in the industry by those who are engaged in it. The Bill does not make any provision in that direction. The bald statement that has been put forward that ratoon cotton is not legal tender is the statement of Mr. Crompton Wood, and one that has been substantiated by his experts and his association. If we were to condemn ratooning in the old days of sugar-cane growing, and condemn it in all other cases, where would our sugar and other industries be to-day? Cotton was first grown in Queensland sixty years ago, and we have continued to grow it successfully ever since. During that time we have probably grown ratoon cotton more than seed cotton. The Government have failed to bring forward any evidence to show that the action of cotton-growers over a

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period of sixty years in growing ratoon cotton in Queensland has in any way militated against the success or the future of the industry either on the field or in the export trade.

I first of all wish to deal with the Bill, and then later on to address myself to the matter of ratoon cotton. The Bill unfortunately gives the control of the industry to the State. The Minister claims that there is a desire on the part of the British Australian Cotton Association, Limited, to make available 49,000 shares to the growers, but it must be remembered that that Association retains to itself 351,000 shares. A Bill was introduced in this House only a few days ago for the encouragement of co-operative production. In this Bill it is laid down that 75 per cent. or 80 per cent. of the interests must be retained by the growers themselves. How can the Minister permit that Association to be known as a co-operative one, and advise the House that it is co-operative when the shares are held in such proportions? The three big questions which arise under the Bill are—(1) The agreement; (2) Dictation of conditions of growing by the State; (3) Prohibition against ratoon cotton.

Under the agreement with the British-Australian Cotton Association, Limited, the Government acquire all seed cotton till 31st July, 1925, and they are to pay the British Australian Cotton Association 1½d. per lb. for all cotton ginned, dressed, and baled that is despatched overseas. The Association is to retain all the seed at a cost of £1 per ton. The average price for cotton seed throughout the world last year was £4 9s. per ton. Yet, the Association is to get the whole of the seed for £1 a ton. That gain to the Association is a loss to the producers and a weakness in the agreement—an unfair weakness—because the farmer is to be the loser. The Association are to supply seed to the grower at ½d. per lb., yet they purchase the seed at 1d. for 9 lb. from the grower. The Bill also provides for the acquirement of all cotton grown, and makes provision for special powers for the Government. They naturally expect some resistance because we find this in clause 6—

“and all and every such owners, their agents, managers, attorneys, servants, and workmen, shall without any delay, hindrance, obstruction, claim, demand, or objection whatsoever give immediate and peaceable possession of such cotton to the person authorised by the Minister to demand and take delivery and possession of the same.”

On page 5 of the Bill we find that there is a penalty of £1,000 and imprisonment for any period not exceeding one year to be imposed upon any person who refuses to deliver, or delays or obstructs the delivery of cotton, or who makes any omission contrary to the prohibition in subclause (4), or who carries out any contract against the dictates of the Bill. That is something quite new in a local producers' Bill. A further provision is that a price not exceeding 5½d. per lb. shall be paid for cotton of good quality and of 1½-inch staple over a certain period. Yet we find in a report by Colonel Evans, in the Gayndah “Gazette,” 4th May, 1923, that the only variety likely to produce a staple of 1½ inch is Durango, and it has not been proved that that staple can be grown year in year out. The report further says—

“Regarding the ordinary Queensland

seed—a few plants will give a staple of 1½ inch, but the great proportion is very much lower than this and sometimes is seven-eighths of an inch, and even less.”

It therefore looks as though the Bill providing for 5½d. for 1½-inch staple is not coming within the reach of many farmers in the State, and I hope that we shall be able to secure an amendment in this matter.

No cotton is to be ginned at any place other than an authorised factory. No ginning concession can be given to any individual who is a share farmer. An ordinary farmer may have his own cotton separately ginned for himself, but a share farmer may not. The Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing the methods of planting seed cotton. That facility, instead of being given to the Government, should be left in the hands of the farmer, who knows best how to till his land and how to produce his crops.

Prohibition against ratooning is a great feature in the Bill. This Bill provides that ratoon cotton shall not be grown under any circumstances, and it cannot be sent to a factory if grown. No cotton is to be grown except for commercial purposes, thereby precluding the growing of cotton in gardens for experimental purposes. If we are prohibited from growing ratoon cotton for experimental purposes, how are we to secure that knowledge which we claim is secured by producing and marketing certain types of cotton? We can only learn from experience, and now we are to be prevented from gaining that experience.

To prevent disease no person shall sow cotton seed except that which is distributed by the Department of Agriculture. Yet we find that experts have urged some of our farmers to save some of the seed from cotton that they have successfully grown and plant it themselves, so that they may bring forth something pure and good. Farmers will be prevented from doing so by this Bill. There is another point affected. Experts tell us that, when our cotton is acclimatised in one district, we shall get a better cotton and the seed therefrom should be propagated throughout the district. In the Burnett district the whole of our cotton last season had to be sent to Whinstanes, yet we are now getting our seed from Rockhampton. How are we going to acclimatise our cotton in these circumstances? Penalties not exceeding £500 are provided to apply to anybody who plants cotton seed other than that distributed by the department.

Compensation is provided in certain cases where cotton crops are destroyed, although not affected by disease, in order to secure the safety of cotton plants in the vicinity. That may be all right, but that unfortunate farmer who has no disease in his crop is only going to get two-thirds of the total value of his marketable crop. No doubt hon. members remember that recently a statement was made that the boll weevil was in the Northern Territory—in fact, I believe the Minister mentioned it here. On the strength of such a report farmers may have their crops destroyed and afterwards it may be proved that the boll weevil is not there at all.

Notice must be given to the department by each planter in the State. He must give the area, date of planting, and the variety of cotton he is planting. Those are some of the provisions of the Bill. Sometimes I am forced to wonder whether the Minister's old

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statement of the Labour objective—"Production for use and not for profit"—is hidden within the four corners of this Bill.

I desire now to address myself particularly to ratoon cotton. This is a most important subject, on which we should not have too set or too fixed a policy. I remember the history of the opposition to ratooning from its inception, being with Mr. Crompton Wood and his party for several days from Wowan to the South Burnett, when the Minister, through an unfortunate illness, was unable to be with us. There is a prohibition in the Bill of ratoon cotton. I do not like the sound of the word "prohibition." It appears that this prohibition is the essence of inexperience—of theory run mad. That just about sums up the evidence that the Minister has been able to give this House to the effect that ratooning is not a safe thing. I have listened to the Minister's theoretical evidence and evidence from other countries without any reference to the great argument in its favour—the sound evidence of practical men who have experimented over a long period in this State. If the Minister failed at all, he failed in trying to prove that ratooning is bad instead of setting out both sides of the question and asking us, in the interests of the State, to try to pick out the right course. It is essential that we should consider the other side of the question in our endeavour to do the right thing. We should see that we have the information that the growers have asked for, that is, information as to a market and the experience of people who are not biased and are not associated with any cotton association. We are to be prevented from growing a cotton for which Queensland more than any other country is specially adapted. No argument can be made as strongly in favour of the growing of ratoon cotton in any other country in the world as it can in the case of Queensland. We complain of our dry periods, yet we propose to prohibit the growing of a plant which will stand through a dry period.

Cotton is a perennial plant that will thrive and prosper under dry conditions, and away underground the roots are ready to burst forth with the first rains and enable the plant to produce cotton. On the other side we have cotton seed in the ground waiting for the first rains, and when the seed does shoot, the young plants will probably be burnt off in the first dry spell. You cannot produce from a little heifer the same quality beast that you can produce from a matured cow, and you cannot produce the same quality cotton from a plant that has not had time to search the soil for the food that is there that you can from an established plant, which has had time during the winter months to extend its root-system into Nature's pantry in search of the food that will be available for plant life when the first rains come. Such a plant will produce cotton before the seed plant is likely to get more than a few inches above the ground. Again, the young, tender plant is available as fresh food for any insects present. It has been proved that ratoon cotton grown under scientific conditions has withstood any invasion by insects while seed cotton has gone down. In 1922 the cotton produced in Queensland was largely ratoon cotton, yet nobody seemed to know anything about it. Nobody seemed to care about it and nobody noticed it, yet the growers had to be told, "You shall print

on your bags 'ratoon cotton.'" If ratoon cotton is such a rotten cotton, surely our glorious experts could have picked it out without forcing the farmers to write "Ratoon cotton" on their bags! Everyone knows that the 1922 crop was largely ratoon cotton, and it was on that 1922 crop that the British delegation visited Australia. Was it not on that crop that we made the name we have to-day? And did not the experts in Britain enthuse over it, and did we not induce them to put their money on it? Ratoon cotton grown in Queensland produced a staple superior to the staple of the cotton which is grown in America, and I can prove that statement if our experts know anything about their job.

But before endeavouring to prove that statement, I want to refer to one big factor in the prohibition of ratooning which has not been dealt with by any of those enthusiasts up to the present time; that is the local market we have for kapok. If we are going to condemn ratooning, we are going to make it impossible to supply our local market with a commodity to take the place of the kapok that is imported to-day. The Government should permit some of our ratoon crops to stand so that we might exploit at least our own market. Mr. Speaker, it will no doubt surprise you, but, if you look up Australian statistics in connection with imports from overseas for the year 1921-22, you will find that the quantity of kapok imported in that one year was 5,272,531 lb. of a total value of £261,424. That kapok is used for making mattresses and for upholstering, for which purpose second-class cotton can be used. The total value of kapok imported in that one year was £261,424, which exceeds the total value of the whole of the cotton exported to Great Britain in that year. In that year we only got £80,000 for our cotton, and we are now seeking to prevent the production of an article which, even if it is inferior, as claimed by the Minister, can take the place of kapok for which we are sending £261,424 out of Australia every year. In addition to that, we imported flock amounting to £152, and we imported for the same purpose 23,547 lb. of raw cotton, and also 8,233 lb. of fibre. Second-class cotton would be the best substitute for these articles which we imported last year to a total value of £298,356. In spite of that, the Minister and the department have compelled the farmers to plough out their ratoon cotton. If that ratoon cotton had been allowed to grow, we could have used the cotton as a substitute for those imported materials, and we would have given the world an opportunity of saying whether this beautiful cotton is to be used for the stuffing of mattresses and for upholstering when the world wants such an article. Hon. members will agree that it is a pity that we should have to send £298,356 out of Australia every year for these materials when ratoon cotton—if it is second-class—could be used as a substitute if it were allowed to be used as a substitute if it were allowed to be grown. In the previous year we sent out of Australia £245,586 for kapok and other products used for a similar purpose, yet we find that the total value of cotton exported from Australia in that same year was only £82,269 after deducting costs and other things. Hon. members will agree that that is a very sane argument in favour of the growing of ratoon cotton, and, if that were the only

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argument in favour of growing ratoon cotton, it should be sufficient. Before ratooning is permanently banned the Government should permit of some experiments in connection with Durango plots. They should be ratooned and reported on by uninterested people on the other side. British spinners should have been asked to report on certain consignments without being told which was ratoon. If one section do not want ratoon cotton, another section may. We produce in Australia the best wools in the world. We have ten distinct varieties of sheep, and amongst our wools you will, no doubt, find at least a dozen different classes. We have buyers for every class of wool, and, if we eventually sold our cotton here we would have just as many buyers coming along and each of them would want a class of cotton to suit his own requirements. We do not sell all our wool to one section of the people. We send our wool to different parts of the world, and what one person wants another person does not want, and possibly it can be the same with cotton. To-day no expert appears to remember that great numbers of our stock are being saved by ratooning. Ratooning to the farmers is an insurance against drought and against dry times, and that is one of the great problems that we have to face. We have an opportunity of overcoming this difficulty by allowing the farmers to grow ratoon cotton, and we should try and dovetail the two industries instead of condemning ratoon cotton. We want ratoon cotton because it has been proved successful to the grower. We want ratoon cotton because it is the bread and butter of the grower; and we want ratoon cotton because the grower has had practical experience of its success and practical experience of the cheques that he has received for it from Britain and from other places, where he sent it before this embargo was put on. If we are allowed to grow ratoon cotton, it will give us a great natural advantage over other cotton-growing countries, because other countries cannot grow ratoon cotton. Because America cannot grow ratoon cotton that is no reason why we should not grow it when our conditions are such that we are able to grow it successfully.

The Minister said that one gentleman claimed that the purpose of the Bill is to prevent the growing of ratoon cotton. I have heard one man advocating the very same thing as the Minister—the cutting out of ratoon cotton. He said that the seed from which ratoon cotton is grown should not be distributed. I want to give the House some evidence—not of foreign experts, British experts, or British weavers, but of experienced men who live here with us, and from whom we should draw some knowledge. When the Labour party came into power in Australia a similar party did not then exist in America or Britain. They did not say then, “Because Britain or America does not believe in this idea it is no good.” They said that a new country should carve out its own destiny. That sentiment should be adopted in regard to this industry, and it would be for the protection of those who are on the land. Let me give some first-hand information in addition to that of the experts which has been quoted. I have a letter here—a letter to me from Mr. Fredriksen, a cotton farmer in my district, dated 29th ultimo—

“Received your inquiry about ratoon

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cotton. In reply, would beg to remind you that I do not claim to be an expert, but have had considerable experience in cotton-growing, both here and in Texas, not far from the Mexican border. I may tell you at once that the reason we did not grow ratoon over there was simply that the severe frost in winter completely killed the plants. Out of 75 acres of cotton, only an odd one (less than 2 per cent.) survived. I planted cotton here twenty years ago, as soon as I had the ground cleared—1 acre just to see if it would grow. Well, it grew to perfection; but at that time there was no sale for it, so it was left to take care of itself till next spring, when I intended to plough it out. To my surprise, every bush grew again next spring, and had ripe cotton on in late November. Since then I have had bushes growing continually for years, and, as far as I am able to judge, without any deterioration either to plant or to fibre—length of staple or otherwise. I most emphatically state that, in my twenty years' experience of cotton in Queensland, I have always found that the plant cotton suffers most from pests and insects. The ratoon appears to have become immune to all pests and insects after the second year. I'm speaking for my own neighbourhood; cannot say how it would fare on coastal scrub. That the ratoon here improves in yield, length of fibre, and texture is certain. I have taken 600 lb. of seed cotton more from an acre of ratoon than what the same acre yielded as plant, and that the fibre was O.K. the enclosed letter from the Australian Cotton Growers' Association will prove. I sent them a sample from a ratoon bush, as I wanted the seed for planting and wanted their confirmation of my good opinion of this particular type for future planting. Well, I think anyone will admit that their field officer's reply on this cotton is favourable. Mr. R. Boyd (who, by the way, is a member of the Council of Agriculture) got some samples and sent to the 'Cotton Farmer,' also ratoon. I enclose their reply as well. That it was all ratoon in samples sent away my neighbours can vouch for.

“My personal opinion is that any legislation of a prohibitive nature is premature at this stage, with the meagre evidence against ratoon. If it can be definitely proved that it is detrimental to the industry, why, of course, away with it; but at present it looks like killing a sure thing. You'll notice that Mr. Powell says that the samples sent him would bring from 1d. to 2d. per lb. more on the Liverpool market than the standard grade of American 'middling.' That is not too bad for ratoon, and should make our legislators pause and consider a bit before they pass it out altogether.”

The samples sent by this gentleman can be vouched for by neighbours in his district. Mr. Boyd sent his samples to the “Cotton Farmer,” and this is the reply from Mr. Powell, who was not informed what the samples were—

“In reply to your letter of the 16th instant re samples of cotton which arrived here to-day.

"Sample No. 1.—Grown from mixed seed varieties, probably a mixture of 'Peterkin' and 'Russell.' Length of fibre about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. Good durable cotton, exceptionally strong. I would consider that this cotton would be classed on the Liverpool market as 'strict good middling'—that is, bringing about 1d. per lb. more than the standard grade of American 'middling.'

"Sample No. 2.—This is exceptionally long in length, but not very uniform and not as strong as sample No. 1. It is a hybrid cotton, possibly of Durango or Pima extraction. I should think this cotton, owing to its exceptional length, lustre, and silkiness, would bring about 2d. per lb. above American 'middling.'"

The Minister quoted experiences in Egypt. I have here the opinion of Mr. L. C. Atkins, the Egyptian expert of the British Cotton Growing Association—the field supervisor quoted by the Minister. Mr. Fredriksen sent two samples of second-year ratoon to the British-Australian Cotton Association, Limited, for their opinion, and this is the reply from them, signed by Mr. Atkins himself—

"We are in receipt of your letter of the 3rd March, also of two samples of cotton. The cream-coloured cotton belongs to the Egyptian type, and probably, owing to continuous cross-fertilisation with the Upland types of cotton, has deteriorated greatly from the pure original type. We would certainly not advise you to grow this cotton. The sample of white cotton, on the other hand, is an ideal one for Queensland, and is almost identical with the Durango variety of Upland cotton that we intend to grow in this country. It has a good bloom and colour, good texture and strength, and has a fibre length of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. There is an unlimited demand for this quality of cotton on the markets of the world, and it is a very desirable one to grow. We would certainly advise you to keep the seed from this cotton and plant it out separately, at least half a mile from any other cotton."

There is a recommendation from Mr. Atkins in favour of second ratoon cotton, and he advises this farmer to plant the seed, as it will propagate rapidly; but this Bill is going to prevent him from doing it. Mr. Atkins further says—

"In the United States of America there are over 100 distinct varieties of Upland cotton grown, and these varieties have all been brought up by selection of seed, and this is practically the only method of improving the variety and quality of the cotton in any country.

"We are very glad to hear that you intend to carry out this selection of seed on your place, and any assistance or information that we can give you will be only too glad to do so. We would also like to hear the result of your next season's experiment in this way."

There is evidence with regard to cotton grown by an experienced man, who has been engaged in cotton-growing for twenty years, previously having grown it in America, on the Texas border. Cotton has been sent by him to Mr. Atkins, who claims that it is a most desirable cotton to grow, and he com-

mends its length, texture, and colour, and is so pleased with it that he asks him not to lose this variety, although it is in the third year of its growth. This Bill prevents a farmer from planting any other seed than that supplied by the Department of Agriculture. I have a lot more evidence of growers which I propose to give to the House, and also evidence with regard to the actual returns received by growers last year. These returns will show the difference between the ratoon cotton and seed cotton growing in a paddock alongside.

The Dalma Scrub Local Producers' Association have compiled quite a lot of [7 p.m.] evidence in support of ratooning, and, after the conference with the Minister, when the Minister got their case and would not give his, they forwarded it to the Country party, and have also sent a copy to their member. They give actual results which have been achieved by practical men by ratooning—not something which might be done, but something which actually has been done. The following are experiences of Dalma Scrub growers:—

	Per acre.
	£ s. d.
Mr. J. C. N. Fullerton in 1923—	
2,629 lb. annual cotton off	
3 acres, equal to 328 lb.	
per acre	7 10 4
1,000 lb. ratoon cotton off 1	
acre, equal to 1,000 lb.	
per acre	22 13 4
Mr. G. McGregor in 1923—	
300 lb. annual cotton off 15	
acres, equal to 20 lb. per	
acre	0 9 2
4,480 lb. ratoon cotton off 7	
acres, equal to 640 lb.	
per acre	14 13 4
Mr. E. Harding in 1922—	
560 lb. of annual cotton off	
3 acres, equal to 70 lb.	
per acre	1 12 1
8,960 lb. ratoon cotton off	
10 acres, equal to 896 lb.	
per acre	20 10 8

Those are facts which, coming from practical men, must lead the Government to a realisation that behind this advocacy of ratooning there is something more than a mere careless hope—something more than a laziness on the part of the farmers—as was suggested by one of the experts in the report read out by the Minister. Here we have actual proof, with the names of the farmer, that last year £1 12s. 1d. an acre was received for seedling cotton off one part of a farm and £23 10s. 8d. an acre for ratoon cotton off another part of the same farm, both crops being grown under the same climatic conditions and rainfall, and the seed cotton being sent to the British-Australian Cotton Association, who did not know that any of it was not the best in the world.

What were Mr. Crompton Wood's first statements when he arrived here, and what was his reference before he left? When he first came he said that the Australian cotton had made such a name on the British market that this country was worthy of a visit, and worthy of the British people's best endeavours to further extend operations so that they could get plenty of that same good cotton. It was not until he was here several days that he found out that included in that same good cotton was ratoon cotton. Mr. James McNeil, for the

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1921-1922 cotton crop, obtained 1,680 lb. off 3 acres, being 210 lb. per acre, returning £4 15s. an acre. That was obtained from seedling cotton. From the ratoon crop in 1922-1923 he obtained 1,008 lb., being 126 lb. an acre, returning £28 17s. 6d. There we have a statement of a man obtaining £4 15s. per acre for seedling cotton and £28 17s. 6d. per acre from ratoon cotton the same year, under the same climatic conditions and on the same farm. Surely this evidence is something more than piffle! Surely this illustration of what a farmer is receiving is sufficient evidence that we should look to it to bring about not only the desires of the farmers but the successful cultivation and the profitable growing of this crop. That is what we are out for. That is what we should pin ourselves to. This return per acre is worked out on a basis of 5½d. per lb. for both annual and ratoon cotton, which is essential when we are looking for an average price. It has been stated that the cost of cultivation is much greater with annual cotton than with ratoon cotton. I have here a comparison made by the Dalma Local Producers' Association, showing the cost of producing a crop of annual cotton and a crop of ratoon cotton off 10 acres. That statement shows the cost of cultivation for seedling cotton—

	£	s.	d.
"Falling scrub at £1 15s. per acre	17	10	0
Stacking and burning timber at 15s. per acre ...	7	10	0
Plain wire	1	16	0
Wire	13	19	0
Erection of fence	1	19	0
Cotton seed	0	6	3
Planting, four days at 13s. per day	2	12	0
Thinning cotton, six days at 13s. per day	3	13	0
Hand chipping, forty days at 13s. per day	26	0	0
	£75	10	3"

The following shows the cost of cultivation for the ratoon crop:—

	£	s.	d.
"Destroying previous year's bushes, twelve days at 13s. per day	7	16	0
First chipping, thirty days at 13s. per day	19	10	0
Second chipping, twenty days at 13s. per day	13	0	0
	£40	6	0"

There we have £40 6s. for ratoon cotton as against £75 10s. 3d. for seedling cotton, showing that nobody can say that a considerable amount of work is not put in by the hoe. It is the hoe alone that can be used on such land. Most of the work has got to be done with the hoe. Here we have fifty days' work at 13s. per day. Is all that work to be lost to those who want work, and is the farmer going to be prevented from carrying out his operations in the way that he desires and in the way that experience has shown him is the best in this country, and in a way which practical experience has not proved is wrong, and in a way in which the return is going to give him the greatest amount of money? After considering the cost of labour in felling and stacking unburnt timber, fencing, planting, and hand-chipping, and considering that a crop may be a partial

or total failure through lack of rain at the right time, one crop is not sufficient inducement to a farmer to grow cotton. The Minister made some statement as to the cost of cultivation some time ago, but he did not quote anything of that nature in favour of ratoon cotton.

I find, too, that Mr. A. S. Bailey, of Capella, in 1917, secured first prize in Rockhampton, and the following year he took both the first and second prizes with ratoon cotton, and the judges did not know that it was ratoon cotton. The cotton, which was the first picking as annual, went 600 lb. to the acre, and this year, which has been a very dry one, the same area has yielded 1,500 lb. to the acre first ratoon, while his annual crop for the year will only yield 300 lb. to the acre. That shows the difference should a farmer meet with a bad season. Mr. James Coombs, of Capella, said—

"I sent two samples of three-year-old grown ratoon cotton to the Clermont Agricultural Show, and it was awarded first and second prizes. Then I mixed the two samples together and I sent it to the Brisbane Exhibition, where it was awarded first prize and also a special prize as the best cotton grown in the British Dominions."

Mr. COSTELLO: Who was the judge? That is good evidence.

Mr. CORSER: I do not know, but the judge was of the opinion that it was the best cotton grown within the British Dominions.

Mr. Coombs submitted that statement, and it has the hall-mark of the Central Queensland District Council of Agriculture, so it is authentic. We must remember with regard to the sentiments and opinions expressed by Americans, South Africans, the English weavers, and the experts who have come out to Australia, that the strongest case the Minister put forward in his argument against ratoon cotton was that put forward by Colonel Evans. Who is this gentleman? He is a gentleman with the highest credentials—a gentleman of honour and integrity—but at the same time he is a man who is out here in the pay of the Empire Cotton Corporation and weavers in Britain. The British cotton interests pay him to-day, and attached him to the Department of Agriculture. He is here doing his duty and expressing the same sentiments as the master of the cotton delegation, Mr. Crompton Wood. He is using absolutely the same expressions as were made use of by Mr. Crompton Wood. Why should we brush aside all the expressions of opinion by our growers and their experiences and say that we are doing something detrimental to the interests of Queensland when we accept their practical opinions and will not accept the opinions of the gentleman who is not only in the pay but was sent here by manufacturing interests. We should not consider him. I have a letter here from Mr. Earle, for the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, addressed to the member for Wide Bay in the Federal House of Representatives. I made some inquiries through him myself, and this letter, which is dated 22nd August, 1923, states—

"It is understood that the corporation is arranging for the services of an expert adviser to be made available to the Queensland Government, and it has been suggested to the corporation that this expert might be given authority to

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also inspect lands suitable for cotton-growing in the other States interested in the matter."

Since that time Colonel Evans has visited North Queensland, the Northern Territory, New South Wales, and Melbourne. A few months ago the Secretaries for Agriculture of the various States met in conference in Melbourne to decide upon a policy for cotton-growing in Australia. Who was the representative of the Department of Agriculture in Queensland? Not the Minister, nor a farmer—or the Council of Agriculture—but Colonel Evans. He represented the cotton interests of this State at that conference. He did not dictate the terms to ensure the transport of our cotton overseas but the terms under which growers shall be allowed to grow their cotton. That is not right or fair. Seeing that we have a Council of Agriculture established to look after the interests of the man on the land and the development of his industries, should we send a man who was sent to Brisbane by the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation down to Melbourne to say how we should grow cotton, what variety should be grown, what staple, and under what regulations? I say "No." It is for hon. members to look at the Bill from a non-party point of view, and look, first of all, to the interests of the producers. If the Government are not going to make it possible for the growers to get a fair return from their labour, they are not going to make a success of cotton-growing in Queensland. If we fail in our endeavour to make a success of cotton-growing in Australia, we are going to do a very harmful thing to the Empire. It is for us to seek what is payable; we must consider it from a payable basis or not at all.

Mr. KIRWAN: What about the question of a market for ratoon cotton?

Mr. CORSER: I shall come to that later. Let me ask the hon. member for Brisbane why he did not interest himself some months ago and ask the Secretary for Agriculture why he did not send an expert or some representative of the growers to handle their own staff on the other side and to look for a market as an experiment? No, he would not do that. The whole of our cotton goes to the British-Australian Cotton Association, Limited, who are allied with British cotton interests on the other side. They handle and market the cotton. We are not going to have successful cotton production until the man who grows it has a say in the handling of it. Do we get a corporation of the wool interests of the world to come here so that we may hand our wool over to them, and say, "You market the wool for us on the other side"? No; we make them send their buyers here to compete in the open market. The case is far different with cotton, and I think it is a bad principle. The producer should have an opportunity of controlling and marketing his produce.

Mr. KIRWAN: Does the hon. member favour selling cotton the same as wool is sold?

Mr. CORSER: I do not say that I do, but I say that we should not give any people this complete representation of the grower in selling his commodity wholesale.

Mr. COLLINS: The Federal member for Wide Bay was lacking when the sugar question was before the Federal House.

Mr. CORSER: The sugar-growers did not say that. I have seen letters from sugar-

growers and sugar-growers' organisations commending him for the stand he took.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: It is all very well for the hon. member for Brisbane, who is not going to grow cotton and whose people are not going to grow it. We must look after the people who are struggling in a dry time to-day, and whose ratoon cotton may still be of great value to them. We are cutting out the opportunity of allowing that ratoon cotton to tide them over a dry time. Let us hear some other opinions regarding ratoon cotton. I will read extracts from letters written by Messrs. Cassidy and Monaghan, Bajool—

"We have been growing cotton, both plant and ratoon, in this locality for the past four years, and have come to look on the ratoon as our greatest standby, for, no matter how dry the season, we were always sure of a fair return. (I may say we have been doing all our cotton-growing among the stumps in freshly burnt scrub soil.) To cite this year's experience alone: When the ban was put on ratoon cotton last spring we started to chop out a 10-acre block of first-year ratoon which we had already trimmed and chipped. When we had 4 acres cut out, owing to the dry season and the 3d. guarantee, we decided to let the other 6 acres remain. When picking time came, from the 6 acres of ratoon we got 10 bales of cotton, and from the 4 acres cut out and replanted we got half a bale. And certainly the bolls on the ratoon were much larger and to the lay eye appeared to produce a much better quality of cotton. When you add to this the expense of chopping out the old bushes, replanting, and an expensive chipping, which the ratoon didn't require, as it had developed sufficiently to smother the growth of weeds which followed the Christmas rain, you can see why cotton-growers are anxious to have the ratooning system continued."

Mr. Nagle, Capella, says—

"My observations after sixteen years' experience have led me to the opinion that cotton from a first year's ratooning shows no deterioration whatsoever."

Sixteen years' experience, and Australian too! He goes on to say—

"An expert to whom I have submitted samples failed to discriminate between first year's ratoon cotton and plant cotton. More particularly has this been the case in respect of cottons produced on the rich heavy soils of the Peak Downs district, where the cotton plants do not make very rapid growth in the season after planting, due no doubt to the not rapidly responsive character of these heavy soils. But the root growth once established, the plants show a high degree of vigour, producing not only well-grown plants, but an abundance of bolls. For this reason the first year's ratoon crop invariably proves more productive than a plant crop under the most favourable weather conditions. In a season of scant or irregular rainfall the plant crop is practically a failure, while a ratoon crop produces, if not a full crop, a very profitable return. This was very evident this past season, when the plant crop was poor, the lint short of staple and somewhat dingy in colour. The ratoon crop

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yielded well, with lint of good staple, and of good lustre."

Mr. F. S. Daniels, Gindie, says—

"I believe by condemning ratoon cotton they condemn the chance of growing cotton in this (Capella) district, for the seasons are too uncertain to enable a start to be made with any certainty at the right time of the year; and that is a difficulty that can never be overcome."

Mr. J. K. Stephenson, a cotton plantation manager from America, said—

"In fact he did not hear anyone suggest growing ratoon cotton to any extent until he came to Queensland."

Mr. M. H. P. Wynne, of Oldham, England, when asked at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce at Toowoomba "if he believed in ratoon cotton," stated—

"Of all the spinners in Oldham there were none who would make any difference between ratoon and any other."

Neither could he. On 19th August, 1922, Mr. Vernon, a field expert at Lismore, said—

"Cotton is a perennial. Some people thought it was an annual because in America it was killed by the frost every year. Here there was no frost to kill it."

Then this is the statement of Mr. Vaughan, a field expert of the department—

"The words 'ratoon cotton' were more or less a misnomer. What many people meant when they spoke of ratoon cotton was standover cotton. His association had always taken a strong stand against ratoon cotton, because it had been advised to do so by the United States Department of Agriculture and prominent British spinners and cotton men."

Not the growers—not those who have had experience in cotton in Australia of what "ratoon" meant, but because they believed it was standover cotton. I believe Mr. Crompton Wood and Mr. Parker, when they traversed the Wowan district and saw the fields there of standover cotton, thought that that was to be the ratoon cotton—that from these old bushes they were going to pick standover cotton and call it ratoon cotton. Again—

"Mr. Davies expressed the opinion that ratoon cotton was as good as plant cotton."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We have only his word for that.

Mr. CORSER: I would take his word before I would take the hon. gentleman's—I say that to the Minister without prejudice.

Mr. NOTT: I defy the Minister or his experts to show the difference.

Mr. CORSER: I never challenge any statement quoted by the Minister, and I resent the hon. gentleman questioning any statement I quote. I always quote the remarks of honourable men, and I take the names of the big men quoted by him as honourable men. This is a statement by Mr. Dyer, Capella—

"When the cotton delegation passed through here last year Mr. Parker was shown a sample of plant cotton and also ratoon cotton. He was asked the value of the plant cotton at that time and he replied '14s.' He was then asked the value of the ratoon cotton, and he replied '12s.'"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What is that?

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Mr. CORSER: "12s" are the grade he put it in. It goes on to say—

"He had previously been told which was ratoon and which was plant; fifteen minutes later he was condemning ratoon cotton in the strongest terms he could express himself in, as being nearly worthless."

"When the delegation landed in Sydney, Mr. Crompton Wood was very much concerned at being told that 75 per cent. of the Queensland crop was ratoon. This ratoon was not kept separate last year, yet we have heard no outcry about the inferiority of last year's crop."

Then we have the following "Special" to the "Daily Mail":—

"Manchester, 16th March.

"Recently I have had an interview with Mr. E. Crompton Wood, who is no doubt well known to all interested in growing the raw material in Queensland. The whole of the Australian cotton crop of last season, which amounted to about 3,000 bales, was used exclusively by two well-known Lancashire spinning firms, and Mr. Wood stated to me that the results obtained were more satisfactory, principally so with regard to the cotton grown from Durango, which is an imported seed from the United States. The cotton received in Lancashire was of long staple and of excellent quality."

That was the 1922 crop, which was very largely ratoon cotton. That is some information with regard to the attitude of those who have condemned ratoon cotton, yet who we find have been pleased to use it and have given Australia a good name in connection with it.

The Council of Agriculture was established to safeguard the industry, and a special committee of the Council has decided that ratoon cotton should stay until—what now is advocated—proper experiments are carried out. It is an elected Council and not a nominated one. It made a request for experimental plots. The Central Queensland District Council of Agriculture resolved to request the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the ratoon problem, and strongly urged the retention of ratoon cotton to save the industry. The Premier promised first to submit the resolution to the Council of Agriculture, but that has not been done.

Before dealing with that I must give some further evidence as to the opinion of the Central Queensland District Council of Agriculture, namely—

"This District Council places on record its protest against the decision of the Government"—

These are not a few growers, as stated by the Minister. This is the resolution of the Central Queensland District Council of Agriculture against the decision of the Government to legislate to prevent the ratooning of cotton under systematic methods—

"as we hold the view that the demand for such legislation is by restricted interests and is not conducive to the expansion of an industry which, given sympathetic administration, gives promise of becoming magnified by its Empire importance . . ."

"Further, this District Council, from a close observation of the facts leading up to this decision, and having regard

to the report of its representatives attending the conference on the 15th August, 1925, embracing comments on the conduct of the Minister for Agriculture and the Director of the Council of Agriculture thereat, is of opinion that, for reasons appended hereto, a Royal Commission of Inquiry is desirable."

The report of the representatives attending the conference included comments on the conduct of the Secretary for Agriculture and the Director of the Council of Agriculture. These gentlemen came right down here to address them. What else do they say—

"Despite the weight of evidence clearly favouring ratooning, the interests of the farmers of Queensland have been sacrificed in the interests of a dictatorial combine.

"That the Government has failed in its protection of the farmers' interests by accepting the bald statement that ratoon cotton is not legal tender, and neglecting to make early departmental efforts by way of an independent inquiry following the despatch of trial consignments to various markets of the world.

"That the Government has no evidence to prove that the ratooning we desire encourages diseases and pest infestation more seriously than annual planting.

"The action of the Minister for Agriculture in holding aloof his anti-ratoon evidence from a searching analysis by the conference, and the fact that same covered no experience of systematic ratooning as applicable to Queensland climatic conditions; and the further fact that the practical methods adopted in our own scrub belts defied comparison with the methods adopted in any other part of the world, coupled with the rejection of the assurance by growers that they could profitably—and would, if allowed—produce ratoon cotton of a desirable quality without any guarantee or support from the Government; and, further, the Minister's refusal to submit the question to a referendum of all growers, were features of a narrowness of Ministerial desire to find a solution of the ratoon problem."

"Under the circumstances this District Council pledges itself to exhaust every avenue of endorsement of its protest and desire for a Royal Commission of Inquiry, and seeks the support of the Council of Agriculture and all District Councils in furtherance of its efforts to give effect to such desire."

[7.30 p.m.]

What do the local producers' associations say? I have here a list of opinions expressed by a number of them in support of ratooning, and to save time I ask that they be published in "Hansard" without the necessity of my reading them.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the document be published in "Hansard" without being read?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I thank the House for that permission.

"RATOON COTTON.

"LOCAL PRODUCERS' ASSOCIATIONS' VIEWS.

"Marmor Local Producers' Association.—Ratooning prohibited and the scrub farmer falls out of the business. The last

two seasons have shown us that the plant just gets to bearing stage and then the cold weather sets in and no crop is harvested, whereas, if the plants were ratooned a crop would be assured the following year. Members state that cotton-growing will be very limited if ratoon cotton is condemned. Practically all scrub farmers show a loss on new burnt scrub. We wish the delegates success and await the results with interest.

"Dalma Scrub Local Producers' Association.—If legislation is introduced prohibiting the ratooning of cotton, the scrub farmer will have no option but to discontinue growing cotton, and seek more remunerative employment.

"Upper Ulam Local Producers' Association.—That the District Council's actions in procuring evidence in favour of the growing of ratoon cotton is greatly appreciated.

"Hourigan's Creek Local Producers' Association.—We approve of the intended action of the District Council and special cotton committee on the ratoon cotton question at the forthcoming conference.

"Caloran Local Producers' Association.—That the Government refrain from passing legislation prohibiting the growing of ratoon cotton until such time as the matter has been prominently discussed by the Queensland Producers' Association as a body, with a view to ascertaining if it is in the interests of producers to have such legislation carried into effect.

"Yarwun Local Producers' Association.—That this branch supports the District Council and the ratoon cotton investigating committee in their movements regarding ratoon cotton.

"Bouldercombe Local Producers' Association.—An interesting discussion took place on the question of ratoon cotton, at the conclusion of which it was decided to give the subject our moral and financial support.

"Rannes Local Producers' Association.—Most of the cotton grown in our locality is on burnt scrub, which, if the growers were compelled to destroy after harvesting the annual crop, the expense involved would induce or compel the farmers to give up the industry of cotton-growing.

"Marlborough Local Producers' Association.—It is the opinion of this branch that the ratoon cotton question be thoroughly investigated and discussed by local producers' associations and the Government before any legislation is passed thereon.

"Dixie Local Producers' Association.—It was agreed to assist the District Council in the ratoon cotton question.

"Capella Local Producers' Association.—It is recognised that ratooning is vital to the industry in this district, as, owing to the heavy nature of the soil and usual lateness of storms, it is most difficult to secure early germination, and many years like the last one will be lost if annual planting is insisted upon.

"Milman Local Producers' Association.—The action of the council to establish a case for ratoon cotton is approved of by this association.

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"Murray's Creek Local Producers' Association.—We are with you entirely in the action you are taking in this matter, and trust that your efforts will eventually be successful.

"Ridgeland Local Producers' Association.—This branch upholds the efforts of the cotton committee in its endeavours to further the ratoon question, and this branch gives our unanimous support to the delegates on the forthcoming conference of growers.

"Binneru Local Producers' Association.—That this Local Producers' Association considers that ratooning cotton will not encourage pests provided it is cut down and burnt, and offers financial assistance to the District Council in the question.

"Nerimbera Local Producers' Association.—Decided that we support the District Council in its fight for ratoon cotton.

"Comet Local Producers' Association.—After a lengthy discussion on the above question, members are of the opinion that, owing to the uncertain seasons in Central Western Queensland and the trouble of germination, cotton will not be a success here unless ratoon cotton is allowed. Plant cotton on virgin soil has been attacked by pests here this season, yet ratoon cotton from the previous year was free of pests. Trusting you will do your utmost in favour of ratoon.

"Boolburra Local Producers' Association.—That we support the question of ratoon cotton.

"Barmoya Local Producers' Association.—Financial support in defence of ratooning.

"Pheasant Creek Local Producers' Association.—Financial support to help protect the ratoon.

"Don River Local Producers' Association.—Financial support in the interests of ratoon.

"Dululu Local Producers' Association.—That the District Council try and get the Government to allow growers to ratoon cotton.

"Struck Oil Local Producers' Association.—That we assist the Central Queensland Ratoon Cotton Committee in its investigations in support of ratoon cotton.

"Alma Creek Local Producers' Association.—That we assist the cotton committee in their efforts in regard to the ratoon cotton question.

"Calmorin Local Producers' Association.—That we support the District Council in its efforts to establish a case for ratoon."

The Secretary for Agriculture in the course of his speech this afternoon asserted that I made a vicious attack on the Premier, and he asserted that the Premier had stated that the British Cotton Growing Association had limited their guarantee to £10,000. I challenge the Minister to prove his assertion that I made any attack at all or to show that I am wrong. He said that "Hansard" would show. Well, let me quote "Hansard." On 28th September, 1921, as reported on page 966 of "Hansard" for that year, I am reported as having asked the Premier:—

"1. What offer has been received by the Government from, or an agreement made with, British cotton interests regarding a guarantee on Queensland cotton crops?

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"2. For what period does such agreement hold good, and what (a) maximum or (b) minimum price for Queensland-grown cotton has been offered from overseas?"

To that the Premier replied—

"1. No offer was received, but the Agent-General made an arrangement whereby the British Cotton Growers' Association guarantee a price.

"2. Five years from 1st January, 1920; (a) no maximum; (b) 1s. 6d. per lb. (sea-freights and insurance payable by the British Cotton Growers' Association) for cotton lint of good quality."

Hon. members will notice there is no reference to a £10,000 limit. This afternoon the Minister said that the first offer they got was for 1s. 3d. per lb., and they did not take it. That reply says no offer was made. There is no £10,000 limit mentioned there. I have quoted all the answer of the Premier—the first announcement made in Queensland with respect to the first guarantee, and I challenge the Minister to produce anything earlier.

Mr. BRAND: There is nothing about ratooning either.

Mr. CORSER: No. That was a guarantee for cotton; and they got the cotton, and it was chiefly ratoon cotton. The next year the Minister said, "There will be no guarantee this year. It was subject to a limit of £10,000, and that is exhausted." Naturally I stand on my dignity and demand why the Premier did not say so before.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You stood on your dignity about the arsenic.

Mr. CORSER: I stood on my dignity, and I put the hon. gentleman where he ought to be. (Opposition laughter.) We could have fed hon. members on that arsenic and it would not have killed them. I said it was 17 per cent. arsenic, and the Minister found out afterwards that it was only 14 per cent. arsenic, although he told me that it was 90 per cent. He got it conveyed to Brisbane by the police and he was bowled out.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You cannot complain of the quality, quantity, or price of any of the arsenic that went into your electorate.

Mr. CORSER: I did not, but the Rawbelle Shire Council did, and the Minister knows it. He said, "We will send you no more." (Opposition laughter.)

But let me get back to the question of the cotton guarantee. I will now read what the Minister says is my vicious attack on the Premier over the first guarantee. On page 262 of "Hansard" for 1922 I am reported as having asked the Chief Secretary—

"1. In view of his answer to my question on 28th September, 1921, contained in 'Hansard,' volume 137, page 966"—

The question I have just quoted—

"that an arrangement has been made between the Agent-General and the British Cotton Growers' Association, whereby that Association guaranteed a minimum price of 1s. 6d. per lb. (sea-freights and insurance payable by the Association) for cotton lint of good quality, for five years from 1st January, 1920, how can he reconcile this statement with—

(a) His answer to my question this week—that the agreement with the

British Cotton Growers' Association was limited to a risk of £10,000, which limit had already been reached?

(b) His statement made in Perth on his return to Australia on 3rd September, 1920—that an offer had been made by the Empire Cotton Growers' Association of a guaranteed minimum price for cotton lint, and negotiations were still in progress when he (Mr. Theodore) left England?

(c) His statement in Melbourne on 8th September, 1920 (published in the Brisbane Press of 9th September)—that since his arrival he (Mr. Theodore) had been met in Adelaide by the Hon. W. McCormack and had been advised that the Association had now indicated its willingness to guarantee a minimum price of 1s. 6d. per lb. for good, clean lint, the guarantee to operate for five years?

"2. If this agreement existed, where is it now?"

Nothing about £10,000 anywhere there! There is evidence of another error.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE interjected.

Mr. CORSER: I say that the Premier did not state that there was a limit, and the Minister is not going to shuffle in his misstatements in that way. He said that the Premier had stated that there was a £10,000 limit.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: And so he did.

Mr. CORSER: There is his statement in "Hansard," his statement in Melbourne, and his statement at Perth, and in none of them did he say that the guarantee was subject to a limit of £10,000. It was after the season of 1921 had passed that he said, "No guarantee this year because it was subject to a £10,000 limit." It was then the Commonwealth Government came in, the Minister says, but as a matter of fact I have proof here that the Federal Government were negotiating before Mr. Crompton Wood came here at all. I have here a letter from the Prime Minister's Department, Melbourne, dated 22nd August, 1922—

"I have your letter of 28th July regarding particulars of the guarantee to cotton-growers in Australia by the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. In reply I desire to inform you that as the outcome of representations which have been made, it is hoped the Corporation will co-operate with the Commonwealth Government in its efforts to obtain the desired guarantee. In order to secure the co-operation of the Corporation and stimulate the promotion of this enterprise, the Commonwealth Government has extended an invitation to that body to send an expert to Australia to discuss the possibilities of cotton-growing and to advise the Government generally in the matter.

"It is understood that the Corporation is arranging for the services of an expert adviser to be made available to the Queensland Government, and it has been suggested to the Corporation that this expert might be given authority to also inspect lands suited for cotton-growing in the other States interested in the matter.

"Three accredited delegates representing a large and influential section of Lancashire cotton manufacturers have

also been invited to visit Australia to discuss fully the details of a proposed scheme to manufacture cotton goods from Australian cotton and to erect mills in Australia. The matter and extent of the Commonwealth's participation in the guarantee has not yet been finalised."

That shows that arrangements were being made with this influential section of Lancashire manufacturers. It is this influential section of Lancashire manufacturers who have advised the Government to put their ban on ratoon cotton, and the Government have done so without listening to the farmers, and without considering Australian conditions.

Mr. KIRWAN: Who asked them to come out here?

Mr. CORSER: The Commonwealth Government. Yet the Secretary for Agriculture says that his Government alone were responsible for propagating this great cotton business in Australia, and that no credit is due to the Commonwealth Government, who are paying half the guarantee in every State of the Commonwealth. The credit is due to the farmers who grow the cotton. I give credit to the British delegation for coming out here, but I am not going to forget to give credit to one man, who right along has contended that cotton could be grown, and that is Mr. Daniel Jones.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: If there is one man who was able to speak right out, and who has been an encyclopædia on the possibilities of cotton-growing in Australia right along the line when people have gone out of the industry because there was no market, and when the whole world was looking towards Australia for cotton, it is Mr. Daniel Jones, who kept pace with the whole matter, and could place his finger on the possibilities of cotton-growing, not only in one little centre but throughout Queensland and Australia. He is second to no man in his experience and as an expert so far as Queensland conditions are concerned, as a practical ratoonist, and as a man with practical knowledge who is out in the interests of cotton, the Empire, and Queensland. We are very lucky to have him, and it is a pity that the Government did not weigh in the scales his argument and experience as well as the experience of big experts who may come from other parts of the world. The Minister says that Mr. Jones cannot be considered an expert. He would not be considered as an expert for one reason, and that is because he does not pocket the big screws that the big experts do. If he pocketed those big amounts he would be called an expert, and as such he would be recognised.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: It appears that for the 1922 crop the growers were advanced £86,064 for 3,755,526 lb., which is equal to 5½d. per lb. The Government say that of this amount they have lost £70,000. How this was done seems to be very peculiar. The Government got 3,755,526 lb. of seed cotton, and they ginned 1,251,842 lb., costing £6,520, and at 1s. 6d. per lb. in London that would realise £93,876. The freight on that amount was £2,513, making a total cost of £9,033, leaving the total amount secured £84,843. Cotton in London was selling at 1s. 10d. per lb., so that 1s. 6d. is a low estimate, and added to that is the value of 1,117 tons of seed, which at £10 per ton make another £11,170, or a

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total of £96,013. How the Government can claim that they have lost under the guarantee I am at a loss to know. The Government are providing that the Association is to receive a further benefit in respect of the price at

which it will get the cotton seed, which will be to the detriment of the grower. The following sets out the ginning charges offset against value of seed Upland cotton in America:—

State.	No. of Records for Ginning.	Cost of Ginning One Ton of Lint.	Value of Two Tons of Seed.	Grower's Credit or Debit.
	Average.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Texas	146	7 12 0	8 16 0	Cr. 1 4 0
Arkansas .. .	83	5 12 0	9 8 0	Cr. 3 16 0
Mississippi ..	78	5 2 0	10 0 0	Cr. 4 18 0
Georgia .. .	201	4 15 0	10 18 0	Cr. 6 3 0
S. Carolina ..	150	4 5 0	9 10 0	Cr. 5 5 0
Alabama .. .	153	4 4 0	11 0 0	Cr. 6 16 0
Average .. .	..	5 9 0	9 18 0	Cr. 4 0 0
Australia .. .	..	11 13 4	9 6 8	Dr. 21 9 0

Mr. KIRWAN: What did the Governor of North Carolina say to the Governor of South Carolina? (Laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: I will tell the hon. member what he said. He said "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." I hope that the hon. member for Brisbane will remember that when he is in the Chair. (Laughter.) When the farmer puts his seed cotton on the train he loses control of it, and the Association are going to get the seed in it for £1 per ton, yet the average price throughout the world is £4 16s., which the farmers by the agreement are going to lose. That is the agreement.

Mr. COSTELLO: What would he have to pay when he bought the seed back?

Mr. CORSER: He would have to pay ½d. per lb., whereas the Association gets it at

"1. Without regard to the value of the seed.

	Sold in Australia.	Sold in England.	Totals and Averages.
Lint, lbs.	54,991	1,211,382	1,226,373
Amount realised .. .	£3,240	£78,920	£82,260
Average price per lb. gross .. .	14.14d.	15.64d.	15.59d.
Charges, insurance, brokerage, &c. .. .	£169	£11,825	£12,194
Charges per lb. of lint .. .	0.74d.	2.36d.	2.31d.
Average net price of lint .. .	13.40d.	13.28d.	13.28d.
Per cent. of charges to total gross return .. .	5.20	15.11	14.82

"2. Taking value of seed into account, for which the grower has not been credited, and allowing ½d. per lb. the price charged to him for seed purposes) on the basis of two pounds of seed to one of lint, the charges work out as follows:—

	On Lint Sold in Australia.	On Lint Sold in England.	Totals and Averages.
Charges	£169	£11,925	£12,194
Add value of seed .. .	£325	£5,046	£5,371
Totals	£494	£16,971	£17,565
Total charges per lb. of lint .. .	2.16d.	3.36d.	3.33d.
Per cent. of charges to total return .. .	15.25	21.51	21.36

will set aside all prejudice and party feeling in discussing this matter.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I would like to have an opportunity of reading your irresponsible speech in "Hansard" and replying to it.

[Mr. Corser.

the rate of 9 lb. for 1d. I think that hon. members will agree that things are not all that they might be under the agreement, so far as the farmers are concerned. The following shows the analysis of the profit and loss account from a reply to question (a) of a series of questions submitted by the Central Queensland District Council of Agriculture, and replied to by the Department of Agriculture. This document will take a considerable time to read, and I ask permission to have it inserted in "Hansard."

The SPEAKER: Is it the wish of the House that the hon. member be allowed to insert the document in "Hansard"?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I thank hon. members for their permission. I hope the Government

Mr. CORSER: That would be more than I would care about doing with the hon. gentleman's. The Minister was not responsible enough to make a speech.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): I beg to move—

“That the hon. member for Burnett be granted an extension of time.”

Question put and passed.

Mr. CORSER: In reply to the Minister, I would like to say that I am responsible for my remarks, but he is not responsible for his. My remarks are made in the interests of the growers and the State, and are not the remarks that have been compiled by the big interests. That is one thing I am pleased to say. The remarks made by the big experts are in one direction; but I look at this matter from an Australian point of view. I am sorry that the Minister cannot on any occasion deal with a matter from a broad point of view when he cannot get his own way. Every time he is beaten he shows the white feather. He also turns up pretty dirty.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: I will go back to the statement I was making when the Minister interjected. I trust that this matter will be looked at from a non-party point of view, and from the point of view not only of the cotton-weaving interests in Britain—although not excluding that view—but also from the interests of the people here in Australia, to whom we must look if we are going to make the industry a success. We must remember that, if we do not satisfy the growers and make it possible for them to get a yield, we shall not make a success of the industry. The Minister does not understand the demand of the growers in Central Queensland—and, in fact, of the growers of Queensland generally—for facilities to grow ratoon cotton on scientific lines and under intense cultivation, and the fact that they are guided by an experience that the Minister has not got and never will have. All we ask for those growers, who with their wives and families have passed through dry times and times of hardship but experience, is that the crop which has been established by themselves and their families, and which they have not received payment for, should be allowed to follow its course in nature and yield to them a reward for their labours. They have proved conclusively that something can be grown successfully in Queensland which cannot be grown in any other part of the world, and that is good ratoon cotton. The Minister will find that out if he will take the pains to look at the other side of the argument to that which he is looking at the present time. I urge that before ratooning is doomed experiments along the lines desired by growers should be properly carried out.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): The argument with regard to ratoon cotton has been from the point of view of the buyer, but I wish to look at it from the aspect of how it concerns the interests of the growers in Central Queensland and not from a political aspect. The desire is not to make political capital to the advantage of any party, for the simple reason that the District Council of Agriculture in Central Queensland, or the majority of them, are supporters of the present Government. As supporters of the present Government, the Council are asking the Government to step in and assist them in the passage of this measure.

I will deal with the general provisions of the Bill later, but for the moment I intend to digress and go straight on to the question

of ratoon cotton. The Minister seemed to be obsessed with the idea that those who favour ratoon cotton are demanding from the Government something for nothing. I wish to state emphatically, speaking on behalf of the cotton-growers of Central Queensland, that their desire is to be permitted to grow ratoon cotton without any assistance from the Government in any shape or form. They are asking for nothing, and surely when a body of men who have such faith in their own interests—

Mr. HARTLEY: What about their markets?

Mr. PETERSON: I am coming to the question of markets.

Mr. HARTLEY: They are asking the Government to market for them.

Mr. PETERSON: They are not. I am going to show later on that they do not ask the Government to find a market for them. I listened very carefully to the lucid address of the Minister, and I sympathise with him for the trying time which he has undoubtedly gone through, and the great effort he put forward this afternoon in speaking for a considerable time. He has my sympathy and the sympathy of all hon. members on this side of the House. He will agree that he was given a very good hearing. I paid particular attention to the evidence adduced by him to show that ratoon cotton should be condemned. He submitted evidence from certain prominent gentlemen from overseas, but, if hon. members look through every particle of it—through, under, and over it—the conclusion that they must arrive at is that the statements of those gentlemen can be boiled down to this—

“We object to ratoon cotton being mixed with plant cotton.”

Nobody objects to the Lancashire people or the people on the other side objecting to mixing plant cotton with ratoon cotton. That is the basis of the argument against ratoon cotton. Now, the settlers in the Dalma Scrub, the settlers in Central Queensland and elsewhere, are not asking that ratoon cotton should be mixed with plant cotton; but they are asking this Legislature not to place an embargo on their growing ratoon cotton and saying that they will find their own markets for it. It is a diabolical principle to introduce in any Bill where farmers are to be told what to grow, where to grow it, and all the rest of it. When the Government pay a guarantee, undertake the marketing arrangements, and undertake to enter into contracts with the British Cotton Growing Association, then they have some grounds for making stipulations. But when a body of men say they are prepared to grow a certain class of cotton without any assistance from the Government, and submit evidence that the arguments brought against them are incorrect, the Government should play fair and give them a trial at growing ratoon cotton for two years. The Minister first brought forward the argument that it would not be salable. That is the case of the spinners when plant and ratoon cotton are mixed. Their objection to it is because the texture would not be of sufficient strength. When the Minister was twitted on the allegation that ratoon cotton bred pests, he replied that even if it did not breed pests the pests settled in the roots.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said that they hibernated in the roots.

Mr. Peterson.]

Mr. PETERSON: If the Minister will remember the time when he went through the Dawson Valley with the Cotton Delegation, and I went over the Dawson Valley and other parts of Central Queensland—practically two-thirds of the district—during last cotton season, he will recollect that the pest in the cotton was the corn grub. If the argument of the Minister is that any cotton-growing association has the right to say what class of cotton should be grown, then, as the hon. member for Burnett said, the people of Bradford should insist on only merino wool being grown in Australia. We have in Queensland about ten different varieties of wool, and, as has already been pointed out, there are purchasers for all those varieties. The people of Bradford might as well say that they will not take merino wool because it creates blowflies as for anyone else to say that they will not take ratoon cotton because it breeds pests.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not say that.

Mr. PETERSON: No, because if it was grown, markets would be established here where buyers could come and buy.

Mr. HARTLEY: Wool buyers can buy every class of wool, but you cannot classify ratoon cotton and annual cotton.

Mr. PETERSON: I have samples of ratoon and annual cotton here, and I defy anyone to show the difference.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is what I say—you cannot tell the difference. That is what causes the damage.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: And kills the market.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The machine will tell the difference.

Mr. PETERSON: The 1922 crop was largely composed of ratoon cotton. The Minister gave out enthusiastic reports which he had received on it from the other side of the world. He did not condemn it then, but gave his meed of praise to the standard and height that the cotton industry had attained.

All I ask is that the Government, before the Bill goes into Committee, will concede the right to growers to grow ratoon cotton for, say, a term of three years. This would give them an opportunity of

[8 p.m.] proving its worth under the adverse conditions of to-day, which have proved that plant cotton is a failure. In the Central district last year the farmers had a disastrous cotton season. I know of one man who had 16 acres, and, owing to the paucity of the rainfall, he received only £9 from it. If that man had been permitted to grow ratoon instead of plant cotton, his crop would have brought in something in the vicinity of £180.

If these people are prepared to take the risk of growing ratoon cotton, why should the Government object? I agree that the Government have a perfect right, in launching out upon such a big industry, to see that the industry is established on a sound basis. At the same time the Minister has not proved his case up to the hilt even with regard to the pests that attack the crop as a result of ratoon cotton. In America they do not have ratoon cotton, yet they have there the greatest evil that has been found in the industry—the boll weevil. If you had gone through any of the cotton areas—and those hon. gentlemen who went through last season

will bear me out in this—you must have come to the conclusion that the plant cotton was riddled with pests from end to end. Why not condemn plant cotton and have none at all if you are going on the argument of pests?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said that the pests—although the experts cited that as a strong argument—was a secondary argument. The market is the first.

Mr. PETERSON: We can appreciate that part of the Minister's argument. Supposing that pests are a secondary argument and that marketing is the chief, these people are prepared to take the responsibility of finding their own market. I will jog the Minister's memory courteously and ask if he does not remember that I asked at the commencement of this session whether his department had taken every opportunity of exploiting the markets of Britain and Japan to ascertain the possibilities of ratoon cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We sent a consignment to Japan the other day.

Mr. PETERSON: The Minister replied that everything had been done. Now we find that only a few weeks ago he discovered that everything had not been done and that he has since sent consignments to the other side.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was a promise made by the Premier twelve months ago.

Mr. PETERSON: I am very glad that the Minister did that. I am sorry that a disaster has taken place in Japan, otherwise we might have got word sooner as to the possibilities of the cotton. To boil down the facts, the position is that growers in Central Queensland particularly, where the rainfall is so inadequate, as has been proved by the statement of the hon. member for Burnett, cannot hope to succeed with cotton-growing under the present conditions, which ban ratoon cotton. I again repeat the argument, and ask what need there is to oppose the resolution of these people when they are prepared to take the whole responsibility of the growing and marketing of cotton under the supervision of the Government? That is a fair proposition, and the Minister will surely consider it from a non-party point of view and agree to try out the idea. He did not even agree to the principle of experimental plots, which we consider would be advantageous.

My next points are in connection with the Bill itself. Before going on with them I desire to say that I am of the opinion that the restrictions in the Bill, particularly those regarding ratoon cotton, will go a great deal towards minimising the output of cotton this year. No grower will submit to these restrictions if he wishes to retain his decency as a citizen of the State. I intend to enumerate the various conditions in order to bear out my contentions. First of all we find that the Minister—though he may disagree with me—takes upon himself power to proclaim throughout Queensland, through the Governor in Council, that immediately areas have been gazetted he may take over the whole of their property from the farmers included in the proclamation. He may say that the Bill does not mean that, but it distinctly shows in one clause that after the proclamation is issued the Governor in Council can step in and take away the man's title to his property. The Minister said that this Bill had been drafted

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in very clear language, but I think that point should be made perfectly clear when we go into Committee.

The next matter I complain of is the autocratic powers to be given in the Bill. It is intended to make criminals of certain men if they do not conform to the ideas of the Minister. He may either impose imprisonment for twelve months or, if the man has sufficient money, he may be fined up to £1,000 for not complying with the regulations. A telegram or notice or scrap of paper may be issued that So-and-so has to hand over everything to the Minister or his servants, and, if he does not care to do that, he receives either the imprisonment or the fine. That is a malicious principle. I agree that where regulations are made under an Act of Parliament it is necessary to have some penalty, but I think the Minister has overstepped the mark with this provision.

In one part of the Bill power is given for the Governor in Council to declare a fixed price of 5½d. per lb. up to 1926. There is no provision whatever made after that period. Possibly the Government or the Minister may have some reason for inserting that restricting date. I hope that the Minister will see his way clear to insert an amendment whereby, after 1926, provision will be made for the proclamation of the price, to be issued in June of each year. I ask that for this reason: that the farmer will then know whether the proclaimed price will pay him to put in cotton or not. He will not then put in his crop and be dissatisfied after the price has been fixed.

My next complaint is that provision is made for the Minister to contract himself out of any liability for indiscretion. Any of the Minister's servants may go along to a cotton area and set it on fire; they even have the power to burn off or clear the crop. Supposing that is done—I will not say through malice, but through ignorance—the grower has no right by law to obtain any compensation from the Crown. I think that the Minister should be fair to those people, particularly anybody caught in the way I have indicated. Past experience has shown us many cases where the Crown has been mulcted because of the mistakes of its servants.

In this Bill no provision is made for any compensation to the growers in that regard. I notice that, whilst the Government preclude growers from combining at the present moment to have their own cotton ginneries—probably that may be correct because of the agreement that is in existence—they at the same time make provision that any Southern company that is growing cotton in Central Queensland will have the right to go to the authorised ginneries and have their cotton ginned, but nobody else can. Why this preferential treatment? Share farmers are prohibited. For what reason are share farmers prohibited, and for what reason are others who grow ratoon cotton banned from having their cotton ginned if they are conceded the right to grow ratoon cotton? I am not going to labour this aspect of the question further than to express the hope that the Government will amend the Bill in certain directions in order to make it a better Bill than it is at the present moment.

I wish to revert to the question of ratoon cotton and to refer to some of the questions that have been submitted to me as member for the district and also to other hon. mem-

bers in the House in order to emphasise the absolute necessity for the Government giving all the relief that is possible to these settlers. I have a letter written by the secretary of the Dalma Scrub Local Producers' Association, which is in the Normanby electorate, and in that letter, amongst other things, he asked this—

“If the spring months are dry a clean fire can be secured, but adequate rain must fall after the fire or the seed will not germinate. If sufficient rain falls within a week or so after the land is ready the grower is very fortunate; but often he has to wait for rain till near Christmas. The result again is a poor crop. In the two sets of conditions above mentioned the bushes, if ratooned, would yield a prolific crop in the second season.”

It has been borne out by facts, and even admitted by the Minister, that if they had been allowed to ratoon, there would have been a prolific crop. Owing to the proclamation having been issued in 1921-22 stating that the Government were prepared to take all cotton grown in Queensland at 5½d. per lb., quite a number of people came to Queensland and took up land, not only in the Normanby electorate, but in other parts of Queensland. Many of them ratooned their cotton. They came here because they thought they could ratoon the cotton. However, the Government have debarred ratoon cotton and these people have been left high and dry. The Central Queensland District Council Executive have put up a most excellent case.

There is no other side to it. They have shown the climatic conditions under which they operate. They have shown, as the hon. member for Burnett has pointed out, what it costs them to produce plant cotton and what it costs them to produce ratoon cotton, and they have shown that they are able to make five or six times more from ratoon cotton than they can from plant cotton. Seeing that it is not the desire of these growers to harass the Government or make any political capital, or to injure Queensland, I sincerely urge the Minister to show some consideration to them and at least to give them three years in which to prove their case. A little further on in this letter from the Dalma Scrub Local Producers' Association we have this statement—

“If we are allowed to ratoon we can fall an area of scrub, plant it with cotton, ratoon it the second year, and in the third year destroy the cotton bushes and sow Rhodes grass. Every year an area of scrub would be felled and treated in this manner. After a period of five to seven years the area felled the first year would be fit to stump and plough. With this method ratoon cotton offers an efficient and profitable method of clearing Queensland scrub land.”

That is another argument in favour of ratoon cotton. I am not going to read the figures submitted by the hon. member for Burnett, because they are already in “Hansard.” The Dalma Scrub Local Producers' Association also makes this statement—

“WHY ANTI-RATOON LEGISLATION SHOULD NOT BE PASSED.

“Because no evidence exists to prove that Queensland ratoon cotton will lower the good name of Queensland cotton in the world's markets.”

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Has the Minister submitted any evidence that Queensland ratoon cotton up to the present moment has damaged the name of Queensland cotton in England? Not one single word of evidence has been submitted. These people are to be turned down because certain gentlemen say, "We do not want the cotton to be mixed." We are not asking for the cotton to be mixed. We are asking for it to be kept separate from plant cotton and allow the people who grow it to market it themselves, without any responsibility on the part of the Government.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: Do you want a separate ginnyery for ratoon cotton?

Mr. PETERSON: Yes, if the Government agrees to this request. This letter continues—

"or that ratoon cotton will breed disease more than annual cotton."

Has the hon. gentleman proved that ratoon cotton is going to breed more diseases than annual cotton? In the Central district two-thirds of the plant cotton was ruined by the corn grub. The hon. member, if his argument is sound, should legislate against plant cotton. I remember visiting the Stanwell district eight years ago. The first cotton grown in that district was on Mr. Cousin's place, and I remarked to him eight years ago that I never saw so many pests in my life on any crop as I had seen on the cotton plants. That was the first time cotton had been grown in that area. I have never seen any crop that had so many insects as plant cotton had. Consequently, if the hon. gentleman's contentions are correct—and he made a great deal about ratoon cotton creating pests—he should introduce legislation to prevent the growing of plant cotton. As I said before, the boll weevil, which is such a curse in America, is there because of plant cotton, and the pests the hon. gentleman complains about are already in Queensland. They are here with plant cotton. Consequently there is nothing in his argument about the introduction of insect pests. If the Government cannot see their way to concede this most reasonable request that has been emphasised by other speakers, the Dalma Scrub Local Producers' Association ask that the Minister will at least agree to the establishment of experimental plots.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We are going to do that under the department.

Mr. PETERSON: I am pleased to hear that, because that is what the farmers are asking for. I am most hopeful that, as a result of these experiments, we shall be able to prove that there is a market for ratoon cotton. I want the hon. gentleman distinctly to understand that I am not arguing that ratoon cotton will fetch the same price as plant cotton on the other side of the world; but I do argue, in common with the growers of Central Queensland, that there is a market for ratoon cotton, and the growers are prepared to take the lesser price for ratoon cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Can they grow it at 2½d. per lb.?

Mr. PETERSON: All I can say is that they should be given the opportunity to get the best price they can. They are asking for this, and there should be no objection to it, because they are going to foot the bill themselves.

Mr. HARTLEY: How are you going to keep ratoon cotton from the annual cotton?

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Mr. PETERSON: I am fully convinced that during the last season a large amount of ratoon cotton found its way into the plant cotton bales, and no expert found it out.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not correct. They did find it out.

Mr. PETERSON: I am not arguing that it is a good principle to mix the cotton. The weight of evidence is rather against the mixing of ratoon and plant cotton. I am not arguing on those lines at all, but I am putting up a battle for the growers who find they cannot grow plant cotton successfully, but that they can grow ratoon cotton. By growing the ratoon cotton they will be able to make a livelihood for themselves.

Mr. HARTLEY: Their argument is that they should grow ratoon cotton and get an annual ratoon crop.

Mr. PETERSON: That is not so—the correspondence shows that such is not the case. They are asking for that right, which I have reiterated here to-night. In appealing to the Minister for that consideration, I again urge upon him that there is no desire whatever to make political capital. The cotton industry, if handled wisely, will help to make Queensland one of the greatest States in the Commonwealth.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Thanks to the Government.

Mr. PETERSON: I give the credit which is due to the Government, but we owe a great deal to the gentleman who did all the pioneering—Mr. Daniel Jones. I do not know Mr. Jones personally, but I have read of him in the Press and in the "Queensland Agricultural Journal," and I am familiar with his persistent efforts to bring about the growth of cotton in Queensland. As credit should be given to any Administration for anything they do to try and build up the interests of the State, so credit should be given to the men who have ploughed a lonely furrow and who may not be able, as the hon. member for Burnett said, to claim large salaries. If it is the intention of the Government to commence aright in this great industry, in their attempt to be right let them not be unjust. We must remember that these people have rights which should not be trampled upon. They are not asking the Government to foot the Bill, but for the right as Britishers to be able to grow a crop for which they honestly believe there is a market. If that right is not given to these people, much of the good of the Bill will be lost, and the value of the cotton crop in Queensland will be minimised—not only under previous legislation but under this Bill. We desire to give the Minister every assistance to make this a perfect measure. We are not offering captious criticism; our desire is to do the very best we can in the matter. We have a mandate from the people who sent us here to protect their interests, and in doing that we are not defaming Queensland or doing anything which will drag Queensland down. I hope that the Minister will see fit to give way to the resolutions which have been submitted to him, not only by the associations concerned but by certain members of this Chamber. In giving way to these resolutions he will not be losing any party prestige, but he will be doing something which will be in the interests of Queensland.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr BULCOCK (*Barcoo*): I feel that we should approach this question as one which is fraught with the greatest responsibility to those of us who are assembled in this Chamber, and in whose hands to-night rests for good or evil the future of the cotton industry in Queensland. I have listened with a good deal of interest to the arguments which have been advanced by hon. members opposite who have addressed themselves to this question. One thing which has struck me in listening to the speeches which have been made is that this question has been considered by hon. members opposite purely from the point of view of the grower. I will admit that the point of view of the grower is a very serious matter to him; but there are two other points of view which have to be taken into consideration—the point of view of the taxpayer and the point of view of the spinner who is going to buy the commodity. We all recognise that the grower will no doubt regard the ban on ratoon cotton as being in the nature of an imposition calculated to impede the expansion of the cotton-growing industry. That is the cotton-growers' point of view, which has been more or less ably put forth by the hon. member for Burnett and the hon. member for Normanby. But the point of view we must consider in this connection is that the final court of appeal is the spinner. It has been said that there is a certain definite market for ratoon cotton, and that the evidence in favour of the abolition of ratooning is somewhat meagre. That may be so, but we must remember that the big spinners of the old world who are going to buy the product of Queensland have definitely said that they are not prepared to take ratoon cotton. In support of their statement they have advanced certain arguments, which were ably put forward by the Minister in charge of the Bill this afternoon. I must confess that, to my mind, the hon. member for Burnett, instead of strengthening the case in favour of ratooning, tended to weaken it by some of the illogical arguments that he brought forward, and some of the reasons he gave are not worthy of serious consideration. This question is one which rises above the narrow trammels of every-day incident. It is fraught with great consequences to the State. The hon. member for Burnett insinuated that the prohibition of ratoons and the Government's attitude on this particular question are the result of inexperience. The District Council of Agriculture in Rockhampton has been quoted in support of ratoon, but can we pit the opinions of those gentlemen against the opinions of the spinners who will be the buyers and who will convert the product into fabrics? Further, we have to realise in this connection that cotton is a comparatively new industry in Queensland from a big commercial point of view, and necessarily our experience is limited by the limits of that industry, and if we were not to avail ourselves of the lesson of the past—the lesson which has been learnt by bitter experiences in other parts of the world—we would be wanting in our duty to the community as a whole, especially if we allowed the continuance of a policy of ratooning.

The hon. member for Burnett made some reference to the production of wool and cotton, and claimed that there was an analogy between the marketing of the two products. There is no analogy, because in

the first place one is a vegetable substance and the other an animal substance. Wool is not subject to disease in the way that we understand vegetable substances to be susceptible to disease, and further, there is a recognised market for all classes of Australian wool.

The chief objection to ratoon cotton is the irregular staple that is found in it. That argument cannot be applied to wool. While you may have wool of a weak staple, yet you have a definite staple of an even length, and therefore it is not reduced to the lowest common factor with regard to value as happens when ratoon cotton is being spun. The hon. member for Burnett suggested that we might save stock by allowing ratooning, but the saving of a few head of stock by endangering the future of a great industry certainly indicates a poor conception of the duties of a member of this House on an important issue of this nature.

Some question was raised by the hon. member for Burnett about the United States of America. It was said that a certain adviser in the United States of America had recommended to this Government that the ratooning of cotton be not allowed, and the hon. member suggested that probably the Americans would not try and encourage us to ratoon cotton in Australia and Queensland because we are going to be active competitors with them in the English and Continental cotton markets in time to come.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A very mean suggestion.

Mr. BULCOCK: That argument is not borne out by facts, because we find that the Federal Government of the United States of America and the Federal Bureau of Industry there have suggested even more drastic legislation than we are considering at the present time. They do not encourage the production of ratoon cotton. Further, a very interesting chapter in the fight against insects and other pests in America can be read in the Federal law which was passed to create a non-cotton area in the vicinity of certain States. The

State of Texas would not agree [3.30 p.m.] to the prohibition, consequently a non-cotton area was not created.

But the proposal was made, and is it not more drastic to prevent by Federal enactment the growing of cotton at all than to do as we are doing—institute a system whereby plant cotton may be grown which will return a sure and certain revenue?

Some question has been raised about the ability of the farmer to grow plant cotton year in and year out. Naturally cotton, like all other crops, will fail to mature in certain seasons. That is not peculiar to cotton, nor is it a risk solely confined to cotton. Lucerne, maize, and wheat—in fact every other crop—go through periods of adversity, and cotton cannot claim to be placed on a more secure basis than these other crops. Consequently, let us consider the question from the point of view of plant cotton. It has been said that the statements which have been made by hon. members on this side of the House and the statements which have appeared in the Press on the authority of the Secretary for Agriculture have at least been biased by the influences which are at work on behalf of the cotton-spinning interests in England. It has been suggested by hon. members inside the Chamber and outside the Chamber that

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some sinister unseen influence is seeking to prevent this Government from allowing ratooning to be practised. Let us therefore look at an independent authority on the question. If hon. members will look up the "Encyclopædia Britannica," they will find this very significant paragraph in the article on "Cotton"—

"Under normal conditions in warm climates many of the species are perennials, but in the United States of America, for example, climatic conditions necessitate the plants being renewed annually, and even in the tropics it is found desirable to treat them as annuals to ensure the production of cotton of the best quality, to facilitate cultural operations, and to keep fungoid and insect pests in check."

At 8.31 p.m.,

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*) took the chair as Deputy Speaker.

Mr. BULCOCK: There is an authority certainly removed from the trammels of party politics. There is an extract from a publication accepted in the whole of the English-speaking world as an authoritative treatise on the various matters it sets out to discuss. The "Encyclopædia Britannica" ranks among the classics of authoritative literature, and it is noted for its accuracy both in generalities and in details. It is not biased by politics, and we find that statement emanating from it. Whilst we are discussing this question of boll weevil and fungoid pests which may attack cotton, it is interesting to quote from "The Scientific American" of recent date as follows:—

"In 1921 66,662 square miles of additional cotton country was infested by the pest and there remains uninfested only a small ring of cotton-producing land containing only scattered plantings and producing only 5.4 per cent. of the total cotton crop. The annual damage caused by the insect is conservatively estimated at £2,000,000 and the total damage at between £40,000,000 and £60,000,000."

It is interesting to recollect that hon. members on the other side of the Chamber and the Press also have been continually reiterating the statement that for the past sixty years on and off Queensland has been producing ratoon cotton. That is so, generally speaking; but we have to remember that, whilst we have been producing ratoon cotton and have fortunately enjoyed an immunity from fungoid and insect pests, it is only of recent years that the boll weevil has attained any degree of prominence as a destructive agent of the cotton crop in America. Its onslaught is insidious, as I shall show by the statement I intend to make. The boll weevil appeared in Georgia, one of the big cotton States of the United States, in 1916. It was ignored there till 1920 as being of comparatively little importance in the final analysis of results, but in that year, after gathering its forces during the first few years, it made an onslaught, and the devastation was so alarming that in 1921 its depredations resulted in the complete annihilation of the cotton crop of Georgia and the abandonment of its growth in that State.

The question we have to consider is this: Would we be justified in allowing ratooning in view of the experience of other parts of the world? Would we, as a Government, be

justified in allowing the creation of conditions which have led to that sort of thing?

Mr. MORGAN: That was not ratoon cotton.

Mr. BULCOCK: Would the State be justified in running the risk of almost certainly duplicating those conditions in Australia? A great point has been made about the ability of the farmer to produce cotton. The best standard of comparison we have at present is afforded by the cotton States of the United States of America, and I have gone to some trouble and made some research to determine the actual cost of production in America as compared with that in Australia. The land values in the cotton belt in America are rather staggering. According to the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics of the United States of America—which, I believe, compiles very accurate information—a prospective cotton-grower requires from 15,000 to 30,000 dollars. To take up a farm of 160 acres at an average cost of 300 dollars an acre—which frequently does exist in the cotton belt—would represent a capital of 50,000 dollars, exclusive of agricultural machinery and the labour required to carry on farming operations. In spite of these big overhead charges which the settler has to incur, they can make a commercial success of cotton-growing in America. It has been suggested that certain portions of the United States of America are ceasing to be cotton-producing districts and are becoming producers of other commodities. That is true within certain limitations, but no doubt it is due in the main to the depredations of the boll weevil and other insect and fungoid pests. In spite of the fact that wages on the average are higher in rural industries in America than in Australia, that greater capital is needed there, and that the price being realised in England to-day for American plant cotton is not equal to the price which Queensland growers are realising overseas, the farmer in America who is able to get a crop regards himself as being very comfortably situated financially. On that standard of comparison I am inclined to think that the argument of hon. members opposite, that it is impossible to produce plant cotton in view of the expense involved, falls to the ground. As a matter of fact, in America—even under conditions where the settler can get advances of only 50 per cent. of the value of his land and 25 per cent. of the value of his improvements, in comparison with the much more favourable treatment which he can get in Queensland under the State Advances Act and allied Acts—we find that plant cotton-growing is a very profitable undertaking.

We must all realise that possibly the greatest assets we are going to have in our cultivation belts in Queensland will be cotton-growing and dairying. Those who have a vision of the future can see that with proper control and with the State having adequate resources to enforce that control, we can become one of the great cotton-producing countries in the world; but, if we fail to exercise that control, we might just as well abandon our cotton project, and allow cotton to be grown in just the same way as we allow the growing of wheat, maize, lucerne, or any other crop. In this question the Government have a duty to the whole of the people of the State. I know—and we all know—that individual cases make bad law, but the Government are not justified in considering

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individual cases in this instance. The Government are only justified in considering the wellbeing of the community socially and industrially.

Plant cotton can be made to pay. Some question has been raised during the debate about the productivity of ratoon cotton, and it has been stated that ratoon cotton can be made to pay. An article appeared in the paper devoted to the cotton interests in Rockhampton recently which said that the evidence on which the Government were basing their proclamation banning ratoon cotton was unsubstantial and uneconomical. I think that pounds, shillings, and pence is the finest argument that one can use. In spite of the statement that our conclusions are unsound, uneconomical, and not founded on fact, we find that ratoon cotton on the world's market to-day is worth about 6d. per lb. less than plant cotton. Hon. members opposite will probably argue, and they have argued, that ratoon cotton has a certain definite market value. It has a certain definite market value provided it can be sold; but the point we must not lose sight of in this connection is that two crops of plant cotton would probably yield more than one crop of plant cotton and one crop of ratoon cotton under normal conditions. We approach this debate at a time when normal conditions do not exist in the country. We are drawing conclusions from what hon. members are advancing in this Chamber from an experience of two dry years—two unfortunate years so far as cotton production is concerned—but, fortunately, these years are the exception. The rule will be to strike an average, and if we were to approach this question when good seasons prevail, hon. members would not advance such arguments as they have in support of growing ratoon cotton. We must not lose sight of the fact that, at the present time, we are going through a period of agricultural depression so far as droughts are concerned, and naturally that colours the outlook of the farmer and the farmers' representatives sitting on the opposite side of this Chamber; but, in a year or two, when the trouble is passed and the drought is a thing of the past and things are more flourishing, I think it will be generally recognised that there is wisdom and forethought in the Government's action in barring ratoon cotton. The local authorities that have been quoted in favour of ratoon cotton are meagre in the final analysis; but go where you will, and search what authorities you may, you cannot find any authoritative statement favouring ratoon cotton amongst Old World experts. If you go to the United States of America you find they discourage ratoon cotton. If you go to Brazil, the home of ratoon cotton, you find that strong representations are being made to the Brazilian Government to prevent the growing of ratoon cotton. While on the question of ratoon cotton, so far as it applies to Brazil, I would like to ask hon. members opposite if they desire to reduce the Australian farmer and put him on the same economical basis as the saffron-coloured Brazil farmer, who is growing cotton for an average of 7d. per lb. on the London market. We quite realise that the Australian farmer should not be asked to compete with the saffron-coloured farmer of Egypt and Brazil. If ratoon cotton is allowed and the quality of our cotton does not exceed the quality produced in Brazil—we have to recognise the

identity of climatic conditions in some regard—then, when our product is put on the London market, what will be the result? Our Australian farmer demanding Australian conditions and asking for decent conditions of livelihood, and the Government demanding that he shall pay decent wages to the men he employs to do the work, will have to compete on the London market and the Cotton Exchanges of the world with the coloured labour of Brazil. That is an economical phase of the question that we dare not lose sight of if we are going to develop the highest productivity of the land.

There is another point that we should also consider. I spoke some little time ago about the communal aspect of the whole thing. The cost will have to be borne by the taxpayers in the final analysis if anticipations are not justified by results. The people of Queensland will have to dip deep into their pockets to finance the cotton crop in the next year or two if the results that we anticipate are not justified on the Cotton Exchanges of the world. Therefore every hon. member must realise the necessity, and the community must not lose sight of the fact, that we must definitely lay it down as a policy that the best staple we can produce shall be produced for sale overseas.

Then, again, we have to look to the question of our railways. We anticipate that in the Burnett and Callide districts we are going to open up a new "Dixie's Land." We believe that within a few years we shall have countless numbers of small farms and prosperous cotton-growers, and men engaged in dairying and the growing of other crops in conjunction with cotton. In order to justify our belief, we have had to commit the State to an expenditure which, I believe in the final analysis, may easily total £15,000,000. That is a charge against the public purse, and if results do not justify our anticipations, who is going to bear the cost? The cost is going to be borne by the taxpayers of Queensland. Then, again, in the State the big majority—hon. gentlemen opposite are very fond of saying that in these big questions the majority voice should prevail—will have to bear the cost if anticipations are not justified. Therefore, it is clear that we have a duty not only to the farmers who purpose growing cotton but a duty to the community as a whole, who will have to dip deep into their pockets to finance the cotton industry and the cotton railways if things do not turn out as we hope they will.

There is another question that we might discuss in this connection, and that is the question of labour and labour conditions. The highest productivity that the soil is capable of will yield sufficient remuneration to the grower to enable him to pay decent wages and not exploit child labour. What happens in those countries like Egypt and India, where cotton is worth 3½d., 5d., 7d., and 8d. per lb.? Exploitation of labour—the labour of little children! What happened in America in order to keep the cotton industry going? The exploitation of the little children! In order to prevent exploitation and to see that decent wages may be paid to the men and women who will be engaged in picking cotton, we have a perfect right to say that the best cotton shall be grown. The best cotton is the cotton that is going to return, not only the maximum amount to the farmer, but the maximum amount to the

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people who are engaged in the planting and harvesting of the cotton. If we allow ratoon cotton to be grown, seeing that hon. members opposite admit that the difference in price of plant cotton and ratoon cotton is considerable, it is not likely that the prices of the two will be brought closer together in the process of time.

Mr. MORGAN: Some people say that ratoon cotton is superior to plant cotton.

Mr. BULCOCK: The hon. member for Murilla informs me that some people say that ratoon cotton is superior to plant cotton. Some people say this and some people say that, but the spinners, the buyers, and the men who have to finance the crop definitely say one thing, and that is that ratoon cotton is not satisfactory.

Mr. SWAYNE: They have not been able to tell the difference.

Mr. BULCOCK: Every authority that I have been able to consult in this matter leads me to believe that, while some experts may not be able to tell the difference between ratoon and plant cotton—and it may not be possible for an individual to tell the difference—when that cotton goes over the mill the spinner can very soon tell the difference. The ratoon cotton is harsh and brittle, and consequently can only be used for certain purposes.

Mr. SWAYNE: Why cannot the experts tell the difference before it goes to the machines?

Mr. BULCOCK: I do not profess to be an expert, but in every case when it does go over the machine it can be easily detected. If experts cannot tell the difference and ratoon cotton is sold as plant cotton, and goes overseas bearing the brand of Queensland as an indication that the cotton is of high quality and is bought as such, what is going to happen when the buyers find that they have been deceived? What caused the slump in our canned and dried fruit trade? It was because we did not send our best article. We cannot afford a slump in our cotton trade. It has been said that this question of plant or ratoon cotton is a sort of modern War of the Roses between Lancashire and Yorkshire. That is not borne out by facts, because, if hon. members will consult the cotton movement within the Empire, they will find that a British Empire Cotton Growing Association was formed. The project was not to encourage the spinners of Lancashire in opposition to the spinners of Yorkshire, or vice versa, but to produce cotton within the Empire. It was recognised that the available supplies in America were getting less and less because of the ravages of the boll weevil and the fact that certain cotton areas were going under other forms of cultivation, and it was realised that the stability of the cotton industry in England was threatened with almost extinction if something was not done. Supplies were to be obtained from wherever they were obtainable. This Association was formed with the distinct object of fostering the growth of cotton within the Empire. It did not have any particular brief for Yorkshire or Lancashire. The Association was not allied to any particular spinning interests, and we find that the highest authorities in cotton are against ratoon cotton and in favour of plant cotton. Can we accept the judgment of the hon. member for Burnett, the Council of Agriculture, or

the District Council of Agriculture in Rockhampton, against the considered judgment of gentlemen like that? Can we put our immature experience in Queensland against the matured consideration of the cotton magnates of the Old World?

Mr. COSTELLO: They are controlling you.

Mr. BULCOCK: Would we be justified in putting their opinions on one side simply because a few cotton-growers in our electorates are up against the Government for prohibiting the growing of ratoon cotton and the fact that a little political capital may be made out of it?

Mr. NORT: You are proving that the cotton-spinners have got hold of the Government.

Mr. BULCOCK: Does the meagre intelligence of the hon. member for Stanley not bring him to realise that in the final analysis there is no appeal from the decision of the spinners? If the spinners have got hold of the Government, as the hon. member suggests, the contention of hon. members on that side becomes ludicrous, because the spinners are the only purchasers that we have. If they say, "We won't buy ratoon cotton," that is the whole position in a nutshell.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so.

Mr. BULCOCK: Are we going to encourage farmers to grow ratoon cotton, and, when they grow it, say to them that there is no market for it? The ratoonists are prepared, it is said, to grow ratoon cotton and market it themselves. If they were allowed to market it, and ratoon cotton is acknowledged to be inferior to plant cotton, would they not be militating against the ultimate success of the reputation of Queensland cotton in the old world?

My second argument against allowing ratoon cotton to be grown is that cotton to be successful must be grown under the closest possible supervision. If ratoon cotton is allowed to be grown for the purpose of increasing productivity, and supervision is not exercised in order to steer clear of the pitfalls that have overtaken it in the older countries of the world, it will be most dangerous to the industry. We must avoid every possibility of allowing insect and fungoid pests to get a hold in the industry. We have an opportunity of asserting ourselves on the market of Manchester, and perhaps the Continental markets. There is an opportunity open to us of building up a unique trade and a great reputation for Australian cotton. We shall have to avail ourselves of that opportunity in the next two or three years. Experiments are being carried out on a large scale in the United States with a view to the elimination of the boll weevil, and it is meeting with some success. They are using dusting mixtures. The question, then, is that within the next two or three years we shall have a chance of asserting our claim as a cotton-producing country. Can we assert that claim by sending an inferior product to London?

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No.

Mr. BULCOCK: Can we assert that claim by competing with Brazil, China, India, and various other coloured-labour countries, or should we not endeavour to produce the best article that we can in order to capture the markets and enjoy a reputation

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for our cotton such as we enjoy on the overseas market to-day with our wool? There are other factors we have to consider. As I have said, we have a unique opportunity of making this issue a success. The year before the war Britain, which is likely to become our chief consumer, imported £70,000,000 worth of raw cotton, while in 1920 those figures had risen to £256,000,000. We can have that market if we like by producing a high quality article, and thus insert the thin edge of the wedge by proving that our cotton is superior to the cotton grown under coloured labour conditions in other parts of the world.

Mr. BRAND: Our ratoon cotton to-day is superior to that produced in India.

Mr. BULCOCK: The hon. member for Burrum suggests that our ratoon cotton to-day is superior to that produced in other parts of the world. Is that why [9 p.m.] we were invited recently to sell ratoon cotton for 1s. a lb.—which would be equivalent to about 10d. a lb. in London—while American cotton was receiving 15d. and 16d. a lb.? That disposes of the hon. gentleman's assertion.

Mr. BRAND: I said Indian cotton.

Mr. BULCOCK: It has been said that the growers themselves are particularly enamoured of ratoon cotton, and that there is a unanimous opinion amongst the growers in favour of the production of ratoon cotton. The official figures from the Department of Agriculture do not disclose that. In 1922-23 the total number of cotton-growers was 7,143. Of this number only 335 were ratoon growers. The total area of plant harvested over that period was 27,500 acres, the proportion of ratoon being only 912 acres. Does not that indicate that hon. gentlemen opposite are speaking merely on behalf of these 335 individuals and that, for particular reasons and catch-vote purposes, they are going to put the claims of 335 individuals before the claims of 7,143 individuals?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted his time under the Standing Orders.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I beg to move that the hon. member for Barcoo be granted an extension of time in order that he may finish the very valuable contribution that he is making to this debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. member for Barcoo be granted an extension of time?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BULCOCK: Referring again to the serious aspect of this question of diseases, we find that apart from the boll weevil we have a cotton boll worm. Quite a considerable furor was created in Western Australia a little while ago when somebody discovered that this worm had manifested itself and had commenced to devastate an area of the crop near Broome. The conference of Ministers of Agriculture instructed the Department of Agriculture in Western Australia to cause that plot or plots to be destroyed. That was done, because the great danger of the existence of that plot was recognised. This cotton boll worm is an insect pest that is going to cause us a great deal of trouble in Queensland if we are not more than phenomenally lucky. As a matter of fact this pest

attacks lucerne, tobacco, maize, potatoes, beans, and various other crops.

Mr. MORGAN: Is it the corn grub?

Mr. BULCOCK: It is a first cousin to the corn grub. If the hon. member wishes to, however, confine the discussion to this type of grub, I will do so if he continues to assume a supercilious attitude. The corn grub has unquestionably attacked some cotton in Queensland.

Mr. TAYLOR: Why is it called the corn grub?

Mr. BULCOCK: I have no time to instruct the leader of the Opposition in these little elementary lessons that he should have learnt when he was at school.

Mr. TAYLOR: I never heard of it attacking corn.

Mr. BULCOCK: The hon. member says that he never heard of it attacking corn. If we look at the statistics of the Department of Agriculture in the United States, we shall find what a danger it is likely to become to Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: What relation is it to the wire grub?

Mr. BULCOCK: The United States Bureau of Agriculture in 1920 stated that the total damage done to maize by this insect was £30,000,000 sterling, and that it has destroyed in recent years £8,000,000 sterling worth of cotton. Again, I would ask if it is the intention of hon. members opposite to subject the cotton-grower to the almost certain risk of the similar destruction of the cotton areas of our State.

Mr. EDWARDS: We are subject to that loss with plant cotton.

Mr. BULCOCK: That is certainly so, but the fact remains that the degree of destruction by this pest is very considerably enhanced when ratooning is permitted.

Mr. EDWARDS: Not at all.

Mr. BULCOCK: That remark shows that the hon. member is not conversant with the facts of the case as laid down by the leading cotton experts of the world.

Mr. EDWARDS: We have had no experience of it.

Mr. BULCOCK: The hon. member reminds me of the ostrich which buries its head in the sand and declares that there is no danger because he has not the intelligence to see that danger.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is all right as regards the ostrich, but what about the other fellow? (Laughter.)

Mr. BULCOCK: In comparing the growing of ratoon with plant cotton you must take into consideration the fact of the spread of fungoid and insect pests, and the two combined make an unanswerable argument so far as the Government are concerned. There has been some question raised about the scrub farmers and the hardship that will be inflicted on them.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is true, too.

Mr. BULCOCK: I do not stand for unscientific or slipshod methods of agriculture. It has been suggested that the scrub farmer will be the man to suffer most under this restriction. I point out that the scrub farmer is not under any great disability, because he need not grow cotton; and in

any case there will be financial assistance forthcoming from the Government to clear areas and put them under cultivation.

While on the question of cultivation, I would like to say that, to my mind, better conditions of agriculture will prevail by insisting upon plant cotton being produced. It is obvious that you cannot work the land properly and expose it to atmospheric action if you are growing ratoon cotton. The security that may be vested in the cotton industry can only be secured by cultivating plant cotton under scientific conditions.

Mr. EDWARDS: What would you do in reference to scrub farming?

Mr. BULCOCK: In the future scrub farmers may obtain assistance from the Government to enable them to bring their areas under the plough. If the hon. gentleman thinks that a handful of scrub farmers should determine the fate of the cotton industry in Queensland, I think that he is again adopting the attitude of the ostrich, and is unable to look at the matter from a national point of view. Those scrub farmers may participate in the dairying industry until they are able to clear their land and grow cotton. This Bill undoubtedly aims at a complete control in every way, shape, manner, and form of the cotton industry. Were there any loopholes the Bill would be valueless. Hon. members opposite have complained of the drastic nature of the legislation. I know it is drastic, and if it were not drastic, and if it were not watertight, then it would be valueless in its entirety. Given soil and climate, what we require for the success of our industry is a pure seed supply, and the Minister has ensured that by what he has done in this Bill. We require the eradication of all insect pests. The Bill gives the Minister full control in that regard. In order to produce the best cotton we require proper cultural methods, and proper cultural methods are brought about by growing plant cotton and prohibiting ratoon cotton. The hon. member for Burnett, when he was addressing himself to the question of guarantees, and the answer that the Premier gave to certain questions, unfortunately did not confine himself to the facts of the case.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A very common practice of his.

Mr. MORGAN: Be fair.

Mr. BULCOCK: I want to be as fair as "Hansard," and nobody can be fairer than that. As reported on page 262 of "Hansard" for 1922, the hon. member for Burnett asked certain questions of the Premier concerning the alleged agreement between the Queensland Government and the Empire Cotton Growers' Association with regard to a guaranteed price for cotton. I do not want to weary the House with the questions, as hon. members may look them up for themselves if they desire to do so. The hon. member asked a series of questions which were very sweeping in their nature, and the Premier replied—

"1 (a), (b), and (c), 2, and 3. The hon. member's imperfect acquaintance with the facts is responsible for the alleged irreconcilability, he evidently being not aware that there was a money limit of £10,000 as well as a time limit of five years."

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The hon. member for Burnett to-night said that the Premier did not mention the £10,000 limitation. I am sorry that the hon. gentleman was so poorly seized of the facts of the case, and I am very pleased to have had the opportunity of pointing out to the hon. member that he did not do the Premier justice in casting the slur at him that he did to-night.

Mr. EDWARDS: He read from "Hansard."

Mr. BULCOCK: I have read the full report of "Hansard," and it shows that the hon. member, whether wittingly or unwittingly, did not do the right thing so far as that matter is concerned.

To my mind, the cotton industry is, in the main, the making of a great industry. I do not believe in ratooning cotton, because I do not believe in encouraging insect pests. I believe in getting the best value for our cotton, and therefore we must grow the best cotton under the best cultural methods. I do not believe in allowing cotton to deteriorate. The experience is that ratoon cotton deteriorates very rapidly indeed. In a report issued by the American Bureau of Cotton Research, we find that a number of observations were made, and it was found in certain areas that, owing to ratooning, the bolls did not open until after the frosts came, and consequently there was no crop. In other instances the cotton so deteriorated that a very poor lint and a big proportion of seed were produced. One can quote specific instances of deterioration vouched for by authoritative statements proving that the three big issues we have to consider in connection with ratooning cotton are—first, the question of insect pests—how we can best guard against them; second, the question of marketing values, and how we can best adjust our conditions to grow the best type of cotton; and third, we must prevent deterioration of our cotton, and we can only do that by unhesitatingly and drastically, if necessary, applying the conditions of the Bill we are discussing to-day and ensuring to the future generations of Queensland a safe, free, honourable, and profitable industry.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I quite recognise that the Bill we are at present discussing is one of the most important measures that has been brought before this House for many years. I have endeavoured to obtain all the information possible, both from those in favour of ratoon cotton and those against it. I have endeavoured to approach this matter with an open mind as I am a grower of cotton, and I naturally desire to get all the information possible on this most important subject. Although I listened very attentively to the Secretary for Agriculture, I must come to the conclusion that up to the present time no definite proof has been forthcoming that the ratooning of cotton in Queensland is likely to bring about a failure of the industry. The hon. member for Barcoo mentioned the fact—a most important fact he stated—that the spinners in Great Britain would not buy ratoon cotton from Queensland. Up to the present time we have had no evidence that ratoon cotton grown in this State has been submitted to the machines in Great Britain to be tested, so there is no evidence as to whether the hon. member's information is correct or not. We have had evidence submitted that ratoon cotton grown

in other parts of the world has been proved to be weak in staple and not equal in strength to plant cotton, but we have had no evidence whatever that Queensland ratoon cotton is of weaker fibre than the plant cotton. Until that evidence is forthcoming I insist that the Government are not justified in condemning absolutely the ratooning of cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It may be too late next year.

Mr. MORGAN: It may be too late, but on the other hand it must be recognised that a considerable amount of injury has been done to Queensland owing to the fact that the Minister has put an embargo on ratoon cotton. Last year hundreds if not thousands of acres of cotton were ploughed out owing to the fact that the Government announced that ratoon cotton would not be paid for at the guaranteed price of 5½d. per lb. In my district in particular, if the growers had not ploughed out their cotton, it would have produced a considerable amount of wealth, but unfortunately they took the advice of the Minister and ploughed out their ratoon cotton, with the result that they did not during the season just past pick one boll of cotton. The whole of the work they have been engaged in for the last two years was lost, and the same thing may happen during the coming season. We do know from experience that with very little rainfall you can produce a crop from ratoon, but up to the present our experience has been that, unless the seed is planted in the cooler months of the year there is a very great risk of the young plants burning off and no crop being obtained. Owing to that fact the amount of cotton that is likely to be grown in Queensland will be considerably less than would otherwise be the case.

The Minister has also endeavoured to prove that by preventing the ratooning of cotton he is likely to decrease the possibility of the introduction of pests into the State. We have no evidence before us that ratoon cotton is more subject to pests than plant cotton. If those who are engaged in growing ratoon cotton are compelled to cut down the plant to the ground and burn the tops to get rid of pests, the Minister cannot contend that there is a greater risk of the introduction of disease by the ratooning of cotton than by plant cotton. I suggest to the Minister that he should compromise and allow those engaged in cotton-growing to grow one half of their crop ratoon cotton and the other half plant cotton. Until time proves that ratoon cotton is of less value than plant cotton, I do not think the Minister is justified in taking the extreme step he proposes to take in connection with this measure.

At 9.21 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. MORGAN: It has been stated by the hon. gentleman that ratoon cotton is not all of the same length of staple. He must admit that that applies to plant cotton. During the year just expired it would have been impossible for the crop grown in the State to be all of an equal length of staple. Any amount of the cotton would perhaps be an inch or three-quarters of an inch in staple, but the whole of the lint produced from the plant cotton last year would not be of the same length of staple.

I also wish to state that many of the clauses in the Bill are, in my opinion, very

drastic. I do not think the Government are justified in bringing in a measure of so far-reaching effect as this. First of all, the Bill does not definitely state the price to be paid for plant cotton during the next five years. The Minister has notified us that he intends to pay 5½d. per lb. for cotton with a staple up to 1¼ inches, but he knows that very few cotton-growers during the coming season, no matter what the state of the weather may be, are likely to produce cotton of 1¼-inch staple; so that the hon. gentleman is really reducing the price of the cotton. He is deducting from the grower ½d. per lb., and the grower will not receive the same amount that he received for the cotton he produced last year. Therefore the Government have backed down so far as the guaranteed price is concerned. Not only have they backed down in that direction, but they have also placed upon the cotton-grower an additional expense of ½d. per lb. for seed for next year's crop.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That ½d. per lb. may go into the farmers' fund.

Mr. MORGAN: That may go into the farmers' fund, notwithstanding that the Government have not kept strictly to the agreement they entered into with the farmers twelve months ago. The Government gave the farmer to understand that he would receive 5½d. per lb. for cotton of good commercial quality, and they have backed down already. They are not going to pay 5½d. per lb. for good quality cotton, but only 5d. per lb.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We paid 5½d. per lb. for good commercial cotton last year, irrespective of staple.

Mr. MORGAN: Why are the Government paying 5d. per lb. for good commercial quality cotton, irrespective of staple? They promised 5½d. per lb. for five years.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I defy you to produce any evidence of that.

Mr. MORGAN: The Government entered into an agreement for five years.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The price was not 5½d. per lb. for five years.

Mr. MORGAN: It was stated that 5½d. per lb. would be paid during that particular period.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are quite wrong.

Mr. MORGAN: The price to be paid is not fixed in the Bill. We have no guarantee that the price is going to be 5½d. per lb. for cotton of 1¼-inch staple. The Government, by regulation, can do just as they desire. The price ought to be fixed in the Bill, so that the people will know definitely what they are going to be paid.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. MORGAN: The Commonwealth Government have stated that they are agreeable to do what this Government recommends. Mr. Groom, the Federal Attorney-General, has already notified the Minister what his Government are prepared to do.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: To share in any fair and reasonable guarantee.

Mr. MORGAN: If it was a fair thing to guarantee 5½d. per lb. for last year's crop, it is also fair and reasonable to guarantee 5½d. per lb. for next year's crop, and also for a

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further period. The Government have entered into an agreement with the British-Australian Cotton Growers' Association for a period of years, and are giving that Association a monopoly. By this Bill they are preventing anyone else from entering into competition with the Association. They even prevent the grower from ginning his own cotton. Notwithstanding the fact that they have a special guarantee spread over a period of years, the farmer is always going to be in a state of uncertainty. He is not going to know for a longer period than one year what he is likely to get for the cotton he produces. The grower has no right to be placed in that condition of uncertainty.

If anybody should know just what is going to happen during the term of the agreement into which the Government have entered, it is the grower. The Government [9.30 p.m.] take possession of his cotton and do what they like with it, even to making it an offence for him to feed cotton crops to his stock; but they give him no guarantee beyond the fact that the price may be fixed by regulation. I am one of those who think that the price should be specified in the Bill, and I hope that in Committee the Minister will agree to give the grower a guarantee of greater security after the present crop.

The Bill provides that no guarantee shall be regarded as existing in respect of any area of more than 50 acres belonging to any one grower. The Government will not allow such an individual to sell the cotton grown on the extra area as he likes, but they will not guarantee him the fixed price of 5½d. per lb. If they are not prepared to take the crop off the area in excess of 50 acres, they should let the individual do what he likes with the cotton. It is not fair to say to the grower, "We will pay you the guarantee for the 50 acres, but over and above that you will be at the mercy of the buyers overseas."

I notice in the "Telegraph" to-day a paragraph which I would like to read, since it concerns the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, about which the Minister has said a good deal and which has assisted Queensland by sending out a very competent gentleman to advise and instruct us as to the growing of cotton. The paragraph states—

"London, 10th October.

"Lord Derby (Secretary of State for War), speaking at the annual meeting of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, while declining to discuss preference, expressed the opinion that whatever could be done to extend cotton-growing in the Dominions must not merely be advantageous to the Dominions, but of the greatest advantage to Britain. He pointed out that white labour was impossible in many parts of the Empire, therefore he urged the corporation to encourage the natives to grow cotton of the best type, even supplying the natives with the best seed under the superintendence of experts. It was useless for the natives to produce an inferior article. He believed that eventually the whole of Britain's cotton would come from the Dominions."

There is an indication that that particular corporation is anxious that cotton should be grown by coloured labour. There is nothing to prevent the Americans from controlling the boll weevil—they know how to get over

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their difficulties very quickly; they bring science to bear upon any question of that nature very promptly—and what use would the English market be to us then? The Americans put the Australian beef out of court and put the cattle industry here in such a position that it is not profitable.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A good argument in favour of producing the best article

Mr. MORGAN: There is not a man on this side of the House who has advocated producing anything but the best article; but up to the present the Minister has not demonstrated that ratoon cotton has had a fair trial, whilst it has been shown by hon. members on this side, who have quoted authorities from other parts of the world, that climatic conditions have a great effect on ratoon as well as on plant cotton. Ratoon cotton is not grown in America because of the frosts, and Queensland seems to be eminently suitable for the growing of ratoon cotton, just as it is suitable for the growing of ratoon sugarcane. We might just as well say that ratooning sugarcane should be condemned, as being likely to produce disease or encourage borers to a greater extent than plant cane, as to say that ratoon cotton should be condemned for a similar reason. The cotton spinners in Great Britain have never had an opportunity of proving whether ratoon cotton grown in Queensland is good or bad. They have condemned ratoon cotton because the ratoon cotton from other parts of the world has not been of equal quality with the seed cotton. The English spinners consider that the ratoon cotton grown in Queensland is inferior to the seed cotton grown in Queensland. It may be that the climatic conditions of Queensland are such that we can grow ratoon cotton of equal quality with seed cotton. I have submitted samples of ratoon and seed cotton grown in my district to the Government experts and the experts who went around the district.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We have only two experts. Which one did you submit it to?

Mr. MORGAN: I submitted it to the expert from the Empire Cotton Growers' Association.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We do not recognise those experts.

Mr. MORGAN: Last year those experts went round the country and told us to destroy this and plant that. The Government knew that they were going round amongst the farmers for the purpose of instructing them, and now the Minister tells us that these men were let loose on the farmers as alleged experts to guide the people and they were not experts at all. I am prepared to submit to the Government expert three samples of ratoon cotton and seed cotton grown in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He will be able to tell the ratoon cotton blindfolded.

Mr. MORGAN: I will give him an opportunity of doing so. A man who has grown cotton in America and other parts of the world told me that he was prepared to put up £50 against £50 submitted by another expert, to be forwarded to the hospital by the person who lost, if the other expert could pick out the ratoon cotton from three samples of cotton produced.

The PREMIER: Three average samples?

Mr. MORGAN: Yes.

The PREMIER: He would lose his money.

Mr. MORGAN: This man has grown cotton in America and other parts of the world.

The PREMIER: He is a very rash man.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not profess to be an expert, but I have examined the cotton, and I cannot tell the difference between ratoon cotton and seed cotton, although it may be possible so to do. The Minister has not produced any evidence to prove that ratoon cotton in Queensland is inferior to the seed cotton in Queensland. That is the most important point. The Minister is justified in making the law as strict as possible in order to prevent the introduction of diseases and pests. At the present time he has power to destroy fruit trees in orchards and yards that may be responsible for the spread of the fruit fly, and he should have the same power in respect of cotton. He should have power to say that the cotton plant should be cut level with the ground. Nobody wants to allow the plant to stand. No one who has advocated the growing of ratoon cotton is anxious that the plant should stand after the cotton has been picked. If the plant is cut level with the ground, there is an opportunity of getting a crop with little or no rain.

I want to tell the Minister my own experience. Last year I put 70 acres under cotton. Owing to the dry spell the cotton came through in some places and not in others. After it came through the cutworm destroyed a number of the plants. After some other setbacks there were only 12 acres that were capable of being picked. The bulk of the people in my district did not pick at all. I obtained from those 12 acres about £8 or £9 an acre. About the beginning of September I ploughed up the land again, but before it was ploughed up I had a look at the plants and saw that they were beginning to sprout. I pulled up some of the plants and found that the root and the plant had grown about the same. The plant was about 3 feet high and the roots had gone down about 3 feet 6 inches below the surface. They were in soil that was moist, while the soil 2 feet below the surface was so moist that water could almost be squeezed from it. We were sure of a crop had we not destroyed it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I have never attempted to deny that—you could have got a crop.

Mr. MORGAN: My case was only the case of many other farmers. I have the ground ploughed up now ready to plant cotton as soon as rain comes. The point is that the ratoon crop which could have been sold and would have given a return was ploughed out. I could give the names of many unfortunate farmers who have ploughed out 20 or 30 acres of ratoon cotton. They have lost the fruits of their labour by being deprived of the right to sell the crop they were assured of.

Mr. EDWARDS: That happens very often.

Mr. MORGAN: Some of those men lost £100 worth of cotton and some an even greater amount.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is assuming it was worth 5½d. a lb.

Mr. MORGAN: Yes. Has the Minister produced sufficient evidence to deprive a man of his livelihood in the face of the

seasons we are going through? In good seasons the hardship would not be so great.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You did not grow any cotton before the guarantee was given by the Government?

Mr. MORGAN: No, but my growing cotton was not altogether the outcome of the guarantee, although I admit that it had a lot to do with it. When cotton falls below 5½d. a lb. very little will be grown, as it will not pay to grow it.

The PREMIER: Will it assist to raise the value of cotton to produce ratoon cotton?

Mr. MORGAN: I have tried to look at this question apart from a party viewpoint as I want to do the best for the cotton-growers, but the Minister has not produced arguments to outweigh those used by the growers of ratoon cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are very hard to satisfy.

Mr. MORGAN: The Minister has only produced evidence from the spinners.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are the clients.

Mr. MORGAN: We should not be dominated by the spinners, who are practically settling the legislation that is being introduced.

The PREMIER: The Empire Cotton Growing Association has advised on it.

Mr. MORGAN: It must be admitted that the whole of the evidence against ratoon cotton has practically come from the spinners. Mr. Crompton Wood, at a banquet, said that we ought to be able to grow cotton in Queensland at 3½d. a lb. Does the Minister really think that we can grow cotton in Queensland at 3½d. a lb.? From my experience I know that men engaged in picking cotton receive 1½d. a lb., and in many localities they are paid 2d. a lb. If that is so, what is the grower to get? He will get practically nothing. When all is said and done, it is merely a matter of the price which will be obtained.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It costs as much to pick ratoon and inferior cotton as it does to pick plant cotton.

Mr. MORGAN: Ratoon cotton can be picked more cheaply than plant cotton owing to the fact that a great deal more can be picked. Taking last year as a criterion, I discovered that you can pick a greater quantity of ratoon cotton in one day than you can of plant cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The length is unsatisfactory.

Mr. MORGAN: That is a matter of opinion. I was shown some ratoon cotton to-day in this House which was equal in length to any cotton grown. One can judge its length easily. I know how to tease it out, and even a novice may find out the length after being once instructed how to do so.

The PREMIER: It is not so easy to judge the evenness of the cotton.

Mr. MORGAN: I am sure that from a length point of view we can produce any amount of cotton this year that will be equal to any plant cotton.

The PREMIER: Evenness of strength and length of staple are two details to be considered.

Mr. Morgan.]

Mr. MORGAN: That cannot be distinguished even by an expert. The hon. member for Barcoo told us to-night, reading from an extract, that only the machine is capable of distinguishing plant cotton from raton cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Barcoo also showed that that is not so with respect to wool.

Mr. MORGAN: Wool is not always of the same staple. Merino wool is not always of the same strength.

Mr. BELCOCK: Supposing you get a ewe with two years' wool on its back, is it not of lesser value than wool from a ewe a year old? You might call that raton wool. (Laughter.)

Mr. MORGAN: Let me ask the hon. member this question: Supposing you get a wether four years old and a wether one year old, which gives the better wool? The hon. member mentioned a ewe, which may have had several lambs. I say that the four-year-old wool is better than the one-year-old wool, and that the hon. member's argument goes for nothing. The four-year-old wether wool is raton wool, and is better than the plant wool of the one-year-old wether. (Laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The oftener you raton sugar-cane the worse the crop becomes.

Mr. MORGAN: Every hon. member who desires to speak on this question should do so. It is a most important matter—

Mr. KIRWAN: It is important that we should do the right thing.

Mr. MORGAN: Exactly, and everyone will have to shoulder the responsibility of deciding for or against this Bill. I am prepared to shoulder my responsibilities, and I feel sure other members are also prepared to shoulder their responsibilities. I am more or less voting in the dark on this question of raton cotton. I have endeavoured to get all the information possible. I have read both sides of the argument, and still I have a doubt in my mind. I cannot honestly say that I can support the prohibition against the ratooning of cotton. I want more evidence. But whatever I do I am prepared to shoulder the responsibility for my action, and only time will tell whether the Government were justified in bringing in this measure, or whether they were hasty in the conclusion arrived at.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If you support the ratooning of cotton the day will come when you will be very sorry.

Mr. MORGAN: On the other hand, if I vote to prohibit the ratooning of cotton, I may be sorry. I was sorry for the men who lost their crop last year.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We all are

Mr. MORGAN: I should be sorry if my vote compelled any grower to plough out his raton cotton this year if it is likely to produce £100 or £200 worth of cotton, and then for him to receive no return from that land owing to the weather conditions. It is an enormous responsibility to place on the shoulders of any member of Parliament, and therefore I want all the information I can possibly get. The discussion that may take place on this measure should be listened to attentively by members on both sides of the House, and no heat should be displayed

[*Mr. Morgan.*

Members on this side, if they support the ratooning of cotton, have to shoulder the responsibility of their action, and the same thing applies to members on the Government side if they vote against the ratooning of cotton. They have to shoulder their responsibilities, and only time will tell whether the Bill is justifiable or not.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): I cannot speak with any experience of cotton-growing, because my line of farming is altogether different, but I have to recognise that many farmers in my district may take on cotton-growing as a side line, and I am interested to that extent. I find a great deal of difficulty in arriving at a conclusion on the main point at issue. The evidence we have had to-night has been very conflicting, and it is a very difficult matter, now that we have heard the evidence on one side and on the other, to say whether we should allow people to raton their cotton or not. So far as I understand the matter, it is all a question of the manufacturer and the grower, and the manufacturer, no matter how capable he may be to form an opinion from the manufacturing point of view, certainly has not had the opportunity to know what the Queensland climate can do. It has been pointed out quite clearly in the evidence placed before us to-night that a tremendous proportion of the cotton grown in Queensland in the past has been raton cotton.

Cotton-growing is no new thing in Queensland. The first cotton was grown in 1860, on an area of something like 14 acres, and ratooning, I understand, has been going on fairly continuously ever since. At times a large area of cotton has been grown and all exported to the same manufacturers who are now condemning ratooning. Could these manufacturers at any time say that the raton cotton grown in Queensland was of no value? We have had experts coming here from the old country—experts connected with the manufacturing industry—and they have told us time after time that the Queensland cotton was good cotton, yet a large proportion of that cotton was raton cotton. It is very difficult to understand why there had been such a sudden condemnation of raton cotton. I am in the same position as the hon. member for Murilla, who said he found it difficult to bring himself to compel people not to grow things when they were willing to take all the risk themselves. It is hard if we are going to tell farmers that they must not grow things when they themselves will be the sole sufferers. I do not feel justified as a farmer in giving my vote to compel other farmers not to do what they say it suits them to do, and of which they are willing to take all the risk. The only question we should consider is whether we are justified in preventing others from engaging in the growing of this type of cotton. After hearing the opinions of people who have grown cotton, I am rather doubtful if cotton-growing is going to be any good to Queensland at all. We know that in all parts of Queensland the spring is uncertain—it is the one period of the year which is uncertain—and apparently we have to depend on the spring every year as to whether we are going to have a successful cotton crop. When it comes down to an annual plant we should seriously consider whether we should put capital into growing cotton at all.

Mr. KIRWAN: Don't be pessimistic.

Mr. DEACON: The Secretary for Agriculture said that the reason for the decrease in the production of cotton in the United States of America was partly owing to a large number of farmers giving up the cotton industry and going in for mixed farming, dairying, etc., as being more profitable. If, after cotton-growing has been established there for so many years and they have had the advantage of plenty of labour, they are leaving the industry now when prices are high, what is the use of our starting here if they do not find it profitable? I listened more attentively to the Minister on this point than on any other, and it seems to me that it will be good enough under these circumstances to leave the whole business alone. It has been stated that cotton would be more profitable as a catch-crop in conjunction with other crops. The men who have grown the most cotton are those who have made cotton their main crop. No crop can ever be grown to large dimensions unless it is grown as a main crop by the majority of those who are engaged in it.

Mr. KIRWAN: Yes, and you must also have a standard.

Mr. DEACON: If we are going to set up a standard that the people cannot attain, and that they will not attempt to attain, it is impossible to keep the industry [10 p.m.] going. A good deal has been said about the ratoon cotton grower. We have to consider the case of the scrub farmer. The hon. member for Barcoo was very contemptuous about him.

Mr. BULLOCK: In what way was I contemptuous?

Mr. DEACON: The hon. member referred to a handful of scrub farmers as if they were only a poor lot and not worthy of much consideration. If there were any in his electorate, I am sure he would say something very different. But even if there are only a handful, we have to remember that they cannot plough. The whole of their ground is unstripped. It is impossible to clear out the stumps even with Government aid, because it would be impossible to make farming profitable after going to such expense. When you come to clear some scrub country it will cost you £35 an acre.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They can put in plant cotton with a hoe on scrub land.

Mr. DEACON: I have seen scrub farms and I know that they cannot be ploughed for many years after the scrub has been felled, and no man with any experience of farming—of course hon. members opposite have no experience, and I am sorry for them—would attempt to do so. If he could leave the plant cotton in and ratoon it for three or four years until the stumps rotted—and they rot very quickly in scrub country—then he could plough and grow plant crops. It is impossible for a man on a new scrub farm to plant cotton every year. He has either to try ratooning or not grow it at all, so that by insisting that all plants shall be cut out after the first year the Government are going to cut out cotton growing by scrub farmers altogether, and scrub farmers—even if they are only a handful—are worth considering as we expect them to do their share in the development of Queensland.

I said a little while ago that I was doubtful whether it was worth while bothering about cotton. Take the people on the Downs

in a season like this. They certainly have land on which they could plant cotton.

An annual crop is a very expensive one. It means all hand labour, and hand labour in this country is a very expensive item, and is likely to continue so. We have done very well in this country with very little cotton to speak of. It is not cotton that has made Queensland what it is to-day. We are now going to introduce a new industry on a big scale. If the people on the Downs do not think it worth while to go in for the industry, they will be able to hold their own and still bring into Queensland the great amount of wealth that they have introduced in the past by following their present avocations. The Downs produce, acre for acre, as much as any other district in Queensland the same size. It will not be worth while for the Downs farmers unless they can have the plants for the following year. One of the great advantages of lucerne is that it stands. One of the advantages of cotton-growing that has been held out for a considerable time is that the plant would be there the following year.

Let me take the question of cotton-growing in the warmer parts of the State. The Bill provides that the definition of "cotton" shall be that which is planted and harvested in the year it is sown. I understand that it is quite possible in some of the northern parts of the State to plant cotton in the early part of the winter, and it may possibly grow up and bear bolls in the spring. According to the Bill, the people will have to wipe out that cotton before it has a chance of reaching that stage. There is a great deal in the Bill that wants to be thoroughly considered before it is passed in its present form. It may possibly prevent some people starting in the industry in the North, and it will certainly prevent some from starting on the Downs.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: Why?

Mr. DEACON: I have already given my reasons. The hon. gentleman was out of the Chamber, and if I was to repeat them again I would get into trouble. I ask him to excuse me and read them in "Hansard."

Mr. GLEDSON: You will spoil the market if you grow ratoon cotton.

Mr. DEACON: I am not out to spoil the market. When you hear the Minister say that the growing of ratoon cotton is becoming unprofitable in other countries, is it not a fair inference to say that it might not be profitable to grow it here? We have to go very thoroughly into this question.

Let me now deal with the question of pests. I understand that the main objection to ratoon cotton is that it will encourage pests.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is one of the objections.

Mr. DEACON: The main pests with cotton are the pink weevil and the American boll weevil. They cannot start here unless they are brought here. Growing ratoon cotton will not encourage them. It might if they were already here. There are many pests already in the State which have not been discussed.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: There are.

Mr. DEACON: Hon. members on the other side might think there are pests in the

*Mr. Deacon.*¹

House, but there are certainly no pests on this side.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: They are all rats on the opposite side.

Mr. DEACON: We are endeavouring to improve the Bill for the Government. The Government are never willing to go in the right way. There seems to be some natural kink on that side of the House, because, if there is a wrong way of doing a thing, they will do it.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must address his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. DEACON: I must apologise for allowing myself to be drawn off the Bill. I have not heard the pumpkin bug mentioned, and that is a tremendous pest. I have seen a field on the Downs eaten out in a few days by this insect. It is also prevalent on the coast, and is a pest that has always been here. It is a hibernating pest. Then there are the maize grub and several other grubs which attack crops allied to cotton. They are already in the country, and not one of them is a stalk pest. They are foliage pests. They only attack the plant when it is young or when it reaches the flowering stage. I fail to see how this Bill is going to stop pests from being carried from place to place. If a district is infested with any of the pests I have mentioned, it can be quarantined. Any cotton field that is infested can also be quarantined, but cotton is the only plant mentioned in the Bill that is likely to be quarantined. That would not stop the pumpkin bug.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: Why not cut their wings?

Mr. DEACON: I should be very pleased if the hon. gentleman would cut their wings. We have had legislation of a similar character to this, but it has never been enforced in order to destroy pests. We have an Act on the statute-book under which orchardists are supposed to destroy any fruit that falls to the ground in order to minimise the evil of the fruit fly. Anywhere in Queensland who bothers? Nobody bothers in the districts where fruit is the main industry. The Government never compel anybody to adhere to the restrictions. We may have inspectors who are supposed to carry out the restrictions, but they never do it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We will make you an honorary inspector if you like.

Mr. DEACON: If the hon. gentleman did make honorary inspectors, the job would not be done. We would have the same state of affairs even if the hon. gentleman had an army of honorary inspectors right over Queensland. They would never bother their neighbours. We have legislated to prevent these pests, but we have not stopped a single one.

Mr. WEIR: We have not stopped you yet.

Mr. DEACON: The hon. gentleman will not stop me until I have gone a certain time. There is another pest—that is wax matches. This Bill proposes absolutely to prohibit the use of wax matches in any part of a cotton field or cotton factory. Who on earth is going to deal with the bagman?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The precaution is a very necessary one.

Mr. DEACON: I should like to see the Minister or anyone else dealing with the

[*Mr. Deacon.*

bagmen. They are the most dependent persons on earth, and will use whatever matches they like.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must deal with that detail in Committee.

Mr. DEACON: We shall have great difficulty in dealing with all the things which we are supposed to prohibit.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: We have to prohibit the export from the country of inferior butter and meat.

Mr. DEACON: I submit that it is unfortunate that the Government should fail to consider the opinions of the growers. They should be considered most.

Mr. WEIR: No; the State should be considered most.

Mr. DEACON: If the growers are going to grow for the benefit of the State and not for themselves, they will not grow much. The farmers of the State should be encouraged to grow cotton.

Hon. F. T. BRENNAN: It is grown for export.

Mr. DEACON: What else would they be growing it for but for export? What is the use of going into a detail like that? There are a certain number of farmers who are represented here to-night by hon. members on this side of the House who say that they only desire permission to grow the crop they wish to in their own way and to take all the risk.

Mr. GLEDSON: The trouble is they do not take the risk.

Mr. DEACON: If the arguments put up by the Opposition do not justify the growing of ratoon cotton, they certainly show that there is a good case. The first thing that the Government should do is to inquire into any possible case of injustice. It is possible under this Bill that a certain number of farmers may suffer a great injustice. They may lose something they have counted on to carry them on. They may lose their livelihood. A certain number of them say they planted cotton with the full intention of ratooning it, and if they had thought they would be prohibited from ratooning, they would never have planted at all. Their claims ought to be considered, and they should be given a further chance to make good their case. Up to the present they say they did not know the evidence the Government have to justify them in prohibiting ratooning. That evidence was unknown to members of this House. Until the Minister gave his reasons to-night nobody outside or inside this House knew the full reasons why the Government prohibited ratooning. There are good reasons why we should delay this matter for another year, if we do no more. For at least another year give these farmers a chance to make good, and give them a chance to get out of the position they are in of depending on the ratoon crop. I hope the matter will be given that consideration by the Government to which it is entitled.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at 10.21 p.m.