

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 1923

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"4. If not, will he endeavour to have the question debated in this House during the present session with a view of endeavouring to bring about the formation of a Commonwealth butter pool?"

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

"1 to 3. The Government, acting upon the recommendation of the Council of Agriculture, has issued a preliminary notification regarding the formation of a butter pool under the Primary Products Pools Act. This Act provides for the determination of the issue by the producers themselves.

"4. Nothing would be gained by such a course, as the present Commonwealth Government have repeatedly declared that they are against the formation of any compulsory pool."

PROGRESS PAYMENTS MADE BY EGG POOL.

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

"1. When was the first progress payment for eggs made by the Egg Pool?"

"2. How much per dozen was paid?"

"3. What salaries or allowances are being paid to members of the pool staff and its elected representatives, giving details?"

"4. When will progress payments be made in future—weekly, fortnightly, or monthly?"

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

"1 to 4. I would refer the honourable member to Mr. K. C. Smith, secretary to the Queensland Egg Board, as I do not consider it desirable for the Minister to interfere with the internal management of a Board elected by the producers without there is some good and sufficient reason."

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER, 1923.

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

QUESTIONS.

PROPOSAL TO CONSTITUTE COMPULSORY BUTTER AND CHEESE POOL.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*), in the absence of Mr. Walker (*Cooroora*), asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

"1. Referring to the proposal to constitute a compulsory butter pool in Queensland under the Primary Products Pools Act, is he aware that the Director of Agriculture in a recently issued pamphlet expressed his opinion that a compulsory pool would be inadequate to satisfactorily meet the case of butter and cheese, and that it was not suggested, because it was believed there was a better way?"

"2. Can he furnish details of the alternative scheme hinted at by the Director of Agriculture?"

"3. In face of the known opinions of many practical co-operative directors who are deeply interested in the sale of butter that a State compulsory butter pool for various reasons would be unworkable, will he undertake to make arrangements so that the arguments for and against a compulsory pool will be placed fully before all dairymen entitled to a vote on this question before the poll is taken?"

CONFERENCE RELATIVE TO CONSTRUCTION OF BRISBANE-KYOGLE RAILWAY LINK.

Mr. BELL (*Fassifern*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. Referring to the recent conference between the Commonwealth, Queensland, and New South Wales delegates relative to the proposed Brisbane-Kyogle railway link, will he furnish particulars of the understanding reached?"

"2. Is it probable that this railway will be commenced at an early date?"

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

"1 and 2. This matter is still under consideration."

PAPERS.

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

Report of the Inquiry Board appointed to inquire into and report upon the statements made in the Legislative Assembly on 29th August, 1923, by Mr. F. A. Cooper, M.L.A., regarding the administration of the Railway Workshops at Ipswich?

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Minutes of proceedings and minutes of evidence taken before the above-named Board.

HOSPITALS BILL.

INITIATION.

HON. F. T. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*): I beg to move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make better provision for the maintenance, management, and regulation of hospitals, and for other purposes.”

Question put and passed.

COTTON INDUSTRY BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

MR. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): Two most important phases crop up in this measure. Firstly, it has to do with the development of our natural resources, and all such measures are of the utmost importance; secondly, it introduces a very drastic feature of control—I might almost say coercion.

Dealing with the first question—its bearing upon our primary productiveness and prosperity—there is no getting away from the fact that this industry has come into prominence in Queensland at a most opportune time. We know that it is most urgent that we should get our waste places settled, and we have arrived at the point in connection with our primary products which are dependent upon our own market at which our home market is already fully supplied or there is very little margin left. This applies to such crops as maize, potatoes, sugar-cane, and so on. There are other industries such as wool, meat, butter—and now we have cotton—that are salable on the markets of the world, and I think that the proper utilisation of our lands, now unproductive, lies in the growth of such products that are not now applied to any purpose. I might point out that as each of these industries develops it helps those industries which are dependent on local markets. As those engaged in these industries increase in number, so do the markets increase for those crops whose opportunity for sale is limited to local demands. Furthermore, more particularly in connection with this industry, it seems to me that at the present time there is an Empire need. We know that unemployment is dreadfully rife in Great Britain, and we also know that the cause for that partly lies in the fact that the factories, more particularly in the textile industries, are unable to get a full supply of raw material, and by the fact that the purchasing power of some of our customers on the Continent of Europe is restricted by the troubles that are occurring there. As regards the first cause—the want of raw material—this industry is going to supply a marked need in that regard. As bearing upon this feature, I would like to draw the attention of the House to some recent utterances in England of Mr. Bruce, the Federal Prime Minister. This question is most keenly acute at the present time, and I find that, according to a cablegram from London, Mr. Bruce, in a newspaper interview, said—

“I was filled with indignation at the spectacle of distress and unemployment,

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and of so many British families on the bread line, when we had a vast Empire lying idle for want of development. We must cure these ills and improve the life and prospects of every British citizen.”

That is the position there. On the same point I quote a cable of the 12th October with reference to the control of cotton—

“A demand for the revival of the Cotton Control Board was made at a meeting of prominent representatives of the export section of the Lancashire trade. The speakers pointed out that the development of cotton-growing within the Empire was the solution of the Lancashire raw material difficulty, but seven years must elapse before the Empire grown cotton would have an appreciable effect.”

That bears out the point I have just made, that expansion of the industry is one of the factors by which the unemployed difficulty could be relieved on the other side of the world; and whilst I am on this subject, I should like to refer to Mr. Bruce's utterances regarding the stabilisation of prices of this and other commodities, since they may be regarded as in accord with one of the main features of the policy of the Country party. Mr. Bruce said—

“He referred to the great combines handling the foodstuffs of the people of Australia, and took the view that we should have our own products, and should have the first rights to our own market, and we recognised the British producers should have the same rights, but in so far as the British farmer was unable to supply the British requirements, then the Dominion producers should be placed in a position to supply the deficit.”

Later on he said—

“The method he would suggest was stabilisation. Fluctuations only benefited the middleman. The producer rarely received the whole value of the increase, but the consumer invariably paid it.”

The same argument would apply to the raw material. The stabilisation of prices has always been a prominent plank in the platform of the Country party, and I would like to point out that, if the prices of this product could be stabilised on a basis which would be remunerative to the producers here, there would be no difficulty in providing employment in Queensland for thousands of the unemployed of Great Britain in producing a crop here which in turn would help to keep their fellows at work in the factories on the other side of the world. So that, I am quite satisfied that this question comes up at a most opportune moment in respect of the great problem which is causing so much concern to our statesmen. The opportunity was taken last week by the Country party to send a cablegram to Mr. Bruce congratulating him upon his utterances in this respect, and pointing out that the cotton industry was one which particularly lent itself to action along the lines he then indicated.

We must realise the importance of the question with which we are dealing, and we must not lose sight of the great need that every action we take on this matter is well thought out and is only taken with a full conviction of its wisdom, and that it is not forced upon us merely by circumstances. In introducing the Bill the Minister pointed out that cotton would be readily salable in

the markets of the world, but we know that once it gets outside of Australia—unless some arrangement such as was foreshadowed by Mr. Bruce can be arrived at—we shall be open to all sorts of competition. The cost of production, therefore, is a matter that must be kept prominently in our minds.

Coming to the drastic feature of the Bill which I have mentioned, it is provided that the farmer shall be prevented to a great extent from growing cotton in the manner which he believes to be most suitable to his requirements, the conditions of his district, and so on. I say that before any interference of this kind is imposed by legislation, the fullest investigation should be made. On this point almost the whole Bill—at any rate, the chief question in it—is the prohibition imposed on the growers against growing ratoon crops. I think we all recognise that, if there is a practice which is to the detriment of the whole industry, it should be prevented.

I have listened keenly as an agriculturist to the discussion that has taken place on this matter, but it has not yet been proved conclusively that such action is necessary. It has been stated that this action should be taken so that the sale of ratoon cotton will not detrimentally affect the whole of our cotton output. It has also been stated that such action is necessary to prevent the introduction of pests. The latter contention is absolutely nonsensical. How can the growth of ratoon cotton increase the pests when they are not already in existence? To talk about the increase in the boll weevil is simply wasting breath. The boll weevil which has injured the cotton industry in the United States does not exist in Queensland, therefore the fact of growing ratoon cotton is not going to bring it here. There are other pests which are in existence, therefore the whole point is whether the growing of ratoon cotton is likely to encourage an increase in pests we already have.

Let me come to the matter of quality, and whether the growing of ratoon cotton will result in the injury of the sale of our cotton product as a whole. I think we have no evidence that such would be the case. I have here a letter which appeared in the Mackay "Daily Mercury" of 9th October, written by a neighbour of mine, Mr. McClymon, who comes from Manchester, who has worked in the industry there, and who would not say anything he was not sure about. The letter says—

" . . . Cotton is manufactured into a thousand different varieties of articles. From voiles and delaines to lampwick is a good range, also from cambrics to corduroy and moleskin, dhooties, Indian shirting, flannelettes, guncotton, etc., etc., so that you can scarcely class butter and cotton as parallel cases. I have passed thirty years of my life in Manchester and district, and a good portion of that was in the cotton industry, and I never met anyone who could enumerate the variety of articles manufactured from cotton. We have recently had a visit of a party of glorified company promoters, accepted by the Government as delegates and the last word in the cotton industry. This party did not represent the spinners and manufacturers of Lancashire, but an associated company, and not a dominant one at that. They succeeded in drawing the

cotton over the eyes of the Minister, Council and Director of Agriculture, and even of the Governor and the Premier, and in spite of anything the Under Secretary for Agriculture may say, they have got the monopolistic control of our cotton crop for a term of three years—*i.e.*, until 31st July, 1925—on most advantageous terms for themselves at the expense of the industry. I think I am correct in saying they have the ginning of the cotton at an increased price of 25 per cent., and I know that the commission for the sale of the cotton is 66 per cent. above the usual commission paid. Not too bad at all for the delegates, but what about the growers? These delegates, not satisfied with the bargain made with the Queensland Government, when their advice was sought *re* ratoon cotton, which is an unknown quantity to them, and apparently not wanting to have the trouble of putting it on the market, instead of admitting their ignorance, followed the well-known railway axiom, 'when in doubt, stop.' They cried 'Stop!', and the Government accepted their dictum and vetoed the growing of ratoon cotton.

" Now, Mr. Editor, this really resolves itself into two questions, the first and most important being, Will ratooning encourage the pests and be a source of danger to the plant crop and the industry generally? This should be decided from a Queensland viewpoint, and with the assistance of our own entomologists, and not an American view of it. (There were some sinister rumours about the boll weevil a few years ago.)"

He goes on to point out the great number of varieties of cotton used, and the use to which such cotton can be put.

Let me again return to the question of the different grades of cotton, and whether the growth of some of them, which may not be as good as others, could affect the sale of the best quality cotton. Has it been so in the case of the wool industry? Does the fact that the wool sweepings off the shearing floors are collected and baled affect the sales of the best merino wools? It does not. There is wool for all classes of buyers. All that is necessary is to see that the buyer is not deceived as to quality. It has not been shown yet that ratoon cotton is inferior. The evidence has been rather the other way. If it was inferior, compulsion should be used to compel the grower to bale it separately and sell it as ratoon cotton, and then the buyer could not complain. I have some correspondence bearing on the question whether it is inferior in value. I have a letter written to Mr. A. J. MacDonald, Sydney, by Messrs. M. H. McFadden and Co., Chestnut street, Philadelphia, dated 8th September, 1920, furnishing a copy of the value of Queensland cotton. A list of eight varieties of Queensland cotton is given, and seven of them are ratoon. The letter says—

" They mention that out of 12,000,000 bales grown in the United States only 1,000,000 bales are more than 1½ inch in length. Australian cotton more than 1½ inch should be able to compete with Egyptian, Peruvian, and American long staples. Therefore we urge growing long staples in your country."

Then, again, I have a letter received by

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Mr. Daniel Jones. While I am on this subject I would like to speak, with other speakers, of the debt we owe to Mr. Jones in connection with the cotton industry. For many years he has unceasingly impressed upon us the great possibilities that exist for Queensland in this connection. His advocacy for years has been borne out by the position of the industry to-day. Seeing his advice has been so good and effective in the past, we may do worse than follow his advice at the present juncture. The reference by the Minister to him was uncalled for. He spoke of him as a hard-headed practical farmer, who could not be regarded as an expert. We have experts and experts. I remember we had an expert connected with the sugar industry who was paid a salary of £3,000 per annum, and I am perfectly sure he did not earn his salary. I also know of my own experience that, although we have known of very able men who have been styled experts, many people have been led into trouble through acting on the advice of others also termed experts. I wish to quote this letter Mr. Jones received from Messrs. MacDonald and Co., manufacturers' agents and importers, Sydney, written on 16th September, 1920—

"I submitted the samples you gave me to the largest cotton operators in the United States of America, and they were much impressed and surprised. They have written me a long letter and placed a value on every sample, but I want to submit it to you personally and discuss it with you."

These are the values I have just referred to. They run from 2s. 8d. to 1s. 3d. per lb.—

"My friends are of undoubted integrity and their financial standing is of the highest, and the samples you gave me have been subjected to close examination in their laboratories. They have buyers in Egypt, India, Peru, and other cotton-producing countries, and finance plantations, etc. The proposition they make is on the basis of buying the cotton straight out."

Seven out of the samples referred to are ratoon cotton. I have here another letter received by Mr. Daniel Jones from John Atkins, of 13 St. Ann street, Manchester, under date 6th August, 1906. He speaks of high-grade cotton raised by Mr. Jones as being of "very bright, good colour, the staple of regular length and fairly fine." That was in 1906, when prices were much lower than they are at the present time, and again the cotton referred to is ratoon cotton. Further on the same correspondent says—

"But I can assure you that, in my opinion, there is better business for the grower in my friends' proposition than there is hanging over the cotton at a flat rate to any Association."

Coming now to America, where it is stated they have no ratoon cotton, I shall quote the official report of the College of Agriculture in California. It is headed "Agricultural Experimental Station, University of California, 1st July, 1922," and reads—

"Experiments with sucker cotton were reported by Mackie and Gear from the Imperial Valley Experiment Station. Seeded cotton, and first-year sucker crop and third-year sucker crop of the Pima long staple Egyptian cotton, grown in 1921, gave the following results:—A number of the cotton plants died out as

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the age increased. The strength and quality of the fibre were unaffected when good conditions of culture were maintained.

"The second-year sucker crop was the heaviest and the plants earliest to mature, as well as the largest in size.

"The tensile strength of the lint is being tested as lint and as cloth."

Mr. Longfield Smith, Agronomist in charge of the Virgin Islands Experiment Station, in a report issued on 23rd May, 1921, said—

"Sea Island cotton crossed with St. Croix Native gave good results the first year they were tried in the first generation, as the plants were almost immune from blister mite.

"Furthermore, it was found that the plants could be ratooned and thus made to give large yields the second year."

O. F. Cook, in a report on "Results of Cotton Experiments in 1911," says—

"The utility of hybrids would be increased if two or more crops of cotton could be obtained from the same plants. The winters of Southern California are not cold enough to kill the roots, and the Egyptian cotton has the habit of forming subterranean shoots when the stalks are frozen to the surface of the ground below the level of the original seed leaves."

The College of Agriculture, University of California, Berkeley, in "Circular No. 121," issued in October, 1914, says—

"Volunteering cotton from year to year has proved to be a profitable practice and is being followed quite extensively. If rows are ridged up well in the last cultivation, the earth about the stem prevents the freezing of the buds and a good stand is secured without re-seeding, while if not ridged many of the plants are killed."

The next letter is from Liverpool. It reads—

"With reference to a sample of ratoon cotton from Western Australia. Messrs. Tanner, Boxwell, Son, and Company, of Liverpool, write under date 10th January, 1923:—'We are in receipt of your samples of cotton, for which we thank you. We have carefully examined the cotton and find it to be of good staple but rather brown in colour and would compete with brown Egyptian. We have no doubt that cotton of this quality would find a ready sale in this market, and on to-day's prices would be valued about 15½d. per lb. With reference to your remarks that some visitors from Lancashire passed through your district and that they condemned perennial cotton, saying that spinners would not use it, we must express our surprise, as we cannot agree with them on this point.

"We handle very largely Peruvian and Brazilian cotton, all of which is perennially grown and is grown in all countries where the plant will stand the rigours of winter. Should the opportunity arise of your being able to consign any cotton to this market for sale, we shall have much pleasure in handling it for you."

The next letter is from Messrs. Nicholson and Wrigley, and deals with the value of ratoon cotton. It is from Liverpool, and is dated 18th July, 1923, and reads—

"We are in receipt of your favour

of yesterday's date with enclosures, also the two small samples of Queensland cotton. These samples are too small to say much about, but we see no reason why Lancashire should not use this cotton if it came here. We understand the great objection to ratooned-grown cotton is disease"—

I have already given opinions to the contrary—

"and that is the reason it is not allowed to be ginned in the same gins as the annual grown cotton. The same kind of machine would certainly do.

"If similar cotton were here to-day and as regular in staples as these small samples appear to be, we think No. 2 would be worth 15d. to 16d. per lb., and the other about 1d. less."

In a letter dated 27th July, 1923, the same firm write—

"In further reference to your letter of the 17th instant with regard to the sample of Queensland cotton, we have gone very carefully into the matter with one or two spinners, and we do not see any difficulty in using this in Lancashire. The value they put upon the same is No. 1 about 12½d. and No. 2 13½d., as this will compare with middling American which is bought in September-October, to-day's price being 12.72 to 13.

"No. 2, they make to be 50 points better than No. 1. The sample you send is small to pass an opinion on, and our spinners suggest that you get a sample of a few bales made, which they guarantee to dispose of."

That is in regard to the attempt that is being made to restrict the growing of cotton in Queensland to annual cotton. The correspondence which I have quoted shows that there are markets for all cottons.

[4 p.m.] I have here a paragraph from the "Wool Letter" published in the "Brisbane Courier" on the 27th November, 1922, which says—

"Peru cotton is a favourite for blending with wool and mungo, as it approaches more nearly to the wool fibre than any other class of cotton, being the roughest of its kind. For this reason woollen manufacturers buy Peru cotton in preference to either Egyptian or American cotton.

"American cotton when blended with wool and mungo makes a somewhat hard-handling piece; but that is not the case when Peru cotton is used. If the Queensland fibre is of the same species as Peru it would do admirably for the woollen trade, and this is a point well worth studying by those interested in the sale of Queensland-grown cotton."

I mention that Peruvian cotton is a perennial, and, therefore, is ratooned. In a subsequent article the same writer mentions the fact that the production of this class of cotton should be the first object of the Queensland grower. In speaking of tree cotton he also refers to the high return. I have already given reasons why it is not wise to place the whole thing in the hands of one small section of buyers, and it is pointed out in the letters I have read that there is a market other than the Lancashire market. There is a market in Bradford, where they manufacture fabrics composed partly of wool and partly of cotton, and it appears to me that an attempt

is being made to limit our output to the requirements of one small section of manufacturers in Great Britain, and as far as possible to prevent Queensland from growing other kinds of cotton that would be suitable for the requirements of other people. As I have already pointed out, if different kinds of cotton were allowed to be grown in Queensland, it could be made compulsory to keep each kind separate, and, if the growers were compelled to describe fully the quality and description of the cotton on the bales or packages, that would prevent the presence of one variety on the market being detrimental to the sale of another variety. Each variety could be sold on its merits just the same as each variety of wool is sold on its merits. Why I lay so much stress on this question of ratooning is that, being engaged in agriculture myself, I realise the advantage in our variable climate, with the dry seasons we have from time to time, of having a crop in the ground that we know will give us a return no matter how dry the season may be. If the growers are allowed to ratoon, they will not have to run the risk every year of the seed germinating, and that risk will have to be encountered every time the seed is sown; but if the roots are already established in the ground that risk will be obviated. I have a letter here from the Central district which deals with this phase of the question very clearly. The letter is written by Mr. Pearson, and it says—

"I also intend to allow all my crop to ratoon and devote my time to plant more land. I think if those folk understood how hard it is to get an early germination of seed they would perhaps alter their opinion. I think nearly everyone here intends to do as I will, as this gives us something to fall back on if planting fails."

I sometimes wonder when people talk about ratooning whether they really understand what is meant by that word. I am told that ratooning is when you cut the bushes down to the level of the ground. On level ground that can be done with a mowing machine very cheaply, but, of course, when the cotton is planted on scrub country that has not been grubbed the ratooning will have to be done with a cane knife or something of that sort. After the plants are cut down they are burnt off, and that does away with any risk from pests. Mr. William Soutter, a well-known horticulturist in Queensland, in a letter published in the "Courier" of to-day's date, dealing with the system of ratooning of cotton, says—

"I have yet to learn that the act of pruning the cotton plant reduces either the length or strength of the staple. All the traditions relative to the use of the pruning knife since the dawn of history have been eloquently in favour of the pruning knife as an aid to the betterment and constitutional development of plants, increased fecundity, better quality of flowers, fruit (seed), and other characteristics; and the cotton plant is no exception to this."

Mr. Daniel Jones, in a letter published in the "Courier" recently, deals with the risk of pests as a result of ratooning, and from what he writes, instead of ratooning encouraging pests, the reverse is the case. Ratooning apparently minimises the risk of pests. This is what Mr. Jones says—

"With respect to the fear of breeding

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pests, it is remarkable that in the Central American States, where ratooning is practised, the original home of the dreaded boll weevil, the ravages of this pest are not nearly so much in evidence as in the United States, where cotton is annually sown."

I feel quite sure Mr. Jones would not have said it unless he was sure of his facts. If he is correct, it destroys the Minister's case. The letter continues—

"This is the evidence of the better disease-resisting character of ratooned cotton—the general experience in Queensland and New Caledonia for the last thirty years or more. If ratooning is further discouraged it will be difficult to put our scrub areas into profit, as it will not pay to clear the land for only one crop of cotton."

It most certainly will not, because it will not pay to plant every year while stumps are still in the ground, and it is a matter of years before you can burn or grub the stumps out. The letter goes on to say—

"Had those unfortunate farmers who unwisely ploughed out their plant cotton acted otherwise, there would now be no need for the Government, as requested by the Dawson Valley representatives, to provide relief for distressed growers."

I have not time to read all the correspondence which I have here bearing on the question, but I might refer to a letter written by Mr. J. J. O'Brien, who was a field officer of the British Cotton Growing Association. Writing from Yeppoon on 26th April, 1919, before we had this scare, he said—

"In the Central district it can be grown as a perennial; the frost, serving as a natural pruner, keeps the plant at a workable height. It is sufficient to replant every five years."

I think I have shown that most certainly there is a case for further investigation before we shut down definitely in regard to the matter of ratooning, as it is proposed to do in this measure. But there is another phase also which presents itself to my mind, and that is the question as to the wisdom of tying ourselves up to one buyer only. As far as I can gather, the reason given by the Minister was the fact that the Association were prepared to spend £100,000 in the erection of ginneries. In the case of a Government who have so much money to spend—they are spending something like £23,000,000 or £24,000,000 per annum—for the sake of £100,000 is there any reason why we should limit the buyers of this great product to one buyer only? In the '90's, when the legislation was passed which led to the establishment of the big sugar mills which have done so much for Queensland, what would have been said if, in connection with those mills, which were going to cost £500,000 or £600,000, the then Government had gone to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and said, "You build the mills and we will give you a monopoly of all the sugar-cane grown." In 1911, when the Denham Government spent £800,000 or £900,000 on sugar mills, if they had said, "We will not spend the money, but we will get the Colonial Sugar Refining Company or some other big company to build the mills for us and give them a monopoly of all the cane in the area," what a howl there would have been! Yet for the sake of assistance to the extent of £100,000

we are being placed in this position with regard to cotton. The Minister told us that, when he grew cane for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, he was limited to certain varieties of cane. I also grew cane for the company, and I say that the limitation was not always a wise one. We get far better results now in the cane industry when we sell according to quality. There is no compulsion now, yet the quality of cane is far higher than it was when this arrangement obtained. That is because the growers are paid by results, and they know that, if they do not grow a salable article or an article which is worth a fair sum, it will not pay them. The quality of cane under such a system as that is much better than it ever was before. Why could the matter not have been left to work out on the same lines in regard to cotton? I am quite sure that, if ratooning is done properly and the bushes are all burnt after being ratooned, it will kill all the insects there are.

I think we can dispose of that feature of the subject. So far as sale is concerned, once the grower had ratooned cotton left on his hands which he could not sell, he would not grow any more, and that would put an end to the difficulty, just the same as the difficulty in selling some kinds of sugar-cane has put an end to the growing of those varieties. I think that those should have been the lines to work on in connection with cotton.

We have evidence from many quarters in America of the value of ratooned cotton. We have information of its value furnished not only from Bradford and other parts of Yorkshire, but also from Manchester itself where the Cotton Delegation came from, and from other firms there who, I understand, are of repute in the cotton manufacturing industry, showing that they are giving a definite price for ratooned cotton. I do not think the value is below that of seedling cotton. However, if it was found that by ratooning you would reduce your cost of production by fully one-third if not one-half, it would be a great advantage, and probably many growers where the climate is variable would find it paid them to grow cotton slightly less in value because they would be sure of the crop, and would perhaps have two crops of ratooned where they would only have one crop of the other. That should be borne in mind.

Many criticisms have been made on the drastic character of this proposed legislation. I would like to read another utterance by Mr. Daniel Jones, who is an expert in this matter and possesses a good local knowledge. He has not only had experience as a grower, but I understand was connected with the cotton mill in Ipswich many years ago, so that I take it that he has experience and knowledge of both sides of the question. I wish to quote from "The Cotton Farmer" of 15th May, 1923, the following article:—

"SENTENCED WITHOUT TRIAL."

"GIVE THE RATOON A HEARING!"

"In the first place, the ban on ratooned cotton does not appear to be general even among cotton men in Liverpool, it being authoritatively stated that practically the whole of the Peruvian and Brazilian cotton is from ratooned plants, and there is no argument about placing it on the market. Brazil produced 75,000 metric tons of cotton in 1919, and 119,500 tons in 1920. Of the latter crop 24,696 tons were exported, and was valued at

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£5,502,000, realising an average of 24d. per lb., the average price of American seed cotton in that year being much less per lb. Peru produced 33,588 metric tons of lint from 226,160 acres in 1919, which works out at 308.7 lb. of lint or 925.1 lb. of seed cotton per acre, which it must be admitted is a very fair average for an outlaw. The value of her cotton exports was £6,656,845 in 1919, and £4,533,216 greater in the following year, so that growing the ratoon is a vigorous and lucrative proposition there. Of the total exports from Peru 29.2 per cent. went to Great Britain, and 8.2 per cent. of the total from Brazil went there also.

"An industry that produces an export value of £11,196,061, as in the case of Peru—£3,268,000 of which found its way to the English market, where it is now stated the same kind of Queensland cotton would be denied—is worthy of consideration, whether it comes off a bush that is only five or six months old or from the same bush that is allowed to grow until it is just over a year old. The value of ratoon cotton exported from Peru is nearly a third of the total exports, and there would be consternation if the same excommunication were tried there as has been put into effect in Queensland.

"Climatically, there is a marked similarity between the climate of Brazil and Peru and that of Queensland."

It seems to me that we are likely to be too much influenced on this question by what is done in the United States, but everybody knows that in the United States there is no ratooning of sugar-cane for a very good reason. Would a sugar farmer in Queensland pay any attention to a sugar farmer from the United States who came here and said, "You must not ratoon your sugar-cane, because we do not ratoon in the United States"? We know that the climatic conditions of the two places are different, and that they enable us to ratoon sugar-cane successfully here and not there. In Java they do not ratoon for another reason altogether, and what reason would we have for taking notice of a Java sugar-grower who told us, "You must not ratoon your sugar-cane"?

Cotton-growing is not a new industry in Queensland. The growing of cotton just now is a recrudescence of an old industry, and it is a recrudescence on a large scale I am pleased to see, and I would be the last to wish that anything I have said or quoted would be detrimental to it; but, at the same time, we have sufficient experience of what has happened in the past to know what we are likely to be able to do in the future. Is it desirable that once a crop has been established successfully a prohibition should be put upon it? It seems to me that once it has been proved that it can produce a salable article, it is most unwise to cut it right out, especially as it appears that, owing to the climatic conditions in certain districts, it is difficult to grow plant cotton every year, and in some years there may be no germination. At any rate, it seems to be most unwise to cut out such an industry unless the case against it has been proved right up to the hilt, which, in this instance, it most certainly has not.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I have followed the varied speeches of hon. members

very carefully. I take it that this is one of the subjects on which every person who is anxious to do the best for Queensland should act altogether in a non-party way, and I want any remarks of mine to be considered in that light. I feel that, at any rate, we are discussing a Bill which has for one of its objects the benefit of an industry of the State, although there may be many differences of opinion regarding its provisions.

It is interesting to recall the variety of opinion which has been expressed on this question. The Minister was most emphatic as to what he believed was right in the interests of Queensland and of the industry, and he went to very considerable trouble in placing information before the House in support of his view. He was followed by the hon. member for Burnett, who opened the debate for this side, who went very fully into the question and very largely argued on the other side, that is, in favour of ratooning. Those two speakers were followed by others who sought to put before the Chamber the opinions which they held. I take it that both the hon. members to whom I have particularly referred have performed a very considerable duty to the House, because I am sure that every hon. member is glad to have information of this character, some of it from the standpoint taken up by the Minister and the rest of it largely from the standpoint adopted by the hon. member for Burnett.

There have been points of agreement in the remarks of all hon. members. I have not risen this afternoon to profess for one moment that I can direct the House in the best course, because I am not a man who actually has to do with the cultivation of crops, and therefore it would be out of place for me to say what I think should be done in this matter. But there have been phases of the question on which both sides can agree. We all believe that the cotton industry is most important to the State. Queensland does need new industries, and anything in the direction of creating or assisting a new industry is worthy of our consideration. There has been a consensus of opinion on that point, and I assume that no difference of opinion whatever will be disclosed during the remainder of the debate.

Hon. members, too, believe that the question is a national one. I think I shall be able to show before I sit down that it is national in more senses than one—that it is national from the Australian point of view as well as from the Queensland point of view, and—let me say as an Empire man—that it is national from an Empire point of view. We must recognise that it concerns not only Queensland but other parts of the Empire as well.

I think the Minister said that there are millions of acres in Queensland suitable for the growth of cotton. I do not know whether that is correct. Let us hope that it is so. It appears that there is an unlimited market, and if that is also true and the price is a fair one—because that is the crux of the position—the conditions seem in our favour. We may have lands that can grow a great deal of cotton, but if there is no market for it at a payable price, it is not much use producing it. If there are millions of acres suitable for the growth of cotton, it is a good thing for Queensland. I believe that we shall discover in the case of cotton what I believe

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will be found to be true in the case of other primary industries. I think, for instance, that land which we are not now using for wheat-growing will be found suitable for that purpose, to the very great advantage of Queensland.

But, whilst one may agree that there is a great deal of land available for the cultivation of cotton, it is essential, as the Minister said, that we should start right. I think that was really the stand the Minister took in opposition to the ratooning of cotton.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: He insisted that no mistake should be made at the outset by the men engaged in the industry—that they should start off on a footing which would be absolutely sound so that there would be no doubt whatever on that score as to their success. He also remarked that it was necessary that we should produce the best article. With that I agree. I believe that in the past Australia has lost a very great deal because she has not been careful enough in that regard. I believe that quite a number of persons who have had to do with Australian trade—I do not say intentionally—have perhaps unintentionally produced an article which has not been the best article for the market they have supplied.

I agree with the Minister that it is essential that we should produce absolutely the best article, and I am sure everyone will agree on that point. There are

[4.30 p.m.] points on which we all agree.

I take it that no one would hesitate for a moment to say that the production and the growth of wool in Queensland are most vital. We must agree that that is one of those industries which is vital to us and has very much to do with our welfare. A comparison has been made between wool and cotton. I submit that we know exactly what wool means to us, but unfortunately it does sometimes happen that, when we get to the top of the tree with regard to wool, a drought comes along and the flocks perish, which is a national loss. We must admit that there is an increasing demand for cotton. It is one of those things for which there will always be a big demand not only in Australia and the British-speaking countries, but in other countries of the world. There seems to be a considerable difference of opinion, but we are told that there is an increasing desire on the part of cotton spinners and millers in the old country to avoid risks which are said to be attached to ratoon cotton. I say again that I am not in a position to speak on ratoon cotton, other than that I know there has been a difference of opinion in this House in regard to the matter. What is the position to-day in Queensland? I would like the Minister to follow me very closely in this regard. We have to admit that the hon. member for Burnett voiced the feelings of a great number of people in the community who want to grow ratoon cotton. They do not want to be prevented from growing ratoon cotton.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Only 4½ per cent. of the growers of Queensland desire that.

At 4.33 p.m..

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES, Mr. Kirwan (Brisbane), took the chair as Deputy Speaker.

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HON. W. H. BARNES: I want to point out that there have been influences at work in this direction. One of the strongest influences that has been at work, the Minister must admit, is that the men who are going to continue to grow ratoon cotton are not going to be paid the same rate as other men. When you touch the pocket—it may be that parliamentarians do not mind the pocket question at all—generally you touch a very vital point indeed.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is a very sensitive part.

HON. W. H. BARNES: So it is, I take it, in connection with the people who want to grow ratoon cotton. Then we are told that the Lanca-hire cotton spinners object to ratoon cotton. What are the reasons for the objection? Some say that it is not long enough in staple; some say there are other reasons why they should object to it; but the real reason which the Minister has furnished this House has been that he is afraid of the pests which will get into ratoon cotton.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No. I said that, in my opinion, was a secondary objection. My first objection was the inferior quality.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I must accept the Minister's statement that that is a secondary objection. What is the position with regard to this matter? I heard the hon. member for Burnett drawing attention to the fact that some of the ratoon cotton displayed at the Brisbane Exhibition received first place because of its quality.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The question is who was the judge?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am exceedingly sorry that the Minister should take up that stand. I do not know who the judge was.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is very important.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have judged products at the Exhibition, and I am perfectly certain that nothing would deter me from judging in the way that I believe to be right—I am now placing myself in the position of the cotton judge—I would judge according to what I believed to be right.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Quite so; but you are not a cotton grader.

HON. W. H. BARNES: No; I would not undertake a task that I did not understand.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the point.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I claim that I personally would do what I believed to be right, and I must give that credit to every other man who is a judge.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not for a moment reflecting on the honesty of the judge.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I accept the Minister's assurance. If he is not in any way reflecting upon the judge, then the other inference is—I hope I am not misjudging the Minister—that the judge was not capable, or that he was prejudiced in favour of ratoon cotton.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not say that he was prejudiced, but I say that he was not capable. I say that, because so far as I know there were no cotton graders in Australia at the time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not know the judge from Adam, but if he did not understand what he was doing, he should not have undertaken the work. I would like to say further that I think the Minister is wrong in suggesting that at a big show like the Brisbane Exhibition those responsible would appoint anyone who did not understand what he was doing. The Government say they are out to safeguard the industry and protect it from pests. During the debate we have been told that a certain amount of ignorance has prevailed in connection with ratoon cotton more particularly, and it has even been suggested that, if investigation was made into the pests and diseases which have in other lands attacked what is known to them as ratoon cotton, it would be found that that ratoon cotton is not at all the same as Queensland ratoon cotton; in other words, that the visitors from the old land have made a mistake so far as ratoon cotton in Queensland is concerned. I would suggest that in the interests of the industry a special inquiry should be made as to the danger of growing ratoon cotton or otherwise. Supposing there is a grave element of danger connected with it and that it is going to spread disease, who are the people who are going to suffer as a result of that? Why the farmers themselves! The man who grows it is the person who is going to suffer. The Minister must realise that there are people just as earnest as he is—I take it that the Minister is earnest—and he should take some steps to see where ratoon cotton is being grown now. That should be specially protected. The Government should spend a little money in protecting it and see what the result is going to be. We must bear in mind that, if it turns out all right, there is going to be less work with it than there would be in planting cotton year after year. Surely it should be a strong argument as to why action should be taken by the Government. In connection with sugar—I am not saying that the Government have not interfered with the sugar industry, but I know what I am speaking about in connection with it—I remember that when I was Treasurer there was some kind of cane that did not produce sufficient sugar to warrant people continuing to grow it, and naturally the people who were cultivating it realised that it would not pay them to cultivate it any further. Therefore the Minister, in the interests of both sides—keeping absolutely impartial and not being influenced by gentlemen like Colonel Evans—I am not making any reflection on Colonel Evans—should take the matter in hand and see that no prejudice shall be allowed to step in in any way to annoy or irritate or cast out that which may be the very best thing to retain in the interests of us all—namely, ratoon cotton.

We cannot pass lightly by the fact that there are those who have been associated with the industry for a long period who say that the Minister is wrong. That being so, if I were in the position of the Minister, I would be very careful and would go into the whole matter to see that the objection was either fully substantiated or that the other side received a fair go. What are the objects of the Bill? The primary object is to seek to help the industry in Queensland. As I said in my opening remarks, we should deal with it in the broadest possible way, not only as it benefits Queensland but as it benefits the Empire. The hon. member for Mirani made

reference, and rightly so, to the effect that a shortage of cotton has on the industry in the old country. The trouble in Lancashire many years ago, when there was so much unemployment, was due to shortage of cotton. In looking at the question to-day we have to feel that we are part and parcel of the Empire, and we should seek not only to benefit ourselves but the industries of the Empire as a whole. If by benefiting ourselves we can assist the old land, we shall be doing a signal Imperial service. We are linked up with the old land, and we have a right to help it. As far back as 1898, 34,000,000 lb. of cotton were imported from foreign countries into Britain. There is therefore a duty cast on us to do our best by the industry. The Minister—I speak subject to correction—said in his speech that the value of the output last year in Queensland was £250,000.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was slightly over that.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If the crop was worth that, why should we not aim not only to have £250,000 worth produced, but to go on year by year increasing the production, especially when there is such an unlimited market? (Hear, hear!) It is important to place the industry on a sound footing. The cotton industry can only be maintained in Queensland or anywhere else so long as the price is sufficiently good.

Reference was made this afternoon to the fact that years ago we had the industry in Queensland. We know how the mills were subsidised by the Government of the day to try to keep the industry going. All about Ipswich were a number of ginneries, and Messrs. G. H. Wilson and Co. had a mill there. Cotton was grown at that time on all the vacant land in the vicinity of Ipswich and Booval. The industry went out of existence at that time largely because the price did not pay to cultivate it. Past Governments spent a lot of money in connection with the industry.

I have read the Bill very carefully. I notice that its objects briefly are—a guaranteed price; the Minister wants to guarantee a price in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government to ratify an agreement that has been made; to make advances; and to deal with pests as they arise. The Bill gives very drastic powers in that direction. Inspectors have power which, if they are not wisely used, may become an instrument of danger to the people engaged in the industry. Care will have to be taken when appointing inspectors to see not only that they are not dealers in cotton—because the Bill says they must not be dealers—but that they understand it. The Minister said that the judges at a certain show probably did not understand what they were judging. Where are we going to get people who understand the pests and different things that crop up in connection with this crop if we are fortunate enough to have it? The penalties seem to me to be very extreme. A penalty of £1,000 or imprisonment for one year is provided for infringements of certain provisions of the Act. That seems to be a terribly extreme penalty. I do not know what the opinions of hon. members on this side of the House are as to this legislation, but to me it is rather going to the extreme, and is going to deter people from entering the industry. I hope that the Minister will

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see that the penalty and imprisonment are reduced. The Government are to be given an absolute free hand under the Bill. Once it is passed they can do absolutely what they like. They are in a position to make an advance of £4d. per lb. on all cotton grown on areas not exceeding 50 acres. I am not quite sure about that clause. I understood the Minister to say that the Government paid out last season £50,000 in order to assist the industry.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, roughly that amount.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If a big industry is to be established, then the men who are prepared to come in and who are willing to help the industry should be made to realise that the Government are not going to hamper them right at the very jump. There should be no stipulation as to the area. I notice that the Government are given full power to sell the crop. I also notice that the owners have to carry out at the point of the revolver, figuratively speaking, whatever the inspectors direct them to do. The inspectors have absolute immunity from being proceeded against when taking any action under the Bill. They may not, however, have this immunity—I am speaking as a peaceful man, and do not advocate this method—when they probably have to deal with an irritated farmer who may resort to fisticuffs.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It will be a survival of the fittest then.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not believe in that. In this connection I might relate a little story that came to my knowledge when I happened to be Secretary for Public Instruction. An itinerant school teacher asked a station owner if he could take a short cut through the station property. The proprietor, or manager, said "No: you are not a friend of mine; you will have to go round." The station man, looking at him in the buggy—he was a big fellow, 6 feet high, said, "You are no good, and if you get out of that trap I will show you that you are no good." The teacher said in his note to me, "What could I do but get down? I got down, and I was able to show him that I was some good. (Laughter.) He then turned to me and said, 'You can go through now. It is all right, and you can go through whenever you want to in future.'" I suppose the Minister would not approve of such conduct. I wrote across the paper: "Ordinarily the Minister would not approve of such conduct, but in this case the end justifies the means."

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is necessary to get down to first principles sometimes.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The inspectors will be wise, when performing their duties, not to irritate men who are having hard times. I pity the man on the land.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The inspectors will get a bad time from the Minister if they embarrass the farmers.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am glad of that, and take credit for having elicited that intimation from the Minister.

MR. GLEDSON (Ipswich): I desire first of all to congratulate the Minister on the valuable information that he gave to the House, and also to congratulate the deputy leader of the Country party for the very able address that he made on this Bill. I have been very

much interested in the cotton business for a number of years and have carefully watched proceedings. I am surprised by the remarks made by the hon. member for Wynnum in the latter portion of his speech, because I can remember a time when I was before the hon. gentleman in connection with a gas strike in Ipswich, when he ordered me out of his office for inciting strife. Now we have the hon. member saying that some irritated farmer will be coming along and resorting to fisticuffs, and justifying his action.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That man would have a case; you had not.

MR. GLEDSON: This Bill is a very important measure, and it certainly has some features in it that are drastic; but we endeavoured to find the reason. When I first came to Queensland many years ago, people were growing cotton about the Bundamba district. It was grown around Ipswich right out to Redbank Plains and the Booval district. This area was at that time the greatest cotton-growing district in Queensland and was larger than any area on which cotton has since been grown. As the hon. member for Wynnum said, ginneries were established, and Joyce Brothers operated a mill in the district for a number of years. They struggled along under very adverse circumstances trying to keep the mill in operation, but were unable to do so, for two reasons. The first reason was the shortage of supplies of cotton, and the other, I understand, was on account of the varieties of cotton, which were not uniform.

That is the position we have to consider, and there are several matters which have to be dealt with. The Opposition alleged that the Bill gives the right to one company to be the sole buyer of our cotton. The Minister explained the reason for this very fully, but it may be necessary to explain the matter again to hon. members of the Opposition. For years back there has been practically no cotton grown in Queensland. The small quantity that was grown was taken by McDonnell and East, who used it for the purpose of making mattresses, pillows, and quilts. We were therefore faced with the fact that we were not a cotton-growing country, and that something had to be done. When the Premier was in England he was in duty bound to endeavour to find some commodity that could be produced in Queensland for which there would be a market. Previously one of our troubles has been that we produce commodities for which we have no market, consequently the workmen engaged in those industries do not work full time, or, if they do, such a poor price is obtained for the commodities that it does not pay to produce them. The Premier found that there was a demand in England for cotton, and he got in touch with those interested in the business. It was believed that there would be a shortage of cotton throughout the world through the failure of the American cotton crop. The matter was brought prominently before the Queensland Government, and steps were taken to introduce the industry into Queensland. An offer was made by the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, who said, "We will assist you to establish the industry in Queensland; we will arrange for the erection of ginneries, and find a market for the cotton you grow."

The Government, looking after the interests of the growers, accepted the offer. I say that any Government that refused to accept

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such an offer would not have been acting in the best interests of the country. If this offer had not been accepted, there would have been no ginneries erected and no cotton grown, and we should have been in the same position that we were in a few years ago. This company have put their money into the scheme and have now spent somewhere in the vicinity of £200,000 in machinery. All that they are going to get out of it is the satisfaction of establishing an industry here in Queensland—

Mr. MORGAN: How many millions did the Colonial Sugar Refining Company spend? Yet you are always opposed to them.

Mr. GLEDSON: We are opposed to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company having a monopoly of the sugar industry and grinding down the people who were engaged in it.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: Not only had they a monopoly of the refining, but they owned the mills and even owned the farmers, body and soul. That is the reason why we were up against them. The Cotton Growing Association do not own the farms or the growers. They merely say, "You grow your cotton, and we will make arrangements with your Government to erect machinery for ginning it, and then we will make arrangements to buy all the cotton that you produce."

The whole of the argument of hon. members opposite is, "You should allow the farmers to grow their cotton and then allow them to say where they will sell it." Have these farmers not had this opportunity for the last fifty years? They have not taken advantage of the position, and the Government have had to do something to establish the cotton industry.

Mr. MORGAN: The guarantee established the industry.

Mr. GLEDSON: The Government would be foolish to guarantee a price unless they saw some method of ginning and marketing the cotton. Because they do this, the Opposition, who claim to be the representatives of the grower—of course they are not, they only claim to be—get up and say, "Why do you want to make this agreement? Why don't you allow the growers to make an agreement and be at the mercy of every Tom, Dick, and Harry who likes to come along and make arrangements to buy their cotton?" I am sorry that my old friend, Mr.

[5 p.m.] Daniel Jones, has been introduced into this debate. Opposition

members are using him and taking him to be an advocate of ratoon cotton. Mr. Daniel Jones is the one man in Australia who has had faith throughout in the cotton industry. Right from the time he was a cotton-grower many years ago he has been the one man who has continually assisted the Government. He has been the one man who has continually placed his services at the disposal of those who were out to help the cotton industry; but we find now, because in good faith he told the farmers that if they grew the ratoon cotton there would be a market for it, members of the Opposition are using his statements and saying he has advocated the growing of ratoon cotton. He may be quite right for the first year of ratooning. I have gone fully into this matter, and from the information I can gather, the first year's ratoon cotton may be good. I suppose that, if you got an expert cotton grader and gave him a boll

of cotton taken from the first year's ratoon, and a boll of cotton from an annual plant, he would not be able to tell the difference between the two. It may be impossible to tell the difference, because those who have had experience in the cotton industry tell me that in the first year of ratooning there is very little difference, and sometimes the first ratoon cotton is even better than the annual cotton. In a dry season you may not get the same length of staple from the annual cotton that you would get from ratoon cotton, but I find from what I have read about the business that the trouble is that the staple deteriorates not only in length, but also in strength; and that after the first year the ratoon cotton does not give the same length of staple or the same strength of staple as is produced by annual cotton. This has been proved throughout the world by men who have made a study of the industry. It has also been explained to me that the spinning machines are set to suit cotton of a certain length. There are three different gears, and if they get a short, weak staple it interferes with the spinning of the thread and makes a mess of the whole business, and if you have inferior cotton, the work cannot be done efficiently.

The Bill has been introduced to provide that only the best cotton shall be produced. As the Minister very aptly pointed out, when we are establishing an industry, we must see that only the best cotton is produced. All the information we have been able to obtain goes to prove that the best cotton is produced from the annual plant, therefore the Government are quite right in prohibiting the growing of ratoon cotton so that the industry may be established on a sound basis. We do not want to establish an industry that will be successful only when there is a shortage in the world's production of cotton, and one that will be unprofitable to the growers when other countries produce normal supplies. The hon. member for Burnett and other hon. members opposite want the right to grow either annual cotton or ratoon cotton, and they say the ratoon cotton could be used for other purposes than spinning. That might be all right so long as we could keep control of the business, but if we allowed ratoon cotton to be grown, how would we know, or how would anybody else know, that the cotton coming into the ginneries to be exported was all annual cotton? We have entered into an agreement with the British-Australian Cotton Association to supply them with the best article, and this Bill will provide, so far as we know, that only the best cotton will be grown, and we can only produce the best cotton by planting annually.

I was sorry to hear the hon. member for Wynnum say that the Government should not be influenced by experts who come here to assist the Government to establish the cotton industry. I did not like that remark at all, because I take it the Government are not likely to pander to the British-Australian Cotton Association or to anyone else. We are out to see that only the best article is produced; we are out to see that we grow an article we are able to sell. The Minister in his speech pointed out that the services of a gentleman had been offered to us to help establish the industry on a sound commercial basis. That was a very fine offer indeed. That gentleman is now here without any sinister motive. There was no need for him to come here. There was no need for

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the British-Australian Cotton Association to loan his services to us at all, but we have got him, and we are thankful to know that we have someone who is an expert in the business. We say there is no sinister influence behind his work in connection with the establishment of the industry, and I am sorry that the statement that such a thing is being done at all should gain credence.

It was also stated that the industry cannot be established without the expenditure of a certain amount of money. The Minister has stated that we have already spent £50,000 in trying to establish the industry on a sound basis. He also went further and said that, if it cost £250,000 to establish the cotton industry on a sound commercial basis, it would be good business for Queensland. So it will be good business for Queensland; but whilst spending that amount of money, we must see that the country is protected and that the farmers are not allowed, even if they desire to do so, to grow ratoon cotton if it will injure the industry. They should not be allowed to do anything inimical to the interests of the country or inimical to the interests of other farmers who are quite willing to produce the best cotton. While establishing the industry we have a right to protect those farmers from the lazy farmers who want to put in cotton every five or six years and not plant annually, as is necessary to grow the very best quality cotton. I do not intend to take up any further time. I am pleased that the Bill protects the farmer who is attempting to do the right thing, and the Government are quite right in seeing that no loopholes are left open for anyone to make a mess of an industry which can and should be established on right commercial lines.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): I think we are all at one as to the great value of establishing a new industry, especially a primary industry, at this particularly trying period in the history of Queensland. It is not only desirable that we should establish the cotton industry in Queensland for our own sakes, but it is also desirable that it should be established for the sake of industry in Great Britain. In regard to that matter there is a little preface here to a book by Mr. Dunstan of the Imperial Institute which I would like to read, because it illustrates the necessity of producing cotton within the Empire. It says—

“Among the industrial problems arising from the war one of the most important is that of the future of our textile industries, especially in relation to the sources from which they derive their raw material, and the possibility of drawing these to a larger extent than was the case before the war from countries within the Empire.”

I think that, both from Queensland's point of view and the Empire's point of view, the establishment of the cotton industry is particularly desirable.

We know that in years gone by there has been more than one attempt to establish the cotton industry in Queensland. I have been particularly interested in cotton cultivation for somewhere about thirty years, especially when I was a sugar-grower and a millowner, as we were very anxious to obtain a crop that would act by way of a change when ploughing out and before replanting sugarcane. I suppose the most common crops grown for that purpose used to be maize,

pumpkins, and in some cases potatoes; but in some instances cotton was tried. In 1907 or 1908, speaking from memory, there were over 70 acres of cotton of different kinds planted up in the Mulgrave area, and the cotton produced there all had to be artificially dried. A number of those cotton fibres were sent to Germany and England for testing by the Torchon method of testing, and of the samples sent the ratoon cotton samples held their own in regard to strength and desirability from a textile and manufacturing point of view. Previously Dr. Thomatis, of Cairns, produced what he called Caravonica cotton. I had the pleasure of obtaining some of the first seeds of that cotton and sending them down to Bundaberg. The cotton produced on those shrubs used to vary with the season. For instance, if the season was a particularly good one, perhaps the fourth ratoon cotton would be superior to the second or even to the first ratoon cotton. That cotton grew there for about twelve or thirteen years. After they had been growing for about nine years the cotton was sent to Manchester for testing, where it was reported upon as being particularly desirable in regard to quality and strength of staple. When we had the cotton industry here in previous years, it was not that the cotton was not of a good quality or that it did not grow right—it was not insect pests or the fact that it was ratoon cotton that put an end to the industry, but simply that the price was unremunerative. Making inquiries in regard to other countries certainly is very desirable, but you have to do it with a great deal of caution. Are conditions which hold good in other countries applicable to Australian or Queensland conditions? We know that if you are experimenting here with crops grown in other parts of the world—I have had the pleasure of doing a great deal of experimenting in one way or another—you will get results from growing seeds from other countries which are rather surprising. I have grown a plant called okra—and, by the way, it happens to be a near relation of cotton—and several other plants. In the very first season a native insect attacked them and almost wiped them out. We have plants belonging to the cotton family here, so that we can expect a number of our natural insects to prey on the cotton bushes.

When speaking on a former Bill during the present session, the leader of the Country party instanced the fact that, when he first came to the Downs he was quite sure that he could raise lambs. He set out to do it, but found that it was not profitable. Then, if I remember rightly, he turned his attention to wheatgrowing and stuck to that for about eleven years, and he found that the local people were right in each case when they told him that it was not the class of husbandry that should be carried out in that locality. He then took up dairying, and I think he has found that far more satisfactory than either of the other two branches of industry. I am mentioning that just to show that, although the hon. member had experience in Victoria, he found the conditions here so marked that his Southern experience did not hold good in Queensland, and much less so will the experience at another country hold good.

Another thing I would like to draw attention to is our flora. Compare the flora of Australia and Queensland with those in any other part of the world. They have in other

[*Mr. Gledson.*

parts of the world leaves of various shapes. When we come to Queensland we find that, except in the scrubs, the eucalypti have a peculiar kind of leaf which is not very common in other parts of the world. Then again, who would have thought from the experience in other parts of the world that sida retusa, noogoora burr, or even prickly-pear would have run riot as they have done in Queensland? In regard to this there is a little incident in regard to a certain kind of bamboo that came under my notice many years ago. It was planted in Queensland somewhere about 1886. There were two plants put in, and there was no sign of them running riot or sending their suckers under the ground and coming up a distance away, and they just about held their own till after the 1902 drought. Within a period of six months after that drought a gang of thirty or forty men had to be put on to try to keep the growth from those two little plants in check, and for the next three or four years gangs of about the same number of men had to be put on at different times to try and exterminate what had become a pest, and it was eventually exterminated. Then again, our fauna also illustrate the fact that in Australia the conditions are different to those in any other part of the world—our marsupials, for instance, and then we have the platypus and the ceratodus. Not very long ago people used to say that in Australia the birds were highly coloured, but that they had no song. Amongst our birds, as every good Australian knows, are song birds—in Queensland particularly—which beat any song birds in any other part of the world. (Hear, hear!) On this point another little illustration which is interesting is the result of the introduction of rabbits. When they were brought here nobody thought that they were going to increase and overrun the country as they have done. Even experts would not have dreamed that the rabbit would have done in Australia what it has done.

I would like to make a few remarks with reference to expert opinions as to ratoon cotton. I shall refer to one or two paragraphs in the report by Mr. Wells and Mr. Evans by way of illustration. In one place he refers to the inferior class of cotton grown in India and China. I would just like to say here that the chief reason why the cotton in India to-day has deteriorated to such an extent is because the same policy as the Government are proposing to enforce in Queensland was adopted there many years ago. In support of that statement I would like to quote from a book written by Mr. Ernest Goulding, D.Sc. (London), F.I.C., of the Scientific and Technical Department of the Imperial Institute, with a preface by Wyndham R. Dunstan, C.M.G., LL.D., F.R.S., Director of the Imperial Institute. The book was written not very long ago for the purpose of advising and assisting in the production of cotton in the British Dominions. It explains that Indian cotton almost exclusively supplied the British manufacturing industry till it was replaced by a product of the United States—

“ Indian cotton was almost exclusively employed in the British cotton industry during its early years, but was subsequently replaced by the product of the United States. Much of the fibre formerly produced in India was of a high grade but, during the last 100 years or so, a striking change has taken place. Short-stapled, inferior varieties have

appeared, and have become distributed throughout the country, whilst the cultivation of finer kinds has been greatly restricted.”

No doubt the Government want to see that only the best is grown in Queensland, and they are setting out to do it. But just listen to the causes which brought it about—

“ The causes of this change may be briefly indicated. In the first place, the introduction of ginning machinery led the growers in many localities to cease their custom of ginning their cotton by hand and reserving their seed for sowing, and induced them to send their produce to the public ginning factories, with the result that cotton from widely separated areas was mixed together. The seed was returned to the cultivators without discrimination, and thus it commonly happened to be quite unfitted for the particular locality in which it was to be sown.”

I submit that is exactly what happened last season. I understand that the Government had some particularly good seed, but the seed they are distributing to us to plant for this coming crop has been obtained in exactly the same way as the book describes the Indian seed was obtained.

Another paragraph from the report of the experts I would like to quote to hon. members is—

“ Ratoon cotton endangers the maintenance of the purity of well-bred strains of cotton.”

If you have a well-bred established strain of cotton, by getting seed from it—by ratooning and not growing any other variety in the locality—you are sure you are going to keep that variety; but, if you are going to distribute seed, every time the flower appears there is a chance of cross-fertilisation. If you keep one ratoon plant year after year you can maintain the same strain of cotton from that plant; but the more often you plant seed obtained as the seed which is being distributed this year has been obtained, the less chance you have of getting pure seed. In my cotton patch there are at least seven varieties of cotton, every one of which has a different length of staple and a different twist in the fibres; and besides those seven varieties there are perhaps a dozen crosses between those varieties. When I send that cotton to the ginnery—as I have been sending it this year—nobody can tell me that it is cotton of equal staple, and I would be surprised to know that any cotton of a more unequal staple was sent away from Queensland. But it seems to me that even cotton of our unequal staple was of some use.

Mr. BULLOCK: Would that not be accentuated if you ratooned that crop?

Mr. NOTT: Not necessarily. It might be evened up, because certain varieties will become dominant in a certain locality. Those varieties which suit a particular locality will produce the heaviest crops and overshadow the unsuitable varieties, so that in the second year they will give you a greater crop than you can get from your mixed cotton. That contention has been demonstrated in the sugar fields. You can plant all the mixed varieties of cane you like, but certain varieties will dominate and kill out the others.

Another argument put by Mr. Evans and Mr. Wells—I am picking out these extracts to

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show the value of the opinion of these experts—refers to the unreliability of spring rainfall. It is said—

“It has been said that the unreliability of spring rainfall imperils the prospect of early germination, proved so desirable during the past season's operations. This is not necessarily true.”

A little while ago we saw in the “Daily Mail” a graph illustrating the seasons of Queensland. We have meteorological data for sixty years to show that Queensland does, unfortunately, suffer from dry springs, and, when an expert from America makes such a statement as that, his opinion should be discounted to a great extent. On that point I would just like to quote the heading of an article in the “Sunday Times” of Western Australia—I shall not take up the time of the House by reading extracts from the article itself—

“The Curse of the Imported Cotton Experts.”

There they consider that the imported cotton experts have been responsible for throwing back the cotton industry for two years. Here we have had a number of experts from different parts of the world. We had a very highly paid expert in the sugar industry—Dr. Maxwell.

Mr. HYNES: You do not blame the Labour party for his appointment, do you?

Mr. NOTT: No, but I know a good deal about the question, and I know how much he did for the sugar industry. As to who appointed him, what about the imported driller of the Roma bore? In nearly every instance we have been sorry for importing these experts.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If that is your argument, why did you go to Germany to be educated?

Mr. NOTT: I went to Germany to complete my experience as well as my education, and I think the visit was particularly useful; but let me tell the hon. gentleman that I was an Australian-trained boy till I fortunately got the opportunity to go to Germany and other parts of the world to extend my agricultural knowledge and experience, and I would have been foolish and wanting in Australian brains if I had not accepted the chance.

[5.30 p.m.]

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was a good investment on your part.

Mr. NOTT: I was an Australian who went abroad to learn.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why condemn experts?

Mr. NOTT: I am not condemning experts, but they should obtain sufficient experience of a country before they give advice about it. The Government have on some occasions accepted expert advice. There are cases where they have taken expert advice in which they have been very sorry for it, and I am certain that there are many returned soldiers who are also sorry. The Secretary for Public Instruction and the hon. member for Bremer a little while ago said that the Government had taken expert advice on the establishment of the Coominya Soldier Settlement. Look at it now.

Mr. GLEDSON: The expert was a local man.

Mr. NOTT: I am not denying that. In that case the Government took expert advice without due care—that is what I am drawing attention to.

[Mr. Nott.]

Dealing with the question of ratoon cotton, I am satisfied that in many of the other countries where they advocate annual crops they would be only too glad to ratoon if they could. They do not ratoon, simply because they cannot produce ratoon cotton. The ratoon crops in other parts of the world give a decreased yield as compared with the annual crop, whereas in Australia I think you will find that there is an increased yield of 50 per cent., 100 per cent., or 150 per cent. in the ratoon crop over the annual crop. The Minister said that we had very little ratoon cotton in Queensland. I dare say there was not a great deal of ratoon cotton reported, but I can inform hon. members that a farmer in one locality that I know of sent in plant cotton and received a return of £30 per acre. Between that patch and his neighbour's was only a wire fence, and these two persons in talking the matter over were agreed that the ratoon cotton was the superior cotton and they sent it down as plant cotton and received at the rate of £43 per acre for it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you encourage that kind of thing?

Mr. NOTT: It did not come from my electorate; it came from within 50 miles of Brisbane. The person concerned sent down a small quantity first and asked for a report on it, and he was told that it was worth 5½d. per lb. Consequently the rest of it was sent down as plant cotton. The book I have mentioned, in dealing with the cultivation of cotton in Egypt, says—

“In recent years the time of maturity of the crop has been accelerated by selection, and in addition it is now common for 70 per cent. to 80 per cent. of the crop to be gathered at the first picking. The last portion of the crop is picked as an inferior cotton. It is not mixed with the other portions of the crop, but is sold separately.”

That is not the picking of ratoon cotton; it is the picking of plant cotton. The book further states on the same subject—

“There is little doubt that in early time the cottons of India were grown entirely as perennials, and the same is true of those of Egypt, the cotton plant which was introduced into the latter country by Jumel, in 1820, being described as a perennial tree. As the demand for cotton increased, it was doubtless observed that a more regular crop could be obtained by planting afresh each year, and probably for this reason the perennial forms were gradually replaced by annuals.”

So it will be the case in other countries.

“Moreover, when the plant is cultivated in a climate which during part of the year is hostile to its growth, the plants naturally die off during the unfavourable season, and annual planting thus becomes inevitable.”

The opinion I am going to quote was come to after a study of the cotton question all over the world, especially in the British Dominions—

“The cotton plant is exceedingly liable to variation, and consequently exists in very many forms. The chief factors which influence this tendency to variation are differences in soil, climate, and environment.”

I hope the Government will not forget that these main features count for a lot. On the

question of pure seed I would like to point out that in Hawaii, in order to maintain a good strain of cotton which would retain its identity, it has been found advisable and desirable to plant cuttings. That is an important matter, and worthy of very careful consideration. We have a number of crops other than cotton that can be ratooned and pruned. Pruning at the wrong time of the year or incorrectly has a very deleterious effect on the product, whereas judicious pruning usually improves the product that you are endeavouring to grow. We know that lucerne and sugar-cane have been ratooned time and time again. I think the hon. member for Mirani stated—and rightly so—that, if you get experts from some parts of the world, they would tell you that it was mad to ratoon sugar-cane. In some parts of the world, more especially in Louisiana, they only grow it as an annual crop. Here we ratoon it for a number of years. Louisiana is not very far away from the cotton belt. If they want to keep the seed from one year to another, they have to cover it up in the ground and put trash over it to protect it from the very heavy frosts. If you asked a man from that part of the world what he thought of ratooning sugar-cane I am sure he would tell you that you could not do it. Even in wheat-growing we have pruning in that we allow sheep on the wheat in its early stages. I contend that the ratoon cotton plant will stand the drought, and I even go so far as to say that ratoon cotton will produce a good crop where it is impossible to obtain a crop from the annual cotton. It looks as though we are going to have a great deal of trouble in establishing an annual crop, whereas, if we are allowed to ratoon it the plants will be there. There is one advantage in ratooning which has not yet been stressed very much, and that is, if we can get decent spring rain, we shall be able to harvest the crop in December, whereas with the annual crop we can only harvest it in February, March, or April. Some hon. members have spoken about the effect of dry weather on this crop. We hope to have wet seasons again in Queensland—it would be disastrous if we did not get them.

When our normal wet seasons return, cotton throughout Queensland will have a very bad time. Hundreds of thousands of plants will be destroyed. We usually get our wet season in February or March. If cotton is planted early, the bolls will then be ready to burst, and a tremendous quantity of cotton will be beaten down to the ground and will be destroyed through being unable to dry. We should try and have our crop harvested from December to July rather than from March or April to July. I would like to stress the point that the Government have made a very grave error in connection with the establishment of the cotton industry in Queensland. The Government should have taken the precaution to grow a number of seeds of good staple cotton in various districts in Queensland so as to supply the particular seed which is most suited, instead of supplying the very heterogeneous samples that they have been doing. It seems to me that up to the present the Government have not done a very great deal to improve the quality of cotton. As far as I can see and hear, we have just been going along as best we can on seed supplied from the ginneries, just as the seed is supplied to the growers in India. I hope that one of the first actions of the

Government or of the British Australian Cotton Growing Association will be to import without delay good pure strains of seed for planting throughout Queensland for the purpose of finding what varieties are suitable, and then supply the variety proved most suitable for our climate.

Mention has been made by certain hon. members of the Opposition of the fact that ratoon cotton has taken prizes at certain shows. I know of a case at a show not far from Brisbane at which a Government expert was judging, where a sample of ratoon cotton was awarded first prize. The success achieved by a small sample can be achieved with a larger sample. In a few years ratoon cotton in Queensland will surpass plant cotton in quality, length, and strength of staple. We have a climate particularly suitable for growing ratoons, both as regards sugar-cane and cotton. A matter of the greatest importance to Queensland is distributing the industry over as wide an area and in as great proportions as possible in the shortest time. A big price is at present offered for cotton, and the more cotton we can export the more money will be brought into Queensland and circulated. Ratoon cotton will help to that end very materially. The man growing ratoon cotton to-day, if allowed to leave it, will plant another crop, whereas, if the ratoon crop has to be destroyed, no further cotton will be planted in its stead this year. If the proposed embargo on ratoon cotton is imposed, we shall be prevented from taking advantage of the world's markets to-day. The embargo will prevent the cheapening of the cost of production in Queensland. That will help the cotton industry worked in other countries with black labour and cheaper labour than in Queensland. What appeals to me most is the fact that the Secretary for Agriculture in a Labour Cabinet is advocating an embargo which will place the growers in Queensland at a disadvantage as compared with growers in other parts of the world where cheap labour is employed.

There is one important feature that I would like to offer a few remarks on before I conclude, and that is in regard to the diseases of plant and ratoon cotton. From observation extending over a considerable period—not with large areas planted with cotton but an experience over quite a number of years, and I have visited over 100 cotton farms during the last twelve or eighteen months—I have come to the opinion that there is less likelihood of ratoon cotton plants being affected with disease than plant cotton. I know instances with only a barbed wire fence between the two crops where in eight cases out of ten ratoon cotton is freer from disease than plant cotton. The reason ascribed for that is that the ratoon cotton is a more vigorous plant, and grows more vigorously. Most of the ratoon varieties have little hairs growing right up the leaf, and, when the plant is growing vigorously, they stand particularly well out and prevent the scale and other insects from getting to the plant. Any vigorous growing plant can withstand pests better than a wilting plant. Unfortunately during the spring or early summer the young cotton plant will wilt. We have only to observe how the maize plants wilt at that period. Some people have got their cotton plants through the soil and then lost them. There is one particular insect which makes itself felt on my farm. It is also particularly prevalent

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in Brisbane gardens, where it attacks the hibiscus trees and even the sida retusa. This insect attacks one variety of cotton, and the other varieties are almost free from it. I have known where several plants have come up from seed together, and, though intermingled, one variety is attacked to a greater extent than the others by this scale insect. The Government would be well advised to encourage the planting of those varieties which resist the native insect pests. The pest that I refer to has been called by Mr. H. Tryon, Government Entomologist, as *Lecanium Nigrum*. It is a native of Australia and is prevalent all over it. The Sydney "Mail" of 26th September last contained an article with the headline "The Cotton Boll Weevil," which had quite a lot to say about the cotton boll weevil.

"Various reports have got abroad that the boll weevil has been found in different parts of Australia. The Government entomologists assure us that there is no truth in the rumours, but if growers persist with ratoon cotton the danger of the establishment and spread of disease is great."

It should be noted that it says "the danger of the establishment and spread of disease is great"—not the spread of the boll worm.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No—any disease.

Mr. NOTT: That is one of the misleading articles that have been disseminated to try to frighten the public. As hon. members know, if you put ten hen eggs under a turkey they will not come out ducks. (Laughter.)

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

Mr. W. COOPER (*Rosewood*): It appears to me that the discussion on this Bill has hinged on the point as to whether or not it is advisable for the Government to permit the harvesting of ratoon cotton, or whether it would be better to establish the cotton industry on a sound basis by prohibiting ratoon cotton and practically forcing farmers to grow annual cotton. I have listened to hon. members on both sides of the House using various arguments as to which is the better course. I acknowledge that I am no cotton expert. I know very little about the growing of cotton, yet the statements made by hon. members have appeared to me to be very striking. Hon. members of the Opposition have advocated ratoon cotton, saying that the scrub farmer cannot plant annual cotton and make it a payable proposition on account of the amount of labour he will have to employ in eradicated the old plants as compared with the small amount of labour involved if he is allowed to ratoon. In my opinion, there is a vast difference between ratoon cotton and what is commonly known as stand-over cotton. Ratoon, as I understand it, is the plant that has been allowed to mature for one year and is then cut down, perhaps, level with the ground, and allowed to spring up again to produce the cotton boll. I think that is the correct version. I know something of the scrub farmer, of how the farmer handles the scrub, of what takes place after it has been felled, and how crops fare that may be sown in such areas. Under ordinary circumstances a farmer is very fortunate if, after planting cotton following on the falling

of his scrub, and later allowing it to ratoon, he receives anything at all for such ratoon cotton. In areas where there is a large rainfall that cotton will be overgrown with weeds, and it will cost the farmer more in labour to keep it clean than it will another farmer to plough his land that is free of stumps and plant an annual crop. Anyone knowing anything about scrub farming knows that.

It appears to me that the principle involved in the Government's action is the prohibition of ratoon cotton. One phase has not been touched upon in this debate, and that is that no hon. member opposite has given any reason why the manufacturers of Great Britain are asking specifically for annual cotton and not for ratoon cotton. Those manufacturers desire to have as much cotton as possible produced in Queensland—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: And to get it as cheap as they can.

Mr. W. COOPER: So that they may get it as cheap as possible. Their interest would not be served if they retarded ratoon cotton if ratoon cotton is as good as hon. members opposite say it is. That is the whole of the argument. Every paper shows that there is a shortage of cotton throughout the world, and these cotton companies want as much cotton as they can get to spin and make into cotton fabrics. I am confident that they would not tell us that they did not want ratoon cotton if it possessed the advantages claimed by the Opposition.

Mr. MORGAN: They have had no experience of Queensland ratoon cotton. They have had experience with other countries in the world only.

Mr. W. COOPER: I do not know whether the hon. member has had any experience in this direction. The Government have been advised by experts in the past, and they have not always been led astray. Many of the experts to-day employed by the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association are not experts merely from a theoretical point of view. In my opinion, a man who handles cotton year after year, and puts it through the spinning mills, and who has been sent through various foreign countries to purchase cotton, is an expert. Are the men sent out here by the Cotton Growing Association men of that category or not?

We cannot afford to permit a section of the farmers of Queensland, because they are unfortunate enough to have a scrub farm or are in a dry area, to grow a class of cotton which would prevent the other farmers of Queensland from obtaining the highest possible price in the overseas market. By doing so we would be lacking in our duty. I realise that it does not matter very much to hon. members opposite, so far as their political career is concerned, whether the Government adopt one attitude or the other, because, after all, the Government are taking the responsibility of establishing the industry on the best possible basis, so that we may assure to the man who grows cotton the fullest results for his industry.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. COOPER: If we permitted farmers to do otherwise we would be doing something detrimental to the industry in Queensland, and in a few years' time we should probably find that the cotton industry would go out of existence altogether because we had neglected to protect it and supply the

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very best article for export overseas. The hon. member for Stanley spoke about endeavouring to get particular classes of seed for particular districts, and that we should permit a farmer to grow the cotton most suitable for his district, and then plant from his own seed again. We know that in Queensland plenty of lucerne is grown, and we know the opinion of the majority of farmers in connection with lucerne seed. Ninety-nine out of one hundred will tell you that the best seed is secured from the Hunter River. I consider that it is better than any Queensland lucerne seed. There are also places where you cannot produce seed potatoes or potatoes that will give you the very best seed for the next year.

At 7 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. W. COOPER: Members of the Opposition are of the opinion that it would be well for the Government to adopt a conciliatory attitude and grant those farmers who are anxious to grow ratoon cotton a certain length of time in which to see whether their contentions are correct or not. There would not be very much harm done if that permission were granted, provided the ratoon cotton is kept separate from the annual cotton; but it is a question whether the Government or any experts, advisers, or inspectors can prevent a certain amount of ratoon cotton from getting mixed with the annual cotton, and if that were done, it would have a damaging effect on the oversea markets. On consideration I do not think very much damage can be done to the industry by placing an embargo on ratoon cotton because, if the contentions of the Government are wrong, it would not be very many years before it would be found out, and perhaps not any years at all. It is no use the farmers or anyone else contending that ratoon cotton is good and can be sold overseas when these men who are dealing in cotton and who are buying our products absolutely refuse to purchase ratoon cotton. We want to see that the markets for Queensland cotton are not spoiled as the butter market was spoiled in the past by permitting the export to Great Britain of an inferior product. In the past we had to place restrictive legislation on the statute-book in regard to the products we are exporting overseas, such as beef, wool, butter, and practically all the primary products of Queensland, in order to bring about an improvement in the quality of those products. Assuming that we permitted ratoon cotton to be grown in Queensland without placing an embargo upon it and that our markets were damaged by doing that, we eventually would find that we would have no market at all, and the loss to Queensland would be almost irreparable. The contention of hon. members opposite is that the farmers would have a burden placed upon them on account of the extra amount of work entailed in the cultivation of annual cotton compared with the work which is necessary in order to keep ratoon cotton clean. It has been my experience in the Rosewood electorate that the small farmers grow annual cotton. They are engaged in mixed farming. It has been claimed that the farmers could allow cattle to go on the land in the interval between the operations in connection with cotton-growing and dairying, and thereby get a certain amount of pasturage. But once cattle go on to land where there has been a crop they do damage that cannot be remedied. We know that, if in a wet season cattle were

permitted to graze on a cotton patch, it would be impossible during the next year, no matter what was done to the land, to produce a class of cotton which would bring the highest market price. The difference between the cultivation of ratoon cotton and annual cotton is that in connection with annual cotton the farmer ploughs out the old plants and keeps the land as clear from weeds as possible, and the only extra work is to plant cotton. With ratoon cotton he would be labouring under very great difficulties, because he could not go within a certain distance of the plant. The ground is much harder and far more difficult to cultivate with ratoon cotton than it is with annual cotton. After all, the farmer has an opportunity of getting his land into a fair and reasonable condition for the planting of annual cotton. I see nothing that will be injurious in placing an embargo on ratoon cotton. The Secretary for Agriculture has gone to a great length to obtain all the expert advice possible, and he has gone to unknown trouble to do what he believes to be the right thing to safeguard this great industry. If the Government are weak-kneed enough to permit some men who are anxious to grow ratoon cotton to dictate that policy to a vast number of farmers—and I venture to say that the number is 75 per cent. greater than the number of those who want to grow ratoon cotton—it will be something we shall regret in the very near future. I hope that the Minister will not go back on anything he has said in this Chamber and permitted to go out to the State at large, and I hope that he will insist on placing an embargo on ratoon cotton. If, after preventing ratoon cotton from being grown for twelve months or two years, we can find a market for it that will not be damaging to the interests of the State, we shall not have lost very much if we then remove the embargo; but if we permit ratoon cotton to be grown and the buyers overseas refuse point blank to purchase it, the farmer who grows it will be the loser, and to a great extent there will be a loss to Queensland which we cannot repair. I had some difficulty in coming to a conclusion as to what attitude to adopt, but after considerable thought I have concluded that the Minister and the Government are quite justified in the decision to which they have come, and I feel sure that no one in this Chamber will regret it more than the Minister if he has done something which involves a loss to Queensland.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I hope that the industry we are discussing will not, in the course of time, become the football of party politics, as has been the case with a number of somewhat similar industries quite recently in Queensland; but anyone who looks through the Bill and reads the speech of the Secretary for Agriculture can see that in a couple of years a situation is likely to develop in which the Government will perhaps be forced into doing something prior to an election. That would make the industry the football of party politics and would be detrimental to the interests concerned in it.

With all other hon. members, I wish for the cotton industry in Queensland the very best possible future. For many years it has had its ups and downs. We have produced as much as 7,000,000 lb. of cotton in a year, and at other times the industry has almost gone out of existence. To-day we are starting upon what we trust will be an era of prosperity in an industry for the produce of

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which there is a good demand in the markets of the world, and, although at present we cannot compete in those markets and give the growers the full benefit of their labour at the price offering, we hope that in the near future they will be such that the grower will not require a subsidy from the Government.

I represent an electorate part of which—the Pullen Vale District—is capable of producing well over 1,000,000 lb. of cotton, and I should like to take the opportunity of reading an extract from the primary producers' organ to show how the crop has done this year in that locality—

“Despite the exceptionally long dry spell, cotton-picking is in full swing on several farms, and considering the fact that little or no rain fell during practically the whole of the growing period, the yields are said to be surprisingly large and of good quality. A cotton expert who visited Pullen Vale district recently expressed great surprise at the condition of local cotton crops. ‘In a normal season,’ he said, ‘you people have a fortune before you.’

“In days gone by over 2,000 lb. of cotton per acre has been harvested in this district.”

Here is an area only 12 miles from the capital of Queensland which can produce over 1,000,000 lb. of cotton, without any main road or light tramway or other transport facility. We have had at different times large schemes to build railways or provide other conveniences, but this district with its large number of producers has had no consideration given to it. I am going to show how this Bill applies to the farmers there, and naturally what is applicable to them is applicable to the rest of the producers in the cotton industry of the State.

The Minister stated that the Bill is introduced to give legal effect to the policy of the Government. Considering the matter under all possible circumstances, this policy requires the very closest scrutiny indeed by this Chamber. There are many factors in connection with the Bill that I hope to deal with. I say definitely that the Government have not stood up to their obligations in this matter. Queensland has produced many million pounds of cotton. In the past it has ginned its own cotton. We find to-day we are producing somewhere in the vicinity of 12,000,000 lb. of cotton, and the conditions which were attachable to the production of cotton in past years in Queensland should be the same to-day. I want to amplify my contention that the Government have failed to stand up to their obligations to the man who is producing cotton. The Secretary for Public Works in his speech on the Sugar Works Act said, “The co-operative principle is safe in the hands of the Government.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is right. We are not defenders of the system of placing low-grade products on the market. You stand for putting on the market products that are not of first-class quality.

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman does not know what I stand for. If he would wait and see, he would learn something.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman is not in order in referring to a previous debate of this session.

Mr. KERR: The speech was not delivered this session, Mr. Speaker. I want to show

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what have been the actions of the Government in the past and the statements that have been made by hon. members opposite concerning this industry to prove that they are not standing up to those statements. I take it that I am entitled on this Bill to show that.

The SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman will not be in order in quoting from a speech delivered this session.

Mr. KERR: I am not going to do that. The Sugar Works Act of 1922 is intitled—

“An Act to authorise the construction, establishment, maintenance, management and control of sugar works by the State, and for other purposes.”

The Secretary for Public Works stated that it was the Government's policy to introduce the co-operative principle into primary industries in Queensland, but they have failed miserably to do so. They propose to include that principle in a number of Bills to be discussed this session. The Minister in introducing this Bill did not explain why there had been a departure from a principle which is not only in the Labour party's platform but also in the United party's platform. The principle of co-operation in connection with our primary products is a plank of the United party's platform, and so long as it is so I intend to advocate it. That principle should also be embodied in a Bill dealing with this industry, which industry we hope will reach large proportions. In connection with this departure from the principle I have mentioned, let me quote what the Brisbane “Courier” had to say on 26th April, 1923. It bears out my contention that the Government are jumping from perch to perch and do not know where they stand. When any person, corporation, association, or any body comes along to the Government for the purpose of entering into an agreement, the Government, in defiance of any existing legislation, enter into the agreement. The Government have done it in connection with petroleum and cotton. They are juggling with the people who are producing to-day and with the people who are likely to come to this State. They do not know where they are. This article bears out my contention in that regard. It says—

“Another instance of the way in which the expansion of Queensland is being held up owing to the present Government being in power is afforded by a letter received from a Sydney firm which states that efforts have been made for the past two months to get capital to handle Queensland cotton lands, but it is not available, as persons with money are afraid as to their future treatment by the Government. One company in course of flotation had to withdraw its prospectus and return applicants for shares their money. ‘Since the Government's declaration of a further three years' guarantee some months ago,’ the writer states, ‘it has made three radical changes.’”

That is correct, too—

“First, it added a limit to the staple; second, it excluded ratoon cotton; third, it reduced the guarantee to 5d. per lb.”

That is a condition of affairs existing under the Government to-day. It is no wonder that Queensland is not reaping the benefit it should be receiving from its resources. This article goes on to say—

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope that the hon. member will only quote the article, and that he will not interpolate into it remarks of his own.

Mr. KERR: The article goes on to say—

“A reduction of ½d. per lb. is a serious matter to the grower, as it means £2 ls. 8d. per acre for a 1,000-lb. yield, or £104 3s. 4d. for a 50-acre plot. These actions may all be capable of explanation, but who is going to do it? Meantime, taken in conjunction with the history of the past six years, they set up the gravest doubts in the minds of people here as to where molestation or interference by your Government will cease. Under the best of conditions it is difficult to persuade people to touch new things at present, but the constant fear of Government interference, if not repudiation, makes the task almost hopeless.”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What are you quoting from now?

Mr. KERR: I mentioned that I was quoting from the “Brisbane Courier” of 26th April.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A leading article?

Mr. KERR: Not a leading article—a news paragraph. The Government have not done the right thing or included the correct principle in this Bill. I want to refer to the matter of co-operation a little more than I have done. I have perused papers in connection with the cotton agreement, and I found there a copy of a cablegram dated 5th July, 1921, to the Agent-General. It reads—

“If the department has to undertake any ginning, new machinery will be required.”

The Minister said that the alternative to the agreement was the expenditure by the Government of £150,000 to undertake the work of ginning the cotton. It was a grave lack of foresight on the part of the Government not to foresee the position that has arisen in connection with the industry. It was a grave misdeed on the part of the Government not to permit the building of cotton ginneries on the same principle as sugar-mills have been built.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What do you mean by “permit”? How do we stop them?

Mr. KERR: This agreement stops them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. KERR: Then the Bill stops it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This was before the agreement.

Mr. KERR: The Government could have kept abreast of the times.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are a regular Jeremiah.

Mr. KERR: I am not. I am only telling the Government what they should have done.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are what the late John Norton called a “gerry-madiddler.”

Mr. KERR: If the hon. gentleman can show me that the Government did the right thing, I am prepared to withdraw my remarks. The misdeeds of the Government came about through their not meeting the situation as developments took place. It

may be that on suddenly discovering after getting in touch with the Agent-General that it was going to cost £150,000 to erect ginneries the Government thought something else had to be done. I want to give every credit to the Association which is now operating those ginneries, and which came in after the Government had failed to meet the situation. They stepped into the breach and have spent £250,000. I wish them every possible luck for the sake of the growers and the Association. The Premier said that Messrs. Crompton Wood, Harold Parker, and others were not only buyers of cotton, but large investors in the cotton industry here. When the Government failed to carry on, we have these people stepping into the breach—brokerage and milling interests who have underwritten practically the whole of the capital for the ginning plants in Queensland. They were able to do this only because of the Government's lack of foresight. This will bring home to hon. members something which perhaps words could not convey to them. These are the gentlemen who are going to buy our cotton for their mills. In that connection we find—I think it was in 1920—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Has not the purchaser the right to say what he shall buy? That is the gist of it.

Mr. KERR: I would like to ask the hon. gentleman what happened to the 7,000,000 lb. of cotton many years ago? Did we sell it? We did; and it has not yet been proved that there is no market for ratoon cotton. I understand we are annually importing £270,000 worth of low-grade cotton for filling mattresses. In 1920 a deputation waited on the Commonwealth Minister for Customs urging the stimulation of the cotton industry, the object being to erect manufacturing plants in Victoria, Victoria, of course, is Australia, and the industry would be Australian. We can see that advances have been made in Australia for the manufacture of our secondary industries, which mean so much to the cotton industry and so much to Australia. Reports were made by cotton manufacturers, and I can see how under this agreement most of the cotton produced in Australia is going out of Australia irrespective of quality. No safeguard has been provided against that. Are our Australian manufacturers going to be sacrificed, or are they going to have the same opportunity of buying as any other person? Regarding the visit of Messrs. Crompton Wood and Harold Parker, they wrote to the Premier on 10th October last, saying—

“Ratoon cotton is not legal tender.”

Yet in the same letter they admit that they had had no actual reports with regard to Australian ratoon cotton. That is the whole contention of the Opposition. The word “ratoon” was not known in the old country until recently, and they had not received any information justifying them in barring ratoon cotton from Queensland. If there is to be any differentiation, it should be in favour of the farmer being allowed to ratoon his cotton. Further, the letter said that the writers placed “bolly” cotton and ratoon cotton in the same category. The layman knows that these are two entirely different things. “Bolly” cotton is a cotton unopened in the boll and requires special gins to deal with it. It is also a very low-grade cotton, yet here we have Queensland ratoon cotton placed in the same category as this inferior bolly cotton. The letter also said

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that the United States of America had 35,000,000 acres of land under cotton, but they had practically no ratoon. That may be so, but these gentlemen failed to state that Bradford woollen manufacturers import annually from Brazil 24,969 tons and from Peru 33,533 tons of ratoon cotton, and that the total quantity of ratoon cotton from Central America produced £11,000,000 sterling, of which 29 per cent. went to Great Britain. Our Queensland ratoon cotton has a stronger and longer staple than the American ratoon, and I confidently state that, granted similar conditions, in an experiment between ratoon and plant cotton the former would give the longer and [7.30 p.m.] stronger staple of the two. We find America can find a market in this connection. I want to quote now from the "Producers' Review" of 10th April, 1922, which has this to say—

"Why is ratoon cotton condemned? And who condemned it? The Lancashire cotton spinners did not, for they purchased thousands of pounds worth of ratoon cotton, spun it, and pronounced it as being of first-class quality, and wanted more of it if procurable. Now, as it happens, ratoon cotton is a term quite unknown to the British cotton spinner; but they are up against what they term bolly cotton, which is quite a different thing."

That is just what I have explained. I have a letter here from a spinning manager of the Shelley road mills dated 26th March, 1923. This gentleman is Mr. Ben W. Robinson, and he is actually a spinning manager, and this is what he says in regard to Queensland ratoon cotton—

"The sample of Australian cotton shown to me is what I should call long staple, and of a good grade for cleanliness. Similar sample and grade should command a good price for the 'fine counts spinners.' The bulk of the staple is 1½ inches long. Ours for medium counts average 1¼ inch, and we pay 200 points on the month of American futures. March futures at present say at 15½d., add on 200 points equal to 2d. equals 17½d. I should say the sample of Australian cotton is worth about 400 points on, equal to 19½d. per lb. at present price of American cotton."

This letter has not been produced by the Minister to give the ratoon side of the question.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It does not say that it was ratoon cotton.

Mr. KERR: It was ratoon cotton. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that all cotton sent from Australia prior to this year was mixed cotton. I am firmly of the opinion that there is more in it than appears on the surface in this matter of banning ratoon cotton. Whether in the future there will be only one buyer for that class of cotton, and that the Lancashire people will be able to say, "This is our price, and this the only price," I do not know; but at the present time there is no reason to ban ratoon cotton. I want to quote the remarks of Mr. Harold Parker, one of the delegates who came out here. In an interview on his arrival in Brisbane he said—

"One lot of the Australian-grown product which he purchased had proved so satisfactory that he had bought 10,000

bales, which were now lying at Liverpool awaiting manufacture."

He said ratoon cotton is not legal tender, yet he has 10,000 bales awaiting manufacture and he is highly satisfied with it. It is only since his arrival here and other influences have come in that the position has been shifted to what it is to-day. Mr. Parker also had this to say—

"Great Britain did not want an inch and a quarter staple, but Australia should concentrate on an inch and one-eighth and one inch and one-sixteenth staple."

Mr. Parker does not want a long staple cotton; he wants a shorter staple and he is going to get it from this Government.

I take it that these documents are authentic and that there is no doubt about them. I understand that Mr. Powell is editor of a paper at Rockhampton, and he obtained samples of ratoon cotton which he sent to America to be examined, and the Textile Department of the University of Georgia—it ought to be all right, seeing that our ginning machinery came from Georgia—examined this cotton, and there is no mistaking the opinion of the authorities there. Mr. C. B. Seal, Textile Department, University of Georgia, in a letter to Mr. Powell, says—

"The two samples of cotton submitted to me for examination are found as follows:—Plant cotton from ¾ to 1½ inches in length, very strong, and grading considerably higher than the best American upland. Ratoon cotton, ranging from 1 inch to 1½ inch, equally as strong as plant cotton, but a little more irregular in length. However, as the length is somewhat longer, I would say that they are of about equal values."

Here you have two positions. You have plant cotton which is of shorter staple and which is required in Lancashire under the agreement, and you have ratoon cotton of a longer staple and which is said by experts to be of equal value to the plant cotton. You cannot get away from these facts, no matter how you turn them upside down. Colonel Evans has had a good deal to say in regard to the cotton industry, and undoubtedly we appreciate his advice very much. He was asked a question about ratoon cotton prior to the date when he wrote the memorandum at Townsville which was quoted by the Minister. Evidently when he was at Townsville he was asked to make out a case against ratoon cotton. If he was asked to make out a case against ratoon, undoubtedly he made out a very decent case, but before he made out this case against ratoon, in reply to a question he said—

"I am not going to make any comment on the point of whether ratoon cotton is 'legal tender' on the world's cotton market. You have had Messrs. Crompton Wood and Parker out here and heard their views on the subject. If they cannot tell you what legal tender in cotton is there is no one else who can."

Colonel Evans did not reply to the question which was asked of him. He side-tracked the question on that occasion and said that we had Mr. Crompton Wood and others. Who are they? I have explained that they have interests in this connection. A good deal has been said in regard to our old cotton friend,

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Mr. Daniel Jones. Mr. Jones has been very shabbily treated by the Government. He is an expert, and his services have been sought in most parts of Australia, including Western Australia, and his advice has been very sound on every occasion. His advice on this question is in favour of the growing of ratoon cotton because it is very suitable to Queensland conditions. I admit Mr. Jones has also dealt with the marketing side. All the same, that is a secondary consideration. It is all very fine to say that, if a certain section will not buy our product, we will not produce it. Eggs of a small size are not exported because the people oversea will not buy them, but that does not say we should kill the hens that lay the small eggs. Mr. Jones sums up the position very well in these words—

“The spring rainfall necessary for sowing cotton cannot be relied on in general, hence it is that ratooning under such conditions is favoured by all of our experienced cotton-growers. Realising that its chief merit is related to the fact that it sustains life over long periods of dryness, and produces its crop luxuriantly months afterwards when the rain comes, and all other crops are only a withered memory. Then the stand-over time waiting for rain might be just long enough to turn the crop from a legitimate seed plant to the illegitimate ratoon.”

There you have a line of demarcation made by legislation as to when a thing is ratoon and when it is not ratoon. The Government cannot stand out against ratooning. I have letters here from constituents of mine—letters from dozens of Queensland farmers who have said that they have shown ratoon cotton and plant cotton to the experts on the spot, and the experts have been unable to tell the difference. Either the writers of these letters are awful liars or they are not, and I am inclined to believe what they say. Undoubtedly, in some instances, you may be able to tell the difference by the strength of the staple, but generally speaking, it is impossible to tell the difference. The “Daily Mail” of 8th March, 1923, published a letter written to Mr. D. Jones in regard to a sample of first ratoon cotton sent to Liverpool. The cotton was grown in the Kimberley country in the north-west of Western Australia. The letter reads—

“Messrs. W. Tanner, Boxwell, Son, and Company, Liverpool, under date 10th January, 1923, write as follows:—“We are in receipt of your samples of cotton, for which we thank you. We have carefully examined the cotton, and find it to be of good staple, but rather brown in colour. It would compete with brown Egyptian cotton. We have no doubt that cotton of this quality (such as your sample) would find a ready sale in this market, and on to-day’s prices would be valued about 15½d. a lb. With reference to your remarks that some visitors recently passed through your district, and that they condemned the perennial cotton, saying that spinners would not use it, we must express our surprise, as we cannot agree with them on this point. We handle very largely Peruvian and Brazilian cotton, all of which is perennially grown, and we find a ready sale to all Lancashire spinners.”

“So far as our information goes we believe that perennial cotton is grown in all countries where the plant will stand the rigours of winter. It is only grown

in the United States as an annual, because the winter frosts kill off the plants. As you are aware, we handled all Dr. Thomat’s cotton, and you are probably acquainted with the results.

“We are sure spinners would to-day be very interested had we any of your cotton to offer them. Should the opportunity arise of your being able to consign any cotton to this market for sale, we shall have much pleasure in handling it.”

Here are facts proving that people are willing to take this cotton. There are other countries in the world that are handling cotton. With regard to Japanese cotton mills it is stated—

“According to official reports, the cotton-spinning industry in Japan had a satisfactory year in 1921. Fifty-seven companies, with a total paid-up capital of 295,000,000 yen. . . . The amount of cloth woven by the thirty-three companies during the year is given as 700,000,000 yards, or an average output of 46.36 yards per loom per day. The amount of cloth woven in 1920 totalled 760,000,000 yards. The number of operatives is returned as averaging 7,000 men per day and 28,000 women.”

I have any amount of information here. I have a letter from Philadelphia with regard to cost, which reads—

“Since, in addition to the cost of raising your crop, there is the cost of shipping the cotton to the United States of America, it would be difficult for short-staple Australian cotton to compete with American short-staple cotton, but owing to the premiums received for long staples, Australian cotton of more than 1½-inch in length should be able to compete with Egyptians, Peruvians, and American long staples, and bring a good profit to the farmer. Therefore, we urge the growing of long-staple cottons in your country.”

If we want long-staple cotton, one means of getting it is ratoon cotton, which will give the long-staple cotton.

I want to refer to the question of the bearing disease has upon ratoon cotton. It has struck me forcibly that the whole issue in regard to ratoon cotton depends upon the question of legal tender. As soon as the question of legal tender came up, various people turned round and said that disease would overtake ratoon cotton. It has been mentioned in the Chamber to-night that plant cotton is more subject to disease than ratoon cotton. We have the fact that there are some pests attacking the cotton plant which you will never eradicate by stopping ratooning. Colonel Evans, as reported in the “Courier” of 11th April, 1923, says—

“I arrived at Broome on 7th February, and found that the plots in the neighbourhood, which had been planted on light sandy soil, were not likely to succeed. In the precincts of the town itself, however, a few plots of Egyptian cotton were being grown under irrigation, and I found that these were heavily infested by what I suspected to be the pink boll worm pest, with which I was well acquainted in India. Some of the gardens round about were growing ratoon cotton, and this also was found to be infected. I at once sent specimens to England to Professor H. Maxwell

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Lefroy, head of the Bureau of Entomology of the Royal College of Science, England, whose report has not yet been received."

Here was cotton in Western Australia alleged to be attacked by a pest known as the pink boll worm, and when the report came from Professor Lefroy in London it was stated that, as a result of his inspection of the hibiscus worm sent from Broome he had formed the opinion that it was no known boll worm. We are told that the American boll weevil is not in Australia, but it is supposed to be, and the supposition is that that is the reason why ratoon cotton is being prohibited to-day. Colonel Evans was asked a question in March, 1923—

"Do you think we stand in danger of the importation of the American boll weevil into Australia?"

He replied, "No, I do not think so."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Because of the precautions we have taken.

Mr. KERR: One man who was growing cotton told me about the Government's precautions. He said that the officials came out to his farm with sprays and went round spraying in the field. I say that it is not the Government who have stopped the disease from coming into Australia. What a claim for the Government to make! They would claim anything after claiming that. I am satisfied that ratoon cotton is going to do no harm in regard to pests. I am satisfied that, if it is not legal tender, there is a market for it in the world. I am satisfied that it is a drought cotton which will give the farmer his bread and butter when other things fail. Why should the farmer plant corn, wheat, maize, which the drought kills, and be asked to plant cotton, which the drought also kills? There is nothing against ratoon cotton. Here is the opinion of Mr. W. W. Turner, as quoted in the "Courier" of 12th October last year—

"Mr. W. W. Turner, a Yelarbon grazier, who was in Warwick on Tuesday, confirmed previous reports of the enthusiasm with which the cultivation of cotton is being taken up in Yelarbon and district. He quotes the experience of one grower who, two years ago, experimented in the crop, and was rewarded with a net profit of £8 per acre. The crop was allowed to stand over, and the ratoons, after being pruned, yielded a net return of £15 per acre in the second year. A further trial is being given this year for a third crop off the same planting."

The decision with regard to the embargo on ratoon cotton should be delayed. Plots should be established in various parts of Queensland to test the matter from all points of view, but we should not decide from one point of view only. Taking into consideration the requests of those who grow ratoon cotton, the Government would be well-advised not to make a football of this business, but for twelve months to come give ratoon cotton every test which it is possible to make. Let ratoon cotton be grown and marketed. The farmers are content to find their own markets. To beat the Government in this matter they have appealed for funds, and I think they will get them. To come down with this legislation and prohibit something which it is really impossible to prohibit is going too far.

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I want to read in conclusion a couple of letters. One is from Pullen Vale, Indooroopilly, in my district, from Mr. Hugh McMartin, whose people are known throughout Australia. They have done exceptional service to the State in connection with wool. Mr. McMartin is a very fine type of producer, and an excellent citizen. This letter, which is very pertinent to the matter, states—

"In days to come, when the ruination of a promising industry is viewed in its proper light, those whose names are associated with the passing of the anti-ratooning clauses of cotton legislation will have cause to feel ashamed of the attitude they adopted.

"The cotton industry, before people began to fool and tinker with it, offered a solution of the Australian farmer's most difficult problem—the uncertainty of our rainfall. With a field of cotton well rooted the man on the land could go cheerfully ahead, happy in the knowledge that even should a drought come his way he would get something to keep the pot boiling. The ratoon crop was his savior.

"Now—well, he might just as well plant wheat, corn, or anything else, for cotton is just as 'touchy' in its early stages as any other crop.

"One thing about the cotton industry, it has produced the biggest crop of damned liars possible to imagine, men who bolster up a rotten cause are prepared to manufacture as much falsehood and misrepresentation as they deem necessary to hoodwink the unthinking and disinterested of our community. The greedy profiteering wretches that sit behind the scenes making the balls for their noisy fuglemen to fire are a disgrace to the name of British trade. The spirit actuating their present move of deliberately injuring the struggling primary producers of Queensland, and in many cases, particularly the scrub cotton farmer, completely ruining them, is the same vile spirit of coercive trading that caused the long-suffering American colonists to resort to arms and finally hurl their oppressors from their midst. No measure has ever done so much to weaken the ties that bind us to the mother country, at least within the eyes of a large section of the primary producers, as this anti-ratoon legislation if it is made into law. People will sacrifice much on the altar of patriotism if they believe the cause a just one, but if you get men to believe, as many of our cotton farmers do believe, that they are the victims of a low-down trade 'stunt' worked upon them by people for whose safety and welfare 60,000 of the flower of our nation have lately died—well, patriotism will give way to a feeling of loathing and contempt.

"Personally I believe that the late so-called 'British Cotton Delegation' was no more or less than a scouting party from the British Cotton Combine—which party, when they saw the vast possibilities our wonderful country offered could they but bend our cotton-growers to their will and compel them to grow only the cotton they desired, fairly jumped with joy at the prospect. What a gorgeous promise for the profiteers' future bliss! A rush of lies,

backed with the pretence of expert authority (or financial aid) carrying the ministerial heads of the State temporarily off their balance and causing them, while so upset, to make foolish promises—the installing of watchdogs on the premises to scare off any other cotton magnates who might happen along, a year or two of comparatively high prices (subsidised), and then the old, old tale of no competition, and the price that the only buyer cares to give.”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): I ask that the hon. member be required to lay that letter on the table of the House.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed to him by the Standing Orders. With regard to reading letters or newspaper extracts, I should like to point out that “May” has this to say—

“It is also irregular to read extracts from newspapers, letters, or other documents referring to debates in the House in the same session. Indeed, until 1840, the reading of any extracts from a newspaper, whether referring to debates or not, had been restrained as irregular. On the 9th March, 1840, the Speaker having called a member to order who was reading an extract cut out from a newspaper as part of his speech, Sir Robert Peel said it would be drawing the rule too tightly if members were restrained from reading relevant extracts from newspapers; and with the acquiescence of the House, the member proceeded to read the passage from the newspaper.”

I have no desire to restrict debate, but I have observed an inclination on the part of some hon. members to quote too lengthily from newspapers. I hope that in future hon. members will only read relevant extracts in making their speeches. I have no desire to curb discussion, but the speech of the hon. member for the last twenty minutes has consisted almost exclusively of letters or quotations from newspapers.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I beg to move—

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

Question put and passed.

Mr. KERR: I thank hon. members for their consideration. I shall not continue with that particular letter, but I want to quote in conclusion a letter from Mr. G. H. B. Holmes, who says—

“My ratoon cotton has turned out slightly better than the plant cotton, although you could hardly see the plants for weeds. The plant I kept clean, but when the Government put the ban on ratoon, I stopped working it. If I had kept it clean it would have beaten the annual cotton easily. The ratoon cotton has a long way the better staple.”

Another letter I desire to quote comes from Mr. J. W. Smith, of Gunniwin, via Roma—

“I may say I have a splendid twelve acre setting of cotton, which did not get a fair go this year, but if ratoon should pay well. Do you think there is any likelihood of the embargo of ratooning being lifted? The Australian Cotton Association says ‘No.’ I would very much like to hear your opinion on the matter.”

Mr. J. H. J. Koets, of Deeford, says—

“The discovery I made was a beetle

in the cotton field close to ratooned cotton. This beetle resembled so perfectly the Mexican boll weevil that I was scared and would not continue to fight for ratoon cotton. An entomologist satisfied me, however, that it was not the real weevil and that ratoon cotton, when properly cleaned and cultivated, during winter, in his opinion, will not propagate pests more than annual cotton. I am satisfied on this point, I can go along again to do my best for the ratoon cotton cause, and all through the Dawson Valley you can hear the farmers, with the exception of an odd one, quite in favour of ratoon cotton on account of the results.”

Mr. J. W. Smith, of Gunniwin, also says in another letter—

“I know only too cruelly what it will mean to me, and there are hundreds like me. Scrub selections are a source of great expense. Surely we ought not to be tied down to any such laws.”

I again ask the Government to take each aspect of the question into consideration and see if they cannot, for the time being, withhold their anti-ratoon legislation, pending inquiries as to the markets and pests, and pending the establishing of plots to test ratoon cotton. That is all that is asked. No guarantee is required from the Government; the people are prepared to bear the expense themselves. The question is such a big one that the Government would do well to consider it fully before finally deciding.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): The diversity of interests involved in this important question naturally makes it a somewhat complicated problem. The great point we have to bear in mind in discussing it is the fact that we have to look to outside markets for the sale of our products. When we are dealing with a product all of which is consumed within the shores of Australia, we can make our own rules and regulations and control the whole situation. But when we are looking to the markets of the world and have to compete with other countries with their sometimes cheaper production, then we have to realise that we have not only ourselves to consider. It seems to me that a number of speeches which we have heard savour rather of the parochial, and of considering too much the Queensland side without studying what might be termed both sides of the question—that is, the side of the growers and the side of the consumers, which must go hand in hand in a question of this sort. In approaching this question—and I have endeavoured to give a lot of thought to it—we have to consider both sides. I happen—unfortunately, as some may consider—to be an Englishman, and therefore I can understand the conservatism of Englishmen, and the viewpoint of the home buyer of this commodity. Therefore, perhaps I am qualified to express an opinion from the two standpoints, and I shall endeavour in the remarks I intend to make to throw out some suggestions which may help the situation.

The first point we have to consider is that Great Britain is intensely conservative. We have to rely on Great Britain in this matter. The old country is making the growth of cotton an Empire proposition, [8 p.m.] and is proposing to spend a certain amount on developing the growth of cotton throughout the Empire. We have every reason to know that Great Britain is very conservative. Those of us

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who have been introducing Land Act Amendment Acts during the past two or three years have reason to know that Great Britain is conservative in a matter respecting an obligation; therefore, here again we have to remember that Great Britain is conservative in a question appertaining to cotton-growing. Another point that has to be borne in mind is that cotton is playing a most important part in our land settlement schemes in Queensland. When we obtain the 10,000 settlers that we propose to put on the land, and of whom we have heard so much during this session, we have to realise that cotton cultivation will play an important part in the prospects of those settlers. Therefore, to place any unnatural or unfair handicap upon those settlers in one of their hopeful productions—that is, cotton—will act as a deterrent and a damper at the very inception of their operations. It seems to me that it is the duty of the Government to take a very broad view of this question. They have got to study it from the viewpoint of the market which they expect to establish for the cotton; they have got to study it from the viewpoint of the settler; and they have got to study it from the viewpoint of Queensland in regard to cotton production; and out of these three issues they have to draw deductions and take a definite step in the direction which they ultimately find to be a wise one to pursue. I want to say quite frankly and fearlessly, after having studied the question from all viewpoints, that I think the Government have no other course open but to introduce legislation of this nature. (Hear, hear!)

I am going to give reasons why I am of that opinion. In the first place, there are the statements of those people who have been sent out to advise us upon this question of cotton-growing. We have gone to other parts of the world to get advice, and they have lent to us men of high repute, men of education, and men eminently qualified to voice opinions upon the subject that they have been sent to expound. Therefore, to disregard that advice when we are entering upon a new era in cotton-growing would be unfortunate in that, if any mistakes eventuate, this would naturally be flung in our teeth: "You disregarded the advice of world experts, and carved out your own destiny, therefore you cannot look to us to help you out of your difficulties." Another point is that we are dependent upon the spinners of Lancashire for our market, and I should be sorry if we looked beyond the markets of the Empire for our cotton, because I am quite sure—and this we shall appreciate as we get older and as our problems become more acute—that these problems can be better tackled by looking for markets within the Empire than by looking for scattered markets in different parts of the world; therefore, in that regard, I am in entire sympathy with our present Prime Minister in his mission to Great Britain in trying to inculcate into the minds of the merchants, manufacturers, and consumers in Great Britain the idea of a self-contained Empire. The cotton spinners in Lancashire have a very important voice in connection with the question of ratoons. It may be, and probably is, that they do not understand the ratoon question as we understand it in Queensland. It may be that they have formed an entirely wrong conclusion as to what we understand to be ratoons. It may be that they are confusing "bolly" cotton with our ratoon cotton; nevertheless, at the present juncture, we are more or less

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in the hands of those spinners who are our market, and who are going to make or break to a very large extent the destiny of our cotton production in Queensland. Therefore, I think at this stage it would be unwise to do anything that would destroy the confidence of those people who have already shown an indication of being prepared to extend a helping hand to us in this distant part of the Empire in what we believe to be one of our most promising primary products. Another point is that we have already received financial assistance from the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, and we expect to receive more from that same channel. The Minister has complained, if one may use that expression, that they have not received all the financial assistance from that source that he thinks we are entitled to expect. That may or may not be, but I am quite sure that if we showed that Association that we intend to follow the advice they extend to us, and the advice of their experts, we shall loosen their purse strings, and they will begin to appreciate that this is the producing end of the cotton industry whilst theirs is the consuming end, and that the two interests are absolutely wrapped up one with the other, and it is to their interests from all points of view that they should assist us in that regard. If we defy them, and say, "You have got your own old conservative ideas, and we in our greater wisdom, or supposed greater wisdom, are going to grow ratoon cotton, which is just as satisfactory as annual cotton," what will be the position? There is a diversity of opinion on the question of whether we can grow ratoon cotton as satisfactory as annual cotton. That may be correct, or it may not. One thing is certain, and that is that the Lancashire people seem to be of the one opinion, and that is that annual cotton is the only cotton they require. Seeing that we in Queensland can grow the annual cotton, it seems to me to be rather a pity if we go out of our way to take exception to that attitude, and perhaps take up a line of action and argument which is going to throw our growers into conflict rather than educate them and assist them and proceed on the even tenor of our way without quarrelling amongst ourselves, as so frequently follows when we approach a new era in regard to some branch of primary production in Queensland. I have endeavoured by questions in this House to ascertain what is the position in regard to the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association. Here we have a body of men who are essentially business men, who have in Queensland an agreement of a very short duration, and who have spent something like £300,000 on establishing ginneries. One would imagine that their great object is to get as much cotton to gin as they possibly can, because the more cotton they gin the bigger will be the return for their expenditure. Still these men by their utterances have said that they are opposed to the growing of ratoon cotton in Queensland. I have tried to argue the position out. I cannot understand how the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association could possibly oppose the growing of ratoon cotton unless they were absolutely convinced that it would be a mistake for the welfare of the industry for ratoons to be so grown. As I have already pointed out, if ratoons were permitted, the ginneries would be more frequently and more consistently occupied than would be the case

with the growth of annuals, but if these ratoons are to be eliminated then the operations of the ginneries will be curtailed, and that being so I cannot imagine what possible object the Association could have in discouraging ratoons unless it be for the fact that they and those associated with it and interested in it in other parts of the world with, perhaps, a greater knowledge of this industry, see in it a danger to the welfare of Queensland's cotton. Let us view this position a little closer. Here is an Association that has spent approximately £300,000, and which has a tenure under the agreement only up to 30th June, 1926. One can only explain this by assuming that they anticipate the permanency of the cotton industry in Queensland. This Association's policy evidently is that its future in Queensland depends upon the permanency of the cotton industry. Therefore its argument is that we should grow annuals and not ratoons, because by doing so we would help to establish the permanency of the industry, and thereby ensure the welfare of all concerned in it. Another point is that £50,000 of the taxpayers' money has already been spent in substantiating our guarantee to the growers.

Why are we renewing this guarantee? Why is it that the taxpayer is finding this money? The Government speak somewhat airily of this guarantee. They speak of it as redounding to their credit for the way they are doing it. But it is not their money; it is the taxpayers' money. The people the Opposition are supposed to represent are the people who are paying this £50,000. It is those people who continue to make up these subsidies to the cotton-grower. What justification is there for the payment of £50,000 if it is not to assist a new production to become a permanent industry in Queensland, which will rise, as I hope it will, to such a height that its reputation will be equal to the reputation that our wool has won and is enjoying at the present moment? I cannot justify or reasonably argue for the continuation of these subsidies to the cotton-grower unless it is on the score of giving assistance to the industry in the early days of its production, or in the direction of establishing permanently an industry which will redound to the credit of Queensland and all associated with it.

Another point is this: Even assuming that the advice given on the question of ratoon and annual cotton is not reliable—assuming that it is not correct—I argue that at this stage we should not stop to reason on that point. We have got cotton interests behind us which have been established for generations. We have opinions given which we must respect for the time being, as the interests are interwoven the one with another. It is a great pity if we break away from the advice given to us on this important question, and I suggest that we leave the question of whether ratoon is as good as annual cotton for investigation and subsequent determination.

The Minister in his speech—in my judgment it was a very comprehensive one—expressed the hope that cotton would occupy as important a position in the industries of Queensland as our wool. I reciprocate that feeling.

At 8.12 p.m.,

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

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I see no reason why the cotton industry of Queensland should not be just as important to us as our wool is, but there will be this very great difference, in my judgment—that whereas wool is the product of big stations and the investment of large sums of money, cotton seems to me a production upon which we must rely on the small cultivator to make a success of it. The more one investigates this question the more convinced one becomes that the future of the cotton industry is in the hands of the man who looks to it as a side crop rather than as a main crop. It seems to me that it will be the salvation of the dairyman if he can put 5 to 10 acres of land under cotton cultivation and by so doing add £100 or £200 to the common exchequer and find occupation for his family and himself between the times he is engaged in his milking. Those seem to be the lines along which we should proceed. In that direction it is quite a different class of primary production to wool, but just as valuable and calling for as much judgment as wool has done.

There have been several arguments raised in favour of the ratooning of cotton which require a little examination. One of the arguments advanced is a very potent one indeed—that is, that the sowing season for cotton is generally a dry time in Queensland, and the spring rains in that portion of Queensland where cotton cultivation is showing the greatest progress are not sufficiently reliable to encourage the planting of annual cotton. There is a good deal in support of that contention, and those who support the ratooning question could not have found a season more favourable to their argument than the present one. We are suffering from an extraordinarily dry spell. It is somewhat unfair to base all our argument in favour of ratooning on the conditions as they exist to-day. Nevertheless, records show that spring rains in the Central district are not too reliable; but for an annual crop those rains must be enjoyed, otherwise the grower will miss his opportunity and the seed will not germinate. That is a forcible argument by those in favour of ratooning. Whether we can overcome that—as I presume we shall endeavour to overcome it in certain directions by irrigation—I do not know, but I do think that irrigation will help to solve the problem. It is certain that, if annual cotton is to take that prominent position in our exports which we hope it will, some means will have to be found to assist a spring growth.

Another point that the advocates of ratoon cotton can reasonably advance is that the Government are diminishing the guarantee in regard to annual cotton, and by this action the grower will be thrown more and more back upon ratoon cotton. There is a certain amount of truth in that argument. After next year, if my memory is correct, the Government propose to reduce the guarantee in regard to other than 1½-inch staple cotton. This shows a tendency on the part of the Government to reduce the guarantee, and thereby withdraw from the cotton-grower the main protection to him, which has been the guarantee.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There will still be a guarantee of a flat rate of 5s. per lb.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That is ½d. per lb. less than the present guarantee?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

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Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The Minister also stated that he is uncertain as to how long this guarantee is going to last. Although the Minister may be on quite safe ground, and is perhaps keeping within the four walls of his responsibilities by being guarded in his remarks, the fact remains that by showing a tendency to reduce this guarantee the Government are strengthening the argument of the ratoonist, because he says that, if this guarantee did not exist, it would never pay him to grow annual cotton.

Another point I wish to touch upon is this: I do not see how the Government can possibly withdraw that guarantee while they put restrictions on the grower as to the class of cotton he shall grow. The fact of the Government giving this guarantee is their safe anchorage in imposing the conditions under which cotton is to be grown. If the Government did not give any guarantee as to the price, they would have no justification whatever for introducing this Bill. Therefore, it seems that so long as the Government place restrictions on the grower in the manner in which they are doing, so long must they maintain that guarantee. It should not be a difficult matter to maintain that, because if our cotton is of the excellence which our experts tell us it is—there seems to be no diversity of opinion in that regard—it will not be long before Queensland cotton will establish for itself a reputation on the market which will demand and command a price which only the best can attain, such as is the case with our wool to-day. Therefore, the maintenance of a guarantee on all fours with that which exists to-day seems to be absolutely necessary whilst we impose conditions on the grower. In my judgment, it is safe so long as those conditions prevail, because by so doing you will undoubtedly ensure a longer staple and a high quality of cotton.

Another very forcible argument that has been raised is in regard to the difficulties experienced by the men on scrub lands. I have heard one or two speakers on the Government benches speak rather disparagingly and slightly of those men who are engaged in the problems of settlement on our scrub lands. I would remind those hon. members that we have to rely on the co-operation of all classes of settlers to make Queensland the country we desire to make it, and that the problems of the man on scrub land should be our problem. If we can help him by encouraging him in the growth of cotton, then we are assisting ourselves as well as him. What is the problem in regard to the scrub settler? He argues that he cannot afford to clear his land in the ordinary way—that the only way within his means is to fell and burn the scrub and plant his cotton amongst the roots, allowing time to rot the roots out, when they may be broken up and removed. Of course, that is quite correct; but it seems to me that the Government can come to the scrub farmer's assistance, and instead of inviting his hostility—as a measure of this nature will do unless some kind of assistance is given to him—help him in the clearing of his land. These scrub farmers cannot afford to buy the plant for the clearing of their land, yet plant can be obtained which will very effectively and easily clear scrub land. No one can argue that any reasonable farmer would rather plant cotton promiscuously amongst the roots of trees than clear his land with the proper implements and then plant the cotton

symmetrically, permitting of easy cultivation and attention. The question then is why the Government do not place at the disposal of the scrub farmer the necessary implements with which to clear the land. We want him to grow cotton, and the Government might reasonably make available to him such land-clearing implements on loan as would permit of the clearing of the land within the course of a week or two, when the implements could be passed on to someone else to do likewise. The scrub-settler could then go ahead and grow his cotton in the manner the Government think necessary. I argue that it would be a thousand pities if the Government proceeded with this measure, which may seem particularly harsh to a man who does not understand the true significance of it, and allowed cotton-growers to be divided into two camps on this important question. This should not be a party question. It is a matter of endeavouring to establish another great primary production. We are told throughout the length and breadth of the civilised world that Queensland cotton is pre-eminent. Therefore, let us approach the matter from that point of view, and instead of pitting one method against the other, let us carry out that doctrine of pre-eminence amongst the growers and show them what I believe is the broader view. Let us encourage the growers to look at the question from that standard, give them practical encouragement, and assist them in their temporary difficulties—which are possibly tremendous in their sight, but which may surely be overcome in such an important issue as this, if we all pull together.

Another very important point that the supporter of ratoon advances is that there is a market for ratoon cotton and that the Lancashire spinner does not understand our ratoon cotton. Admitting that this may be so, I argue that this is not the stage at which to take a definite stand on this issue. Let us by all means have experimental stations and other means at our disposal to test out this ratoon question thoroughly and sincerely, not with the object of defeating the grower, but with the object of producing an article which is going to work out to the best advantage of our Queensland industry. If it can be proved that ratoon cotton can be produced of the quality mentioned by Opposition members, surely it will be possible to convince the spinner in Lancashire that Queensland ratoon is a very different proposition to ratoon cotton from other parts of the world. If it can be demonstrated that our ratoon is on a par with the best cotton from other parts of the world, then Queensland cotton is going to be placed on a wonderful pedestal. If our ratoon is so excellent, how much better will be our annual cotton?

I have endeavoured to throw what I believe to be a few additional lights on this question because I should be intensely vexed if it developed into a mere party question that would tend to stop the development of such an important industry. The question should be capable of solution, and, if the grower who is seized with the advisability and necessity of growing ratoon cotton were able to view the question from the broad Empire point of view, I think it could be solved. If his contention is correct, the time will undoubtedly come when his arguments will be substantiated; but, seeing that we are on the threshold of what promises to be one of our most important primary productions,

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this is not the time to indulge in party arguments of a conflicting nature which are going to destroy the confidence of our prospective buyers.

In an interjection of mine on the Minister's second reading speech, I suggested that the visit of the Prime Minister to England should be taken advantage of to advance our cause in reference to further assistance being obtained from the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, and I suggested that, if the Minister will take action, advantage will accrue. We know quite well that our Prime Minister is intensely interested in this question of cotton cultivation in Queensland and it is quite in keeping with his policy that our Empire should be self-contained that our cotton industry in Queensland should be developed. I am quite certain that, if we took advantage of his presence in England—and apparently he is attracting some little notoriety—to advance our claims to the special consideration of the British Empire Cotton Association, it would be to our advantage. Particularly can he do that when, as I presume will be the case, this Bill will have become law. The authorities at home will understand that, much as it is against the grain of many engaged in the cotton industry in Queensland and of some of those who are acting as our advisers, we have yet seen fit to be guided by British demands and are preventing the growing of ratoon cotton. This would certainly be the means of gaining the sympathetic ear of those interested in the industry at home.

I cannot let this opportunity go by without making some brief reference to the extraordinary position which is being taken up by the Government in these days. Here we have a Government ostensibly committed to socialism that is bringing forward a measure of restriction at the direction of proprietary interests, at the direction of capital, of individualism. I am not saying this in any captious spirit. I do not know exactly where we are in these days—

Mr. WEIR: You never did know. You have changed your position three times recently.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: If the hon. gentlemen opposite will listen to me I will show that, until a few months ago, hon. gentlemen opposite, when on the hustings, were advocating the socialisation of industry and exchange. Now we have the very same Minister who said that production should be for use and not for profit, saying when making his second reading speech that the grower was perfectly entitled to grow those crops for which he would get the most return, and, if he could not get that satisfaction, he was entitled to "chuck it up."

Under socialism that man would [3.30 p.m.] have to continue to grow cotton, because that would be the particular niche that he would be supposed to fill best. The Minister is quite sound in his argument in saying that the consumer at home—in this case it is the capitalist, the individualist, the employer—should direct the class of cotton he wants, and as he directs so must we comply. Let me compare this statement with what we used to hear in the rabid days of socialism not so very long ago when hon. gentlemen opposite used to defy all the laws of supply and demand and say, "We in Queensland are going to set the pace and make the world toe the line in accordance with what we direct."

The PREMIER: It is possible for a socialistic State to supply a capitalistic market.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The Premier no doubt is preparing statements which he will probably find a good use for in a few months. If hon. gentlemen study the situation, they must look with interest upon the transition stage through which the Government are passing at the present moment. They seem to be casting off the shackles of socialism and becoming an individualistic Government, and candidly I must admit that it is very difficult to know just where they stand in these days.

The PREMIER: Do you admire us as we are or as we were? (Laughter.)

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I admire them very much more as they are, because I have no time for these ridiculous socialistic stunts which most of them do not believe in, but which they talk about to tickle the palates of those who do not know any better.

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

Mr. FARRELL (*Rockhampton*): As my electorate is the centre of one of the biggest cotton-growing districts in Queensland, and as I have taken a considerable interest in the cotton industry since it has been established in Queensland, and particularly as my predecessor also took a considerable interest in the industry, I would like to say a few words on the all-important subject of ratoon cotton. To me the big part of the Bill is whether or not we should grow ratoon cotton in Queensland. That is the burning argument. I would like to congratulate the Minister first of all on the stand that he has taken in regard to this question. The policy that has been followed in Australia for a considerable time of "Anything is good enough" has to be put a stop to sooner or later. We see the same thing in the fruit industry in Australia; we see the same thing in the meat industry of Australia, where the policy of not catering for the best and the best only has ruined practically two of the biggest industries that we have in this Commonwealth. Nobody can deny that the meat industry in Australia has been ruined chiefly on account of bad marketing—neglect in connection with the export of our meat to the other side of the world—and the Argentine with its more up-to-date methods and with its policy of producing the best article has captured our trade in that line. As the Secretary for Public Works pointed out to me when discussing this matter with him yesterday, the same thing applies to the fruit industry. Owing to carelessness in the classifying of fruit and owing to careless canning of the fruit we have lost trade which legitimately belongs to Queensland, and it is now going to the other States. For that reason I am going to advocate the policy of supplying nothing but the best cotton so that Queensland cotton, by its own value and by its wonderful texture, will place itself without any advertising right on the top of the markets of the world, the same as our wool is doing at the present time. If that policy is pursued in connection with all the other industries in Queensland, the time will not be long when we shall be able to cut out the useless commissioners we are sending to the East and other such useless officials, who, at big

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expense, are attempting to advertise our goods in those countries. I know that the Minister in placing this Bill before the House has many interests to consider. He has first of all to consider the State and the industry, and he has to consider the grower. But what is of more importance to me is the man who works on the farm—the labourer—and that aspect of the ratoon cotton question in Queensland has so far not been touched upon by hon. members.

Mr. NOTT: It is easier to pick ratoon cotton.

Mr. FARRELL: It may be easier to pick ratoon cotton, but easier, as my friend will see, to get cheap labour to pick ratoon cotton, and that is the policy he stands for. Let us examine the facts as they exist. The Minister, in his second reading speech, told the House that the world's price for ratoon cotton averages between 2d. and 2½d. per lb. In the Wcwan cotton fields in the Dawson Valley, and on the cotton fields at Archer, Bajool, and Dalma, situated round Rockhampton, the price paid to the labourer for picking cotton is 2d. per lb. If the farmer himself is only going to get 2½d. per lb. for ratoon cotton, what is going to happen to the labourer who has to pick the cotton on these farms? The natural thing that my friends opposite stand for—give the labourer 1d. per lb. for it! Anything is good enough for the man who is working on the farm!

Mr. CORSER: He is likely to take it. What about the Industrial Arbitration Act?

Mr. FARRELL: What is the good of an Industrial Arbitration Act if the wage laid down is 2d. per lb. for picking ratoon cotton and the world's price is only 2½d. per lb.?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: What is the good of talking like that?

Mr. FARRELL: I would sooner believe the Minister than believe the irresponsible statements of members opposite. That is the argument, from my point of view, in favour of growing annual cotton for which the farmer is paid from 5d. to 5½d. per lb., so that the labourer can still get his 2d. per lb. for picking the cotton and thus be able to make a living wage. If the farmer only gets 2½d. or 3d. per lb. for his ratoon cotton, there is no possibility of paying the labourer a living wage.

Mr. CORSER: That stuff is all right on the kerosene box.

Mr. FARRELL: And it is stuff the hon. member does not like. In looking up the returns of the cotton ginned in Rockhampton for the first five weeks of the present year, I find that the annual cotton ginned at the North Rockhampton ginnersy during that period totalled 1,229 tons 9 cwt., and the value was £62,932; while the ratoon cotton ginned during the same period amounted to 130 tons 17 cwt., and was valued at £3,653, or, in other words, there were ten times as much annual cotton ginned at that ginnersy as there was ratoon cotton ginned, and the value of the annual cotton was nineteen times the value of the ratoon cotton. That is an argument in favour of continuing to grow annual cotton around Rockhampton in preference to ratoon cotton.

Mr. CORSER: It cannot be ratoon cotton the first year.

Mr. FARRELL: I am speaking of the returns for the first five weeks of this year.

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The hon. member for Burnett does not understand the conditions in Central Queensland, and he does not understand what I am talking about.

Mr. CORSER: There is a large area under cotton in my electorate.

Mr. FARRELL: I think there is a larger area in the district I am speaking of. During the last State election campaign I had the privilege of touring the biggest part of the Keppele electorate and a large part of the Normanby electorate with the Secretary for Railways and seeing for myself some of the farms where ratoon cotton was grown and some where annual cotton was grown, and I have no hesitation in saying that, if the ratoon farming we saw outside Marmor, and which more resembled a lantana scrub than farming, is a sample of ratoon-cotton farming generally, the sooner ratoon-cotton farming is wiped out in Queensland the better it will be for the industry. Driving along the road you could see farmers plucking from ratoon plants which had been cultivated I am sure for two years, and hon. members opposite surely will not suggest that the cotton from this place will be anything like the best which should be produced in Queensland. I quite agree with the hon. member for Normanby that there are certain farmers, like Mr. G. McDonald of Callioan, sincere farmers, who would cultivate ratoon crops profitably, but against that there is the unanswerable argument, "What are you going to do with it if you grow ratoon cotton?" That subject has been mentioned by other hon. members of the House, so I will not deal with it. It was thrown across the Chamber by the hon. member for Murilla that, while the Government are supporting an agreement between the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, Limited, and themselves, they are continually up against the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and other such monopolies. There might be some reason for their argument if we did not know that up to the present time the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, Limited, has not received one penny by way of return for the money it has invested in Queensland. Hon. members know that this company has made available shares for Australians to take up. To show what value the shares are at the present time, I might mention that on my last visit to Rockhampton a business man there offered me 100 shares at 18s. 6d. each that he had taken up in the company. Surely that shows that the Association and those who bought its shares are not making any handsome profit out of the business. There is no analogy between the position of the British Cotton Growing Association and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which has made millions of profit and exploited the workers right through. In Rockhampton alone, the Association has established a ginnersy at a cost of between £65,000 and £70,000, and another ginnersy at Wowan at a cost of between £40,000 and £45,000. My friends the hon. member for Fitzroy and the Secretary for Railways and myself have continually pressed the claims of Rockhampton to have an oil mill established there, and I am pleased to see by a Press report the other day that our representations in that matter have been successful. I have had several interviews with Mr. Vaughan, the secretary of the Association, and the keynote of his conversation all along was as to what was going to be the position when the agreement between the

Government and the Association expired. All the time we were trying to get an oil mill established in Rockhampton in opposition to the proposal of the Association to establish it at another centre. The argument of Mr. Vaughan, the secretary of the Association, was, "What facilities can Rockhampton give us, so that when the agreement expires we shall be able to compete favourably against any other co-operative concern or State-owned concern which might grow up after that time. Mr. Vaughan has faith in the cotton industry in Queensland, and I am sure my colleagues share this view. We have the same faith in the industry in Central Queensland, and we look forward to the time, not many years distant, when we shall have, not only wool sales established at Rockhampton but also cotton sales. I feel that the industry in Central Queensland is going to grow to such large proportions that that will be the natural outcome of the industry there. We shall have cotton sales there, notwithstanding the Jeremiah arguments adduced on the opposite side as to whether we shall get a market for our crop. It will be found that buyers will come to Central Queensland to buy Queensland cotton, because the Government will see to it that nothing but the best cotton is produced.

I do not want to take up any more of the time of the House. I was asked to express my views on the question by farmers in Central Queensland, who have met me on several deputations during the last four months. I want to say that for the past four years we have had four of the worst seasons on end that have been known in the history of Central Queensland. While some of the farmers are suffering hardships through the bad seasons, I am inclined to think that that has made their view on this question slightly biased. I believe that, if we had two or three good seasons in which the farmers would get an excellent return from annual cotton, the present fight for the continuance of ratoon cotton would cease altogether. I believe that, if the Government's policy was put into force—and I am sure it meets with the approval of the majority of the farmers in Central Queensland—the result would be that in a few years the cotton of Queensland would be in the foremost place in the markets of the world, the same as our wool is at the present time.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): In the discussion which has taken place in connection with this question, which all members admit is a very important one, a lot of interesting matter has been introduced. The importance of the cotton industry to Queensland has been realised by hon. members on both sides of the House. It is felt that the future of the cotton industry in Queensland rests with what we do in Parliament in connection with this Bill. Therefore we want to discuss the matter as far as we possibly can from a non-party point of view in the interests of Australia and Queensland, and also, as the hon. member for Oxley pointed out, from the Empire point of view. That there is a genuine shortage of cotton throughout the world to-day everyone admits, and that that shortage is going to continue for quite a long time is very evident. In trying to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the question we are discussing we have to take into consideration what is happening in the other great cotton-producing countries of

the world, so that we shall not make any mistakes in what we are doing at the present time. We do not want to take any false steps or make any mistakes which it is possible to avoid.

The Minister made a very long and comprehensive speech, the whole of which I have since read, and he brought forward some very strong arguments against the growing of ratoon cotton. I take it that in this House we have to be guided to a very great extent by men who claim to have special knowledge of cotton-growing, not only in Australia but also in other parts of the world. If not, then by whom are we to be guided? We have not been so long in business in Queensland that we can claim to have a special knowledge of what is really necessary at this time. There is something which is quite evident. The Lancashire spinners have told us with no uncertain voice that they want a particular kind of cotton. The question we have to ask ourselves is: Are we prepared to produce that cotton? Are we willing to do all we can to assist the spinners of Lancashire by providing the cotton which they say is necessary to enable them to carry on their business? If not, then the sooner we let them know it the better. The relative value of the two cottons has been discussed during the debate, and it has been stated by some hon. members that it is impossible to distinguish ordinarily between ratoon cotton and annual cotton. By observation it may be quite impossible to tell them apart, but we are told that something besides observation is going to tell us which is the better. The spindle is really going to be the test, and we have to be prepared to supply the best article we can.

We have reached a stage from which we cannot go back. Certain things have been done by the Government, and I give them credit for the very best intentions. I believe they have done all they could to stabilise this industry in Queensland by guaranteeing a price to the growers and by making the agreement with the British Australian Cotton Association in order that it may be permanently successful. We do not want the industry to run along for one or two years and then collapse. During the period for which the industry has been operating already, we have not experienced the conditions we would have liked to give it the necessary "kick off," but it is satisfactory to know that the production during the last two years has been considerable. The Cotton Delegation, after visiting all the States—I believe they saw Queensland first—came to the conclusion that this State offered the greatest possibilities of success; and the British Australian Cotton Association is prepared to back up that opinion by providing the money necessary to build ginneries and oil mills here to the extent of £250,000. I venture to say that had it not been for the efforts of the Association, the same success would not have been achieved. Neither the efforts of the Government nor co-operative enterprise—much as I believe in co-operation—would have brought about the success which has followed the activities of the Association. I think it has built about half a dozen ginneries and two oil mills. The oil mills, I understand, are nearly ready to operate, although I understand the Association does not intend to start them until January of the coming year. The establishment of those mills means a great deal to us during such a dry time, because it means the production

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of cotton meal cake and oil and one or two side lines. I find that the analysis of the cotton meal in particular shows that it compares most favourably with oats or wheat for feeding purposes. If that is so, it will be a fine thing for the State, and we should be glad that the industry has been established in our midst.

I should like to quote here from the annual report of the Commonwealth Bureau of Commerce and Industry for 1922, on page 231 of which Mr. E. S. Little, who, until a few weeks ago was Trade Commissioner for the Commonwealth in the East, speaking of China in particular, says—

“The value of imported cotton-made fabrics and sundries amounts to about Tls 250,000,000 (£80,000,000) per annum.

“About a quarter of a century ago, to be precise, after the China-Japan war in 1894, the first cotton mills were erected in China. The number is constantly growing, for new mills are being erected in all parts of the country.

“China is reckoned as the third largest cotton-growing nation in the world. The staple of Chinese cotton is very short, so that fine counts cannot be made. Long stapled cotton is imported from foreign countries for admixture with Chinese cotton in the production of various kinds of cloth.”

He also tells us that seventy-seven mills are owned by Chinese and thirty-one by Japanese. He says that the imports of foreign cotton amounted to £6,000,000 yearly. The remarkable thing about it is that, although they import a large amount of cotton, they also export £10,000,000 of raw cotton yearly, chiefly to the United States and Japan. Mr. Little goes on to say—

“There are no reliable statistics prepared in China under official auspices—but the most reliable estimate is that of the Chinese Cotton Mill Owners Association, which gives the figures as 1,868,000 bales of 500 lb. gross grown on 4,751,000 acres of land.

“It is estimated that the mills produce 250,000,000 lb. of yarn and 60,000,000 yards of cloth annually.

“A vast quantity of cotton is used in the preparation of wadded garments and wadded quilts and bedding.

“The capital now invested in up-to-date cotton mills in China is over 160,000,000 dollars. These mills are equipped with 3,200,000 spindles and 26,000 looms run by 50,000 horse power, of which more than a half is electric. The number of hands employed is 100,000 persons.”

Hon. members will see from those figures what we have to expect from China in the way of competition when we get this industry going. The fact that China is growing mostly a second-class cotton should not be an encouragement to us to grow anything of a second-class nature if we can possibly produce first-class cotton. If we cannot, then it is a horse of another colour. In the report of the Bureau of Science and Industry itself, it is stated:—

“Another industry which deserves close attention is the cotton-growing industry. The last two years have seen a remarkable revival in cotton-growing, and already this season's cotton has proved

to be from 25 to 50 per cent. better quality than the American crop, which is the world's standard.”

[9 p.m.]

“That cotton-growing will lead to the manufacture of the cotton fabrics is now certain, for one enterprising firm is already establishing a cotton-spinning plant, and several knitting companies are turning their attention to the manufacture of cotton garments. The value of the market can be realised from the fact that Australia has recently been importing about £10,000,000 worth of cotton goods annually.”

We have to ask ourselves the question of whether the proposed legislation that we are discussing is going to extend the industry or is going to hamper it in any way. Personally, ever since the Cotton Growing Association came to Australia and to Queensland I thought that all we as Queenslanders and Australians were asked to do was to get behind them and support them in every possible way. I have felt that there was no doubt about the industry being a success so long as they were prepared to come here and back it up with their capital in the way they have done. We know what they have spent, and we know that they contemplate spending another £250,000. The first ginnery was established here just a little over twelve months ago. On 31st August last the first ginnery was established in New South Wales at Waratah, near Newcastle, and it was opened by the Premier, Sir George Fuller. I have an account of the opening of that ginnery, and I find that at the opening special stress was laid on the fact that quality was to be one of the first considerations and that they were going to hold their own as a cotton-producing State. Sir George Fuller is reported as saying—

“This Association had clearly caused a considerable area to be planted, and last year sufficient seed was issued to plant 7,535 acres. Despite the dry season, a total yield of 75,000 bales was the result. The demand for seed this year was largely increased, and it was approximately estimated that from 15,000 to 30,000 acres would be planted in cotton.”

He also referred to the fact that the Queensland production increased from 1,000,000 lb. in 1921 to 12,000,000 lb. for the season just closed. That shows clearly and definitely how the industry has grown in New South Wales. Professor Elwood Mead, who was in Queensland and New South Wales a short time ago, says of Queensland—

“I do not think there is any doubt about the great opportunities for growing cotton in Queensland. I am equally sure that cotton can be grown successfully in parts of New South Wales. I am sure cotton can be very successfully grown far south of the Queensland border. I speak of Queensland with confidence, because on my last visit to Australia I saw cotton growing in Rockhampton which had been brought here in 1855. It was Sea Island cotton, the most valuable variety grown in the United States.”

I have endeavoured to get all the possible information I could as to what was happening with ratoon cotton in the other States, and last week I sent a wire to Messrs. Bond and Co., Ltd., Sydney. They have some of our

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ratoon cotton down there for manufacturing purposes, and I asked them to let me know how it turned out. I got this reply from them—

“Regret cannot give you any information regarding Queensland ratoon cotton as we have not yet run through our machines.

“BOND.”

I was very sorry to get a reply like that. In order to find out exactly what the other States were doing, I got into communication with the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. I found that, although they were not introducing legislation such as we are introducing in Queensland, they are doing practically the same thing in another direction. They say—

“An agreement has been made between this department and the British-Australian Cotton Association, Ltd., setting out the terms on which the Association shall receive, gin, press, bale, ship, and market cotton. Seed cotton is not acquired by the department, but is treated on the farmers' account on the terms set out in the attached leaflet.

“Steps have not been taken to acquire seed cotton from the farmers, as it is considered that the guaranteed price is sufficiently high to attract all the seed cotton that is available, and that it would be against the interests of the farmer for him to dispose of his seed cotton in any other way than through the channel provided by the department.”

The covering leaflet says—

“The New South Wales Government guarantees to pay the following prices for seed cotton grown in New South Wales upon the conditions set out:—

Season 1922-23.—Fivepence halfpenny (5½d.) per lb for all seed cotton of ¾-inch staple and over.

Season 1923-24.—Fivepence (5d.) per lb. for all seed cotton of ½-inch staple and over, and fourpence halfpenny (4½d.) per lb. for all seed cotton of ¾-inch to ½-inch staple.

Season 1924-25.—Fourpence halfpenny (4½d.) per lb. for all seed cotton of ½-inch staple and over, and fourpence (4d.) per lb. for all seed cotton of ¾-inch to ½-inch staple.

The above prices will be paid on seed cotton delivered at the ginnery, provided it be of good quality, properly packed and consigned as directed, and is received in good condition.

‘Seed cotton’ means cotton derived from seed planted annually.

‘Good quality cotton’ means seed cotton that is clean, free from disease or damage by insects, disease, weather, or through any other cause, and is not immature, stained, dirty, or otherwise damaged, and is not ratoon cotton.

‘Ratoon cotton’ means cotton derived from plants of more than one season's growth.

Seed cotton that cannot be accepted as good quality cotton may be paid for at a price to be determined by the Minister at his option or arrangements may be made for such cotton to be treated and sold on the owner's account, or otherwise dealt with as the Minister may decide.

Should ratoon cotton be mixed with seed cotton, the whole consignment will be rejected at the risk and expense of the sender.

The guaranteed price will be paid only on seed cotton derived from areas not exceeding 50 acres.”

Mr. HARTLEY: That is a pretty stiff condemnation of ratoon cotton.

At 9.8 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. TAYLOR: Yes. They go on to say further that, although they are not introducing a Bill on the lines we are discussing, clause 19 of their proposed Plant Disease Bill provides—

“All cotton plants before the 31st August in each year to be uprooted and destroyed.”

That is what they are doing in New South Wales in regard to cotton. They are doing practically the same as we are doing in Queensland, only in a different form. We have to be guided to a very great extent in these matters by what is taking place in other countries if we are going to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problem. The information I have given the House was obtained direct from the department, and is authentic, and can be perused by any hon. member.

A small ginnery has been established in South Australia. As I said at the commencement of my remarks, it is quite evident from what has been done in Queensland by the Association that they consider that Queensland is going to be the cotton-producing State of the Commonwealth. If they had thought that New South Wales would give them as good a field for their activities as Queensland, or that South Australia could provide just as good an outlet for their capital, there is no doubt they would have started in one or other of those States in a larger way than they have done up to the present time. The Premier told the deputation which waited on him on 9th May that only 240 acres of ratoon cotton was harvested in Queensland this year. That is a very small quantity, indeed. That is the whole area under ratoon for the present year. From those 240 acres there would be only about 30 tons of lint cotton produced—a very fair average return for the present season. I fail to see how it can be argued that the ratoon cotton sent to Great Britain has decided what the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association should do in regard to our cotton. The hon. member for Oxley stated the case of the British Cotton Growing Association coming to Queensland to secure cotton. If it was ratoon cotton, if it answered their purpose, there was no necessity for them to impose any restriction on its production. They came here to secure all the cotton it was possible to get, and from all the information we have we find that the annual demand for cotton is becoming greater every year. What sufficed last year will not suffice to meet the demands of this year. There was therefore no necessity whatever for the British Cotton Growing Association to endeavour to limit the output or place restrictions of any kind on the production of cotton in Queensland.

The Minister went to a considerable amount of trouble to show what was done in South Africa and various other parts of Africa in order to produce the very best article. The figures he gave were very convincing, because they really spoke of efforts

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for a number of years to establish ratoon cotton in that part of the Empire if it was possible to be done on a commercial basis, and in order that they might hold their own as a cotton-producing country. But they found that ratoon cotton was not a success, and returned to annual cotton, which we are asked to do in Queensland. We realise the many difficulties our settlers will have in regard to the growth of annual cotton. A considerable amount of labour and expense will be involved in uprooting the existing cotton plants and replanting. That is going to add to the cost of production. The hon. member for Oxley suggested that the uprooting process of the present ratoon crop might be cheapened by the introduction of some system of co-operation, or some assistance by the Government in providing plant to uproot the ratoons. That would have to be a charge against the succeeding crop. Quite a number of growers carry on operations on a small scale, and it would be costly for them to provide the necessary plant to do this work. We have to consider all the interests that are involved—the interests of the grower, the consumer, and the manufacturer. As far as we possibly can we want to prevent any clashing of interests. We want to show, if it is possible to produce cotton here, that there will be a satisfactory return to the grower, that the ginner will get adequate pay, and that the manufacturer will receive the article he wants. Unless we can do that we must get out of the business. I do not intend to detain the House any further in connection with this matter. I have quite a lot of material, but so much has been said that I do not think I can throw any more light on the question. I stand behind the agreement that has been made. (Hear, hear!) The agreement is not only in the best interests of the growers, but is in the very best interests of the State, and I believe the work that has been done during the period the agreement has been in operation has been in the very best interests of the whole of the parties concerned. I trust that whatever is done in connection with this legislation the growers will realise that we in this Parliament are not up against them or out to fight them in any shape or form. We wish to protect their interests, and while we are protecting their interests we are protecting the interests of Queensland and Australia also.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. LOGAN (*Lockyer*): We have heard a good deal of argument from both sides of the House in favour of and against ratoon cotton. I want to say decidedly that I stand behind the ratoon.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You stand behind the small Queenslander.

Mr. LOGAN: The experience of the farmers in the various districts throughout the State shows that the second or ratoon crop is always the heaviest crop. We have listened to the argument put forward by the Minister to show that the second or third crop is lighter than the annual crop. That may be so in other parts of the world, but so far as Queensland is concerned it is certainly not correct. Evidence can be procured from any farmer or any association in this State to show that the second or ratoon crop, when reasonably cultivated, has been by far the heavier crop. By way of illustrating this point I want to quote a letter from a gentle-

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man who carried out a little experiment on a plot of land in my electorate. Some time ago a gentleman from the Department of Agriculture asked me if I knew of a plot of land where he could get a farmer to cultivate a half or 1 acre of ratoon cotton, so that the results obtained could be compared with a similar area of plant cotton? Subsequently the department decided to experiment on a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -acre plot on Ma Ma Creek, and they also had an area of 7 acres put under plant cotton. In other parts of the world, particularly Egypt, ratooning may not be successful because of the huge difficulties they have to contend with. With irrigation the roots of the plants become sickly and stunted, and naturally the best results cannot be obtained from that plant. It is interesting to compare the results from the plant crop and the ratoon crop from those plots in the Grantham district.

The gentleman referred to writes to me under date 15th September, 1923—

“ This is a report of $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ratoon cotton on an experimental plot established on my farm. The Department of Agriculture sent a man to measure the land and took all details in the working of the land, the previous crop before it was ratooned, and rainfall up to the time on the 9th February, 1923.”

So, evidently, this was a third season's ratoon—

“ For your information we gathered 20 bales of cotton and consigned same in three different lots to the Department of Agriculture to Roma Street, Brisbane, and I was paid at the rate of 5½d. per lb., and each bale weighed on the average over 400 lb. The net weight of the 20 bales was 8,716 lb. of seed cotton. The rainfall, from September, 1922, to July, 1923, was 8½ inches. I had 7 acres of new plant cotton from seed, which yielded 5,080 lb. net weight. I have shown samples of ratoon and plant cotton to men and they could not distinguish the difference between the two samples. I still have samples of the two classes of cotton left.

“ F. A. KAJEWSKI.”

To get confirmation of these facts the Minister has only to look up departmental records, which will prove that I am correct.

I shall go into the question of comparison of yield and return and see what can be got for one year from ratoon cotton and what can be got from plant cotton for similar periods. The ratoon cotton is from a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -acre area—half an acre bigger than the plant cotton area. The seed output from the ratoon area was 8,716 lb., and from the plant area 5,080 lb. The ratoon cotton yielded per acre 1,156 lb. and the plant cotton 726 lb.—a difference of 430 lb. per acre. The value of the ratoon cotton was £26 9s. 10d. an acre and the plant cotton £16 12s. 9d., a difference of £9 17s. 1d. per acre. The total profits from the whole area of ratoon above that of plant cotton were £74 18s. 10d.

Knowing these facts and knowing that this crop was produced from a plot under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture, we must take a clear view of the evidence on behalf of ratoon cotton.

The PREMIER: The returns were at 5½d. a lb. You cannot get 5½d. a lb. for ratoon cotton on the open market.

Mr. LOGAN: That is all very well, but what about the guarantee after 1926? What guarantee have we then of getting 5½d.?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: None at all if you produce rubbish.

Mr. LOGAN: The Government have already departed from the guarantee. They previously made the guarantee of 5½d. for the first three years, but before those three years were up the Government have somersaulted owing to the fact that the delegation came out—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You should tell the truth.

The PREMIER: The qualification was a guarantee from the start.

Mr. LOGAN: I say that there was a difference in the qualification about the quality. The guarantee read for good clean seed cotton, but did not say it was not to be ratoon.

The PREMIER: The qualification was good seed cotton, free from disease, and of good quality.

Mr. LOGAN: If that was so, it does not say that it is not to be ratoon.

The PREMIER: That qualification does say that it is not ratoon.

Mr. LOGAN: The hon. member for Enoggera read a letter from the manager of the Shelley Road Spinning Mill, Preston. I have in my hand a copy of the letter from that gentleman, and he shows us in this letter that Queensland ratoon cotton was worth, in Preston, 4d. per lb., more than the best American cotton. I desire to point out that this ratoon cotton was a sixteen-year crop. What has the Premier to say about that? Knowing these facts I would not be just to my constituents if I came here and said that I was in favour of doing away with ratoon cotton. I think the Government are quite right in testing this matter, but in my opinion they are starting at the wrong end. If they want to do justice to the farmer, the right way is to allow the farmer to grow ratoon until it is discovered that ratoon cotton is not in the best interests of the industry. The Government should then enforce legislation of a prohibitive nature such as they are now introducing. We should consider the unfortunate man who is having a bad time on account of the dry season and who finds it difficult to make ends meet. He is compelled to do away with ratoon cotton and a chance of getting a profit. I know that on this particular farm this man Kajewski, who cultivated this experimental plot, planted some of his cotton three times and did not get a single boll. In Queensland we are subject to floods and droughts and never know where we stand. When we have a sure thing such as ratoon cotton, it is a wise thing for the farmer to hang on to it.

I have been somewhat struck by the evidence in favour of the abolition of ratoon cotton which has been prepared by Messrs. Wells and Evans. Some of their arguments appear to me to be altogether ridiculous from a farmer's point of view. In the first place, these gentlemen remind us that the number of farmers growing cotton in scrub areas is infinitesimal—that they are a mere handful. I should like to remind those gentlemen that the largest cotton-grower in Queensland grew all of his cotton on scrub country. In my district the farmers are felling scrub every year for the purpose of growing this new commodity that promises to give such a good return. I venture to say that it will give them good returns if they are allowed to carry it on in a reasonable way.

To plant seed amongst the stumps in scrub country and expect the farmer to pull out that plant cotton after the first year's growth is absolutely out [9.30 p.m.] of the question. It has got a good grip, and to cut the cotton

out is almost equal to felling the scrub in the first instance. The expense is going to be so great that it certainly will not pay the farmer to grow cotton in that class of country. We have the promise of building up an industry equal to the wool industry, and I honestly believe and sincerely hope that this industry will eventually grow to the magnitude of the wool industry; but, if we are compelled to do away with the ratoon crop that has been most beneficial, then a great number of farmers who are growing cotton to-day will certainly go out of the industry. Last week I asked the Secretary for Agriculture a question in connection with the quantity of seed obtained from the 1922-23 cotton crop and also the area under ratoon cotton, and the answer was that there were approximately 1,000 acres under ratoon cotton for the year 1922-23. It seems strange that in answer to my question the Secretary for Agriculture should say that approximately there were 1,000 acres under ratoon cotton out of an approximate area of 28,695 acres, and that the yield from the 1,000 acres of ratoon cotton was 376,838 lb., whilst the Premier told a deputation from Rockhampton earlier in the year that there were 246 acres under ratoon cotton, which yielded the same amount of cotton. Why this discrepancy between the two sets of figures? If the area under ratoon cotton was 1,000 acres, it seems to me that the discrepancy has been brought about in order to show that a less quantity of cotton was produced on that area. If we have 1,000 acres of ratoon cotton and the yield was 376,838 lb., that only shows a return of about 377 lb. per acre; but, if we only had 246 acres under ratoon cotton, the return was somewhere about 1,532 lb. per acre. In my opinion the figures quoted by the Premier were nearer than those quoted by the Secretary for Agriculture, because we know from experience that ratoon cotton has certainly returned a bigger yield than 377 lb. to the acre for the year. We have been told that ratoon cotton is a failure and that it is not wanted on the Lancashire market. We have the statement made by Mr. Harold Parker that some of the Australian cotton that has passed through his mill has proved highly satisfactory. I do not wish to tire the House by reading the long statements that have been made, but they have been absolutely in favour of ratoon cotton. We all know in Australia that our women folk, if they are going to buy any calico, generally ask for Horrocks's calico, which contains about 30 per cent. of ratoon cotton. If ratoon cotton is no good, how is it that our women folk, who know cotton fabric probably better than some of our experts, wish to buy calico which contains a large percentage of ratoon cotton? The "Brisbane Courier" of 27th November, 1922, in a letter from its Bradford correspondent, speaking of the perennial Peruvian varieties of cotton, says—

"If the Queensland fibre is of the same species as that of Peru, it would admirably suit for the woollen trade, and this is the point well worth studying by those interested in the sale of Queensland-grown cotton."

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Mr. Crawford Vaughan in the "Daily Mail" of 22nd January, 1923, says—

"We don't want the grower to be fooled into producing cotton which cannot be sold on the world's market at profitable rates."

This in face of the fact that growers were cutting out, on the advice of the officials of the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, the very class of cotton welcomed in Bradford. As further corroboration of the utility of this class of cotton the special correspondent of the "Brisbane Courier," dated 11th May, 1923, writing from Yarrow, mentions that growing near the house was a plot of tree cotton. This was the result of seed given to Mrs. Hooley by Mr. Daniel Jones. They had been growing for three years, and had reached a great height. For two years those fifty trees had returned about £3 value of cotton each season sold to the ginners, besides some retained for home use for making quilts, and seemed to be always bearing.

When you have a crop in bearing all the year round, even though it may be sold at a lower rate on the London market, with a very much heavier yield the growers are not going to be so much out of pocket. A great deal has been said about the inferior cotton grown in America, but that is the "bolly" cotton which has been confused with the ratoon cotton grown in this country. The "bolly" cotton comes after the first year's crop, and is known as stand-over, and consequently is no good for ginning. Our ratoon cotton in Queensland is of very high quality. One other thing which has struck me as rather funny is that at a time when farmers have hard work to keep their stock alive they are denied the right to purchase the seed cotton which is essential for feed. While I do not object to the cotton seed being sold for other purposes, we do complain that, when there is a shortage of feed, our farmers are not able to buy seed cotton for feed purposes. It is a remarkable thing that the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association has under the agreement a monopoly in the State and can buy it at £1 a ton, while the farmers when they want feed have to pay £5 10s. a ton for it. In the early days Kitchen and Son had to pay £4 13s. 4d. a ton, which is equivalent to the price the farmers are paying to-day for the seed they have to plant. The seed we buy for planting costs 1d. a lb., which brings it up to £4 13s. 4d. a ton, yet the same seed when we want it for feed costs us £5 10s. a ton. That is the discrepancy which I cannot understand. I do not know why the farmers should be denied the right of getting that seed at the same price as the Association gets it. The hon. member for Enoggera referred to Western Australia, and I have a letter here from Mr. Teesdale, which appeared in the "Daily Mail," of 4th August, 1923—

"SHARP WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ATTACK.

"The curse of imported cotton experts" was the title of an article in the Perth "Sunday Times," by Mr. F. W. Teesdale, and he excused the use of it by inviting inspection of the Derby cotton plots—that unfortunate experiment which Colonel Evans condemned in such drastic terms."

"To-day, this Pindan soil, that he said was totally useless for cotton cultiva-

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tion, has a splendid crop of healthy, well-grown bushes, some of them 2 feet in height, plenty of lateral growth, and bearing a good show of blossom." Mr. Teesdale wrote, 'Certainly, the height of the plants might be better, but this is directly attributable to the utter lack of good tilth for seeding—one of the most important essentials for successful cotton-growing.'

"The lack of knowledge shown right through the experiment is deplorable, for which the officials in Perth were in no way responsible, any more than in their unfortunate selection of the person who was responsible to a great extent for the failure. Right from the start trouble was experienced, and it is regrettable that a competent man from Queensland was not secured to take the entire management. When the Queensland expert approved of the vicinity of Derby for cotton-growing, he was doing so with a forty years' experience in soils. When Colonel Evans' condemnation was bruited all over Australia, the Queensland man wrote to the writer, telling him not to be discouraged with the first set-back, that the ground was still all right, and time would show who was right—the imported expert, or the Australian with his thorough knowledge of Australian conditions.

"Time has shown, and to-day the lie direct has been given those, who, on a few hours' inspection of the soil, and relying a good deal on those who knew about as much as they themselves did as to the soil suitability, utterly condemned the whole undertaking and discouraged everybody connected with it. Why, it is now proved by departmental analysis that the only soil of the samples submitted by Colonel Evans that is free from salt is the identical Pindan soil so utterly damned and outed by that same gentleman."

"Mr. Teesdale also stated: 'He then discovers a fearsome pest in the shape of a caterpillar (that was never lost) in the scrub flowers, particularly the hibiscus, and suggested that an entomologist be dispatched to determine the extent of the country affected by this insect when any Nor'-Wester could have told him that it extends from Carnarvon to Port Darwin. Specimens were sent to England, and the suspected presence of the deadly boll weevil in Western Australia duly printed in block headings in English papers. This same caterpillar is right through Queensland, and causes a certain amount of damage naturally, but it not taken at all seriously.'"

I want to say that these gentlemen who come here as experts in this branch of agriculture need to be very careful in their utterances. They should reflect that the country is a new one to them and that, generally speaking, they do not know the conditions which prevail in it. We have been in contact with these caterpillars which are spoken about ever since I have been in Queensland—a matter of about forty years, and I think there is not a man who comes from the soil who does not know that they have been prevalent ever since Queensland has been Queensland. Only yesterday I received a letter from the Wondai district stating that there had been a plague of moths, which

in turn means a plague of caterpillars; yet we have experts coming here and telling us that this pest is going to be a serious menace to the cotton industry. We know perfectly well that it is going to be a serious menace to the cotton industry. We know that the same pest will clear the ground of everything green in front of them. I have seen them strip the leaves of growing corn with the cob on it and leave nothing but the stalk, and they are more likely to destroy the annual cotton than the ratoon cotton, although they may certainly eat the bolls and take everything green off the plants. My brother, who has been cutting lucerne all through the drought, has had to turn his horses on to it owing to the fact that this very pest has got on to the farm and would otherwise have destroyed it. We have the corn grub, which will perforate the cotton boll. I have seen hundreds of bolls destroyed by it.

It does not matter whether it is plant cotton or ratoon cotton, the same pest will attack those plants. Therefore I say we require men with years of knowledge in this State or the country generally to say whether these pests are going to be injurious to plants or not. We have to remember that many families on the land are absolutely dependent on their cotton crop, and their only prospect for the next season is the crop they may obtain from their ratoon cotton. This legislation prohibiting the growing of ratoon cotton is going to strike a very deadly blow to those people who are struggling to-day. In their interests I hope the Government will not go on with this legislation. It is quite right for the department to find out whether ratooning is not in the best interests of cotton-growing. But they should do as I suggest, and start at the other end, and consider where they are at the present time. There would be some justification for that; but to come at this particular time, after having boosted up the industry and got the farmers to go in for it to their full capacity, and then tell them they cannot continue, is not a fair deal, and I for one do not stand for it. You have not got to go far to get evidence that the farmers are opposed to this sort of thing, and how they fear this kind of legislation. Is it another system of outside control? What does it mean? We were told some time ago by the Premier, who outlined the scheme at Laidley, that the Government were launching an agricultural scheme, and they proposed to constitute a Council of Agriculture, on which the farmers would have direct representation, and that they were going to give effect to the wishes of the farmers. What have we got to-day? We have the Council of Agriculture directly opposed to this sort of thing. On another occasion, when an important Bill affecting the farmers was coming before the House, the Council of Agriculture were refused the right to say whether they were in favour of it or not. That is done by a Government who claim that they are out to befriend the man on the land. I fail to see where they are the friend of the man on the land. There is every reason to believe by this legislation that the Government are not going to give the farmers the best help they possibly can. I would ask the Minister to withhold the prohibitive clauses for the time being, and go in for experimental plots of ratoon cotton to ascertain if the growing of ratoon cotton will introduce certain pests, and then, if it is found that the growing of ratoon cotton

operates disastrously against the industry, by all means bring in legislation for prohibiting the ratooning of cotton. If that were done every hon. member on this side would give every assistance in that direction. At the present time no evidence has been brought forward to show that the ratooning of cotton is injurious to the industry. It may be in other countries, because they are not working under the same conditions. In America the frost cuts down the cotton, and it is not possible for them to ratoon in many places. A great deal of this legislation is framed on conditions obtaining in America, and not in Australia. We should create legislation in the interests of the Australians. Not very long ago America was told that she could not spin her cotton properly or make her own cloth. She was told by big interests in England and other places, and they were the people to do all that sort of work. The American people showed that they were not going to be bluffed, and they went ahead with the establishment of spinning factories, and manufactured their own cloth. I say to the Australians, "Do not be bluffed by those who say it is not possible, owing to climatic conditions, to spin cotton in Queensland." We have been told that because of the dry conditions the thread will break. We must not be bluffed in that way; we must give it a trial. I have here a sample of lint calico spun in Ipswich in 1904. It is half-ratoon and half plant cotton. I would like to show it to any expert, and ask if he could produce anything of the same quality to-day and at the same price. I have also a sample of ratoon cotton spun in Germany. These samples are good enough for any purpose.

In the interests of the industry I want to ask once again that care should be exercised in what we are going to do. I quite agree that the Government should have a full investigation made of the whole industry, but I cannot see that they are working in the best interests of the industry by compelling growers to do away with ratoon crops. We have been told that there are only 240 acres of ratoon cotton in Queensland, while it has also been said that there are approximately 1,000 acres. Approximately there are 28,000 acres under cotton in Queensland. We have also been told that there is not so much ratoon cotton going to the English market. From my own experience I know there is a great deal more ratoon cotton grown in Queensland than credit is given for, and there is also a great deal more ratoon cotton exported to England than is stated.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Are you suggesting that the farmers have been sending in ratoon cotton for plant cotton?

MR. LOGAN: I am not suggesting anything, but I am merely suggesting what the Minister or anyone else would do if they were in the industry.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is a poor idea of fair dealing.

MR. LOGAN: I think it is fair dealing, and I only ask the Government to give the farmers a fair deal and let them continue to grow ratoon cotton until it is definitely discovered to be detrimental to the industry to do so. I ask the Government to listen to the appeals of the Council of Agriculture and the various Local Producers' Associations throughout Queensland. These

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Associations were formed to enable the man on the land to have a voice in all questions affecting his interests. The Premier in his speech at Laidley said that the Council of Agriculture and the Local Producers' Associations would reflect the opinions of the man on the land, and that the Government would be guided in their legislation by those expressions. The position as we find it to-day is that a director absolutely silences the Council of Agriculture. He blocks them absolutely from saying what they wish by suggesting the legislation that would be in the best interests of the industry. The Government should take notice of the man on the land through the Council of Agriculture and endeavour to meet him in his demands. It has been said time and again that the man on the land is the backbone of the country. He is up against it at the present time; and, when he is up against it, no endeavour should be made to take away from him his bread and butter by placing an embargo on ratoon cotton. I am not talking moonshine. I have pioneered two or three times myself. I know what it is to watch the clouds and wait month after month and year after year for a crop. I know the position of many of these struggling farmers to-day. I know that they are looking to the ratoon crop. They have not been guaranteed that they are going to get sufficient rain to bring up their plant crop. Time and again it has been ruined by insufficient rain. The man I referred to as having had that experimental crop at Ma Ma Creek failed three times with his plant crop. I am only using that case as an illustration, because he was under the supervision of the Government. Their officials were in a position to investigate that experiment and satisfy themselves as to what was being done on the farm.

It is all very well to argue in favour of plant cotton from the spinners' point of view, but the main point brought forward in opposition to ratoon cotton is that it is going to introduce pests and vermin. If that is so, why have our grape vines, sugar-cane, and other things not introduced these pests? If it applies in one case, it applies in the other; yet we are told that ratoon cotton is going to bring such an awful lot of pests that it will ruin the industry. For my own part I do not believe it, and I hope the Government will seriously consider the proposition before putting through the Bill.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): I consider that this is one of the most important subjects with which we have had to deal this session. It was pleasing to hear the very luminous speech delivered by the Secretary for Agriculture. He gave us a lot of information. I think that second reading speeches of Ministers generally have improved greatly this session over those of last session. The hon. member for Burnett also delivered an excellent address and put the case for the ratoon-cotton growers in a splendid way. I think his speech has been the means of making even hon. members on the Government side give very serious consideration as to whether they would allow this drastic legislation to go through or not.

I notice that the Bill is known as the "Cotton Industry Bill." I sincerely hope that before long we shall have an opportunity of putting through a Bill which will not only deal with cotton in the raw state but that we shall have a Bill before us dealing with the manufacture of cotton. I

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think that would be something that would greatly benefit Queensland and Australia generally.

The Government must be given credit for what they have done in connection with the cotton industry in Queensland. It has gone ahead splendidly and is an industry which at the present time of high prices of cotton overseas is likely to be of great benefit to the State. I notice from the Commonwealth "Official Year Book" that as far back as 1906-7 we had a bounty paid on cotton. The Federal Government then gave a bonus of 10 per cent. on all raw cotton produced. The maximum amount of that bonus in one year was £6,000. It is interesting to know that during the year 1916-17 the bonus was paid on 13,751 lb. That goes to show that even with a bonus we in Queensland were not in a position to grow cotton at the very low prices then existing. Owing to the present high price of cotton we are now enabled to successfully engage in this industry.

[10 p.m.]

I notice that Mr. Crompton Wood, a member of the delegation that came to Australia, on his return to Sydney after his tour of Queensland said—

"Cotton could be grown in Australia at 3d. a lb. in the seed and 9d. in the lint. Other nations could not produce it so cheaply, and in Australia a man with a wife and a few children could run a farm of 100 or 150 acres, and produce at as low as 1½d. a lb., at which price no competition need be feared."

I should say that no competition will be feared with cotton at 1½d. per lb. It is utterly impossible for us to think of producing raw cotton at a profit at 1½d. per lb. If the British Association looks to the time when cotton will be produced at 1½d. per lb., then I can say it will get very little so far as Queensland is concerned. Mr. Crompton Wood further says—

"The Government had done wisely in offering to buy at a big price to encourage cotton-growers, but production at a profit should not be accomplished too easily, lest the necessary steps to produce scientifically and cheaply might not be taken. White labour was best, and in the long run Australia would score by having white, and nothing but white, labour."

Mr. Crompton Wood, the man who has been intimately associated with the establishment of the cotton industry in Queensland, makes the statement that white labour is the best in the cotton industry, and in the same breath he says we can produce cotton at 1½d. per lb. That is utterly impossible, and I do not think we can place very much reliance on the statements he makes with regard to ratoon cotton. Mr. Harold Parker, another delegate, said—

"Great Britain did not want 1½ inch staple, but Australia should concentrate on 1½ inch and 11/16 inch staple. Eventually the Chinese market might be supplied. England could not compete with Australia on that market, because of the reduced costs of delivery. Then there were Java, India, and other markets, and the Commonwealth would become one of the chief points of the Empire, instead of an outpost. It was feared the

limitation of markets was being reached as regards Australian fruit, and the outlook was not bright. While the initial difficulties were greater, cotton solved irrigation difficulties, and while costs would be higher, quality would be higher also, and a greater price realised."

We have placed on the statute-book this session legislation which allows those engaged in the primary industries to go to the Arbitration Court for an award, and if the price of cotton falls very much below the present price it is going to be impossible to pay white men a decent wage to produce cotton at any sort of profit to the man who produces it. I do not think we shall have any difficulty in marketing the cotton we produce, because there is a shortage of cotton throughout the world at the present time. I agree with other speakers that we should look to Great Britain to give us preference in regard to our raw materials, and it is pleasing to know that Mr. Bruce is at home now looking after our interests in that direction. If we in Australia are going to purchase from Great Britain the finished article, it is the duty of the old country to reciprocate and purchase from us as much of our raw material as possible. In connection with the matter of ratoon cotton, I think that the clause in the Bill dealing with that matter is most severe, and the penalty very great.

I am not going to speak on the question of ratoon cotton at any length, because it has been dealt with already, but it will be most harsh if the Government compel people who have ratoon cotton coming on to root it out after this Bill becomes law. I hope that, if the Government are going to put an end to ratoon cotton, they will allow these people first to harvest their crop and sell it. They have spent a great deal of money in clearing the land and growing the crop, and it will be a great injustice if the Government deal harshly with them in this matter.

The Government should give consideration to the many requests made by the members of the District Councils of Agriculture which have been dealing with this matter, and which are composed of men who have practical experience in connection with ratoon and plant cotton. The Premier, when he outlined his agricultural policy, said that if the farmers organised they could control their own industry, which would be in their own hands, and he asked who could make a greater success of it than those who are engaged in the industry. I understand that the Central District Council represents sixty-six Local Producers' Associations, and that Council has carried certain resolutions asking the Government to refrain from introducing this legislation. These people will lose confidence in the Government if the Government do not pay heed to their resolutions. Coming to my own District Council—No. 7 District Council—a motion was carried supporting the Rockhampton District Council in their endeavour to get the Government to refrain from putting this embargo on ratoon cotton. The chairman of that District Council is a member of the Council of Agriculture, and he stated that the Council of Agriculture had given the matter great consideration, and was suggesting to the Government the establishment of three experimental plots of ratoon cotton. I would like to know if the Minister is going to give heed to the request of the Council of Agriculture in that respect. He is chairman of the Council.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We will carry out those experiments.

Mr. CLAYTON: I think the hon. gentleman can go a long way further, and allow those who have ratoon crops in to harvest them. The hon. gentleman will be doing something then in the interests of the farmers, and instead of carrying out these experimental plots at a big cost to the State he will have an opportunity of letting the farmers themselves carry out the experiments. As regards climatic conditions, I do not think that in other countries they have been going into the matter of ratoon cotton as we do here. In most countries where ratoon cotton is grown, the climate is so severe that they cannot ratoon in the same way as we wish to do. The hon. member for Barcoo quoted a case where an American grower lost all his crop through the frost coming on and the bolls not having opened. At Cinnabar, in my district, where there was a big crop, it was the frost that opened the bolls. One farmer had sacked his men because the bolls were at a certain stage and did not show any signs of going any further. He was very despondent, but when the frost came along it was the means of opening the bolls and he got a record crop. That shows that the climatic conditions in Australia and America are quite different.

Now, I want to quote on this point the resolutions which were carried by the Central District Council of Agriculture—

"1. The Council has unsuccessfully protested against the action of the Government in introducing anti-ratoon legislation, and the Council of Agriculture, Brisbane, has supported the District Council by voicing its disapproval of the Government's action.

"2. The Council, constituted as it is of sixty-six Local Producers' Association representatives from cotton-bearing districts, that in the aggregate produced just 50 per cent. of the total cotton grown in Queensland last year, feels justified in the prominent and determined stand it has taken in the interests of the industry.

"3. The Council is strengthened in its determination to test the home and other markets by the fact of its being in possession of authentic information intimating that a ready market exists for all ratoon cotton that can be grown, and at a price that will pay thousands of growers to produce it where they can only produce annual cotton, on an average, in about one year in three. The Council is, therefore, impressed with the undeniable fact that it is infinitely preferable to grow ratoon cotton in those areas than it is to grow nothing at all."

And that is what will happen on many farms. Owing to the very light rainfall in the spring months the farmers will not be able to grow plant cotton; but, if ratoon cotton has proved one thing, it has proved that even if there is a dry spell the farmers are sure of having a decent crop.

There have been a great many speakers from both sides and the question has been debated very fully. I sincerely hope that the Minister will consider the ratoon growers and that he will not press this Bill as it is printed, but will accept amendments. I would like to remind him that when he was speaking he quoted what the Colonial Sugar Refining

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Company did in regard to a variety of sugarcane of which it did not approve. I do not think that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company compelled the farmers to chop out that cane immediately, but gave them notice that it was not a variety which could be crushed in the best interests of its factories, and intimated that in future it would not take any more of it. It did not compel the farmers to cut out their ratoon cane at once; but the Government are compelling the farmers to root out their ratoon cotton when there is a possibility of getting a fair price with very little expenditure. We hear hon. members on the other side talking about monopolies and how they cripple industries; but here is an instance of where the Government are going to be harsh with the growers, whilst the other concern deals with them in a much more lenient way. I hope that in Committee the Minister will accept amendments. We have a recollection of his accepting a great many amendments on the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill. I understand that the hon. gentleman accepted about seventeen amendments, and I think he is convinced that we were the means of assisting him to improve that measure. If he will accept amendments on this Bill from men of experience on this side, he will have placed on the statute-book a Bill that is going to be lenient with many people on whom he is now going to inflict a hardship.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumbidgee*): I am not for a moment going to hold myself up as a cotton expert, but I feel that this legislation is of so much importance to the agricultural people of Queensland that it is necessary for a member representing an agricultural district to express an opinion on it. The main feature of the Bill is the prohibition of the growing of ratoon cotton. It is of the utmost importance to the industry to allow the growing of ratoon cotton. I am so convinced on the matter that I consider that unless we have ratooning there will be no cotton at all. It is all very well for hon. members to quote experts, and it is all very well for them to say that there are certain people offering to buy a certain article. For years they have been buying the ratoon cotton, and they did not know the difference. If that is so, then why in the name of common sense—that is something more than expert advice—should we want to cut out this class of cotton at the present juncture? It is a well-known fact that in the Southern parts of Queensland if you prevent ratooning you will not have any cotton. About seventeen years ago Mr. Daniel Jones gave me some cotton seed. I have heard it said that Mr. Jones is not an expert. I want to know how we get experts. Is it not by experience? Is not an expert a man who applies himself to a certain profession or trade? Mr. Jones is more than an expert. He is a prophet so far as cotton is concerned. It is all very well to cast a cheap sneer about Mr. Jones only being an ordinary farmer. He pointed out to me seventeen years ago, at a time when nothing was being done with cotton in Queensland, that it could be produced here in payable quantities. He was so interested in the matter that he used to carry a few cotton seeds round in his pocket. Although I came from a wheat belt I was so interested in this man being so much impressed with the possibility of growing cotton for a livelihood in Queensland that I attempted to grow it also. I grew it in my cultivation for three

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years. The first crop was only a bare crop, the second year was an abundant crop, and the third year's ratoon crop was considerably better than the first year's crop. I have handed samples of that ratoon cotton to men who have worked in the cotton factories in the old country.

It is all very well for the Minister to rise in a self-assured manner and say that no criticism worth considering has been offered to the Bill. Any sane man would take considerable notice of the criticism that has been offered during the discussion. If it was not for the ratoon cotton very few plants of annual cotton would be growing to-day on account of the dry spring. As the hon. member for Stanley pointed out, the State would still have its ratoon crop, whether there was a dry spell or not. That is a simple fact, because if the plant itself is stunted from want of rain it is the new shoots that produce the cotton. Consequently that cotton in that sense is ratoon cotton. This scheme is not altogether right. We should not be guided by "boodle" as to what we should or should not grow. We have all heard hon. members opposite talk about the power of "boodle," but, if it were not for the power of "boodle" behind this machine, there would be no necessity for considering this matter to-day. Had the Government been sincere in their great co-operative drive, we would have had a co-operative cotton movement instead of a proprietary one of the very worst order. I admit that the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association has done an amount of good work, but it is wrong in principle that this Association should be allowed to have control of the industry.

I was rather pleased to notice that, as the debate proceeded, the speakers did not touch upon the argument that ratoon cotton encouraged disease. It is absurd to say that more disease will be introduced if ratoon crops are grown. Where the fields are properly worked and the plants pruned there is no more danger from disease being introduced per medium of ratoon crops than the annual crop, and probably not as much. It is possible that planting seed annually will have the effect of introducing disease. I have watched the small areas of cotton grown in the various parts of the State with the keenest interest for some years, and I have not seen any sign of disease other than the corn grub and the peach moth. Last year the crop was very seriously affected by these pests. It is not an imported pest, but a local one, and one that is here to stay. The Minister did not point to any specific instance of ratoon cotton breeding disease. He simply made a bald statement; but bald statements are not facts. The great trouble experienced by the cotton-grower in Queensland has been the lack of spring rains.

We can plant just as easily as they can in Egypt, and our soils are just as friable and suitable; but we have not a regular rainfall or the water supply that they have. It has been said that they have cut out ratooning in Egypt. It is quite a different proposition there where they have the water. Plant cotton is the natural way of doing things, and probably we would be advocating it as strongly on this side of the House as are the Government if we had the same conditions as obtain in Egypt and America. We are only asking, and I understand that

the Council of Agriculture has asked the same thing, that this matter of ratooning should be held up for a certain length of time. I know that the Minister and the Government profess to take notice of the Council of Agriculture. Personally I do not think that the Council of Agriculture is an authority, but, if it is permitted to bring in laws and practically supersede the Department of Agriculture, it is right that its view should be heard. I do not consider that only a few people are affected by this Bill. It will affect the majority and not the minority. If I thought that there was the slightest danger of ratooning endangering the cotton industry, I would range myself on the side of those who are attempting to abolish ratooning. I am a farmer and know something about farming. I know that cotton is a very hard thing to produce. There is a lot of labour connected with it, and a lot of the profits go into the picking expenses. If it is not a better payable proposition than it was prior to the present boom, it will not give us the return we were led to expect.

I do not want to delay the debate, but I wish to say that I feel very much concerned on this matter. If the Government really believe that ratooning is an evil, I think they ought to show us something more than they have done in the way of evidence and quote greater authorities than they have done. I do not think that it is the duty of this State to injure any single grower, but I think that, if this Bill is passed into law, we shall not be merely injuring a single grower—we shall be injuring the greater number of growers and the whole industry.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): I was rather astounded to hear the Minister say that no argument had been put forward that was really worth answering. The arguments advanced are important for more reasons than one. I take it we are discussing a most important question. It has not been definitely decided by any authority in Queensland who has had any practical knowledge of local conditions of ratooning that this branch of the industry is an evil. With all due respect to the experts who have been sent here from time to time at the instance of the Government, I maintain that the conditions applying in the different countries in the world make it difficult to decide the question as it affects Queensland. I know from personal experience—and hundreds of others who have come from Victoria have experienced the same thing—that growing one product, say, wheat, in Victoria, is quite a different proposition to growing it in Queensland. If farmers attempted the same methods in Queensland that they employed in Victoria they would "go broke." That proves beyond all question how very careful we should be in this matter. I feel that the Minister would be well advised to stay his hand on this occasion.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I do not want to interrupt the hon. member, but I would like to point out that the Bill has been under discussion for two days, and the hon. member is repeating arguments [10.30 p.m.] that have been used at least a dozen times already, and I do not propose to allow the hon. member to do so. The hon. member may be unfortunate in not having spoken earlier in the debate, but I do not propose to allow him to repeat the arguments already advanced.

Mr. EDWARDS: The question of ratooning cotton in Queensland is a very important one, more particularly seeing that we have such great difficulty in getting a crop of plant cotton. Arguments have been used that this year should not be taken as a criterion of what may happen in future years, but I have had many years' experience in Queensland and I have seen many dry springs. In many years I can safely say it would have been impossible to get a decent plant of cotton. Only last year, after the plant cotton had come above the ground, hundreds of acres throughout Queensland were completely destroyed by some grub. That proves how careful the Government should be before destroying a plant that is in existence at the present time.

Those who have a knowledge of the conditions in regard to growing cotton on scrub lands must realise that it will cost up to £1 an acre to cut the cotton bush out after the cotton has been picked. I do not think anyone would grow cotton under those conditions on our scrub lands in Queensland, and I know that the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association—I give them credit for what they have done—have laid themselves out on every occasion to induce people to take up scrub land in Queensland for the purpose of growing cotton. It seems to me that, if we do what we propose to do tonight—that is deny all the evidence of those men who have had practical experience on our scrub lands, and tell the growers that they will have to cut out the cotton bushes after they have picked the cotton—it will prevent the planting of cotton in scrub country altogether.

The growers in Central Queensland have definitely decided that, if the Government will leave them alone, they will not ask for a guarantee, and they are prepared to find their own market.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. EDWARDS: When a body of men who have had years of practical experience in producing an article are prepared to undertake the finding of a market, any Government, unless the plant grown is a danger to the State, should allow those people to market that product. There is plenty of time, after we have established the industry, to decide whether ratooning cotton is injurious to the industry or not.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*), in reply: I would not impose a speech on the House at this late hour were it not for the importance of the Bill. I realise that in this Bill we are making history. I want to say that the speeches of the hon. member for Barcoo, the hon. member for Ipswich, the hon. member for Rockhampton, the hon. member for Rosewood, the hon. member for Oxley, the leader of the Opposition, and part of the speech of the hon. member for Wynnum were in striking contrast to those delivered by members of the Country party. In brief, the criticism has centred on three subjects—the advocacy of ratooning cotton; the attack on the experts of the department; and the attack on the British-Australian Cotton Growing Association, which has been described as a monopoly. The word "foreign" has been applied to the Association by members of the Country party. I do not propose to reply to all the statements which have been made, but I say that

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they do not strike me as being effective criticism at all. They come from those members of the Opposition who criticise the action of the Government in legislating in this direction; they come in my opinion from men who are unable to rise to a high plane, or who have not sufficient vision to see the possibilities of this great industry. They speak as small Queenslanders appealing to the selfishness, the cupidity, and the short-sightedness of a small section of the people who desire that ratoon cotton shall be grown at all costs.

Mr. EDWARDS: That will apply to the Council of Agriculture too.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No; but it applies to the hon. member who has just resumed his seat.

Mr. EDWARDS: And to the hon. gentleman who is speaking.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I would like to summarise the points made by the hon. member for Oxley, who I think reached a very high standard to-night in his outlook with regard to this important industry. He realised, as members of the Government realise, the possibilities, and he is able to look ahead and to see that a narrow outlook now may injure or prevent the growth of a great industry with great possibilities not only to the State of Queensland but to the Empire. At present the Empire wants cotton and other raw material, and those people who talk about their patriotism can show it now by endeavouring to place an industry on a sound footing which will not only do a lot for Queensland in the way of attracting immigrants here to make permanent homes for themselves, but assist the Empire, which is in need of raw material. The position in America to-day is due to the mistakes made by the early politicians there, because it is twenty-five years since the boll weevil came over the Mexican border into America, and to-day it is destroying more than one-third of the total crop, and has passed over 90 per cent. of the total growing area. It is due to the failure of adequate action being taken that the boll weevil has destroyed more than one-third of the crop to-day. I should be very sorry, as I said in my second-reading speech, to pay so much attention and give so much of my time to establish this important industry, and advise the Government to expend a large sum of money in subsidising it, if in the course of a few short years, when the price may have slumped, Queensland had not embraced the opportunity and placed the industry on a sound and lasting footing. I should be very sorry, indeed, to be a member of a Government which made that mistake. Now is the time to start right and establish our reputation.

I would like to emphasise and endorse the points of the hon. member for Oxley, which in brief sum up the whole position. It is not a question whether Australia may be different to all other countries—probably it is different to all other countries, and ratoons may possibly be grown and we may produce a different article to what is produced in other parts of the world. The hon. member for Oxley said to-night—and it is endorsed by Mr. Crompton Wood—that the British Empire spinners are the most conservative manufacturers in the world. Mr. Crompton Wood said that not only would they refuse to take ratoon cotton from Queensland, but that, if they thought

there was a small percentage of ratoon cotton in the bales, they would refuse to take any of the cotton. Those are the persons who are asking us to supply a good article. I admit that there is a big demand for low-grade cotton. If our growers in Queensland are prepared to grow cotton for 2d. or 2½d. per lb., let them grow ratoon cotton, but if they want more than 2½d. per lb. they are not going to grow ratoon cotton unless the attitude of the people who buy that cotton changes. If we can change that attitude, well and good. To sum up the position, the hon. member for Oxley said—

Mr. MORGAN: Great minds think alike!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He said, first, that Great Britain was conservative. Secondly, he said we must take notice of what the spinners or the buyers of cotton want. I do not think there is any getting away from that. If two parties make a bargain and the buyers say they want plant cotton—it does not matter if all the evidence in the world convinces the Government or Queensland that ratoon cotton is the better—they should have plant cotton. It has been pointed out that the spinners are agreed that ratoon cotton has been a failure, not because the staple is short but because it is not even, and for many other reasons which it is not necessary to repeat. Thirdly, the hon. member for Oxley said that the Government must take notice of the experts. What is the good of the Government going to England and America and asking for the best advice they can get from men with lifelong experience, bringing them here and putting them in charge, if they are not going to be guided by their advice? Are we to be guided by old-timers like Mr. Dan. Jones, who does not know anything about modern cotton-spinning. He is not an expert any more than I am an expert. I have said already that he has done a great deal in bringing before the people of Queensland the possibilities of cotton-growing; but, if he is going to make a nuisance of himself by trying to induce the people of Queensland to ruin the industry now that we have established it, he will lose the good name he has won.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: He is a supporter of the Labour party.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He may be. He certainly told me that, if the Labour party had been in power ten years ago, the cotton industry would have been on a sound footing to-day. He said that we were the only party which had a policy in regard to cotton. That is on record. He may be a supporter of the Labour party for all I know. Anyhow, I am not concerned about that. I say that, if Mr. Dan. Jones advises the people of Queensland to grow ratoon cotton against the best advice we can procure, he is doing a disservice to Queensland, and the good work he has done in placing the necessity for cotton-growing before the people of the State will be largely discounted if he continues to advise the Country party to support ratoon cotton, as he has been doing for the purposes of their speeches.

Briefly, the Country party say we should wait awhile. Why should we? Why should we not get the best? Why should we not profit by the mistakes of the past with reference to meat, with reference to fruit, and with reference to our butter in the early days—the mistakes made by Australia with reference to almost everything she has had to

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export, the mistakes that Mr. Massey, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, had to rectify the other day by passing two drastic Acts, the one dealing with the export of any meat and the other with the export of any butter? It is easy to say that ratoon cotton will be all right, and after the damage was done we might want to hide behind somebody else and say it was not our fault. Now is the time when we have to act and take no risks. Why should we not accept the advice of Mr. Wells and Colonel Evans—men who have been employed by the Government, the one at a large salary and the other one paid by the British Empire Cotton Corporation, and sent out here with absolutely no axe to grind? These men have reputations to lose, and it is unfair for any member of Parliament to take advantage of his position and say that they are not absolutely honest and capable of advising the Government.

Mr. MORGAN: It is not a question of honesty, and you know it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member must know that they are able to advise, and he must question their honesty if he says they do not advise to the best of their ability. I want to make some reference to a statement which has appeared in the Brisbane "Courier" on this question. The Press generally has risen to the occasion. Certainly anonymous letters have appeared in the papers, and from honest writers over their names, advocating the growing of ratoon cotton, but leaders have appeared in many papers and, generally speaking, the Press has risen to the occasion. It would be as well to quote the following leaderette which appeared in the "Courier" of 12th instant—

"It is unfortunate that some members of the Opposition, in the debate on the second reading of the Cotton Bill, should be speaking of the British-Australian Cotton Association as a monopoly, because, by some curious evolution, that word seems to have gathered around itself an unjustifiably sinister significance. The Association is a monopoly; but, like many more of the kind, it is one from which the general public may derive great benefits. The company has a very limited period to run, yet it is investing a great deal of capital in Queensland without any certainty of making much money, or even securing a reasonably good return. When it comes along and starts an industry in a way that only a powerful company could do, it is hailed as a benefactor; but as soon as it has spent its money and has placed the industry on a sound basis it is sneered at as a monopoly. That is neither fair nor common sense. In this particular instance the company cannot benefit itself without conferring a benefit on the farmers and on the State; and without it there would be no cotton industry here at all. A good case, as we mentioned in an article on Tuesday, might be made out for permitting farmers to retain ratoon crops for this year, because there is a danger that the annual cotton crop might not be planted owing to the dry weather. There is certainly no cause, however, for adverse criticism of the company. It has said from the beginning that it will not take ratoon cotton, and so it is the

plain duty of the farmers to supply what the company wants, and not what they think it ought to take. It is a pity for Queensland that we have not a few more useful pioneering monopolies of the kind."

I think we can all endorse that article. A statement was made by an hon. member opposite this afternoon that we should encourage co-operation. He knows as well as I do, and the farmers know likewise, that there is an Act on the statute-book of Queensland which enables the farmer, if he so desires, to establish a co-operative ginny on finding one-third of the money, but they did not do so because they realised that the ginning of cotton required expert advice, and the Government had no alternative but to make an agreement with the Association, and that agreement has been of distinct advantage to the people of Queensland, to the growers, and to the Association, which has spent £250,000 and has not made any profit at all.

Mr. MORGAN: The Government established sugar-mills—why not cotton ginneries?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There has been no one in this Chamber more hostile to State enterprises than the hon. member for Murilla. If this Association had been like the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and the millers who had exploited the farmers in the past, there would be some justification for complaining that the Government had handed the farmers over to a monopoly. The agreement terminates in 1926, and the farmers have to get busy and erect co-operative ginneries. The farmers are offered 49,000 shares in this company, 1s. on application, 1s. on allotment, and 1s. per month for eighteen months, if required. It is true that 345,000 shares have been sold, mostly in Australia, up to the present, and there is no reason why the ordinary shares should not be bought by the farmers. The Association has spent £250,000 in Queensland in establishing up-to-date ginneries and oil mills. It also proposes spending another £150,000 in this State. Why should it be sneered at and termed a foreign company by men who believe in private enterprise? What alternative had the Government than to accept the Association's offer.

Was it not favourable to the growers of Queensland? Would anyone say, after having read the agreement that I have tabled in this House and after having read the correspondence leading up to it, that the Government did not make a good deal on behalf of the people of Queensland?

I am not going to deal with all the ridiculous statements made by the hon. member for Burnett, who evidently spoke for the Country party, but there are one or two statements that I do wish to reply to. I wish to quote Colonel Evans's reply to the statements made by the hon. member regarding the habit and growth of ratoon cotton. Colonel Evans says—

"With regard to his statements about the habit and growth of ratoon cotton: The fact is that when the first rains come the plant suckers from the base of the stem and produces a large number of small fruiting branches, and very often bears a heavy crop of small bolls; but the tendency is for the plant to produce more bolls than it can bring to

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maturity, both from the point of the available plant food and also from that of the available moisture during dry spells. The consequence is that the ratoon cotton contains a large percentage of short and badly developed fibres, which cause it to be wasty, this being due to the fact that a number of short fibres pull out and cannot be spun, with the result that there is a great deal of waste in the mill. If properly picked, ratoon cotton is very often difficult to distinguish from annual cotton on the grade alone, and the final test of its quality must remain with the spinner."

Hon. members of the Opposition said that the final test of these so-called experts was their not being able to tell ratoon from annual cotton. I am not concerned about that. That does not affect the question at all. Who are the experts referred to? I explained by interjection that until a fortnight ago there was no man in Australia or Queensland who could claim to be an expert cotton grader. Several members of the British Cotton Growing Association who have been in the State to advise the farmers what to grow have been cited as cotton experts, just as Mr. Jones has been cited as an expert. I deny that they are experts. The only men recognised as experts are those who have been appointed by the Government to advise them. There is nothing in all this talk about these so-called experts going about the shows to judge cotton. They were not experts, although they performed their duties honestly, and we are not going to accept their statements as to certain cotton being of good ginning quality or not. We have to accept the statements of our experts. Colonel Evans further states—

"Mr. Corser eulogises the ratoon cotton as grown in Queensland and says that it is superior in staple to cotton grown in America. He also states that everybody knows that the 1922 crop was largely ratoon cotton and that it was on that crop that we have made the name we have to-day.

"The first spinners' reports on our 1922 crop are now coming to light and are not so satisfactory on the whole as we should have hoped for. There is a certain amount of complaint about the quality of our cotton, and it has been privately stated that some spinners who bought last year's cotton do not want this season's cotton."

That is due, as several speakers asserted, to the fact that ratoon cotton had been sent in as annual cotton. Mr. Parker and Mr. Crompton Wood said that, if any ratoon cotton was sent to the old country, it was good-bye to the cotton industry. Colonel Evans further states—

"It is necessary to counteract this sort of thing if we are going to maintain our reputation for quality; and if it is a fact, as Mr. Corser states, that the 1922 crop contained a large mixture of ratoon, this will account for some of the disappointing reports that we are receiving from the spinners on that crop. His remark that the Queensland staple is superior to the staple of cotton which is grown in America is somewhat sweeping, as so many different qualities of cotton are produced in the States over an acreage of 36,000,000."

Yet the hon. member for Burnett gets up

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in this Chamber and tells us that the staple of Queensland cotton is superior to that which is grown in America. Colonel Evans goes on to say—

"In reply to Mr. Corser's remarks on the subject of kapok, it may be stated that there is little probability of ratoon cotton ever replacing kapok. Kapok is used in Australia for mattress making and for stuffing furniture. In the United States of America this is replaced largely by linters, which are sold at from 2½d. to 5d. per lb. of lint."

This would ensure about 1d. to 1½d. per lb. to the grower for ratoon cotton in the seed—

"It is a by-product of cotton seed oil manufacture. It is anticipated that as soon as our oil mills are in operation there will be ample linters available for this purpose and the need for importing large quantities of kapok will therefore no longer be necessary."

That disposes of the wonderful discovery made by the hon. member for Burnett. When one statement of a responsible member of Parliament is discounted, the whole of them can be discounted. In regard to another statement of the hon. member for Burnett, I want to appeal to the practical men in this Chamber, like myself, who have had something to do with clearing scrub. The hon. member for Burnett submitted two tables, and I want to show in that connection how he attempted to mislead the House. The first table in regard to the annual crop on new scrub land of a 10-acre block that he gave was—

	£	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	18	0
Hand chipping, forty days at 13s. per day	26	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£75	10	3"

I am quite prepared to give him in the item of 6s. 3d. for cotton seed, although it was supplied free, but that does not concern the hon. member very much. He then stated that the cost of cultivation for the ratoon crop was—

	£	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
	<hr/>		
	£40	6	0"

This compares with £75 10s. 3d. for the growth of the first crop. I am satisfied that hon. members who know something about clearing scrub understand what I am trying to point out. The hon. member for Burnett was so unfair as not to point out that the ratoon crop should have borne its proportion of falling the scrub, fencing, and burning—the permanent improvements. I have

worked it out and the figures show that the plant crop would have cost £54 3s. 5d., whereas the ratoon crop would have cost £61 13s.

In order to arrive at the costs I have charged half the cost of fencing, half the cost of burning off, and half the cost of falling the scrub to the ratoon crop. Will any hon. member in this Chamber say that that is not a fair thing?

Mr. MORGAN: Yes. It ought to be spread over a term of twenty years.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If that were done you would arrive at the same basis. Was it a fair thing for the hon. member for Burnett to try to mislead this Chamber? The clearing and fencing are lasting improvements. The scrub would not grow up again for some considerable time, and the fence would not have to be renewed for another twenty years. Yet the hon. member, in order to bolster up the very poor case that he put forward, omitted to add that proportion of the cost to the ratoon crop. I am not going to delay the Chamber any further with regard to the statements of the hon. member for Burnett.

I now want to make a brief reference to the mistakes we have made in the past with regard to exporting produce from Australia without proper classification. Our success in wool is largely due to the fact—we could not very well help ourselves—that the major portion of our Queensland sheep are merino. The comparison with other countries shows—

Australia, 84.23 per cent. merino;
 Argentine, 98.3 per cent. cross-bred;
 New Zealand, 98.1 per cent. cross-bred;
 Great Britain—practically all cross-bred;

which shows the greater proportion in other countries to be cross-bred, while in Australia we have mostly merino, which accounts largely for our success in wool.

Some hon. members have urged that we should have cotton buyers visiting Australia the same as do the wool buyers. I have mentioned in my speeches several times that we look forward to the time when cotton buyers will come here and buy our cotton just as wool buyers come and buy our wool. But that will not be brought about until we have as good a reputation for our cotton as we now have for our wool, in which we are producing the very best article and producing a sufficient quantity.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The main factors in valuing wools are—the yield, the spinning quality, and the length of staple.

With regard to other products, I should like to mention the report of Mr. Ward, our Fruit Expert from Tasmania, who mentioned that Tasmania and New Zealand suffered very considerably from the lack of grading displayed in exporting such products as apples. They did not send their best article, and, through the carelessness of those concerned, lost a great amount of business. The exports only caused people on the other side to believe that our products could not be relied upon. This was so also in regard to the shipment of a quantity of Australian wheat, which was badly infested with weevils.

Mr. MORGAN: Was that some that the Queensland Government sent over?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: With regard to the meat market, I think the hon. member who just interjected knows something about the question. I am confident that he will agree with me that the time has arrived when Australia—and I urged this in his presence at the meat conference in Melbourne when I urged Mr. Rodgers, the Federal Minister for Trade and Customs, to establish a meat pool on the lines set out by New Zealand—should encourage its meat producers to send only their very best products to Great Britain. That is why Argentina has beaten us. That country achieved a good reputation by producing and exporting the very best meat.

Then we come to copper. The best copper is electrolytic copper, then best selected copper, standard copper, and blister copper. When we come to deal with butter the same thing applies. For years Queensland butter had a bad name, and it was only because we passed legislation and because the factories woke up to the fact that they must produce the very best article that we got a reputation. Denmark, because her farmers were educated, and because they were progressive, has a name for her butter that is worldwide, and Danish butter can always command a higher price than Australian butter. New Zealand butter even can command a higher price than Australian butter. These are lessons that we should take to heart. When we are establishing a new industry we should start well, and we should legislate in order to put this industry on a sound footing. I could go on quoting other industries, but Mr. Austin, the Commissioner for Trade, has furnished me with a very important statement to-day which

I would like permission to have [11 p.m.] printed in "Hansard" as it is of such great importance with regard to fruit and other things in Queensland that are exported, and the advice given by the agents and the Agent-General in London.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the statement be printed in "Hansard" without having been read.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The statement reads—

"The prosperity of this State is so largely dependent upon its export trade that the manner in which this trade is handled is a matter of vital concern to this Government.

"Unfortunately, to-day, owing to methods which can almost be described as 'criminal,' some of our products have practically no standing in the world's markets, by reason of the fact that, notwithstanding the repeated requests from the people who buy our goods to send home only a certain standard of article—viz., the best—and have shown us what that standard should be, traders have continued to send home goods which are inferior in quality, in size, and in get-up, to that demanded by the export market.

"I submit that no other word but 'criminal' can be applied to the action of any person or persons who, knowingly—i.e., after having been fully apprised of the position—exports goods which are not in accordance with those requirements, and thereby injures for years to come, if not altogether, an industry which can bring prosperity to so many of our settlers.

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"In the meat and fruit industries, we are suffering to-day from action such as I have set out, and undoubted evidence is available to prove that both of these great industries have suffered terribly as a result thereof.

"Our export values of both meat and fruit would be far higher to-day had the representatives of these industries seen to it that the article which was asked for and required during the past five years, say, had been sent, and not the inferior class of goods which went forward.

"Whilst to-day, in these industries, every effort is being made to export the right quality goods, and it can be stated that there has been a considerable improvement in this regard, the fact remains that, through the bad reputation these goods have earned on the oversea market in the past, difficulty is even now being experienced in overcoming the prejudice against our goods.

"Take, for instance, canned fruit—No oversea buyer will now make a firm purchase, their only method of handling the business being on a consignment basis, wherein they take no risks.

"Surely the remarks of the Hon. the Minister for Trade and Customs at the formation of the Australian Meat Council, can be applied to the position now existing in so far as the cotton industry in this State is concerned.

"In addressing the representatives present at the conference, Mr. Rodgers stated—

This conference has been convened in order that you, with your experience and knowledge of the meat industry, may assist the Government in their earnest desire to organise it upon national lines—that is to say, in such a way as to prevent the special interests of any section of it being given undue consideration as compared with the interests of the whole.

Unless the Government is backed up by the industry, and consequently the industry is supported by the Government, it cannot be established on the basis of a great national organisation, and thus be enabled to successfully compete in the world's markets.

Now is the opportunity for you to help your Government to place the meat industry of this country upon an organised basis from a national standpoint.

"Far above the interests of any individual or individuals there is involved in this cotton industry the national aspect, and the Queensland Government would be failing in its duty if it allowed the industry to be established on an unsound foundation."

With regard to the statement that ratoon cotton is just as good as annual cotton, a statement has been attributed to Mr. Dan Jones in the "Courier" of 13th January of this year. I do not know whether the statement was made by Mr. Jones, but it is headed "Mr. Jones's Views." It is a telegram from Rockhampton, and concludes with these words—

"Mr. Jones also stated that Bond Limited, who had 700 acres under cotton at Archer and Marlborough, intended to purchase 3 tons of ratoon cotton at a

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guaranteed price of 5½d. per lb. This would be sent away for treatment, and if the result was satisfactory the firm in future would buy all the ratoon cotton grown, which would be treated at its Sydney works."

Bond and Co., of Sydney, are the only cotton spinners at present in Australia. They have established large works in Sydney, costing a quarter of a million. They are progressive people, and that statement was made about them by Mr. Dan Jones. I want to show how reliable Mr. Dan Jones's statements are when he gets out of his depth. I referred this matter to the British-Australian Cotton Association, and in a letter they say—they do not mention Mr. Jones's name, but I have no doubt that it is his statement that is referred to—

"On 13th January last a statement was published in the Brisbane Press to the effect that Messrs. G. A. Bond and Co. were prepared to pay the then guaranteed price of 5½d. per lb. for 3 tons of ratoon cotton, conveying the idea to the general public that in their opinion ratoon was equal in value to annual cotton. As our experts were of opinion there was a marked difference in the value of the two cottons, we telegraphed Messrs. Bond and Co., asking if the statement as published was correct, and they replied in the affirmative with the exception that they were prepared to take 3,000 lb. instead of 3 tons. After the cotton had been ginned samples of 'A' and 'B' grades of annual cotton were, at Messrs. Bond and Co.'s request, submitted to them with a view to their purchasing their requirements for their spinning mills. The samples were approved of by their expert, and an order was placed by them for 580 bales at Liverpool rates, less 1d. per lb. as confirmed by your department, and the price of the first consignment will be approximately 1s. 4d. per lb."

Equal to 1s. 6d. per lb. at Liverpool.

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

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

"That the Secretary for Agriculture be granted an extension of time to enable him to finish his speech."

Mr. MORGAN: This is not a second reading speech.

The SPEAKER: I am afraid that the motion is not in order. The Minister will have an opportunity of replying in Committee.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If anyone objects, I will not continue my remarks, but I will finish in about five minutes.

Mr. MORGAN: We do not object. We will give you a fair "go."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I want to complete this important statement—

"A sample of ratoon cotton was then submitted to Messrs. Bond and Co., which their expert valued at 10d. per lb."

That is what I want to emphasise. They paid 1s. 4d. per lb. for the annual cotton, but, notwithstanding Mr. Daniel Jones's

statement, which was broadcast all over Australia, that they were prepared to pay 5½d. in the seed for ratoon cotton, this firm could only offer 10d. per lb. for the ratoon cotton sent. Thus it is seen that the only spinner in Australia values—when it comes to the real test—ratoon cotton at 6d. per lb. less than annual cotton. That should satisfy any advocate of ratoons. So much for a statement of that kind! The hon. member for Burnett was very indignant the other night when I stated that I could produce a statement in the Press to the effect that Mr. Hughes, the then Prime Minister, had indicated at Rockhampton during the Federal elections that his Government were prepared, if certain statements made by the growers were true, to make up the price of 3d. per lb. paid by this Government for ratoons and the 5½d. I will give the newspaper reports in support of my statements. On 12th December, 1922, the Brisbane "Telegraph" had the following:—

"RATOON COTTON.

"GUARANTEE MAY BE PAID.

"By Federal Government.

"Rockhampton, December 11.

"Mr. J. W. Nuttall, chairman of the National Democratic Council, has received an intimation from Mr. Hughes respecting the exclusion of ratoon cotton-growers from the guarantee. Mr. Hughes had previously said that if inquiries showed that the representations were correct he would recommend the Federal Government to pay the full subsidy on this year's ratoon cotton.

"Mr. Goode was commissioned to investigate, and Mr. Nuttall has now been advised that Mr. Hughes has requested Mr. Crawford Vaughan to give specific findings as early as possible."

The "Brisbane Courier" of the same date amplifies that, and makes it quite clear what Mr. Hughes had in mind. It stated—

"RATOON COTTON.

"GUARANTEE QUESTION.

"Federal Inquiries.

"Rockhampton, December 11.

"It will be remembered that advice was received from the Prime Minister that he would cause inquiries to be made at once regarding the correctness of the representations made to him on behalf of the farmers who followed the advice of the State Government, and allowed their last year's cotton to ratoon, and in respect of which the State Government intimated that the subsidy was withdrawn. The message also stated that if the report supported the representations he would recommend to the Federal Government the payment of the full subsidy for this year's ratoon cotton. The manager of the Rockhampton branch of the Australian Cotton Growers' Association (Mr. C. Goode) was commissioned to conduct the investigation, and further representations were then made to ensure that this would be along the lines of the points raised, and which already have appeared in the 'Courier.' The president of the National Democratic party of Central Queensland (Mr. J. W. Nuttall) now has received advice from Mr. Hughes that he has requested Mr. Crawford Vaughan to ask the representative to give a specific finding along

these lines at the earliest possible moment. Furthermore, Mr. Hughes points out that the Commonwealth is pledged to pay its quota of any payment made by the State Government for ratoon cotton."

Mr. CORSER: Has he gone back on anything he said?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is for the cotton-growers of the Central district to say. I have not heard that the cotton-growers got 5½d. per lb. for ratoon cotton, and I venture to say that, if they had received 5½d., the supporters of the late Prime Minister in this House would have told the public all about it. I am not going to say any more, but will conclude by stating that the Government are going right on with their policy of doing the statesmanlike and the right thing with regard to this industry. As recommended by the leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Oxley, we are quite unanimous about it, and are doing the right thing. It may appear drastic and may injure a few growers. I have sympathy with those growers who will suffer by the legislation which we are passing, but legislation, if it is worth anything at all, cannot be any good to the country without somebody suffering inconvenience. The Government are going right on with their policy of protecting and fostering the cotton industry. (Hear, hear!)

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

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

The House adjourned at 11.11 p.m.