

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**FRIDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1923**

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FRIDAY, 19 OCTOBER, 1923.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Marce*)  
took the chair at 11 a.m.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—TENTH ALLOTTED  
DAY.

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

DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

CHIEF OFFICE.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon.  
A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—

“That £15,399 be granted for ‘Depart-  
ment of Mines—Chief Office.’”

The amount placed on the Estimates last  
year was £15,014, and this year there is a  
slight increase of £385. Last year the esti-  
mate of expenditure was exceeded by the  
small sum of £223.

*Hon. A. J. Jones.]*

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): Quite a lot of information is furnished in the report of the Department of Mines. Unfortunately, according to the Auditor-General's report, we are still losing a lot of money on mining in North Queensland. While we are all extremely anxious to see mining prosper throughout Queensland, and while I have the utmost confidence in the general manager, Mr. Goddard, who is a man who knows his business pretty well, and whom the department is very fortunate in having to carry on the mining work in North Queensland, still we must be very careful. It has been contended by the Government that, if they had not entered into mining ventures in the way they did, a considerable amount of distress would have resulted in North Queensland as a result of the mines shutting down. That is perfectly true, but at the same time the engaging in actual mining operations is one of the activities in which the Government should be exceedingly careful regarding the way in which they expend the public funds.

The HOME SECRETARY: Mining has done a lot to settle Queensland.

Mr. TAYLOR: I quite admit that. As long as Queensland has been a State the Government have assisted mining, and no doubt will have to assist mining in a very material way. I think that the object the Minister had in view in embarking upon these mining ventures in North Queensland could have been as well achieved if the money had been spent in developmental and productive work of a permanent nature, which would have given all the employment that has been given by the mines during the period of their operations.

I would like to stress what I have said here on more than one occasion so far as mining generally is concerned. The Government and the Minister are trustees of the public funds. The duties of a trustee, whether acting as trustee for the people of the State or for a private individual or company, is not to invest money unless he can see that there is little likelihood of any loss being incurred. I have said before that the Minister is very optimistic, and his optimism has cost the State thousands of pounds which might have been saved. It is not a bit of use for a man to allow his optimism to get the better of his judgment. Everyone realises that the investment of money in mining is to a very great extent a gamble. Notwithstanding all the information that we may get from the experts of the Mines Department, we very often find that they are wrong in their estimate as to what is going to happen in regard to certain ventures. In the expenditure of public money public men should keep in view the principle that they should invest that money in the same manner as they would invest their own and adopt all the precautions that they would then adopt. Ministers would not invest their own money in the way they have been investing public money for a number of years.

Mr. MAXWELL: They would soon be up George street if they did.

Mr. TAYLOR: They would soon be up George street or up Queer street.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Do you mean by that that Ministers are not as careful with public money as they are with their own?

[*Mr. Taylor.*

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not think they are. Greater care should be exercised with public funds than an individual would exercise with regard to his own money. No matter what Government may be in power, they are simply trustees of the public funds. As I said a few moments ago, the whole of the objects which the Government have sought to attain by carrying on mining ventures as they have done in North Queensland could have been accomplished by expending that same amount of money in works of a permanent and reproductive nature. We would then have something to show for it. Judging by the reports, there is a tremendous amount of very valuable metals widely distributed in North Queensland, but unfortunately the cost of recovering those metals and placing them on the market during the period the Government have carried on operations has not been as satisfactory as it might have been. We have on record what was lost by the company operating at Chillagoe before the Government took it over. That company lost a couple of millions in trying to win metals in that area. That fact did not deter the Government, who waded into the venture, and, although they have provided employment in an indirect way and a certain amount of revenue for the railways by their operations, I am still of the opinion that the money could have been better spent. I would rather see the money spent in the way of subsidies to prospectors than that the Government should spend it in the industry in the way they are doing at the present time. That would be preferable to the haphazard way in which we have been going on for some years.

I notice by this morning's newspapers that Dr. H. I. Jensen has been appointed consulting geologist for a certain oil syndicate operating in Queensland at the present time. I do not know whether he has severed his connection with the Mines Department. Those of us who have given any attention to the activities of Dr. Jensen since his association with the Mines Department regard him as being a very able man. I do not know Dr. Jensen, and I would not know him if he entered this Chamber this morning. I realise that Dr. Jensen is a man of very wide knowledge so far as mining matters are concerned. I do not know whether he has severed his connection with the Department of Mines or not, but, if he has done so, I am very sorry. In view of the fact that the Government are so largely interested in mining matters just at present in Queensland, if the matter of salary only affected the retention of Dr. Jensen, I consider that he should have received an increase of salary. I think it is a pity if he is going to be lost to the Mines Department.

There is another matter which is a little different to metalliferous mining—that is, the operations which are being carried on in connection with boring for petroleum throughout the State. I understand this is the mining activity with which Dr. Jensen is going to be associated in the future. The discovery of oil in payable commercial quantities means a lot to Queensland. The Government have been trying for a number of years to get satisfaction from the Roma bore, but unfortunately a number of circumstances have operated against success in that area. That is to be regretted, as the Roma area seems to be one of the localities in which

there is an excellent possibility of securing good results. I am sure that it is the hope of every hon. member in this Chamber and of every man throughout Queensland that the Bills which we have been considering in this connection will meet with the success which the Minister desires—that is, the discovery in payable quantities of oil throughout the State.

The departmental report deals with the subject of coal. Here again we are fortunately situated as a State. I notice that there is a possibility of three woollen mills being established in Queensland, one at Brisbane, one at Rockhampton, and one at Charters Towers. I only hope that they will materialise, because they will mean a greater consumption of coal in the State. I do not see why coal should not be the property of the Government the same as is provided with regard to petroleum, with this proviso, that in granting coalmine leases a certain royalty should be paid to the Government on the coal won. We are exceedingly fortunate that we have coal practically throughout the whole of Queensland, also that the major portion of the coal so far discovered is of very fine quality, holding its own with other coal produced in Australia and probably with any other coal in the world. To make coalmining the success we desire it to be it is abundantly evident that we shall have to provide facilities for the loading of coal at the various ports throughout Queensland so that there will be some inducement for ships to obtain bunker coal at our ports. Delay should be eliminated in bunkering as far as possible. Steamships are similar to railways. If the railways are run only on an average of twelve hours a day, interest has still to be paid for the twelve hours when the rolling-stock is not in active operation. As we have to compete with the whole of the world in the supply of coal, it is quite evident that we should provide the latest facilities for delivering coal into ships, and that we should keep the transport charges as low as possible. We cannot always expect a venture such as coalmining to show an absolute direct profit, but in an indirect way the State gains through the freights on our railways from the coal. A very considerable amount of money was lost during the period the Mount Morgan mine was shut down, when the unfortunate strike was on, not only to the company and the employees, but also by our railways, and the Government were perfectly justified in granting the subsidy to the Mount Morgan Company to enable the mine to continue its operations. I do not claim to have the same local knowledge as the Minister, and probably other hon. members, with regard to that part of the State, but what little knowledge I have convinces me that, had that mine shut down, the town of Mount Morgan might as well have been taken off the map.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Does not the same argument apply to Chillagoe?

Mr. TAYLOR: The same argument does not apply to Chillagoe, because in so far as Chillagoe is concerned, the Government started new ventures and new mines, and they took over leases that had been proved to be unpayable. Until the slump in copper took place, Mount Morgan had been a paying proposition, and had contributed largely to the revenue of the State in the way of taxation and in freight on the railways. The whole plant was in active operation, and if

the subsidy had not been granted, it would have been necessary to scrap the whole show because there was really nothing in the vicinity in connection with which the plant could have been used. Mount Morgan was a settled township, and the Government were fully justified in granting that money to the Mount Morgan Company, as it has enabled 1,100 or 1,200 men to find employment at the Mount Morgan mine. Probably there are 400 or 500 less miners than were employed prior to the strike, and it appears that one of the difficulties has been in getting the necessary skilled miners to operate the mine.

If we get a drought we generally find that it is confined to one State, but the remarkable thing about goldmining is that there has been a slump over the whole of Australia. The falling-off in the gold returns has not been peculiar to Queensland, as there has been a tremendous falling-off in goldmining in Western Australia, Victoria, and also in New South Wales. However, according to the report, there are one or two promising shows in Queensland, and they should receive all the encouragement the Government can give them, in order to see if we cannot restore the prosperity of goldmining to some extent. We might not get back to the state of prosperity that existed in Queensland in the days when goldmining was such a great success. Although Gympie owed its early prosperity to goldmining, it is a remarkable thing that that town probably was never more prosperous than it is at the present time. Of course, it is surrounded by very fine agricultural country, and as a result of the operations of the settlers in that district, it to-day is a very flourishing town, and is in no way dependent on goldmining. Then Croydon, in North Queensland, has practically ceased to be a gold-producing centre, which is unfortunate. It was a fairly thriving place when I was there many years ago, but it has fallen away to a very great extent. I do not think we should pin so much of our faith to mining as we should to the encouragement of other industries which will be more permanent and stable than mining has proved to be in those districts. There are quite a number of directions in which we can spend our money profitably. The hon. member for Burke has lately come from a very interesting trip through North Queensland, and anyone who has read the reports of that trip which have appeared from time to time in the Press and the information given with regard to the possibilities of that country will recognise that there are some magnificent streams there which are second to none in the whole of the State, and which will aid in the development of the sheep and cattle industries.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The development of those districts cannot proceed without coal.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am speaking more particularly with regard to goldmining and metal mining generally. I give the Secretary for Mines credit for his enthusiasm in this matter. I believe that his desire has been to do all he possibly can to assist the industry: but I hope that the optimism which is such a large part of his make-up will not carry him away the same as it has done in the past. We were told the other day about a wonderful discovery of silver-lead about 10 miles wide, and I do not know how

*Mr. Taylor.*]

many miles long. We are accustomed to hear these things in regard to mining.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not say that.

Mr. TAYLOR: We have to take these things not only with a pinch of salt but very often with a whole tablespoonful of salt. Until they are properly tested and developed they may simply be the means of a very large amount of money being lost. In connection with that particular mine in the Chillagoe area, where the Minister's optimism leads him astray is in his limitation of the leases to such a small area that I fail to see that there is going to be any encouragement for people to operate. If it is a good proposition, he can protect the State by allowing a more reasonable area. He proposes to limit it to 10 acres. He is carried away with the idea that it is going to be another jeweller's shop, and that you are going to walk along there and kick out payable metal with your boot. When he comes to test it he may find that it is a more difficult matter than he anticipates. Even on the strength of the reports which he has received, I do not think that he should lose his head over the matter. He can protect the State fully against men taking up the country who do not intend to work it but acquire it simply for speculative purposes and not with the idea of real development; but, if he gives people backyard allotments in order to carry out mining operations, I do not see how he can expect to succeed. I certainly think that the proposed areas of 10 acres are not sufficient for the development of that find in North Queensland.

I sincerely hope that in the coming year the price of copper will rise to a payable rate. It is most unfortunate that we cannot get a more satisfactory price for copper than we are receiving at the present time. Taking into consideration the position of things, not only in Queensland but throughout the world, it is evident that production costs are not going to be reduced to any great extent to assist us. If we could find big deposits of a more payable nature the whole difficulty could be solved quite easily, and I hope that during the year on which we have entered we shall experience bigger and better returns from the mining activities in which we are engaged throughout Queensland. I hope that mining will assist in the development of Queensland, as it has done in the past, more especially so far as industrial metals are concerned.

Mr. RIORDAN (*Burke*): Like the leader of the Opposition, I regret that the Mines Department is not able to make a more encouraging report, and no doubt a man of different temperament from the Minister would find it very hard to work in conjunction with the officials of the Mines Department. Outside of the Minister, I suppose that a more conservative body of men does not exist in the public service. The Minister has had a very hard row to hoe on account of those who are connected with him in the management of this department. For instance, Dr. Jensen recommended the establishment of a State battery on the Kidston field, to be placed on the hill, so as to allow of the amalgamation of the mines there and the treatment of the ore right on the field. A mining inspector went along afterwards and built a battery down near the hotel about

3 miles away, so that the ore had to be carted to the battery. The battery was thus placed a good way from the ore, although it may have been a little closer to the "booze," and I think that, if Dr. Jensen's recommendation had been carried out, work would have been provided for a good many men for many years. Kidston is a low-grade proposition, and when you have to pay cartage for 3 miles on low-grade ore, it practically takes up all the wages. That field was always looked upon as a poor man's field.

I congratulate the Minister upon coming to the decision which has been mentioned by the leader of the Opposition, not to grant leases of large areas on the newly discovered field, because we know that in the past gambling has been carried on with respect to mines in Queensland, and I suppose some of the biggest scandals in this State have been worked on the people by mining companies that have been worked on any people of any country. I need only refer to Iguana Consols at Croydon, where £17,000 was paid for the sinking of a shaft on the report of a newspaper man against the advice of geologists. The man who got the grant brought up the machinery from his old plants in Croydon and sold it to the company, of which he was managing director at a salary of about £300 a year. This man has done more to cripple the mining industry in Queensland than any other man.

The leader of the Opposition referred to the optimism of the Minister. It is just as well that we have in the department somebody who is optimistic about mining in Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: It is costing him a good deal.

Mr. RIORDAN: I do not think it is costing him as much as it should cost. I think he is over-careful. Anyhow, he has done a lot for mining in Queensland. Despite what the leader of the Opposition may say, anyone who has travelled through North Queensland and seen the operations at Chillagoe must admit that, although the State is losing a few pounds there, had it not been for the working of that field thousands of men would to-day be carrying their swags round North Queensland. Although it is a Government venture, I think that the present manager and the Mines Department will make a success of it. It has been carried along by Mr. Goddard in a very satisfactory manner, and I hope that the Minister will go further in a similar direction and establish a treatment works on the Cloncurry field, or force those who are holding the works there idle to operate them.

Had the Minister allowed these people on Mount Isa and on the new Cloncurry field to take up big leases, then what has always happened to the finder of a field and the men engaged in the industry would have happened on those fields. Men [11.30 a.m.] are prospecting year in and year out. Genuine miners walk from creek to creek, or pack their mining tools up in an effort to find new fields, and as soon as a field is found a mob of sharks rush out in motor-cars, peg it out, and then make application to the Mines Department for exemption and hold it until such time as they can float a company to work the show. The granting of only 10 acres to the prospectors on the Mount Isa and Chillagoe fields will enable the prospectors to get what is

[*Mr. Taylor.*]

due to them. A show of 10 acres will be quite sufficient for them. If the field is a success and mining magnates want the mine, let them buy it from those who have discovered it. Some men have given a lifetime to finding these shows. These men devote the whole of their life in prospecting in the interests of the State, and under this system they will be able to get something for finding the show.

The Minister has been generous in granting an allowance to prospectors. The system of allowing £2 a week to men going out prospecting is a very good one, and the work should be carried out on old fields on a more systematic basis. Some people take up old shows and make application to the Minister for assistance in sinking a shaft. Many of them have been reopened, and have had a crushing taken out of them. Dr. Jensen paid a visit to the Croydon field in 1918, and returned and recommended that the Government send a boring plant there to bore along the line of reef, and test that field by the method of putting down a bore hole every few hundred feet. By that method the Mines Department would have been able to find out whether gold still exists at Croydon or not. I understand that to-day boring can be done cheaper than it has been done in the past, and that the plants are more easily shifted. I think that Dr. Jensen's recommendation in regard to the Croydon field should be given a trial, and the Woolgar field should be also tested. On the Woolgar field there are a dozen or twenty men ploughing along and getting out a crushing, and quite recently the crankshaft of the old battery broke down. A geologist of Dr. Jensen's standing would be invaluable to the Mines Department in North Queensland. The department should not consider the matter of salary, and should give Dr. Jensen a boring plant to have those fields tested. The miners are living there hoping for something to turn up, and I am more than convinced that, if Dr. Jensen was given a free hand for twelve months or two years in the Chillagoe and Etheridge districts, there would be a revival in goldmining activities in those parts. At the present time we have the Cloncurry field tied up on account of the long leases there. There are plenty of treatment works around the Cloncurry district, yet it is impossible for the prospector to get his ore treated there, and he has to send it across to Chillagoe for treatment, and it is paying more than wages. When I went through the Cloncurry district during the time of the elections there were two men sent to gaol on suspicion of stealing ore off one of the company's leases. If those men can steal ore off the company's lease, as they were alleged to have done, and have it treated and make it pay, then why in the name of good fortune is the company being allowed to have its mines closed down? When a company has 25 per cent. copper in the ore it should be compelled by some provision in the Mining Act to work those leases.

Mr. MORGAN: The Government cannot make their own copper mines pay, so why force others to work theirs?

Mr. RIORDAN: Let me tell the hon. gentleman for his information that we can make 25 per cent. shows pay. I am speaking of a case where men were committed for trial on suspicion of stealing copper, and they evidently could make it pay. There are men walking about the country who are prepared to work these mines, and work them profit-

ably; and, if the company had done that, it would have given employment for the last five or six years on the Cloncurry field. That would have been done if these long leases had not prevailed. The Minister would be well advised to establish a furnace at Dobbyn or Cloncurry, or in some convenient centre, and the prospectors would be prepared to work that smelter on a co-operative basis, and with a man like Dr. Jensen advising them and stationed in Cloncurry, hundreds of men would be making a living around that district, and many new shows would be opened up. The company has been allowed an extension of three months' exemption to allow it to bring about an amalgamation. The company has been talking about that amalgamation for some time. In certain cases exemption has been refused and certain claims have been thrown up, but they are hanging on to the good stuff. I hope that no further extension will be granted to them now that coal is available at Bowen, and can be obtained for about 14s. per ton, or landed in Cloncurry at about £1 per ton. Coke can also be obtained. In years gone by it cost from £3 10s. to £4 per ton to land coal and coke in the Cloncurry district. There is a saving there of over £2 per ton. Then the Railway Department are prepared to meet these people by giving them certain concessions in freight over the railway line, but they have refused to negotiate with the Government. Under those circumstances the Government should refuse to negotiate any longer with them in the way of granting them exemptions in regard to their claims on the Cloncurry field. I feel certain that, if the Government threatened to start a furnace there on co-operative lines and refused to give them any further extensions, they would start to operate very quickly.

The Woolgar field is a goldmining field that has not received the attention that I think it should have got. At the present time there are shows there returning 2 oz. to the ton. If this stuff can be in any way easily obtained, it ought to be a payable proposition. I know that the Minister intends having a battery put there in order to assist the prospectors, because he has informed me that he is sending a crankshaft out with a man from Charters Towers to have the battery fixed up so that the people can get their ore treated. There are other fields that have been hampered and tied up by our old friend private enterprise. We have the Ortona field, out on the Robinson River and down through Percyville. That is just as good a mineral belt as there is in any part of Queensland, and I predict that before many years go by Percyville will be one of the principal mining districts in Queensland. The Chillagoe Company, in 1914 prior to closing down, negotiated with the Denham Government for a loan of £30,000 to build a railway to Percyville to enable them to carry on. If the Denham Government had granted that loan, the Chillagoe Company would be operating in Chillagoe to-day instead of the Government. A new field would have been opened up at Percyville, and they would have obtained some decent ore to work on. There is a battery on that field at the present time, and the owner of the battery has paid back to the Government the money that was advanced to enable him to erect it. If it had not been for the clamour that was raised, I doubt whether the Government would have

Mr. Riordan.]

been repaid. There is some good crushing stone at Ortona, and one party, although they have 500 tons at grass, find it impossible to get it treated notwithstanding the fact that there is a battery held by a syndicate within a few miles of the mine. That battery is held by some of those people who come on to mining fields, take up leases, and tie the field up year after year by securing exemptions. I hope that the Minister will go further in this matter and erect a battery for the prospectors at Percyville and Ortona to enable them to crush their stone. A royalty could be charged on the treatment of their ore, and in this way the Government would get the money expended on the battery returned in addition to giving employment to many miners in those districts.

I hope that the Minister will carry on his policy of expending money where he thinks there is an opportunity of it giving a revival to the mining industry. He is not one bit too optimistic about the mining industry. The mining industry has done much to develop this State. Charters Towers, Croydon, Gympie, and other fields practically saved Queensland in the olden days. At one time the mining industry at Croydon carried a population somewhere in the vicinity of 15,000.

Mr. MORGAN: It has ruined a lot of people since.

Mr. RIORDAN: If the hon. member can name half a dozen people that Croydon has ruined let him do so. I have never heard of a greater calamity howler in regard to the cattle industry, which should be in a prosperous condition, than the hon. member for Murilla. If the Mines Department had carried on its operations in the same manner as the cattle industry has been carried on, there would be some need for the hon. member to criticise the Government. Croydon has made many people in Queensland, despite his statement. I suppose that not one quarter of the taxation that was received from the mining fields in the Gulf and on the Etheridge has been expended in developing those districts. In the past we had a Government which believed in pulling everything to the city. More has been done by this Government than was ever done previously in developing the country with a view to keeping the population there. The Government have not done anything approaching the political jobbery that was done in connection with the Iguana Consols. The previous Government granted that company £17,000 on the eve of an election in order to catch votes.

Mr. MAXWELL: This Government cannot talk on those lines!

Mr. RIORDAN: No, we rely on the intelligence of the electors. Seeing that the company is winding up, it is the duty of the Minister to enforce the claim of the Government in respect of the machinery.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have got the lot.

Mr. RIORDAN: You have got a bad lot, but it is better than nothing. (Laughter.) To show what a swindle it was, I might say that there is only one decent piece of machinery; the rest was purely scrap iron. That was one of the most scandalous things that has ever been foisted on the people of Queensland. I am very pleased to hear the Minister say that he has secured the machinery, but I suppose something like £8,000 had been spent when he stepped in.

[Mr. Riordan.]

I hope that the Minister will not look upon that £17,000 swindle as the general principle on which average people engage in mining. The genuine miner is a very honourable man, but there is not a bigger shark on the face of God's earth than the mining speculator. I hope that the Minister, by refusing to grant large areas to those speculators, has given them the kick in Queensland that they deserve.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I do not think that anybody, not even a member of the Government, can say that the Mines Department is generous in its administration. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has made a statement about the Mines Department which even the Opposition will stand up against. I doubt whether the Minister will accept his statement. The hon. member for Burke claimed that the responsibility for all things that have gone wrong rested with the administrators and permanent heads of the department. He put the whole of the blame on their shoulders. To save the Minister the pain of having to sack them I must say a word on their behalf.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I suppose you will do the opposite.

Mr. CORSER: It is generally recognised that the permanent heads of the the Mines Department are carrying out State functions in a manner that is a credit to the Government and themselves. (Hear, hear!) It does not necessarily follow that the policy of the Government brings about credit to their administrators. They are honestly attempting to carry out the policy of the Government, and deserve the credit that is due to them. I feel sure that the Minister will acknowledge that they are carrying out their duties generously, if they are not doing it in any other way. The Minister some time ago told us that it was essential, in the interests of the State, that the Chillagoe works should be carried on, and that they could be carried on profitably. The Government acquired those works by spending a lot of money. They also acquired the Chillagoe railway to make it possible to carry on those works. The Government by doing so relieved British and other investors of assets which were likely to fall in value. We find now that not only the railway but the mines and treatment works have resulted in continuous loss. The Chillagoe works in 1920-21 showed a loss of £49,450; in 1921-22 there was another loss of £71,786, and in 1922-23 a further loss of £58,793. There has been a total loss of £178,655. There has only been one profit shown of £1,375. Thus the mine that was supposed, under Government management, to bring about a reward to the State for the investment in the railway and the taking over of the mines and smelter has resulted in a continuous loss.

It was proved that under State control and State management our mines are only likely to bring about a greater loss. Through our stupidity in acquiring privately-owned businesses we have relieved the investors by buying from them something that was not going to pay, and we have placed that loss on the State, merely because we were married to State enterprise as against private enterprise.

Mr. HARTLEY: What would private enterprise have done with the proposition?

Mr. CORSER: They had got to such a position that the railway was not paying.

Why should we pay back their investment and increase our own liabilities?

Mr. HARTLEY: We could not have got out of it

Mr. CORSER: We could. When the Government were putting themselves into it we were told that it was going to be a big benefit to the State, and that we were going to develop the field in the way only the State could develop them.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There has been a big depreciation in metal prices since.

Mr. CORSER: I admit that, but that was taken into consideration at the time. The Minister's statement went to prove that everything was going to be right. Now we find there has been an official loss—we are not going to say that the officials are responsible—it is the fault of the Government.

As to Dr. Jensen, I have heard more about him here than I have of any other mining man in Queensland. I am not prepared to admit that everything he says is right and that everything everybody else says is wrong. If anything, I would rather take the other side.

The Irvinebank treatment works also show a loss. In fact, most of our mining ventures have shown losses. Year in year out we find losses accumulating and adding to the cost of the State, which is not to our advantage. Not so long ago we were told by the Department of Mines that we were going in for a big iron and steel works.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. CORSER: We spent quite a lot of money on them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman cannot show me anything in this vote relating to iron and steel works.

Mr. CORSER: I can show that quite a lot was done in the securing of a lease at Yampi Sound.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not going to permit the hon. member to discuss the iron and steel works on this vote.

Mr. CORSER: I am not going to discuss the iron and steel works, but I say that the administration of the Department of Mines brought about a lease which I understand they have in their possession at the Chief Office—the vote for which we are now discussing. If we hold a lease at Yampi Sound, we want some information with regard to that lease. We do not know very much about it, and the Minister has not enlightened us.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. CORSER: I will not discuss it: I think it should be kept in the burial ground for all State enterprises. That is the only appropriate place for it.

\*Our Mines Department is a very important one, and a great deal can be done by considering whether many of our old mining fields cannot be operated under newer and more scientific methods of ore treatment. Under newer systems and better machinery I think many of our old fields might be opened up and many mines similar to the Mount Perry mine, which supported large populations under prosperous conditions, reopened. I trust that the day is not far distant when we shall be able to reopen many of our goldfields like Eidsvold and

Gympie—places that were once working to the benefit of the State. That would be to the advantage of the State, and I sincerely hope that the administration of the Department of Mines will be able to carry out the scheme successfully in the near future. I wish them every luck.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): So far I cannot see that the criticism of the Mining Estimates has been in any way adverse. While it may be said that the Department of Mines has not done everything that ought to be done, and that it might have made greater use of its opportunities, still I think that the Government and the people of Queensland have a great deal to congratulate themselves upon. There is no doubt that in the past the Department of Mines has been a very important department in the administration of the Government. One thing that can be said of the whole of the administration of the department is, that it has always been free from any charge of anything savouring of dishonesty or of a questionable nature. If you start off on that basis, you are on a pretty good wicket. The Department of Mines has had as its chief objective the conduct of its operations on straight lines, and it has been successful in achieving that objective. That is a very big thing. It must be remembered that no department can give of its best if it is a starved department, and I desire to say as flatly as I can that the Government do not give the necessary monetary assistance to the Department of Mines. A department can only go as far as its cheque book will allow. I consider that the geological staff and the Department of Mines have done wonderful work in view of the amount of money that has been placed at their disposal. A much better result could be achieved if a slight alteration was made in the department. I believe that it is a bad system to have the whole department under one head. I think that the Geological Department should be a sub-department under the Chief Geologist and that he should work in co-ordination with the Under Secretary and, through the Secretary for Mines, should handle the whole of the geological and report work on mining. That is not the case at the present time, and I am satisfied that a good deal of delay and sometimes loss occurs through the present system. If a report is wanted, the matter must go through the Under Secretary and then his instructions go on to the Geological Department. If assays are wanted, they have to go to the Chief Office and then on to the Government Analyst. That is one of the worst features that the department is staggering under to-day. It is under-equipped. The Government should place an adequate amount at the disposal of the Secretary for Mines to enable him to equip and staff the Geological Department with all the necessary appliances for its work. It should not be necessary to have to send work on to the Government Analyst. That must have a hampering effect on the efficiency of the department.

I have heard that Dr. Jensen has relinquished his services with the Department of Mines. I suppose that it must be admitted that in many ways Dr. Jensen was a valuable officer, but I daresay it was at his own desire that he resigned, and no department can be made simply the hunting field for one geologist or official. While Dr. Jensen may have been a good officer, there are

*Mr. Hartley.]*



dozens of others who are quite as valuable, if not more valuable, officers. Right through the staff we have good men, with one exception. I am inclined to make an exception of the Chief Geologist, Mr. Dunstan, because I do not like a lot of his reports.

[12 noon] although in the past he has done a lot of valuable work, which no doubt will be recognised as a standard throughout the State. The work of the other geologists has been of a very earnest and valuable nature, and the one man I would like to give special distinction to is Mr. Saint Smith. No man has accomplished greater work in the way of travelling over rough country and making valuable reports than Mr. Saint Smith. I do not think anyone can mention one instance where his reports have been wrong. That is a very big thing to say in connection with mining, because, as everyone knows, all mining is a pretty big gamble. It is a very difficult thing to tell what will occur a few feet under the ground, what sort of a lode it will turn out, and whether it will last or whether it will not. The Government can congratulate themselves on having in their service geologists like Mr. Saint Smith, both in the North and in Central Queensland. His reports have been splendid.

Hon. members opposite, in speaking about oil and referring to the geologists, said they would not take their opinion about this or about that. One might just as well say he would not take a doctor's opinion after calling him in, or that he would not take an engineer's opinion after seeking his advice.

Mr. MORGAN: The opinions of some doctors are not worth taking.

Mr. HARTLEY: Whether they are worth taking or not, a man has only to get a bit of a pain and he is off to the doctor pretty quickly. Of course, with the opinion of a mining expert it is a different matter.

I want to give three specific instances where the opinion of Mr. Saint Smith was proved correct as against the opinions of quite a number of men who were not geologists, myself amongst them. To me it was a very valuable lesson. A number of geologists will not tell you what they think. They will give you a "Yes-No" opinion, but Mr. Saint Smith, if he has any data at all on which to base an opinion, will say what he thinks. When the Fairview iron lodes were discovered we were "cock-a-hoop," and thought we were all right. We thought it was a Mount Leviathan. We were told that at Mount Etna there was nearly a pure ironstone lode there 10 feet square. So we were still more optimistic on the question of iron, and we said that, if we did not get the ironworks at Broadmount, the Government would not be playing fair. Then there was a little show at a place called Marmor, and the gold taken from the lode averaged from 20 oz. to 30 oz. to the ton. Mr. Saint Smith reported on these three propositions. He said the Fairview lode was only a block of ironstone showing over the top of a mountain and did not go down below 8 feet. He said that the Mount Etna iron or blocks were blocks of very pure iron ore on the surface ranging up to 12 feet square, but it would not go down to any depth. I was with him at the time, and I said, "I bet you it goes right through the hill," and he said, "If you go over the other side of the hill and

{Mr. Hartley.

find one bit of ironstone, I will say you might be right." I put in half an hour in the scrub trying to find ironstone but found nothing that looked like ironstone. We were not satisfied, and I got the Government during the period of unemployment to test the matter by excavating, and, when that was done, it was found that the stone at Mount Etna cut out at about 6 feet. The same thing occurred when we looked for the iron ore at Fairview. We cut through the ironstone there at about 2 feet and underneath that was only ordinary stone. With regard to the gold-bearing ore at Marmor I got the Government to send a geologist there to report. Mr. Saint Smith was sent up, and his report was that he did not think the thing would be of a permanent character—that it was just a patch of good stone. I had a conversation with him, and asked if there was not a chance of his being mistaken. He said he might be mistaken, but, if he was advising anybody, he would not advise them to put anything in it. In spite of that, the show looked so good that I not only put in £25 myself but induced a number of friends to put money into the venture because the show looked like a jeweller's shop, and so it was for about 6 or 8 feet along the reef, and then it pinched out. We put in about three months chopping all over the place and never got even a trace of gold. That speculation was entered into against the advice of the Government expert, and I give the particulars because hon. members on the other side the other night were saying that the geologists were no good and that they would not accept their opinions. In those three separate instances the opinion of the geologist was proved to be absolutely accurate, and, when we have men like that in the department, we have something to congratulate ourselves upon.

Another matter I want to refer to is the dearth of information in relation to the Styx coalmine. I want to say as definitely as I can that I am very disappointed with the slow progress in connection with the Styx coalfield. The report says there is very fine coal there.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The best in Australia.

Mr. HARTLEY: Then for the Lord's sake get a decent move on and get the shaft down so that we can get it out and sell it! Do not talk about it!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The shaft is down about 500 feet.

Mr. HARTLEY: Not the big shaft?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes, the big shaft.

Mr. HARTLEY: I am very pleased to hear it. The work has gone on a lot quicker than up to the last time I inquired about it, and I hope that very soon they will be down on the coal and get it out. Even if it is only 400 feet nearer than it was two years ago, we are that much further ahead.

Mr. MORGAN: It may be so deep that you will not be able to work it.

Mr. HARTLEY: No. We know how deep the coal is. It is about 600 feet from the surface, if my memory serves me right. I am very pleased to hear that the work is so much further ahead than I thought it was. I want to suggest to the Government and to the Minister that, with three big State coalmines like Baralaba, Styx, and Bowen, the

business cannot be handled by the general department, as is being attempted; and I suggest that they get a first-class man and put him in charge of a sub-department to manage the whole of the State coalmines. There are two big factors in connection with the development and profitable handling of these mines—the mining part and the engineering part. No Government department will do it adequately and profitably. I have seen evidence in one or two cases where the management in the department is bringing about delay. I earnestly advise the Minister to put on a coalmining manager with a thorough knowledge of how to get out coal cheaply and in the largest quantities. It is rather funny to see the hon. member for Burnett, who the other night was condemning this side right and left for depending on the Council of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture for advice in connection with the handling of things belonging to the farmer, getting up this morning in defence of the Mines Department because it was getting a little criticism in regard to its mining operations. It appears to me that when it is their own business hon. members opposite want to handle it their own way, but when it is something which does not concern them they do not care who handles it.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I am one of those who think that the time has arrived when the Minister should call a halt, and, before he spends thousands of pounds in prospecting or developing new ventures, he should show us something solid for the money already expended. The Minister has a lot of ventures in hand at the present time, but very few of them are showing a profit. I think that it is up to the hon. gentleman to show a profit and prove that the State is capable of handling these ventures successfully. Until he does that I do not think he is justified in spending huge sums of money in doubtful enterprises which may land the State into trouble, as we find is the case at present. I would draw the Minister's attention to the report of the Auditor-General for 1922-1923 with respect to the Department of Mines. I think that this matter requires some explanation. The Auditor-General states—

“ DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

“ The accounts in connection with the following undertakings under the control of this department—

State coalmine, Bowen;  
State coalmine, Baralaba;  
State coalmine, Styx No. 2;  
State coalmine, Styx No. 3;  
State arsenic mine, Jibbenbar;  
State store, Jibbenbar;

were not finalised at the date of this report, and therefore were not available for publication. As three months have now elapsed since the close of the financial year, this delay is quite inexcusable, and apparently indicates lack of effective supervision on the part of the responsible department officials. It is hoped that there will be no recurrence of such regrettable neglect.”

That is pretty strong criticism. Could an official who realises his position use stronger language than that? He states definitely that things are not as they should be—in fact, it is almost serious enough to move for a Commission of Inquiry to find out really what is happening in connection with these matters. The report goes on to say—

“ The accounts of the above under-

takings will be dealt with in my report on the State enterprises, under the control of the Commissioner for Trade.”

Why is it that these enterprises are not managed in a businesslike way? There have been thousands of pounds spent in connection with the undertakings mentioned by the Auditor-General, yet we find neglect or inefficiency on somebody's part—I do not say on the part of the Minister, although he is the head of the department, and must take the responsibility.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I take the responsibility; I have got an explanation.

Mr. MORGAN: I am glad to hear that the Minister has an explanation. This is the strongest criticism in connection with any department made by the Auditor-General for some time past. I could not let the opportunity pass without referring to it, and asking the Minister to let us know why these matters have not been dealt with in a business-like and up-to-date way.

I would like briefly to refer to the State arsenic mine and the general cost of production. The Minister knows that arsenic, like copper, has fallen considerably in value, and may fall still more. Before the war arsenic equal to that produced at Stanthorpe sold for £9 10s. per ton. The Minister knows that we cannot produce arsenic at that price; in fact, according to the report, it is costing £40 per ton.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The average price last year would be about £34.

At 12.15 p.m..

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

Mr. MORGAN: In the last report I saw the cost was stated to be about £40 per ton. The Minister also stated that he could have sold all the arsenic produced at Jibbenbar at that particular time at £70 per ton. If the Minister can produce arsenic for £40 per ton and sell it at £70 per ton, it will be very profitable.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have brought the cost of production down as low as £27 per ton, but the average cost over the year was £34 per ton.

Mr. MORGAN: When the Minister made a statement he said distinctly that he could sell the arsenic at £70 per ton and that it cost £40 per ton to produce, and that by giving it to the prickly-pear selectors at £10 per ton, he was making them a present of £30 per ton as far as the cost of production was concerned, and of £60 per ton with regard to the market price of the article. It would be far better for the Minister to sell every bit of arsenic in the State mine, and not allow the farmer to have one ton of it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Why?

Mr. MORGAN: If the hon. gentleman can produce arsenic for £40 per ton and sell it at £70 per ton, he is making a profit of £30. Instead of giving the farmer arsenic at £10 per ton to mix his own poison, thereby losing £30 per ton—because, according to these figures the hon. gentleman would be losing £30 per ton if it costs £40 per ton to produce—it would be far better for the department to make a profit of £30 per ton and give the farmer the mixed poison which is on the market. The mixed poison would be 50 per cent. better than the pure arsenic.

*Mr. Morgan.]*

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: And allow the manufacturers of poison to exploit the farmer! If you advocated that we should make the poison, there would be something in it.

Mr. MORGAN: It would be far better to sell the arsenic for what it would bring and use the profit to manufacture our own poison, if so desired, and give the farmer the manufactured article. With the £30 a ton profit made on the sale of arsenic the hon. gentleman could give the farmer the ready-mixed poison, which would be in every way better than what he is doing at the present time.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There would have been more pear in Queensland to-day had it not been for the arsenic mine.

Mr. MORGAN: It is only the out-of-date man who uses arsenic for pear poisoning. In a few months' time the hon. gentleman will have no applications for arsenic for that purpose. In fact, I think the bulk of the applications for poison are in connection with the use of it for suckering and dips. It soon will be just as much out of date to use arsenic to destroy pear as it would be to use one of the wooden ploughs used in Great Britain 100 years ago. I would like to see the Minister use the arsenic in the manufacture of poison, if he likes, to prevent exploitation and give it to the farmers at a cheap rate.

I recognise that the Chillagoe smelters are giving work to a number of men, but it is very expensive. They are employed in a losing concern. Would it not be better to place them in some other locality and make them prosperous or revenue producing? It is all very well for the Government to say that they have kept 1,200 men at work—we are all glad that they are employed—but they are not producing enough to pay the cost of their upkeep. If we were to run a private business in that way, what would be the result? We would go down. If you are running a company and find that the profits are not sufficient to pay wages and you make a loss of, say, £50,000 a year, you cannot carry on. The Minister thinks he is justified in using State money in a different manner to the way he would use his own money. I say he is not.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is developing all the time. It is improving the assets of the State.

Mr. MORGAN: Chillagoe was exploited by private enterprise. Millions of money were spent upon it, and it never paid a dividend; and now, with the best brains the Government could get, and the Government resources behind it, it is still a losing proposition.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is in better order now than the company ever had it in.

Mr. MORGAN: I admit that if copper goes up to £90 a ton it may be a payable proposition; but we do not produce more than 10 per cent. of the world's requirements in copper, and we have no control over prices. Personally I think it might be injurious to Australia if copper went up to a high price, because everything we need to develop the State and Australia would go up in price accordingly.

Mr. HARTLEY: How is it that the price of copper wire does not come down now?

Mr. MORGAN: There has been a considerable reduction in the price since the termination of the war. It has been truly said that

[Mr. Morgan.

every ounce of gold costs about £6 to produce, therefore it is not a payable proposition, because the cost is more than the actual value of the gold. The same thing applies to copper. If we are getting £70 a ton for copper and it is costing us £90 a ton to produce, it is not payable. Why not use the money in producing something which will command a good market overseas? Would it not be better to produce another £1,000,000 worth of wool? Would it not be better to employ the 1,200 men who are working at Chillagoe in the wool industry or elsewhere on the land in a payable proposition which would bring to the country something with which to pay the interest on our loans?

Mr. RIORDAN: According to your argument, we should go out of cattle-raising.

Mr. MORGAN: If cattle prices or conditions generally in the cattle industry are not going to improve, the best thing to do is to go out of the cattle industry. The two things are not similar propositions, but all the same, if the cattle industry cannot pay, one of two things must be done. Either the cost of production has to be reduced or we shall have to go out of cattle altogether. The same thing applies to copper. At one time at £60 a ton, with wages at £3 a week, it was a payable industry and gave employment to thousands of men. Now it is not payable with copper at £70 a ton and wages at £4 5s. a week. Would it not be better to have copper at £60 a ton and have all our copper shows working and showing a margin of profit, with wages at £3 a week if that wage had the same purchasing power as £4 5s., than to have copper at £70 a ton and all the mines idle?

Mr. WEIR: We say the same.

Mr. MORGAN: If the prices of articles generally were reduced and the purchasing price of the sovereign came down accordingly, we could have thousands of men working in our mines, even with copper at £70 a ton. I remember the time in Victoria when they were producing gold from ore which went half an ounce to the ton. Could you work a mine giving half an ounce of gold to the ton to-day?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Yes, with a good seam.

Mr. RIORDAN: It all depends on the nature of the ore.

Mr. MORGAN: And on the cost of getting it. Some mines have better ores than other mines. The point I want to make is that it is not profitable for us to go on losing £100,000 a year for the purpose of keeping a certain number of men at work. The Government told us that they could make the mines pay with copper in the vicinity of £90 a ton. So they could, but they bought the mines when copper was at £80 a ton, and now the price is falling. It is just the same as what happened in connection with the cattle stations. The Government bought them at a time when cattle were high in price, and now they have fallen to such an extent that they are not paying. The same thing applies to the Chillagoe mines.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You would cut down the men's wages.

Mr. RIORDAN: Mr. Corbould said that he could make copper mining pay with 5 per cent. ore in the Cloncurry district.

Mr. MORGAN: I am not advocating cutting down the wages. I know that a man

getting £4 5s. needs every penny to keep himself and his family under existing conditions, but the point I want to make is that, if a wage of £3 were equal to a wage of £4 5s. if prices were reduced, the miner would be just as well off and we could produce copper profitably when the price was £70 a ton.

Mr. RIORDAN: The miner could never keep a wife and family on £3 a week when copper was £60 a ton, unless he kept them in bags.

Mr. MORGAN: No; and they are keeping them in bags now. Where will you find people living under worse conditions than those living on the mining fields to-day?

Mr. HARTLEY: That is just where you are right.

Mr. MORGAN: The Auditor-General tells us that the loss on the Roma oil bore amounts to over £36,000.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is not a loss; it is an expenditure.

Mr. MORGAN: I am very pleased to hear it. Then we find that the loss on the Bamford State battery amounts to £4,465. I would like to see some of these things paying.

I find that £16,324 has been spent in connection with assistance to miners obtaining precious stones. Nobody objects to the Government trying to assist people in this industry, but did the Ministry fix the matter on a business basis when they laid down a 5 per cent. margin?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We paid 95 per cent. on our standard, but we hope to get more than that standard.

Mr. MORGAN: The Government are a long time about it. I hope that when they do get the money they will be able to give a certain amount to the miners by way of profit.

We were told that the Warra coal mine was the best in Australia. That statement was broadcast all over Australia, and [12.30 p.m.] now we find that the mine is a total failure, although it contains the very best coal. It is a beautiful waterhole, but the coal is too costly to produce.

Mr. BRUCE: There are always risks in mining.

Mr. MORGAN: It is fair to expect 5 per cent. of successes.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What about the Bowen coalmine?

Mr. MORGAN: I find that £49,000 has been expended in connection with the Bowen iron and steel works, and we have nothing to show for it. It is unfortunate that the Minister should be connected with it. We are told that the Styx River coal is an exceptionally fine coal. We are told that it is the best in Australia, but we have heard that sort of statement before.

Mr. HARTLEY: The coal is being sold at a profit to the Railway Department in the Central District, but it is not being produced quickly enough.

Mr. MORGAN: I would like to see some of these things pay so that some of the profit may be used in speculating, and then we could say we were not losing any money.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: A mine has to go through its developmental stages, and it does not pay during that period.

Mr. MORGAN: I hope before long the Minister will prove that it has been successful. I know he is very optimistic, but men who are engaged in mining all their lives or for a great number of years always contend that they are going to strike the prize in the next hole. They have hearts like lions, and never give up, always believing that it will be found in the next hole.

Mr. HARTLEY: While they have that spirit they will keep this country going.

Mr. MORGAN: It is a very fine spirit.

Mr. HARTLEY: Do you not do the same thing in connection with droughts? You fight through one drought believing that next year is going to be a good one.

Mr. MORGAN: Yes, but the individual fights the drought at his own cost.

Mr. WEIR: No, you do not.

Mr. MORGAN: He is not using public funds. The Government should be very careful in expending public funds, and they should treat all these matters on a business basis, whether the funds are going to a company or to an individual.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Queenton*): The hon. member for Murilla expressed rather extraordinary ideas which, if they were carried out, would help the country to go back rather than go forward. He evidently believes in the past rather than looking at the present or to the future. He claimed that because copper wire and other copper things in Australia were so cheap—

Mr. HARTLEY: They are not.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: The hon. member said they were. Assuming that they are cheaper, he contends that the price for crude copper should be cheap also. If there is anything in his argument, it would be just as well to go from copper to wool, and say that because we are wearing woollen tweeds it would be better for us to have wool at a cheap price and consequently clothes at a cheap price. When we come to consider the amount of copper used in Australia in comparison with what we are producing, and to say that because the commodity that is used is sold at a cheap price the raw material should also be a cheap price, it is simply a nonsensical argument that no one who knows anything about the subject would use.

The hon. gentleman also spoke about bringing sovereigns to Australia to pay for the goods that go out of Australia. A man who puts up an argument like that does not know anything about international trade. He does not know anything about it when he talks about sovereigns coming into a country which produces gold. He also said that, if wages were as low now as they were ten or twenty years ago, the country would be better off if the purchasing power was the same. Anybody who knew the purchasing power of £3 per week twenty years ago, and what could be purchased then in comparison with what is purchased at the present time, would not put up such an argument. It shows that the hon. member has in mind what was in the mind of the people in Charters Towers when wages were £3 a week, when they put up the argument that, if the men were prepared to work for £2 a week or £2 10s. a week, one-third more could be employed in the mines. There is

*Mr. Winstanley.]*

no doubt that those who argue like that have no objection to that being done so long as they are not victims of a system which would bring people absolutely back to the conditions of slavery. There is no doubt that to-day people are purchasing more than they purchased twenty years ago, and they need to. Years ago people went without a large number of things which they now get, and which they have a perfect right to get.

Mr. TAYLOR: You are wrong.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: I am not. I can guarantee that the leader of the Opposition cannot by any means or method or figures prove otherwise.

Mr. TAYLOR: I went through it myself.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: I went through it too, and I know what I had to put up with. I am satisfied that the conditions to-day are better than they were twenty or thirty years ago. I am speaking of outside of Brisbane, in the northern and western portion of the State, and anybody who knows anything of those conditions will not hanker for them to come back. I hope that they have gone for ever. The leader of the Opposition is just the same as the hon. member for Murilla in reference to optimism. Had it not been for the optimism of the people who pioneered Queensland there would have been no Queensland. There is no question that the people who worked in the mining districts and pioneered the mining fields of Queensland were of a very optimistic temperament. They would not be miners if they were not. They were very optimistic about the way they spent their money, and anyone who did not know them would say that they were fools for the way in which they spent it.

At 12.40 p.m.,

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

Mr. WINSTANLEY: They have confidence in the ventures they put their money into, and accordingly they put their money into them. Sometimes they win; sometimes they lose.

Mr. MOORE: Putting your own money into it is different to putting the State's money into it.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: According to hon. members opposite it is quite right to put the money of the State into anything that will help the pastoralist or any other body of employers; but immediately any aid is given to mining they want to stop it. If the idea of the hon. member for Murilla was carried out, immediately a proposition became a non-paying one all the men engaged in it would get the sack and the whole of the work would be shut down. Anyone who has had any experience knows that a private individual—and private individuals are just like private companies—will run his business at a loss for a certain length of time in the hope that the market will revive. I know of business men who, although there has not been work for them to do, have not discharged their men, because they knew that, when trade revived again, they would find a difficulty in getting their men together again. They took a risk for four or five months in keeping their staffs on in the hope of recouping themselves in the days to come. There is no doubt that there is an element of gambling in mining. It is men like hon. members sitting opposite who are the gamblers and not the miner, who is a legitimate worker.

[*Mr. Winstanley.*]

When a miner takes up shares in a mine he will work it whether it is paying wages or not, because it is to his interests to see the mine developed.

Mr. TAYLOR: They do the same as everyone else does.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: If the speculator can boom up the shares by booming up a report, he does so in order to sell those shares to his personal advantage on the Stock Exchange. That is the way they like to make money.

Mr. KELSO: Do you mean to say that the miner is an investor?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Of course, he is an investor.

Mr. TAYLOR: He invests his money to make a profit the same as anyone else.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Charters Towers during the first twenty years of its existence. No outside capital was spent in Charters Towers during that time. It was not until rock drills and deep sinking were resorted to and big companies and the speculators came on the field and the people began to be taken down. I can confidently state that if Charters Towers—and though I do not know so much about other fields, I suppose the same remarks apply—had been kept as a legitimate mining venture, and not exploited by half a dozen people, it would have been working to-day.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WINSTANLEY: As soon as the mining speculators saw that the mines were finished, that there was not much more in them so far as they were concerned, they did their level best to shut up the field. No better class of people come into a community than miners. The discovery of a mining field would set Queensland going again. A discovery has been made outside Cloncurry, but whether it is a good or otherwise remains to be seen. The discovery points to the fact that Queensland has not yet been prospected to the fullest extent, otherwise such a discovery would not be made so close to an old mining field. I am positive that not only silver-lead mines but gold mines will be discovered in time to come. They will be discovered by people who are optimistic that gold and other minerals exist. They are the people who will make the discovery and help Queensland along. Charters Towers was developed on practically 12-acre leases. Up to the time when deep mining and rock drills were introduced the leases was not more than 12 acres in extent. Those leases were quite large enough to keep the companies going for a fairly long time. Later on, when deep mining and rock drills were introduced, the leases were enlarged to 100 and 150 acres. They were not half worked, and it sometimes happened that the companies were shepherding one-half or two-thirds of the leases—simply adopting a "dog in the manger" attitude, and preventing others from working them. The Minister has acted wisely in seeing that a handful of people do not monopolise the new silver-lead field in the Cloncurry district. After some development has taken place there, it is possible that some of these 10-acre leases may be combined and the area increased to 20 acres. So far as the legitimate miner is concerned, it is a wise thing to limit the size

of the lease, otherwise the whole area may be secured by one company, which does not intend to work them, and it will keep people off the field.

For many years past a sum has been placed on the Estimates for the aid and development of mines. I am sorry to see that the Government—probably the Treasurer—have found it necessary to cut down that vote on this occasion. Last year £19,500 appeared on the Estimates for that purpose, and this year it is cut down by £3,500. When that sum is spread over all the mining fields in Queensland no one can get a large amount.

Mr. HARTLEY: Just enough to christen the engine.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Ten years ago a mine was taken up at Charters Towers which had been given up as not worth the trouble of working. The company had spent about £200,000 on other leases, and they could not raise money enough, after having spent their funds on developing the mine, to work it. They approached the previous Government, when the hon. member for Albert was Secretary for Mines, and he gave them a subsidy of £500. It was not very much, but it was enough to give them a start. The company did some work with the £500 and things looked promising. For ten years that mine has been employing from 100 to 150 men, and has been a paying proposition so far as the shareholders were concerned. That subsidy was money well spent. The company built up a reserve fund of £4,000 or £5,000, but in the last five or six months their luck has been out, with the result that their reserve fund has been exhausted. They very naturally are asking the Government to come to their assistance, and thus keep the men employed. The Government no doubt will assist them. The point arises whether, when a mine reaches the stage when it does not appear to be profitable, it should be shut down and thus put an end to operations. That should not be done. It has often happened in mining that, after the original prospectors have gone away, someone else has come along and, without much work or waiting, has reaped the reward that the first people should have got. From this standpoint it is quite legitimate that the Government should help the struggling mining companies in existence at the present time.

The hon. member for Murilla among other things had something to say about batteries in various parts of the State. The Government have come in for some criticism because £2,000 has been spent in that direction at Charters Towers. The expenditure of that sum has enabled miners to crush 800 tons of stone. If that battery had not been there, the prospecting for that stone would not have been done. That has been done, not only so far as Charters Towers is concerned, but practically all over the country. Men are still looking for reefs, sometimes getting stone that pays wages and sometimes scarcely paying wages, but they are optimistic. The mill was £100 short of paying expenses but against that they have 240 or 250 tons of sand which they will treat in the future. I think that the Department of Mines is deserving of commendation for the help it has given to the mining industry in Queensland.

A good deal of criticism has been levelled against the action of the department in connection with Chillagoe. If hon. members

know anything about the subject, they will know that, when the railway was first built to Chillagoe and afterwards to Etheridge, it was on the condition that it was to be repurchased by the Government after a certain period had elapsed. There was no getting away from that. The company could look to the Government and expect payment for the railway when the time fell due. The Government thought that, instead of allowing the whole countryside to lie idle and the railway to go to ruin, they might as well try to keep the railway in permanent order. They preferred to do this instead of taking over a heap of scrap iron, and at the same time they endeavoured to revive the mining industry. Up to the present the proposition may not have been a payable one, but that is partly due to the insufficiency and quality of the ore that has been smelted. I know of one mine in Ravenswood with exceptionally rich ore that always used to send the ore to Port Kembla; but when the Chillagoe Company started smelting operations, they sent it to Chillagoe and got, not only a quicker, but a better return than by sending it to the South. They appreciated the fact that the Chillagoe Company's smelters were a valuable acquisition and that they helped, not only Chillagoe, but other places in North Queensland. For that reason, I certainly think that, when all is said and done, the Government should be commended for the assistance they have given.

Mining is certainly slumping at the present time, but there are great possibilities that Queensland will see a revival of the mining industry, not only in gold, but in other metals. That is, provided we do not become pessimists. If we become pessimistic, it will mean not only the end of mining, but the end of a number of other industries at present in existence in the State.

So far as the officers of the Department of Mines are concerned, I have always found them exceptionally courteous and ready to give me all the information in their possession, with a view to helping along the mining industry. For some time past the Department of Mines has had a drill operating at Charters Towers, putting down holes in order to test the country. To some extent the results have not been encouraging. But the latest report is that they have gone through a fairly large formation with stone containing mineral that, while it may not justify putting down a shaft, certainly justifies further experimenting. I hope that before the drill is removed from Charters Towers a few holes will be put down in localities where old miners are quite confident that gold exists—where they have tried the surface but have lost the run of the reef, which may possibly be picked up in deeper ground. I am not desirous of seeing mines worked at 4,000 feet; I think 400 feet would be more comfortable and convenient for those working in the mines.

Taking things all in all, I consider that the Department of Mines has done good work for Queensland, and I hope that that good work will be continued in the future.

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): I am not one of those who disagree with the action of the Government in endeavouring to keep certain industries going in connection with mining. I prefer to see the Government subsidise those industries rather than perpetuate the system of rations and doles to large bodies of men from which we can get no

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return. You may make a loss on certain undertakings, whether they are private or State, but the action is justified when you take into consideration the benefits gained by keeping those undertakings open for the time being, from the fact that men are employed, the railway returns are enhanced, company taxes are secured, and—this is important—the State is able to secure income tax from them. It must also be kept in mind that mining may revive at any time, when a large reward will be reaped. I consider that the alternative of keeping a large body of employees on rations merely tends to demoralise the men.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They would be much better out prospecting.

Mr. PETERSON: That is so. I have always found the Secretary for Mines prepared to subsidise any reasonable show in my electorate. Up to the present the prospectors have not been very successful, but not because they have not tried nor because they have not secured assistance from the Government. I believe that no honest prospector with a reasonable show would have any difficulty in securing assistance from the Minister. We find this in the Auditor-General's report for 1921-22—

“The hon. the Minister arranged with an experienced miner to carry out the testing of the Palmer goldfield as agent for—but without expense to—the department. The transport of material and drilling (2,000 feet) is being carried out by the Mines Department at a cost approximately of £2,340, which is to be repaid by the prospectors.”

In the Auditor-General's report for the following year, 1922-23, we find—

“The arrangement made by the hon. the Minister with an experienced miner, representing a syndicate, to carry out the testing of the Palmer goldfield, has been terminated. Three bores were put down to an aggregate depth of 2,165 feet, at a total expenditure of £4,382 5s. 6d. In accordance with the agreement the syndicate repaid £2,488, being the original estimated cost, £2,340, together with £148 10s. which was charged for drilling at 18s. per foot beyond 2,000 feet.”

Now the agreement was that the department of Mines was to make this expenditure which was to be repaid, yet we find in the last report of the Auditor-General that the amount has been charged to the department. Of course I cannot say if the Minister thought it worth while afterwards to go deeper. It is well, when the Auditor-General draws attention to the matter, that the Minister should give an explanation. The report further states—

“The accounts in connection with the following undertakings under the control of this department:—

State coalmine, Bowen;  
State coalmine, Baralaba;  
State coalmine, Styx, No. 2;  
State coalmine, Styx, No. 3;  
State arsenic mine, Jibbenbar;  
State store, Jibbenbar;

were not finalised at date of this report, and therefore not available for publication. As three months have now elapsed since the close of the financial year, this delay is quite inexcusable and apparently indicates lack of effective supervision on

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the part of the responsible departmental officials.

“It is hoped that there will be no recurrence of such regrettable neglect.”

The Minister can understand our position and that it is impossible for any hon. member to discuss the pros and cons of State enterprise unless he has got information from the Auditor-General's report or from the report of the Department of Mines. The Minister might be able to disabuse our minds

[2 p.m.] in that matter and give us some information as to how the field is progressing. Speaking for the Styx River coalfield, I wish the Minister all luck in the development of that field. I remember when we advocated the Styx coalmine the Premier had the temerity to say that there was not a wheelbarrow full of coal in the whole area. He ridiculed the whole idea and treated the thing as a joke. Fortunately we have been able to show that the Styx River coal is not a joke. It has been awarded the prize medal by the Admiralty. That goes to show that sometimes the member for the district knows just as much about these things as those in charge of the business. I am very glad to see that the optimism of the Secretary for Mines has been justified so far as the development of that field is concerned. I understand from correspondence I have had from that centre that there is a considerable amount of dissatisfaction on the field. I would like to know if the Minister can give us any reason for the dissatisfaction, and why it is contemplated to reduce the employees. I do not know whether I am correctly informed or not, but I understand that there has been a reduction in the number of employees. If it is for the purpose of economy, or if the appliances are more up-to-date, of course we cannot take umbrage at the Minister attempting to run the mine on an economical basis.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We hope that the reduction will be temporary only.

Mr. PETERSON: I hope the mine will be a huge success, because there is no question about the quality of the coal. The tests have shown that the coal in the Styx area is of a very fine quality. While on this matter, I would like to ask: Is it a fact that the Minister refused to grant any leases in this area to private individuals within 60 or 70 miles of the Styx River State coalmine?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I refused one license on the railway line some distance from the Styx River.

Mr. PETERSON: In other parts of my electorate there are some very valuable outcrops, and it does seem a dog-in-the-manger policy to prevent anyone else working that coal.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I might inform the hon. member that the parties applying for that particular license had another license for very good coal country at Blair Athol which they were not working. I would not allow them to take up another area when they were not working the area they already held.

Mr. PETERSON: If that was so, under the Mines Regulation Act the Minister had power to cancel their lease at any time. The hon. member for Leichhardt interjected that there were too many coalmines already.

Mr. FOLEY: Too many opened up.

Mr. PETERSON: I remember that when the hon. member went up to the Blair Athol district he explained to the miners there that the reason why orders for Blair Athol stopped was because the people at Rockhampton could get the coal cheaper from the Styx. Why should the people at Mackay, for instance, be prevented from getting cheaper coal than they can get it from the Styx coalmine for?

The HOME SECRETARY: The concession in regard to carriage which the Government gave would help.

Mr. PETERSON: Not only would the concession in regard to carriage assist, but also the development of the mine by the persons concerned. I am not an authority so far as working charges are concerned, but they estimate that they can produce the coal and sell it a considerably less price than the State is asking for the Styx coal. Both mines are in my district, and I am anxious to see the consumers of coal getting it as cheaply as possible compatible with the miners getting fair and proper wages; but the whole desire should be to do the very best thing for the State. If we say that because we have a lot of coalmines in Queensland nobody else should be allowed to put their money into the industry and try to develop mines of their own and make their own markets, we are establishing a bad precedent. One hon. member opposite was denouncing pessimism, but it is a sign of pessimism if within an area of 300 miles we are not going to allow other coalmines than those which are already established.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is not the general policy. This company has applied for an area when they are not working a mine which they already have in another district.

Mr. PETERSON: The people I am speaking about are not like that at all. They are prepared to put their money down and commence working the area at the earliest possible moment. Is it fair to prevent somebody else from getting coal and providing a large number of districts with cheaper coal? I hope the Minister will explain this matter, and will also be able to give us some insight into the cause of the unrest at the Styx River at the present time. No one wants to harass the hon. gentleman—we wish to assist him all be can.

I want to refer to another matter. I do not want to be at cross purposes with the Minister over it, but I have really to complain very bitterly about the action of the Mines Department in their treatment of Mr. M. Hanrahan, of Wycarbah, in my district. It seems that this gentleman bought a quantity of arsenic from the department. After he had spent a certain sum of money it was found that the arsenic was absolutely useless, and the wages paid in carrying out the operation was so much money wasted because the arsenic was not up to specification. I do not want to complain at any great length on this matter, because I realise that mistakes are made in all businesses, but the trouble is that this man did not make a mistake. Acting upon the specifications of the Mines Department, he purchased a certain quantity of arsenic. He sent this letter to me, and I submitted it to the department eight months ago. What I am complaining about is that although I went to the department on four occasions—on three of them I

went to see the Minister—I was referred to Mr. Brophy. Mr. Brophy, before he thought of resigning from the service, promised to make an inquiry into the matter, but neither Mr. Brophy nor any other officer of the Mines Department has attempted to answer this claim which has been put in. Mr. Hanrahan wrote to me in this way—

“ I am again going to trouble you.

“ Some months ago I sent a claim through you to the Mines Department for £195, which amount I am at the loss of owing to the Mines Department supplying me with inferior arsenic—which they have admitted.

“ As it happened to be in the hustle-bustle of the election no doubt it was overlooked, as I have received no answer so far.

“ Therefore I would be thankful if you would interview the Minister for Mines and have this matter adjusted.

“ I am enclosing a copy of the account.

“ Thanking you for the trouble you have already taken.”

This man's claim was made up as follows:—

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
|                                 | £      |
| “ Wages, twelve weeks at £4 5s. |        |
| per week ... ..                 | 51     |
| Horse and dray, twelve weeks    |        |
| at 15s. per day ... ..          | 54     |
| Soda ... ..                     | 90     |
|                                 | £195 ” |

I understand that this man can verify that up to the hilt. I understand he used something like a ton of arsenic. Whether his claim is valid or not may be open to dispute, but he had to go to all this trouble. In good faith he got the arsenic from the department, and at the end of the application his pear was growing as well as ever, and the department said, “ On analysis we find that the arsenic was not up to specification, and we will send you some more.”

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We took his word that it was bad arsenic and sent him another lot.

Mr. PETERSON: Yes, but in using the other arsenic he has incurred an expenditure of £195, for which he does not get the slightest return. I think that the Government, in common with other trading concerns, should protect a purchaser where it can be proved that he has been injured by some neglect or cause over which the Minister or the officers of his department have perhaps no control. I do not bring this matter forward in a carping spirit, but merely in an endeavour to make the Minister see the justice of the claim or the necessity for investigating it more than he has done.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I will do that.

Mr. PETERSON: Thank you. If a wrong does exist—and I am pretty sure that Mr. Hanrahan is not the sort of man to make an unjustifiable claim—it should be righted, and I shall be grateful if the Minister will push the matter forward.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I want to say a few words in support of the industry which in 1867, when Gympie was discovered, lifted this State from a condition of stagnation to one of prosperity. That is a reply to the pessimism of some hon. members opposite. In 1902, when there was a great drought in this State, the only bright spots were Gympie

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and Charters Towers, which helped to tide us over our difficulties, and, judging from what we can see at the present time, this new discovery in the Cloncurry district may be the means of enabling us to win a lot more prosperity than we enjoy at present. At any rate, I am one of those who take off my hat, so to speak, to the men who in the early days went right into the wilderness and lived on corned beef and damper, and who were not at all times able to get that, because the squatters were not altogether favourable to the prospectors because they used to disturb their cattle or sheep. The man on the land is not the only pioneer of this country, and many of those prospectors had to sink many holes before they struck what they called payable dirt. I know what it is to work day after day and week after week, and receive not a penny for my labour, but still go on working as hard as any man in any part of the world, endeavouring to get a livelihood and discover gold. So I want to say a word or two on behalf of the pioneers of the mining industry.

I differ from some of my friends with regard to what they call experts. I want to tell the hon. member for Toowoong that there is a difference between believing in geology and believing in experts—and there is a difference between the mining expert and the geologist. The mining expert is generally a man who lays himself out to take down the public by issuing prospectuses and making statements when things are not what he says.

At 2.15 p.m.,

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

Mr. COLLINS: I have worked at mining for twenty-five years, and I know something about it, and my experience has taught me that no matter in what part of Queensland a discovery takes place, if I divide it by four, I generally get the truth. I hope the development that is now taking place a few miles from Chillagoe and the Cloncurry districts will be the means of reviving mining in Queensland.

I was surprised to find no criticism of the Bowen State coalmine by the leader of the Opposition. I suppose he is now well aware that it has reached what might be called the producing point. I notice that he is not finding any fault with it.

Mr. TAYLOR: You gave me the figures the other day concerning it.

Mr. COLLINS: That was when it was a producing mine. There are two ways in which a mine can pay: There are the profits to be made from actual mining looking at it from a purely mining point of view, and there are the benefits that accrue to a community from the development of the mine. Let me use the Bowen State coalmine as an illustration. Before that mine was developed we were paying 42s. 6d. per ton for our coal in the North, whereas to-day we are paying at the mine 18s. per ton for screened coal, 16s. per ton for unscreened coal, and 14s. for slack.

Mr. TAYLOR: Look at the number of men out of work in the Ipswich district.

Mr. COLLINS: Let us examine for a few moments what that really means. I have in my hand a report by the manager of the

Bowen State coalmine, which appeared in the Bowen "Independent" of 15th September. He says—

"The railway was completed to the State mine on 2nd September, 1922, and coal production started from this mine on 4th September, and to date (September, 1923) 67,713 tons of coal have been produced. The rails were not completed to the Consolidated Company's mine till Christmas, 1922, and to date this mine has produced 9,000 tons of coal."

If we take the price of 42s. 6d. per ton and the price of 16s. per ton for unscreened coal, we shall find that there has been a saving already to the users of coal in North Queensland of approximately £80,000.

Mr. VOWLES: What about dividing that by four? (Laughter.)

Mr. COLLINS: There is no need to divide it by four. The Bowen State coalmine is now producing about 400 tons of coal daily, which practically means a saving of £500 per day as compared with the price that was paid for coal imported from the South. That is a benefit to the general community. A good many hon. members seem to lose sight of the fact that it is not altogether the amount of profit that the Minister can show on mining, but it is the profit to the general community as compared with the price paid for coal imported from the South.

Mr. TAYLOR: From Ipswich.

Mr. COLLINS: Assuming that the Bowen State coalmine, which is gradually developing, continues its output of 400 tons of coal daily for 250 working days in the twelve months, it means a saving to the people of North Queensland of approximately £125,000 over and above the amount that would have to be paid for coal coming from the South. Is that not a wonderful saving? I can quite understand hon. gentlemen who have been trained in what might be called the commercial school of thought not conceiving of anything paying unless it is actually showing a profit, as will be the case with the Bowen State coalmine when it gets on its feet properly. The Minister informs me that that will be so. The possibilities are very great in connection with that mine, and when the new jetty at Bowen is completed—it is expected to be completed by 1924—we shall then be able to export coal to different parts of the world if there are the markets for that coal that we anticipate there will be. I anticipate that there will be a market. The Mines Department deserves credit for the manner it has developed that mine. I take it that it is developing the other State coalmines in other portions of Queensland in a similar way, and I hope that the good work being done will be continued. I said a few moments ago that there was a difference between geologists and experts. While my friend the hon. member for Fitzroy praised Mr. Saint-Smith, of the Geological Department, I want to say a word in favour of Mr. B. Dunstan, the Chief Geologist. We all know that years ago Dr. Jack, who was a celebrated geologist and had a great reputation, practically put a damper on the Bowen coal field and retarded its development by a report he wrote. It was only when Mr. Dunstan went up to the Bowen coal field and reported upon it that its worth was made known. Mr. Dunstan is one of the most able geologists in Australia.

[Mr. Collins.]

I am not talking of him as an expert, but as a geologist who has knowledge of the different strata that go to make up Queensland and Australia.

At 2.21 p.m.,

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

Mr. COLLINS: When Mr. Dunstan went up to report on the Bowen coalfield he had Dr. Jack's report before him. I happened to be travelling up North on the same boat that he travelled by and he told me that, in view of Dr. Jack's report, he was not hopeful. The hon. member for South Brisbane was then representing Bowen, but he was put out on account of his extremism and later on I was put in because of my moderation. (Laughter.) We are both in Parliament still. Through the efforts of the hon. member for South Brisbane Mr. Dunstan was sent up to report on that coalfield. I remember meeting Mr. Dunstan subsequently, and he was man enough to say to me, "After a careful examination of the Bowen coalfield, I have come to a different conclusion altogether to that arrived at by Dr. Jack, and I am satisfied that there is a coalfield there."

Mr. FERRICKS: He told us both.

Mr. COLLINS: That is the point that I want to make—that there is a coalfield there—not a coalmine—capable of producing not millions but billions of tons of coal. There is no shortage of coal in Queensland; there is an abundance of it. Nature has been kind to Queensland, not only so far as her coal deposits are concerned but also her artesian water supply. I do not know of any country in the world where Nature has been so kind.

I now pass from coal to deal with gold, because I represent the second gold-producing centre in Queensland. I speak of Mount Coolon. Only yesterday morning I received a letter from Mount Coolon stating that at the 100-foot level at Barclay's claim, on the Mount Coolon line of reef, the reef has increased to 25 feet in width. Already there are on the field three 10-head batteries, and the writer went on to say that the Mount Coolon Company was going to add another five head, making fifteen head in all. I am satisfied we are going to develop a fairly good goldfield there. I want to thank the Minister for what he has done towards reviving the old Normanby goldfield, which, in the opinion of some miners, will develop into a gold-producer as time goes on.

I have not anything to cavil at against the Mines Department. The only exception I take is the reduction in the prospecting vote. When that vote is spread over the whole of Queensland it will be recognised that it is a very small amount indeed. I am not one of those who believe that we have discovered the whole of our mineral deposits in Queensland. Only yesterday I received a letter from a man who is prospecting in my electorate, informing me that as soon as he received word that his prospecting area had been granted more than likely he would be able to announce the discovery of a new goldfield in Queensland. We want to stimulate prospectors to go out and prospect. It is better to give a man £1 10s. a week—which the Minister allows for a single man, and £2 for a married man—than to have those men receiving what hon. members opposite term doles. I am going to watch them very closely in connection with a Bill

that is going to be passed through the House, as to whether they will object to doles for the cattlemen or not. I would prefer to see money spent in prospecting rather than in subsidising those who are unemployed. There are any amount of districts in Central and Northern Queensland where important discoveries will be made in the near future.

I think that the Department of Mines is to be congratulated on its Chillagoe results. As my hon. friend the member for Burke knows, that district is practically a territory itself—a huge stretch of country. If they had not the Chillagoe mines in that district it would be practically a wilderness, and even if we have a loss on the mines we show a profit, inasmuch as we are employing there at the present moment over 1,000 men. We all know the state of the labour market; if these 1,000 men were not employed in connection with the Chillagoe mines and smelters they might be on the labour market.

Mr. VOWLES: They might be out prospecting too.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member cannot think of anything but profits. If the proposition will not pay directly it will pay indirectly. All that is wanted to make the Chillagoe district pay is to discover one rich vein or lode. We used to have a saying when I was working at mining to the effect that anyone can work a rich mine but it takes a good man to work a poor one. That is true of all mining. I am in hopes that this new discovery will be rich enough to pull Chillagoe out of the mud and make it a paying concern. An hon. member opposite was dismayed when the State batteries were reported as not paying—

Mr. VOWLES: The Minister is not dismayed.

Mr. COLLINS: No; the Minister is an optimist like myself. I am satisfied that those State batteries have done good work. The Labour Government are pioneers in State battery operations. The Tory Government never rose to the occasion and did not give us State batteries in those bad old Tory days. I was prospecting in those days, and we were right out in the country, and very often had no meat and had to rely on what we shot in the way of wallabies and so forth. I made a request to the department for an advance to enable my party to go to Gympie and get our stone crushed. The Tory Government gave us the huge sum of £5, and we had to borrow from a good neighbour in the locality in order that we might take that stone down to Gympie. That is all the Department of Mines did for my party in the year 1902.

I say that the present Minister is giving excellent assistance. I take off my hat to those sturdy old pioneers who went out to the south of Cooktown tin scratching. It would do hon. members opposite who represent farming communities a deal of good to see those tin-scratchers working. Some of the work occupied twelve months of their time without bringing in a penny, and they had to bring water two or three miles to enable them to sluice their tin. There is not an hon. member opposite who has passed through that experience.

Mr. COSTELLO: Don't be silly.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member has not gone through it. I do not know of any

*Mr. Collins.]*

other district where they have had to bring water 3 miles to sluice tin.

I have seen men who had no company behind them doing that kind of work living in the scrub, felling the timber and sawing it out to enable them to get the necessary fluming to cross the creeks in order to bring the water to their tin-shows. I say all honour to that type of man, and while [2.30 p.m.] that type of man exists in Queensland there is hope for the future of mankind and hope for the Labour party, because I do not think one of those men would vote for hon. members opposite. They belong to the class who believe in democracy and who do all they can to uplift mankind and do away with the conditions of slavery that have existed in the past.

I want to mention one thing that I overlooked when I was dealing with Mount Coolon. When Dr. Jensen visited that district a few months ago he reported the discovery of a huge deposit of iron ore. That was something that was not known when we were talking so much about the establishment of iron and steel works. Within the Bowen electorate itself we have a huge iron ore deposit, and I hope as time goes on that this iron ore deposit will be utilised, and that it will be made into iron and steel and that finally we shall see the iron and steel works established at Bowen.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): The hon. member for Bowen referred in no uncertain terms to what he called the olden days before the Labour party came into power, and, if his remarks indicate anything, they indicate that under the régime of the Labour party mineral production has gone ahead by leaps and bounds. Unfortunately, if you get down to tin tacks, you will find that under the Labour Administration our mineral resources are not being developed. In support of my contention, I wish to point out that production in connection with mining was far greater in 1914 than it is to-day, as the following statement will show:—

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF YIELD OF PRINCIPAL MINERALS DURING 1914 AND 1922 RESPECTIVELY.

|                        | 1914.     | 1922.   |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gold .. .. ozs         | 249,468   | 80,584  |
| Copper .. .. tons      | 18,455    | 5,104   |
| Silver .. .. ozs       | 253,964   | 273,036 |
| Coal .. .. tons        | 1,053,990 | 958,519 |
| Tin ore .. .. tons     | 2,085     | 1,098   |
| Opal and gems .. £     | 17,800    | 35,862  |
| Wolfram .. .. tons     | 249       | 4       |
| Molybdenite .. .. tons | 271       | 1       |
| Limestone .. .. tons   | 119,805   | 78,186  |
| Ironstone .. .. tons   | 48,090    | ..      |

Mr. BRUCE: What about 1916-1917?

Mr. KERR: I am quoting the latest statistics.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You quoted the figures for two years only.

Mr. KERR: I have given the figures for two separate years—1914, before the Government came into power, and the latest statistics available. We have hon. members standing up in this Chamber and telling us what the

[*M. Collins.*

Government have done, and telling us about men carrying water for miles. All that was done in the olden days. If we have the resources that hon. members opposite talk about, then they are not being developed under a Labour Administration. That is the position in a nutshell. Mining, as we know is uncertain. That is frankly acknowledged, and it certainly seems to be very uncertain from the accounts in connection with the Department of Mines. The Auditor-General has a word to say in regard to the accounts of this department.

Mr. DASH: We have heard all this before.

Mr. KERR: At one time an hon. member of this Chamber used to say that it was a good thing to say it "over and over and over again." Look at some of the undertakings of the Government in this connection. The Government have spent £710,000 on one undertaking and have received no interest on that money, and various other accounts are not kept correctly, according to the Auditor-General's statement.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He did not say that.

Mr. KERR: I mean in connection with depreciation. Take the loss in connection with the smelters and ore reduction treatment works at Chillagoe. The loss on last year's operation was £53,793, and the accumulated loss to date is £178,655.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What was the railway revenue before we started Chillagoe and the railway revenue since?

Mr. KERR: That is another undertaking that is not paying, notwithstanding that they get a 50 per cent. rebate on the freights. The railway itself does not pay. The Government have made concessions all round, and still these enterprises are worked at a loss. It would pay the Government to put this money into other undertakings—give it to private enterprise, if necessary, in my electorate. (Laughter.)

Mr. HARTLEY: How many private mines are paying dividends?

Mr. KERR: Let me remind the hon. member of the silver-lead mine at Indooroopilly, which will possibly develop into a very large concern. (Laughter.) The hon. member laughs like the rest of his colleagues. Their vision cannot go beyond their own electorates.

Mr. HARTLEY: What dividend has it paid?

Mr. KERR: The mine has only reached the initial stage of development. This mine was not discovered by any prospector, but by a man who, when he was digging a hole to plant a pawpaw tree, came upon a silver-lead lode. They are developing this mine and hope to make a great success of it. At Brookfield, in my electorate, gold has been discovered, and one of the experts has recommended that a company be formed to develop this mine.

Mr. HARTLEY: What has the Indooroopilly mine paid in dividends?

Mr. KERR: The hon. member must allow for the initial working expenses. (Government laughter.) These mines have been made for them, still the Government are drawing money out of the Treasury to make up the working expenses. Take the smelters, for instance. The taxpayer has to pay to the

Treasury £32,000 a year in connection with this business. Since the State has come into the sphere of producing coal our production has gone down. I want to get some figures into "Hansard" to show that, in regard to Chillagoe, the money expended by the State, instead of fostering the enterprise, has resulted in a setback. Not one penny has been obtained out of the business, but private enterprise has been pushed out of the business. The Government should give encouragement to prospecting, as the mining industry is languishing, and encourage private enterprise to go into the business. It is not a wise thing for the Government to spend the people's money in connection with ventures such as I have mentioned. It is having an ill effect, and surely hon. members opposite can see that that is the case. In connection with this particular venture, in 1920 the indebtedness was £243,000; in 1921, £292,000; in 1922, £525,000; and this year £710,000. There has been a great depression in mining, but the Government should not place themselves in a position in which it is going to affect the finances of the State. In connection with the money put into the Warra State coalmine, for instance, it is dead and buried.

The PREMIER: Do you know on whose recommendation that mine was purchased? (Laughter.)

At 2.42 p.m.,

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

Mr. KERR: I do not say that it is all the fault of this Government, but they have intervened and are developing the coalmines to too great an extent. The Government have no right to put the people's money into an enterprise in connection with which they cannot rely on the market price of the products. We are still importing coal into Queensland. The Railway Department is buying coal from Newcastle, and all these things are happening under a Labour Administration.

Mr. GLEDSON: Let us know where that coal is being used.

Mr. KERR: The hon. member represents a coal district and ought to know. If he does not know, it is his business to find out. I want to give a comparison of the salaries and wages paid by this department during the financial years 1914-1915 and 1922-1923. We find that the number of employes has decreased and that the salaries paid in connection with the department are not in proportion to the increased cost of living in the years I am quoting. I will give the exact figures—

| No. of Employees and Total Salaries and Wages Paid.                    | 1914-15. |         | 1922-23. |         |
|--|----------|---------|----------|---------|
|  | Number.  | Amount. | Number.  | Amount. |
| Chief Office .. .. .   | 21       | £ 4,985 | 22       | £ 6,714 |
| Mining Fields .. .. .  | 73       | 17,149  | 77       | 21,645  |
| Mining Journal .. .. .   | 2        | 500     | 2        | 574     |
| School of Mines .. .. .  | 11       | 2,711   | ..       | ..      |
| Totals .. .. .   | 107      | 25,345  | 101      | 28,933  |
| Average per employee per annum .. .. .                                 | ..       | 237     | ..       | 286     |
| Average increase per annum .. .. .                                     | ..       | ..      | ..       | 49      |
| Average increase per cent. .. .. .                                     | ..       | ..      | ..       | 20%     |
| Increase in cost of living per cent. (Commonwealth Statistics) .. .. . | ..       | ..      | ..       | 46%     |

We hear hon. members opposite talking about what they call the old Tory days when men were underpaid, but at the present time, while the cost of living has increased by 40 per cent., the salaries of their own employes have only gone up by 20 per cent. Where do they stand in this connection? They are not genuine. I say that the Government have not been above-board in their undertakings. Their accounts, according to the Auditor-General's report, are not in a proper state. When I say that, I am not casting reflections on any of the officers of the public service, but I say that the charges account of the department does not show a proper result. A business undertaking demands that interest should be paid and that provision should be made for depreciation. The Mines Department might very well be overhauled. The Secretary for Mines is a gentleman of an optimistic nature, but mere optimism is not going to improve the finances of Queensland. Any person can be optimistic if he has other people's money to fool with.

Mr. DUNSTAN (*Gympie*): I wish to speak in connection with this vote as the representative of a mining field whose reputation as a gold producer largely belongs to the days of the past. This is unfortunate, but the

position of Gympie in that respect is not peculiar amongst the mining fields of Queensland and Australia. Practically all of them have their periods of discovery and boom and their maximum of development, and then their decline and close, with the population remaining as the ghostly relics of the days of prosperity. But Gympie, I am pleased to say, even in its declining days can give testimony to the generous assistance which has been given to it by the Secretary for Mines in the way of subsidies for deep-sinking and prospecting. Practically every application that has been made by the mining men of Gympie through their parliamentary representative, backed up by the reports of Government geologists, has been granted in a very generous degree. I am glad to be able to give my personal testimony to the excellent work which the Mines Department—the Minister, the officials, and members of the geological staff—have always done for the Gympie goldfield. It is regrettable that the efforts of mining men on that field have not met with the commensurate success which we all desire, but it is not due to any lack of assistance or encouragement in a practical form from the Minister or officials of the Mines Department.

The Minister has been accused of being

*Mr. Dunstan.*]

over-optimistic in regard to the big undertakings under his jurisdiction. We can all say that the world loves an optimist. The optimist at least will make omelettes by breaking eggs, whilst the pessimist may never make omelettes at all. In optimism as practically demonstrated in regard to mining fields there is at least the hope of discovery of new goldfields or mineral fields in this State, and probably the restoration of those which have come to the days of their decline.

It has to be recognised also that there is an idea amongst practical mining men that the so-called geologist or so-called expert is not of any value as compared with the practical mining man. The prevalent view of the practical miner is largely that of the dictum of Cousin Jack—

“Where should be, there should be.”

But it must be recognised that in many cases the geologist, by his collated data regarding the strata of mining fields, has saved large sums of money. It has to be remembered, however, that in practically every case in Australia the mining fields were discovered by the denudation of reefs and the exposure of alluvial gold prior to the location of the strata by the geologist, and, in my opinion, it is quite possible that auriferous strata may yet be discovered where they have been over-lain or covered by lava flows, and in that connection I have to thank the Mines Department for assistance in putting down a bore in the northern area of the Gympie field, on the recommendation of Mr. Ball, the Government geologist, to prove whether the Gympie series extend into that area and whether the prospects at a lower level than the Eastern ground may not open up an equal area of mining development on that field.

I would like the Minister to give consideration as soon as possible to the amendment of the Mining Acts in such a way as to enable him to compel companies which are about to cease operations to leave the underground workings in good order, so that they can be continued by parties of working miners or new companies. We have had an instance on Gympie quite recently where such a law is desirable. A big low-grade company recently abandoned operations, but the water from the surrounding strata is steadily inundating the mine, with the prospect that in the very near future the whole of the working area of the mine below will be destroyed, and its operation by tributers, working miners, or a new company will be prevented.

A necessity exists also of giving power to the Minister to control the formation of mining companies in the same way as he has taken power to control companies prospecting for petroleum. I have in my mind's eye a mining tenure on Gympie which has been the vehicle for successive flotations for the past few years. I am not in any way against the legitimate mining proposition, but I am against the use of any mining proposition at the expense of the public for the advantage of those persons who do most of their mining above the level of the ground. I can speak with personal knowledge of the good work that has been done by the geological staff of the Mines Department, and of the consideration given in a practical way by the Minister to the encouragement of

[Mr. Dunstan.

mining development at Gympie, and I hope that in the near future we shall see a restoration of mining, particularly gold mining, in one portion of the State or another which will rival in prosperity and even exceed that of the heyday of mining production in the early nineties. I am satisfied that, whilst it is a fortunate thing for Gympie that it is so situated in fertile natural surroundings as to enable it to continue as a prosperous town, notwithstanding the decline of the mines, nevertheless it would be a good thing for Queensland, as well as for Gympie, if a revival of gold mining were realised in that area. Whatever may be said about the temporary or ephemeral nature of gold mining in a general way, nevertheless, whilst gold production is of some magnitude, it is one of the greatest factors in the material prosperity of the community. It is one of the greatest employers of labour of any industry in Queensland, and I am hopeful that what has been done by the department in one form or another throughout Queensland will enable us to see in the northern portions of the State—if not in the South—a revival of mining, both of industrial metals and of gold, such as will once more put Queensland in the forefront of the States of Australia as a mineral-producing factor. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. BRUCE (*Kennedy*): The mining industry is inseparably bound up with the early history of Australia. The early civilisation and population of Australia were due to it. There has been a great deal of quibbling about the expenditure of the State on mining and State enterprises in the mining sphere, but iron, coal, oil, and in a lesser degree copper, are the foundations of national prosperity and greatness. It is, therefore, the duty of the Secretary for Mines to develop the mineral resources of the State, and the action which has been taken by him, and of which there has been so much criticism in this Chamber to-day, is along the right lines. That it will cost money is, of course, well known. When private enterprise first floats a company, it aims first at raising a large capital to develop the lodes on which it is going to operate, looking to the returns to recoup it ultimately for its outlay. When the State takes up an enterprise of this kind, it costs a large amount of money, just as in the case of private enterprise. The expenditure of that money has come in for criticism to-day, and the ultimate development has not been considered by members of the Opposition.

I propose to deal for a little with the manner in which mining interlocks with a great number of other industries. The Cloncurry field is practically closed down to-day because the price of copper is not sufficient to recoup the companies for working. The hon. member for Bowen dealt with many phases of the Bowen coalfield, but I would like to stress its bearing on the Cloncurry copper field. The hon. member for Murilla stated that the reason why copper mining was not payable was the high wages, and he suggested a reduction. Let any hon. member ask any mining manager in Queensland to-day whether that is so. I venture to say that, if he tells him that high wages operate at all he will say they operate only to a very small degree.

I have it from the manager of Hampden, Mount Cuthbert, and Mount Elliott, that

the question of wages is only a very small item in the reasons for the cost [3 p.m.] of production of copper to-day.

On one occasion the increased cost of shipping freight on coke from the South, which is largely used in the production of copper, increased the cost of the production by £2 per ton. By extending the operations of the Bowen State coalmine and by establishing a coke oven under the control of the State, or else by allowing companies to establish coke ovens and to obtain coal at as low a cost as we can, we may be able to reduce the cost, or a portion of the cost, and we shall again see copper produced in the Cloncurry district. There is the cost of steel, iron, and machinery used in the mines and in connection with smelters. The increased cost in this direction has added to the increased cost of the production of copper. The increased cost of fractureur and explosives has also added to the cost of the production of copper. Owing to the increased cost of living, it has been necessary to increase the wages of the employees in all sections of the Railway Department, and this cost is handed on, causing an increase in the cost of production of the copper that is carried over the railways. Per medium of the Bowen State coalmine, I am perfectly sure that we can largely reduce the cost of the production of copper. I do not think the time is very far distant when these mines will again be in operation, and, if the fields reopen, there will be from 3,000 to 5,000 men directly employed in the Cloncurry district and a tremendous number of men indirectly employed. These are phases that should be considered. I was astonished to hear the hon. member for Murilla get up and use the old, old argument that the only way to make an industry prosperous is to reduce the employees' wages. The conditions of mining are such, and the slackness in the mining industry has been such, that it will be found very difficult indeed to secure miners when the fields reopen.

Pleas have been put forward on behalf of the farmer by hon. members on both sides, and those pleas are absolutely justified; but it does not matter how bad the conditions of the farmer may have been or may be, I still state that what the miners have had to put up with during the last five or six years cannot be exceeded by what the farmers have had to put up with. There were 3,000 men employed on the Cloncurry field and without one moment's notice they were driven throughout the State to seek employment, leaving their wives and children wherever they might leave them, and travel this State and other States in order to win bread for their families. Then the Government commenced operations in the Chillagoe centre.

At 3.5 p.m.,

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

Mr. BRUCE: That to some extent relieved the difficulties of those men, but I say now, as I have said for many years in a capacity other than a member of Parliament, that, had the Government established a furnace in the Cloncurry district, they would have employed a great deal more men and at a much more remunerative rate than is the case in the Chillagoe district. I hope the Government will consider that position, and, if possible, establish a State furnace in the Cloncurry district.

In speaking of the old fields in the early history of Australia, Bendigo, Ballarat, Kalgoorile, Coolgardie, Mount Morgan, Croydon, Gympie, and Charters Towers were great factors. I know from personal experience that, when you get to the deeper levels of mining, from a profit point of view it is not a payable proposition to go on with it, and from the point of view of the health of the miners it should not be continued. The general tendency of mines is to lose value as they go down, because the costs increase, and these mines should not be worked because the injury to a man's health increases when a mine is worked to a greater depth.

Mr. KELSO: What do you suggest?

Mr. BRUCE: I have been at Ballarat and Bendigo, and the practical men have left the deeper levels because they have reached an unpayable stage and are better left alone. It is better to search for new fields in the vicinity of those deep mines and prospect on the surface of new areas than to carry on mining at deep levels, and the Government should give that matter some encouragement.

Mr. KELSO: Would the same number of men be employed?

Mr. BRUCE: It is not a question of how many men would be employed. The Government are not carrying on these mining ventures merely to relieve the unemployed. They are also dealing with the question of developing our mineral resources and advancing the State. I have known many practical men who are entirely against working the deeper levels because of the health conditions. If hon. members had seen men of forty to fifty years of age, as I have seen them, suffering from miners' phthisis, they certainly would not support any suggestion that men should work at deep levels for prospecting reasons after they have reached an unpayable stage, as they have in many centres.

The hon. member for Bowen, in dealing with geologists and mining experts, said that the mining expert was a man who generally took the public down. The mining expert as I know him is considered to be almost as dangerous to the general public as lawyers. The question of geologists is hardly worthy of debate here. They are men with certain knowledge in regard to different formations of rocks, of the different ages of the strata, and so on, but they are certainly a useful adjunct to the mining industry. In the Cloncurry district, one year's output of cobalt was estimated at a value of £20,000. In 1917, when the Public Works Commission were taking evidence in connection with the Dobbyn-Mount Oxide railway line, evidence was given in connection with the existing mine. In giving evidence, Mr. Dunstan, the Chief Geologist, estimated that there were 300,000 tons of 10 per cent. ore in the Mount Oxide lode, and that they had prospected the lode to a length of 700 feet and a depth of 300 feet. This lode is still undeveloped, and, owing to the slump in the copper market, will probably be undeveloped for a considerable time, but the minerals are there and the State should do all it possibly can to make those minerals available for the benefit of Queensland and the benefit of the users of those minerals. As I stated before, that will probably be possible through the advanced policy of the Minister in developing the Bowen State coalmine. Mining and the control of mines should be absolutely a State function, for the reason that under

Mr. Bruce.]

State management we can have a better system of ventilation and better methods of working. There is no reason in the world why a mine should not be made much safer than it is at the present time for those who are employed therein. Quite recently we know that there have been three or four tremendous mining disasters.

We have had the Mount Mulligan disaster in Queensland, the Bellbird disaster in New South Wales, and more recently the disaster at Falkirk in Scotland. Hon. members cannot tell me that by proper supervision those disasters could not have been prevented. When the object is to make greater and greater profits, the welfare of the men is very often neglected. Mining for that reason alone should be entirely a State function. There is really no money lost on a proposition, because the metals must be recovered and used. If they are not produced in this State, they will be produced in some other country, where the price demanded will have to be paid.

The hon. member for Enoggera dealt with the mining statistics for the years 1914-1915 and 1921-1922. I interjected in the course of his speech—"Give us the figures for 1916." In 1914 under the old régime the value of the copper won in this State was £1,118,648. In 1916, when the Labour party had been in power for two years (Opposition laughter), the value of the copper produced was £2,265,422, or, approximately, 100 per cent. more. I do not claim as the hon. member for Enoggera did, that the production of metals was due to the Government of the day. I have just as much reason for doing as the hon. member did, but while I have the reason I have not the justification. The hon. member for Enoggera knows nothing of mining, so there was some justification for him making that mistake. I have not that justification.

I trust that in the future the vote for mining will be greater than it is this year, as I believe that the country, particularly the development of the Cloncurry field—from a prospecting point of view it has not yet been scratched—is only waiting to be developed. I hope that the Estimates will be sufficient for the Government either directly or by assisting private enterprise to develop mines to give employment to that large body of splendid men who follow the mining industry. It would be a good thing for the welfare of the soul of the hon. member for Murilla, and it would increase his intelligence, knowledge of the men and of what wages should be paid to them, if he would visit some mine and see the conditions under which the men work. If he went into the stopes, up the rises, or down the shafts and spent a few hours among men and saw how they have to work, he would never again suggest that their wages should be reduced.

Mr. KERR: He did not suggest that.

Mr. BRUCE: He did.

Mr. KELSO: He did not.

Mr. PETERSON: Did not the Premier ask the miners at Mount Morgan to accept a reduction of 5 per cent.?

Mr. BRUCE: I am not dealing with the statement of the Premier, but with the statement of the hon. member for Murilla. I doubt whether there is another man, either in the mining industry, Parliament, or politics, who would suggest that a solution of this difficulty was a reduction of the wages of the miner.

[Mr. Bruce.

Mr. PETERSON: They are being paid too little altogether.

Mr. BRUCE: I am not antagonistic to or charging the hon. member for Murilla unfairly, but I want to improve his knowledge. Any man who has been among the miners knows that the £5 per week, approximately, that they earn out in the West is not nearly sufficient recompense for the conditions under which they work. Besides the hardship of the work, the dangers must also be taken into consideration. Many workers have the blue sky above them, but the miners only have the roof of the mine above them. The risks in the mining industry are tremendous, and if a man works in a mine up to forty-five or fifty years of age, he is certain to fall a victim to miners' phthisis. I hope that we shall not hear any more suggestions of this nature. Many of the hon. members of the Opposition are business men, and if they like to go into the cost of production in metalliferous mining and consult any mine managers, they will find that the question of costs will have to be approached from a purely business standpoint, and not from the viewpoint of reducing the wages of the miners.

The State is developing several coalfields. I have no experience of State coalfields excepting Bowen. There are unlimited supplies of excellent coal at Bowen, and without stressing the matter too far, I wish to state that it will be a payable and profitable proposition for the Government in many ways. Some of the propositions undertaken by the Government may be unpayable, but, as in the case of all enterprises, the Mines Department must be taken as a whole. If the hon. members of the Opposition are fair in their criticisms, they will encourage the efforts of the Mines Department.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): The hon. member for Kennedy stated that under State management a better system of ventilation, better conditions, and everything else pertaining to the welfare of those men who work in the bowels of the earth, would be given than if they worked under private enterprise. The hon. member has made a serious charge against the mining inspectors. We all realise the great amount of risk attached to the men working in the bowels of the earth, just as we recognise the risk of industrialists in working on a four or eight story building. The hon. member brought a charge against the mining inspectors, which meant that they would not be doing their duty if they allowed such conditions to obtain. I deny that those conditions do obtain. I have greater faith in the Mines Department than the hon. member. The Industrial Arbitration Court lays down the conditions under which the miners shall work as well as what rates they shall be paid. I yield to nobody in my admiration of those men who carry their lives in their hands every day while working in the various mines endeavouring to win minerals and coal from the bowels of the earth. At the same time, the hon. member made an unfair statement. He wished to make it appear that private enterprise would not be prepared to give the same working conditions as the State, and in support of his argument instanced the disasters that occurred at Mount Mulligan and Bellbird collieries. Let us analyse certain statements that were made after the hearing of the Commissions of Inquiry that were appointed in connection with both disasters. I have a very vivid recollection that some individuals gave evidence in

connection with the unfortunate episode at Mount Mulligan that explosives were carelessly left lying about. Let us also analyse some of the statements made in connection with the Bellbird disaster, which we all deplore. Hon. members know that in a good many instances familiarity breeds contempt.

The men are so familiar with the handling of dangerous explosives that for the moment they forget all about them. In the Bellbird inquiry it was proved conclusively that wax matches were lying about, which may or may not have been one of the reasons for the disaster. I hope that hon. members opposite will rise to a higher plane and take a different view-point to that which they are at present adopting when they indicate that hon. members on this side of the House are merely supporting speculators, and sacrificing humanity for the matter of a few pounds shillings and pence. We on this side are just as keen to secure good conditions and fair wages as are hon. members opposite. I have heard this afternoon hon. members opposite talking about the pessimistic view taken by the Opposition in connection with the working of the Department of Mines. If that refers to the working of certain mines, it seems to me that I am guilty of pessimism, and, if we did not point out to the Government where certain moneys were being wasted, I consider that we should be failing in our duty.

Regarding the amount of money spent in connection with the Chillagoe Company, the Auditor-General's report for 1922-23 shows that the loss, including the accumulated interest, was £178,655 14s. 2d. to the date of the report. I have a very vivid recollection of the Government's promise that the Chillagoe mines were going to be taken over and run on business lines. I say unhesitatingly that this does not disclose that they have been run on business lines.

**THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:** Any number of other big business concerns are being run at a loss since the slump.

**MR. MAXWELL:** Two wrongs do not make a right, and the Government have no right to perpetuate what they are doing in regard to their State enterprises. It does not only concern one industry. Take as an illustration the Warra coalmining concern. Imagine that mine costing this State \$47,000!

**THE SECRETARY FOR MINES:** That is not right; it is less than that. Since then some of the machinery has been realised upon.

**MR. MAXWELL:** It is satisfactory to know that. At the same time I have to go by the Auditor-General's report, and he says that the only receipts for machinery sold were £9.

**THE SECRETARY FOR MINES:** You urged the purchase of that mine. That amount was for this year. A lot of the plant was used for equipping other mines.

**MR. MAXWELL:** Regarding the purchase of the Mungana mines, I find that in "Hansard" for 1922, at page 15, I asked the Secretary for Mines—

"Will he inform the House from whom and when the Mungana mines were purchased, and what amount of money was paid for them by the Government?"

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

"From Fredrick Reid for and on

behalf of himself and Mungana Mines, Limited. On 18th January, 1921, the general manager, Chillagoe State Smelters, by agreement with the owner of Mungana Mines, undertook to work the mines on tribute on a royalty basis with the right of purchase. On the 25th March, 1922, the option was exercised on the following terms and conditions:—£10,000 cash, less royalty and less the amount advanced by Mines Department for developmental work, and the balance, £30,000, to be paid by way of royalty as the ore is produced at the rate of 4 per cent. on the gross value of metal contents of ore up to £5 per ton, and 5 per cent. (per centum) on ore values which exceeded £5 per ton."

**THE SECRETARY FOR MINES:** That is right.

**MR. MAXWELL:** I am not contradicting it. In my humble opinion money has been wasted in that connection.

**THE SECRETARY FOR MINES:** In what way?

**MR. MAXWELL:** Regarding the two mines that were associated with Mungana—"Girofla" and "Lady Jane." We know very well that in the old days of the Chillagoe Company these mines were the main sources of supply to the company's smelters. We know what happened so far as the Chillagoe Company was concerned. Unfortunately—and none of us boasts about the failure of any company, because we realise what is going to eventuate by the failure—the Chillagoe Company collapsed and the Government took over the enterprise. As I said before, they stated that the proposition was going to be run on such sound business lines that it would be payable. According to the Auditor-General's report, notwithstanding the optimism of the Minister, if any business man conducted his business on the same system of drift, then I say God help him. Undoubtedly he would end, as I said earlier in the day, up George street. This failure occurred in not only one instance but in practically every instance in which the Government has dabbled in investments such as this.

**THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:** It is a very well-managed concern. The metal market killed it.

**THE SECRETARY FOR MINES:** Mungana was a well-managed mine. (Opposition laughter.)

**MR. TAYLOR:** Then you should issue a prospectus and sell it. (Laughter.)

**MR. MAXWELL:** I am sorry for the Secretary for Mines, for he is so very optimistic. I am only replying to certain statements made by hon. members on the other side that the Opposition are pessimistic and that the Government, when they took over the Chillagoe proposition, stated that it would be conducted on business lines. At the time the Chillagoe Company collapsed the old Mungana Company, including the "Girofla" and the "Lady Jane" mines, forfeited their leases. This is where money was wasted. The Government allowed someone else to take up the leases, and they subsequently repurchased them when they found that it was absolutely essential to keep the smelters going to secure the ore from the "Girofla" and "Lady Jane" mines. I should certainly like the Minister to give some information in regard to that matter. That is an instance of where practically £40,000 was lost to the State. When the Government had that

*Mr. Maxwell.]*



property in their hands why did they let it go?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Which property?

Mr. MAXWELL: The "Giroffa" and "Lady Jane" mines.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We never had them.

Mr. MAXWELL: I am astonished to hear the hon. gentleman say that, because in accordance with the reply he gave to me he indicated that the Mungana people forfeited their leases and the Reid Syndicate took them over. It would be satisfactory to compare the statement that the Minister is making to-day with the reply that he gave to me when I asked that question some time ago. Of course I am not pessimistic as to the possibilities of Queensland mining.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said that those mines were part of the Chillagoe Company's assets when they sold out.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Minister informed me in reply to my question that they were purchased from Fredrick Reid "for and on behalf of himself and Mungana Mines, Limited." I have already quoted "Hansard" to that effect.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Read my reply.

Mr. MAXWELL: I have already done so. I have no desire to mislead.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You are misleading. I will explain the matter.

Mr. MAXWELL: I shall be very glad to have the explanation. We find the Warra coalmine has been a tremendous loss. The hon. member for Bowen said that so long as men are employed and the railways are run and the Government are interfering with private enterprise a certain amount of good is done. I certainly hope that the hon. gentleman will give the information, and I trust that when the next Auditor-General's report is tabled it will be found that the position of Chillagoe and of some of the other mines will be better than it is to-day.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): It was not my intention to say anything on this vote, but we cannot be expected to remain in our seats and swallow the insinuations of the hon. member for Toowong in connection with the coalminers who were working in the Mount Mulligan Mine and the Bellbird Colliery.

I shall leave the Secretary for [3.30 p.m.] Mines to answer the hon. member's insinuations in regard to "graft"—because that is what they mean—on the part of the Government in connection with the purchase of the Chillagoe and Mungana mines, as I want to deal with the hon. member's statement in connection with the inquiry into the Mount Mulligan disaster. As everyone who followed that matter knows, there was an explosion in the Mount Mulligan Mine, when some seventy-five of our comrades were hurled into eternity, and the tunnel was completely closed and the whole mine wrecked. Yet the hon. member says that it was found that explosives were lying about. Of course, everything was strewn about the mine through the explosion. You could not expect anything else after such an explosion; yet the hon. member for Toowong wants to blame those men who lost their lives for leaving explosives lying about. (Opposition dissent.) The hon. member for Toowong and the hon. member for Enoggera get up and make any statements they like,

[*Mr. Maxwell.*]

and then they think we are going to sit here and swallow them without replying. It was not because there were explosives lying about that the accident took place at Mount Mulligan. The findings of the Royal Commission give us some information as to the cause of the explosion, and it certainly was not because explosives were lying about.

Similar insinuations were made by the hon. member for Toowong in connection with the Bellbird disaster. He said that after the explosion it was found that wax matches were lying about the colliery. What a ridiculous statement to make! What a ridiculous statement from a member of Parliament, who is supposed to understand these things! He says wax matches were found lying about the colliery, and we know that these men were working in the colliery with naked lights and there was no sign of any gas in the mine. Yet he blames wax matches for the explosion. Are we to sit quietly here and listen to these insinuations against the men who lost their lives in these terrible disasters? I say it was not because of wax matches lying about the Bellbird Colliery that this disaster took place at all. The remarks of the hon. member show what is behind the minds of these men when they get up to speak. They must say something to try and injure the workers engaged in these industries. They cannot get up without attacking the workers. No doubt later on they will say that these men deserve all they get when they go down to the bowels of the earth to work for the purpose of keeping hon. members opposite and their friends in comfort during the cold winter months. I am here to defend the workers, and to defend the memory of those men who have been hurled to death, against the insinuations of the hon. member.

I have had a fair amount of experience in connection with the inspectors attached to the Department of Mines, and I say that those inspectors do their work to the best of their ability and as well as possible in order to see that things are made safe for those engaged in the industry. It is not possible for an inspector to be on the job all the time; but during their inspections they do the best they can to point out where there is any possibility of danger. The managers of the mines also are concerned for the safety of the workers, and there is to be found no better example of rescue work than we had lately in the Maitland district in connection with the Bellbird disaster. We saw there that the manager of the mine laid down his life trying to save the men who were entombed through that disaster. One of the miners in his evidence said that no greater act of heroism had ever taken place. These men, at the risk of their lives, went into the mine for the purpose of saving the men who were entombed. The same thing occurred in Scotland in connection with the Falkirk disaster which took place quite recently. In connection with that disaster acts of heroism were the order of the day, and it hurts me to hear insinuations made against these men such as we have heard coming from hon. members opposite this afternoon.

The hon. member for Toowong made an attack on the hon. member for Bowen in connection with the Warra Coal Mine. Of course, we know there has been a loss in connection with Warra, and the hon. member for Toowong said the hon. member for Bowen does not care so long as the men are

employed and so long as the railway is kept running. The hon. member for Bowen and every hon. member on this side of the House does care about the expenditure of this State, and we are here to see that as far as possible the money is wisely spent, and to see that as far as possible losses are not made in connection with our enterprises. There is no branch railway line to Warra. Warra is right alongside the main railway line, and the only things that were built there were expensive bins for the purpose of holding the coal that they did not get. These bins were constructed by the Railway Department for loading purposes. There is no doubt that Warra has been a white elephant, but it has been a white elephant because the coal was not found in payable quantities where the shafts were put down. The coal is there, and Warra could be made to pay if a shaft were sunk further away from the railway line, where the coal is. The £47,000 expended in connection with Warra was spent for the purpose of buying machinery and sinking three shafts. Some of that money has been recovered, because the machinery has been put to another use, and it is not a total loss. The time will come when we shall get sufficient coal at Warra to make it a payable proposition.

As far as the general vote is concerned, I have not much more to say. I was not going to speak on this vote at all, but I had to get on my feet after I heard the statements of the hon. member for Toowong. We are here to protect the miners.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): So many points have been thrashed out that there is very little to add to the debate at this stage. In reference to the allegations made by most hon. members of the Opposition regarding the men concerned in mining enterprises under the control of the Secretary for Mines that are not paying, an animus is shown on the part of those hon. members in some of the cases mentioned, which cases I think are entitled to a little more analysis on the part of hon. members who condemned them. It has been pointed out by other hon. members that it does not follow that because any particular enterprise under the control of the Government is showing a loss on its actual operations it is not showing a profit to the State in some other direction. I take it that that is what is happening with many of the State enterprises in Queensland, and also in connection with the Chillagoe smelting enterprise. I think that those are the only concerns of any consequence which have been mentioned here this afternoon. I would like to say a word in connection with the prospecting vote, which I notice has been reduced by £3,500 this year. I think there is cause for regret on the part of many members for mining constituencies. We have had brought to our minds quite recently, owing to the recent finds in the Chillagoe, Cloncurry, and Herberton districts, what is possible by judicious prospecting in Queensland. Those are finds without any prospecting grant having been given to the prospectors. I think that with a judicious system on the part of the Minister and a little more expenditure in prospecting we should be able to develop new fields. Take as an illustration the gemfields in the Anakie district in my electorate. We have two prospecting parties out there at the present time, each individual receiving £1 10s. a week,

which is much too small an amount to induce any bonâ fide miner to go right out into the wilderness around the sapphire-bearing area and put in genuine work. The result is that a good deal of the money is wasted, although the miners' committees on the field are supervising the operations and giving the department as square a deal as possible. I think it is wise for the Minister to accept recommendations from a bonâ fide source as to the qualifications and insight of miners who are willing to prospect, and to send them out and give them a fair remuneration, and also give them the advantage of the assistance of one of the geologists of the department. In that particular district mining is on the down grade. The last monthly returns show a big falling off in the production of sapphires there, owing to the fact that the two well-known deposits on the field have been worked over and over again, with the result that there are very few mixed leads to be found on it. But on the other hand we have many known deposits many miles away from the main camp—Ruby Field and Sapphire Town—and on the other side of the Western railway line about 25 miles from those camps we have what is known as the Withersfield—all known sapphire-bearing country.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Our prospectors are doing well there now.

Mr. FOLEY: I am pleased to hear that. Owing to the fact that the main leads are being worked out the Minister should endeavour to establish a much wider scheme than we have in operation at the present time. Personally I have very little to growl about as to the way in which the Minister has received representations from myself on behalf of men wishing to prospect in the Leichhardt electorate. A little while ago we had a grant of £300 given to a body of six miners who are willing to sink a shaft 200 feet on the old Black Ridge Reef in the hope of picking up a lead in the deeper ground. If these miners are successful in locating gold, it will mean that quite a number of miners will be induced to prospect on that lead as the result of what has been done.

I would like to say a word or two in reference to the action of the Minister in granting exemptions to mining companies. The hon. member for Burke touched upon this matter a little while ago, and pointed out that many mining companies are sitting down and shepherding their claims, many of them not fulfilling working conditions, and others have obtained exemptions from the Secretary for Mines. I have had experience in one part of my electorate—that is on the Blair Athol coalfields. I must admit that the coal trade at that place is in a very depressed state, but the fact remains that the mining companies are holding areas over and above the quantity of coal-bearing land that would suffice to carry on operations to meet any demand that may be worked up for the next ten or fifteen years. Although the Minister has done much to liven the companies up, I think he would be wise if he carefully considered the question of not granting further exemptions to these companies when they apply for them. The position, as I pointed out in an interjection when the hon. member for Normanby was speaking, is that there are too many mines operating on that particular deposit of coal. If the operations were concentrated on one mine, every miner on the field to-day would

*Mr. Foley.]*

be getting a fair number of days' work per week with the coal orders available at that place. Owing to the action of the Minister, I am pleased to say that a large area of land has been surrendered by the Blair Athol Company and a reorganisation applied for in lieu of the country which they have surrendered. I would like at this stage to bring under the notice of the Minister what I consider would be a wise thing for him to do—that is, at the first available opportunity that one of the Government bores are available, to make arrangements to test all the country which is being surrendered on that deposit, with the object of the area being taken up by the Government to supplement the coal trade which may be worked up from Styx River and Baralaba at a future date. It is recognised by coal experts that Styx River, Baralaba, and Blair Athol coal can be blended in such a way that you can supply a coal suitable for the requirements of any coal users in any part of the world. I think the time will come when we shall prove that it is possible in Blair Athol by stripping the over-burden to mine coal cheaper than any coal in Australia, and that eventually we shall build up a big export trade. I think it would be wise for the Minister to take up and thoroughly prospect an area on that particular coal deposit.

I would like to say in conclusion a few words about the sapphire pool established by the Government some time ago. A good deal of anxiety was shown by the hon. member for Murilla as to whether the Government were justified in assisting the sapphire industry to the extent of £20,000 or £30,000. The State has purchased £20,000 worth of sapphires from the miners up to date, and we have not sold any of them. From the knowledge which we have of the sapphire industry, we have no fear but that we shall be able to sell them. To give the Committee an illustration of what an asset we have for our indebtedness to the Treasury, let me point out that an ounce of sapphires in the rough represents 150 carats. The average ounce of stone has cost the Government for advances to the miners about £6. It is a very poor quality stone indeed if the Government cannot pick out from every ounce of stone 12 carats of first-class gems, for which they should be able to realise—when reduced to about 4 carats when cut and polished—anything from £2 to £5 per carat. I think it must be clear that we have a good asset for the money we have spent, and I think the Minister has done the only thing he could do to make the pool a success—that is, to send Mr. Knowles home thoroughly to organise the market overseas. (Hear, hear!) He strikes me as being an efficient gentleman. He has had a good deal of experience for his firm on the markets overseas, and, although he will meet with the depression in Europe which has militated against the disposal of sapphires direct from here by the Government at a remunerative price, still I think that the small amount which we have in stock is comparable only to a drop in the ocean when distributed over the markets of America and Paris and London. I think that, as he gets time to organise things properly, he will eventually establish a connection which will give the miner, not the £6 per oz. which the Government advanced, but something in the vicinity of £12 or £15.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): The hon. member for Ipswich, during the course of his

[*Mr. Foley.*

speech, endeavoured to convey to the Committee that certain remarks I made were a reflection on the miners. I would like to call the attention of the House to the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Mount Mulligan disaster, to be found in the "Parliamentary Papers" for the session of 1922, vol. II., at page 78—

"In some places explosives and detonators were stored in the crevices of the packed walls. It has been suggested in the evidence that explosives were lifted and scattered by the force of the explosion, but this can only be applied to a few instances, and then to loose explosives lying on the floor. In very few cases were explosives contained in billycans. In one case only where explosives were contained in a wooden box were they scattered, this box having been overturned, probably by the force of the explosion."

Again, on page 751, there is this finding—

"Explosives were distributed, carried, used, and stored underground in a careless manner, without regard to the regulations."

The hon. member is the greatest misrepresenter in this House. Irrespective of the political opinions held by my friends opposite, he is one of the men on the other side of the House who would not give a man a decent "spin." He would be quite prepared on all occasions to misrepresent. He would lead hon. members and people outside the House to believe that he is the only man here who stands for the uplifting of humanity. There are other men just as anxious for the uplifting of humanity as he—men who are spending their time and money for that purpose, and who are not calling out about it, and who are not being paid for it. It ill becomes a man, more particularly the hon. member, to try to misrepresent the statements I made. I know that these men were brave men, but the hon. member tried to get circulated throughout the length and breadth of Queensland that the hon. member for Toowong wanted to infer that they were not the class of men he had said they were. Hon. members know the hon. member, and they know me, and the people know me, and they know him, and I am quite prepared to leave the issue with them.

With regard to the unfortunate Bollbird disaster, I quoted from statements which were made in the southern Press, that wax matches had been left about, and one would be led to believe from the statement of the hon. member that I suggested that those men had callously done that. I hurl that insinuation back at the hon. member. No such idea passed through my mind. When hon. members get up on the floor of the House and say that under the system of private enterprise men are to be murdered for the sake of pounds, shillings, and pence, I give the lie back to them. Private employers are just as generous as hon. members on the other side. Do not the records of the Arbitration Court prove that on various occasions the Government were the first to go to the Court for the purpose of altering the wages and conditions of their employees? But they still want to convey the impression, as an electioneering stunt, that we on this side do not stand for the uplifting of humanity. If that is any satisfaction to the hon. member, let him have it. I am quite prepared to

allow my actions to speak for themselves, and I leave the hon. member's actions to speak for themselves.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): My remarks to which the hon. member takes exception were certainly made on the basis of his own statements. The hon. member for Toowong raised the question of the disaster at Mount Mulligan and that at Bellbird, and, if he did not do so for the purpose I suggested, what was his reason? He used statements to show that they occurred from certain causes. When it is pointed out to him that the disasters could not occur from such causes, he accuses me of misrepresenting him. The hon. member said with a great flourish that the people of Queensland know me and they know him. They do know the hon. member, because we have read the report in a newspaper of a meeting of the Employers' Federation—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GLEDSON: At which a certain Brigadier-General Thompson made the statement that "If we only had 500 armed men, we could be able to deal it out to the workers. They could fire low and lay out a lot of them."

The people of Queensland do know the hon. member for Toowong. If any hon. member gets up and makes statements that in my opinion are an insinuation

[4 p.m.] against the class that I represent, I am going to defend that class

irrespective of what the hon. member for Toowong may think or say. As he says, I am known through Queensland from Mount Mulligan to the Southern portions amongst the miners, the mineowners, and a large section of the community, and I am prepared to allow my character to stand against that of the hon. member for Toowong anywhere he likes and at any time.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I would like to have some information in connection with the gem industry, which was dealt with by the hon. member for Leichhardt. It seems to me that there is over-optimism in connection with this industry. We find that the Government have advanced £5,716 on these gems, and up to date no account sales have been received, and the Government, not satisfied with that position, entered into a scheme in February of this year to purchase the whole of the gems from the field, and it must not be forgotten that gems are things for which there is no market. Under the scheme entered into by the Government in February last, they have already advanced something like £16,324, and on looking at the Estimates I find that they are still not satisfied and are willing to spend an additional £20,000 in connection with this sapphire field.

Mr. TAYLOR: They have plenty of money.

Mr. KERR: There has to be an end to this sort of thing. There is the valuer on the ground, who pays to the owners of the gems 95 per cent. of their value.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Not 95 per cent. of the value, but 95 per cent. of the standard fixed by the Mines Department.

Mr. KERR: I take it that the standard is equal to the value. Gems are like pearls; you cannot fix a price until they are sold.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is very difficult to tell the value of an uncut gem.

Mr. KERR: That is so. The standard is probably fixed on the basis of values previously received. The owners of the gems got 95 per cent., and the Government receive the other 5 per cent. I would like to know from the Minister what salary Mr. Knowles, who is being sent home, is to receive, and by whom it is to be paid. If it is going to be paid out of the remaining 5 per cent. it does not look as though he is going to get any more than £700. I do not think that Mr. Knowles would give his professional knowledge and take a visit to the old country to place these gems on the market at a salary like that. It seems to me that an explanation is necessary in regard to this expenditure. We are encouraging men year after year to stay in an industry which we have no market for, and year after year the Government pay large sums of money in this connection. That is a thing that is deserving of an attack by the Opposition. The Minister will use the usual old worn-out argument. "What would you do with the men? Would you cast them out and allow their families to starve?" I think that, as members of Parliament, it is time we forgot those excuses. These men should be provided with employment in other avenues. Hon. gentlemen opposite would suggest, with tears running down their cheeks, that the Opposition were out to allow this section of the community to starve. I am not advocating that. The Minister is absolutely wrong in using that line of argument. I do not mean anything like that at all.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman has exhausted his time.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): Mention has been made of the Warra coalmine. That subject seems to be worn out.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Hear, hear!

Mr. WARREN: The Minister says "Hear, hear!" He would like to make this a back number. I was down the original shaft of this mine before the Government took it over, and I am of the opinion that there is more coal there than there is in the Oakey mine. The coal is all right, yet through a mistake—no doubt it was a mistake, anybody is liable to make mistakes—the Government took the machinery away from there. There is no coal west of Oakey.

Mr. MOORE: Any amount of it.

Mr. WARREN: There is no coal being mined west of Oakey. That is what I am trying to explain. The haulage of coal west of Oakey is absolute deadweight on the Railway Department. The Warra coalmine could have been worked profitably. It seems to me that the discussion has centred around the waste of £47,000.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That was the amount that the Auditor-General pointed out was owing to the Treasurer at the time the mine closed down.

Mr. WARREN: There was a loss.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No.

Mr. WARREN: The machinery was worth about £7,000. There is a certain amount of structural work there that is worse than useless, because it is an eyesore and a disgrace to the department, and shows what a colossal blunder has occurred. The Minister in his reply should give us some information as to why the machinery was removed. Was it that there was not sufficient political force

*Mr. Warren.]*

behind the Western people to compel the fullest development of this mine? The engine-drivers who have used this coal on the railway say that it is of good quality. If it is not exactly of first-class quality for locomotive purposes, it is better than what is being used from Oakey. I do not wish to say anything against the Oakey coal, but it is up to the department to give some tangible reason why this machinery was pulled out. We know that there were many miners who were prepared to work this mine on tribute, and there was no reason in the world why the men could not have gone about the work. Some of these men are now farming in that district, and they are in a pitiful plight as a result of the drought. It would have been to the advantage of the country and the Western district particularly had the mine been developed. We now have the pitiful spectacle of the mine lying idle when there is a good prospect of working it profitably and benefiting the Western railway line.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I just wanted to reply to the hon. member for Enoggera, but the hon. member for Murrumba has practically made it unnecessary. The hon. member for Enoggera asked why the Government did not stop putting money into mining ventures and put it into something else, such as placing men on the land, from which they would get some remunerative return. The hon. member for Murrumba asked why the machinery had been taken away from the Warra coalmine when the farmers in a time of drought could have worked and won the coal. That is the answer to the criticism of the Government in speculating State funds in mining enterprises. Mining is a pioneering enterprise. If a good mining field is opened up, agricultural settlement will follow. Mining has been the pioneer of settlement to the same extent as the cattle station. Queensland was first pioneered by persons prospecting for suitable grazing lands, and when they were settled, population and industry grew around them. The same can be said of mining. The miner went out, located a payable proposition, and settlement followed. I say with the hon. member for Murrumba that the closing down of the Warra coalmine was a mistake, in spite of the fact that the State lost £47,000 on the venture. That loss was due to bad management, or immature management, and the lack of proper prospecting. Many of the hon. members opposite waxed eulogistic when the Government took over the Warra coalmine. The only trouble was that they did not continue to be eulogistic. They got piqued because they were afraid of a little bit of "Courier" flogging because a loss had been sustained. If the same action was taken in many instances a lot of the mines operating to-day would not have been worked. The trouble with the Warra coalmine was that the shaft was sunk in the wrong place. This was due to hasty management and the lack of proper precautions in not prospecting by boring. The mine was only developed to the 200-ft. level, where a small seam of coal, hard to work, was obtained. It was known that a seam of coal existed at a depth of 300 feet, while further down at 500 feet there was another seam. If the Government had been prepared to carry that loss, shift their shafts, and mine those seams at a greater depth, the loss would have soon been repaid in the saving of the cost of coal for use on the Western Railway. It would be a big saving in the haulage of coal for that railway if coal

was obtained on the Western line. That affords some justification for speculation in mining. If Chillagoe had been allowed to remain idle, not only would 1,000 people have been thrown out of employment, but Mungana would not have been opened up and the new find, "Nightflower," would not have been developed because of the absence of treatment works. The State can carry the losses of mining speculations if there is a reasonable prospect of greater development following, which will wipe out that loss. When the metal markets recover the State will be recouped for all the money that has been spent in Chillagoe and the other mining ventures.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I have been surprised at the debate on the Warra coalmine. I do not blame the Government for getting out of that venture, but I do blame them for not taking advantage of the offer of the men to work it. The Government, for fear of having their bad management exposed, refused to let the miners take over and work the mine. These men were prepared to develop the mine and go on with it. In fact, they came to Brisbane and asked the Government to allow them to work the mine, but they were turned down. The Government had made a failure of the mine, and they did not want to be shown that fact by the miners.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why did not private enterprise subscribe capital to work it?

Mr. MOORE: Those men wanted to run it at their own expense, yet the Government turned them down. The miners knew what they were taking on, and the Government should have given them the chance of working it, instead of taking down the plant and selling it to people from whom they had no chance of getting the money.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It has been sold.

Mr. MOORE: I would not give the Government 4d. for their chance of recovering the £10,000.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have the plant.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, after taking it back from the man whom you sold it to. It was a pretty hopeless sale. It was sold to a political supporter.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Some of it has been sold to a butter factory.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, and some of it was taken away from the miners, as the Government were afraid of them using it and showing up their own mismanagement.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Which department turned down the miners?

Mr. MOORE: The Mines Department. The Mines Department had control of the mine. They were working it and closed it up.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was not closed by the Mines Department.

Mr. MOORE: Was it closed by the Treasury?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No.

Mr. MOORE: It does not matter what department closed it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! It makes a great deal of difference, because the hon. member cannot discuss it. I would like to

[Mr. Warren.

point out to the hon. member that he is discussing the administration of the Mines Department.

Mr. MOORE: I am talking about the Warra coalmine. It can hardly be said that is connected with the Treasury Department, although, unfortunately, the loss falls on the Consolidated Revenue. I take objection to the whole of the ventures of the Mines Department, because when one reads the report of the Auditor-General on the subject, it reads like a fairy tale. A man in speculating his own money has reason to be optimistic, but I have a strong objection to being optimistic with the public funds.

Mr. HARTLEY: How much would you be prepared to spend to develop a coalmine on the Western Railway?

Mr. MOORE: There is coal on the Western line. One mine is being developed at Roma at the present time, and another at Chinchilla.

Mr. HARTLEY: But not sufficient coal is being won to supply the Western line.

Mr. MOORE: Yes. The Government should go somewhere else where someone has started a coalmine if they wish to start mining themselves. There is any amount of coal west of Oakey.

Mr. HARTLEY: No.

Mr. MOORE: There are five mines working on the railway at the present time west of Oakey. I know a mine within a short distance of my own home that is being worked.

Mr. HARTLEY: Is it on the main railway line?

Mr. MOORE: It is on a branch line. It is only 8 miles from Oakey. I am rather sorry I have told the hon. member for Fitzroy, because he might go up there and do a bit of organising.

Mr. HARTLEY: There is any amount of room in the Central district for that.

Mr. MOORE: Another matter I should like to mention is that of the State coalmine. I have some real good workers in my district—I do not say that because they vote for me, for they are first-class workers.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You are after their votes now.

Mr. MOORE: One of those men came to me, and said, "It is no good to me; I could kick out 3 tons a day if I had my boots on, but I am limited to 2 tons, so I have left the job." He said it was the easiest place he had been on, and he blamed the Government. He said the management was rotten, the organisation was rotten, and the Government were rotten. Of course, it is never anything else; when a failure occurs, it is always the boss who is rotten.

We see from the Auditor-General's report that wherever we have a mine where it is easy to get the material out the cost of mining is excessive. We have a Secretary for Mines who was born optimistic. I think he is a speculator by nature. I do not mind him speculating on his own behalf, but I do object to him speculating with the funds of the State, especially when we are showing losses year after year.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You cannot put it that way—that I am speculating with the Government funds.

Mr. MOORE: I do not suppose that any man who puts money into a mine thinks that he is speculating; he thinks that he is developing the country.

Mr. HARTLEY: No; he knows he is speculating.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member for Fitzroy says that he knows he is speculating, consequently he infers that the Secretary for Mines is speculating with the State's money. I cannot see how we are going to get out of our present position. We know that there are vast stocks of copper throughout the world, and by continuing an enterprise in connection with copper-mining we are merely adding to our liability year after year. It is all very well to show us reports of material valued at so much. The Auditor-General makes some very caustic comments on the working of these various enterprises. I think we have any amount of developmental work that could be carried on that would be a benefit to the country, but to keep up these industries and incur a huge loss is not justifiable. It is becoming farcical. The continual losses make it ridiculous to keep on. If the Secretary for Mines could see the end, and say that in twelve months the price of copper or of gems is going to be considerably higher, it would not be so bad.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why don't you cut the throats of a lot of your cows?

Mr. MOORE: A lot of them are dying without having their throats cut.

Mr. HARTLEY: The hon. member wants the Government to help him to keep them alive.

Mr. MOORE: No; that is where the hon. member for Fitzroy is wrong. My opinion is that if half the cattle died there would be a higher price for the rest. That has occurred in the past after a drought.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why not kill them?

Mr. MOORE: There is no occasion to do so.

Mr. HARTLEY: The hon. member does not like parting with them.

Mr. MOORE: I think the hon. member knows that people have been killing their calves.

Mr. HARTLEY: I know that, because they have more than enough cattle on hand.

Mr. MOORE: Not at all—because they have no fodder for them. Anyhow, we do not want to talk about killing cattle and calves—that has nothing to do with the Department of Mines, and I am sure the Chairman would be justified in pulling me up if I continued on the subject. I think the hon. member for Fitzroy is trying to distract attention from the misdemeanours of the Government in speculating and losing vast amounts of money, but I want to point out that the position is becoming intolerable. As I pointed out, if the Minister could show that there is likely to be a shortage of minerals, and that the price is going to improve, there would be some justification; but to go on year in year out as he is doing, trusting to Providence to let him come out on the right side at the end of the next year, is no way to manage a country. I consider that it is time that the Government endeavoured to put the peg in and stop this huge loss.

*Mr. Moore.]*

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): The hon. member for Fitzroy has made a joke. He said that the reason why the Government went in for these speculations was because the land was poor and the droughts so severe.

Mr. HARTLEY: I did not.

Mr. WARREN: He said that we are going in for these speculations to save the man on the land. When the Government started their speculations in this department Queensland was never in a better way for the producer. All products were booming, the price of cattle was high, the price of wheat was high—every mortal thing produced by the man on the land was flourishing until the Government started this wild-cat speculation. Even the seasons were better. Unfortunately, the Labour Government brought in bad seasons.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member is not going to discuss the seasons under the vote for the Department of Mines.

Mr. WARREN: I just wanted to correct the hon. member who gave that as a reason why the Mines Department went in for these wild-cat schemes.

Mr. HARTLEY: That statement was not made by me; it was advocated by you.

Mr. WARREN: I said that under the present conditions this is the time when I would advise the Government to operate the mines that would be profitable, and I was particularly anxious that the Warra mine should be worked on tribute. With the hon. member for Aubigny, I say that it was a wicked blunder on the part of the Department of Mines that the Warra mine was closed down and the men were thrown out of work. I mentioned incidentally that these very men, or some of them—not all of them, for some were actually miners who would do nothing else—went on the land. I want it to be quite clear that if the Department of Mines had allowed the Warra mine to be worked there would have been about 100 men working in the mine and making the centre a prosperous one. If the Secretary for Mines has any tangible reasons for closing the mine down, I think it is up to the Committee to know them.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): The lack of mining knowledge of hon. members opposite astounds me. I have had a little experience with private enterprise, and remember that on one occasion I was interested in a concern where we had to pay calls for over twenty years, and the mine was finally wound up. There are many mines working to day which worked for ten or fifteen years before they became profitable. Hon. gentlemen opposite do not seem to realise what I said earlier in the debate, that in a mineral belt like Chillagoe they only need to discover one fairly rich lode—and I am in hopes that it will be discovered at an early date—to make the concern a payable one. I have known mines not to pay for ten years, and then, in a few years, to pay over half a million pounds in dividends. If we continue in Chillagoe it will not always show us a loss. I should not be surprised to learn at any time that it is making a good profit.

At 4.30 p.m.

The CHAIRMAN: Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307, and of the [Mr. Warren.

Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 13th October, I shall now leave the chair and make my report to the House.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

The resumption of the Committee was made an Order of the Day for a later hour of the sitting.

#### CITY OF BRISBANE 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 desirability of introducing a Bill for the good government of the City of Brisbane.”

Question put and passed.

#### INCOME TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

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

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to further amend the Income Tax Act of 1902 in certain particulars.”

Question put and passed.

#### LAND TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

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

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to further amend the Land Tax Act of 1915 in certain particulars.”

Question put and passed.

#### SUPPLY.

##### RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ELEVENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

(*Mr. Dunstan, Gympie, one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, in the chair.*)

##### DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

###### CHIEF OFFICE.

Question stated—

“That £15,399 be granted for ‘Department of Mines—Chief Office.’”

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I must thank hon. members opposite, and hon. members on this side also, for their criticisms on this particular vote. I think it is a good thing to have criticism at times—I am not afraid of it so far as the administration of the Mines Department is concerned—and on the whole the criticism has been rather favourable to the department. The hon. member for Enoggera made some reference to the marketing of gems. Prior to the Government interfering—if I may use that term in

regard to this matter—the gem miners were marketing their gems under the open market competitive system—that is, foreign buyers and others went to the field and bid for the product. That was not at all satisfactory, and I am satisfied that the miners on the field were not getting anywhere near the value of their production. As a matter of fact, we have marketed some of the best Queensland sapphires—and by the way the Queensland sapphire field is the best sapphire field in the whole world—and some of the best Queensland sapphires were being sold overseas as Cashmere sapphires from India. The Government marketed in one year £36,000 worth of Queensland gems. Those were “first blues,” as the proclamation which was issued did not make a monopoly or permit the Government to acquire any other but the “first blues”—that is to say, stones of other colours than blue are not marketable overseas. The Government by proclamation acquired the whole of the production in Queensland, and there is only one field producing that sapphire—the Anakie field. We appointed agents overseas in the person of Rubin Brothers to market the whole production. We marketed £36,000 worth of gems, and the Government did not lose one penny. Neither does the Auditor-General in his report say that there has been a loss in the marketing of those gems. But I believe that that scheme was not perfect by any means—not that I could or would cast any reflection on Rubin Brothers. I was satisfied, however, that a better market could be found by arranging for the Government to find the money and have a man overseas to market the stones direct for the Government, and we have done that. Mr. Knowles, of Brisbane, who has proved himself a good Australian—he has a good knowledge not only of the marketing of gems, but a splendid knowledge with regard to the cutting of gems—has been appointed by the Government at a salary of £250 for six months and a small travelling allowance.

Mr. PETERSON: You are getting him very cheap.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He gets a commission of 5 per cent. on the first £10,000 worth of gems that he sells. He is appointed for a probationary period, and, if successful, he will receive a permanent appointment. We are not paying Mr. Knowles any more by way of commission and salary—in fact we are paying him less than we paid Rubin Brothers. Rubin Brothers found the money in the first place to purchase the sapphires on the field, and we issued a proclamation and paid for the whole of the gems, and marketed them through Rubin Brothers. The transactions have been above-board with the agents, but I am satisfied that we can get a better price for the miners and producers on that field by the system I have adopted. Hon. members will see by reference to page 80 of the Auditor-General's report that we have gems overseas ready to be marketed of £16,000 in value. The hon. member for Enoggera complained that we paid 95 per cent. of the value of the gems to the miners on the field. We pay 95 per cent. of the valuation placed on the gems by our grader on the field, but that is not the value of the gems—I can assure the hon. member that it is much more than that—and 5 per cent. is retained for administrative expenses. We have set up a standard, and the grader acts according to that standard. We would be very disappointed if we

did not get a much higher price for the gems than the grader places on them when he purchases on the field. I think that explains the matter satisfactorily.

Mr. TAYLOR: How many men are on the field at the present time?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member for Leichhardt informs me that there are about 400 men on the field now.

At 4.47 p.m.,

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

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The discussion has centred round the first vote—that for the Chief Office of the department. I take it that that practically ends the discussion on the Mines Estimates, because we have talked on every subject pertaining to the department, and I intend to reply briefly. Therefore I will cover the same wide scope as hon. members have covered in their criticisms.

A good deal of criticism centred round the statement in the Auditor-General's report, in which he complains of the delay in the Mines Department in connection with the finalising of certain accounts. The hon. member for Nanango a few days ago asked a question with regard to this matter, and the hon. member for Normanby also desires some information on the point. The delay has been caused by an alteration in the personnel of the staff controlling the State enterprises side of the Mines Department. Mr. Brophy's connection with the department has been severed, and there has been a change also in the accountancy branch, and that has caused delay. That delay was not caused with any idea of withholding information. I have here the statement of accounts regarding the State enterprises to which the Auditor-General makes reference, which I intend to make available to the Committee.

The first item dealt with is the State arsenic mine; which this year shows a loss in its transactions, as we always anticipated. When the mine was established we did not anticipate profits from the production of arsenic. The mine was established for the sole purpose of eradicating prickly-pear in Queensland. I think the Government deserve some credit—although it may sound boastful for me to say so, being the Minister who established the mine—for being the only Government which have attempted in a practical way to do something to rid Queensland of the prickly-pear which is now becoming such a danger. Anyone who knows anything about prickly-pear knows that it has got beyond the individual selector, and that it is not profitable to clear land at a cost of £10 an acre, which, when it is cleared, is only worth, say, £6 an acre. Therefore, prickly-pear is a legacy handed down to this Government, who are forced to deal with it as a matter of State concern. This mine has been working for some years and, whatever any person may say to the contrary, I maintain that there would be more prickly-pear in Queensland to-day had it not been for the arsenic it has produced.

Mr. COSTELLO: It has not done much to clear pear.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member for Normanby brought up a case which I intend to investigate, and I content myself with remarking now that it cost a good deal of money to put a ton of



arsenic into that paddock. Many hundreds of tons have been used in Queensland by shire councils which have prickly-pear infested areas, and by settlers with infested land. We are selling arsenic to-day to the selector for £16 per ton, rail free to his nearest railway station, and we were doing that during the time when the price was £90 and more a ton. As a matter of fact, I was offered, through the Agent-General, £100 per ton for 100 tons of 95 per cent. grey arsenic to be sent overseas, but we refused the offer, preferring to discharge our obligations to the settler, although it meant such a heavy loss. To-day the price of white arsenic is over £70 per ton, and yesterday I had an offer of £47 per ton, f.o.b. Brisbane. The statement of the past year's operations shows that about one-third of our production has been supplied to the farmer at the special rate I have mentioned and that our loss is £1,251 18s. 11d., on a total sales value of £15,618 15s. 6d., although we have on hand 185 tons for which I could get £47 a ton f.o.b. Brisbane, but which the Auditor-General in making up his account has valued at the cost of production. If we had sold that arsenic, there would have been no loss. I am not complaining about the Auditor-General's valuation—it was the proper thing to do—but that explanation shows that last year we actually did not make a loss.

Mr. TAYLOR: You are supplying it at £10 per ton for local use?

Mr. COSTELLO: You are not carrying on on that basis, pending the new legislation?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes. We are still supplying orders. We could import nitric acid and make arsenic pentoxide here, but that is a matter for discussion on the legislation the hon. member for Carnarvon has mentioned. I think that the proper thing to do would be to get an expert to find out whether arsenic pentoxide is the be-all and end-all of prickly-pear poisons.

Mr. PETERSON: Pure arsenic is better.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have already explained that there has been a change in the Accounts Branch, and, in fairness to the officers of the department, I want to say that no reflection whatever can be cast upon them.

Mr. TAYLOR: You must not forget that the Auditor-General says that the delay is inexcusable and shows neglect.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have told the hon. member that the accountant of the State Enterprises Department resigned and the gentleman who was controlling the mining enterprises happened to be changed at that time also. The hon. member seems to think that the accounts of mining enterprises and State enterprises generally can be dealt with in the same way as the ordinary accounts of a Government department. I am not disputing the accuracy of the Auditor-General's report. He has the right to make that comment, but I have the right also to give the reasons for the delay; and no reflection can be cast on the accountant and the present staff of the Mines Department.

The Baralaba coalmine produced last year 38,934 tons of coal, and used 1,068 tons for boiler purposes. The value of that production was £29,514 8s. 10d. and the cost of production £31,348 6s. 4d. It was paid for

at the rate of 14s. 9d. per ton, and, whilst our present figures show a loss of £1,833 17s. 6d., there is a discrepancy between the weights of the Railway Department and those of the Mines Department—which I claim are correct, the scales having been certified to by an inspector of weights and measures—of 2,274 tons. When we rectify that mistake, there will be no loss on Baralaba, although we are selling the coal at the very low price of 14s. 9d. I think hon. members will appreciate the fact that I am giving the actual figures and that there has been no attempt on the part of the Mines Department or any officer in it to hold up the accounts. The reference in the Auditor-General's ordinary report may create that impression, but my statement to-day will be verified by his report on the State enterprises when it appears.

The Styx River mine, No. 2, is a mine which the hon. member for Normanby knows very well. It produced last year 399 tons used for boiler purposes and 21,497 tons of coal sold on railway weights, the value of which was £25,880 6s. 7d. It cost £31,156 1s. 3d. to produce it; showing a loss of £5,275 14s. 8d. We have further to take into consideration the fact that the ruling selling price in that district is 26s. 7d. per ton, and we put the coal into trucks for the Railway Department at £1 per ton.

Mr. HARTLEY: Does that cost cover boring?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No, but it includes the cost of all the developmental work. The hon. member for Fitzroy has visited this mine on many occasions, and he knows the value of the coal and he knows that the selling price at the Rockhampton gas works and other places is 26s. 7d. per ton, whilst we have been distributing it to the Railway Department at £1 on trucks, and we are working in an area which is the most costly to operate in order to keep up the production of this valuable coal in the Central District while we are developing the mine and sinking a shaft on the big undisturbed area.

We have proved that field by a system of boring for at least 6 miles along the line. We have proved seams from 4 feet 6 inches to 10 feet within a depth of 700 feet from the surface. The present shaft is down nearly 500 feet, and the first [5 p.m.] seam we shall work will be about 4 feet 6 inches at a depth of 530 feet, and one will be sunk deeper to the 10-foot seam at 700 feet. Here we have a valuable proposition, and we shall produce valuable coal at much less than £1 per ton.

Mr. PETERSON: Did the analysis prove that it was better than Newcastle coal?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The report from the Australian navy shows that it is better than Newcastle coal, and we need not go to Westport or any other place to import coal while we have the Styx River coal. The Gas Company at Rockhampton threw out the Newcastle coal and took the Styx River coal. While the figures show a loss of £5,275, we have this in our favour, that, prior to the opening of the Mackay coalmine, the cost of coal at the Mackay railway depot and to the nine sugar-mills operating in that district and to the Marine Department was £3 3s. per ton.

Mr. PETERSON: Your department should get credit for that.

[Hon. A. J. Jones.]

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We produced it at £1 per ton, the railrage was 10s. 9d. per ton to Mackay, and we saved the sugar industry in the Mackay district and the Railway Department £1 12s. 3d. on every ton of fuel that was used. I venture to say that last year the three State coalmines saved the Railway Department nearly £100,000 in the difference between the price that it previously paid and the price we sold the coal at. That is not credited to the Mines Department. In a few months we shall be developing our big mine at the Styx River, and I hope the loading facilities will be ready.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Is it proper business to supply to a Government department coal which costs more than the price charged?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It means a saving to the Railway Department. I am not so much concerned about the price that is charged to the Railway Department, because, when we are working the undisturbed area, we shall reduce the cost of production considerably, and we shall be able to sell the coal at about 8 per cent. above the cost of production.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Your argument is that the Railway Department's returns would have been £100,000 worse off if they had not obtained this cheap coal.

Mr. HARTLEY: No, than they would have been if private enterprise had been supplying the coal.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We not only effected a saving for the Railway Department, but we effected a saving for private enterprise in the sugar-mills in the Mackay district.

Mr. PETERSON: But for that there would have been a greater deficit on the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes; but I am more concerned about the discrepancy in the weight. There was a discrepancy of 2,274 tons on 38,000 tons in one year, which compelled me to show a loss. I claim that I am entitled to 14s. 9d. per ton for that coal.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is accounted for by the slack coal lost in the bad trucks.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have to pay for its production just the same.

I now come to the Bowen State coalmine. Last year we produced 363 tons for boiler purposes and sold 51,367 tons from that mine. That was during the period from 1st July to 30th June. The railway to the coalfield was not completed until September, and the production to-day is at the rate of about 120,000 tons per year. We are producing between 400 and 500 tons per day at the State coalmine at Bowen, and we are supplying the whole of the Townsville and Bowen railway system with coal from that mine. The value of the production last year was £38,969 3s. 11d.

Mr. KELSO: Is the coal sold at less than the current price?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. It is sold at 16s. per ton, which will probably be the established price.

Mr. PETERSON: What was the Railway Commissioner paying for coal before?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He was paying 43s. per ton. At the Townsville

depôt we are saving the Railway Department roughly £1 per ton on every ton of coal used.

Mr. KELSO: Is there a loss on the Bowen State coalmine?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No; there was a profit of £5,369 3s. Taking the coalmines all round in their developmental stage, they pan out very nearly equal. Apart from that, there is the saving to the Railway Department, taking the figures at the Townsville depôt, of £51,000, assuming that we are saving £1 on every ton used. The amount of wages paid at the Bowen State coalmine last year was £24,932, at the Styx River coalmine £25,340, and at the Baralaba coalmine £25,624. That shows the employment that has been created at the three State mines by the expenditure of £75,896 in wages.

Mr. HARTLEY: And we are also supplying coal of a higher quality.

Mr. PETERSON: I agree with that; but it has not created any great amount of employment.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Is this coal of higher quality than the Blair Athol coal?

Mr. HARTLEY: Yes.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not want to say anything detrimental to the Blair Athol coal, but I want to say that 1 ton of Styx coal will do work that requires 30 cwt. of Blair Athol coal. The Blair Athol coal is a splendid steaming coal for railway purposes and splendid coal for export purposes, because it is not liable to spontaneous combustion, and, as the hon. member for Leichhardt said, if mixed with Styx River coal, which is of excellent quality, and with the Baralaba coal, which is a soft coal, it will form an excellent coal for export purposes. If a big export trade developed in the Central district overseas or with the East, it would be a good idea to mix these three coals for export purposes.

I have no desire to detain the Committee at very great length, but I was anxious to put these figures before hon. members. I think that the leader of the Opposition, and many other hon. members opposite, who were very generous in their criticism of the Mines Department, will appreciate the fact that I have given all the information with regard to the enterprises referred to in the Auditor-General's report, and the figures will compare favourably with those contained in the report on State enterprises when it is tabled. I have shown that I have no desire to hide anything in connection with these enterprises. The coalmines are a valuable asset to the State. Hon. members opposite may raise the question as to whether the Government should engage in coalmining.

There is no interference with private enterprise in that direction. The Bowen coalfield was known to the department forty years ago. It remained for a Labour Government to come into power to build a railway line and develop that field, which promises to be one of the best fields not only in North Queensland but in Australia. Queensland is very fortunate in having coalfields adjacent to the principal ports along the seaboard. These coalmines are necessary for the establishment of our great secondary industries when the time is opportune.

The hon. members for Burke and Kennedy made some reference to the Cloncurry field.

*Hon. A. J. Jones.]*

They said that the smelters at Cloncurry could be supplied with coal and coke from the Bowen coalmine. I am pleased to have this opportunity of stating that, although we have been suffering from a great depression in the copper industry due to the rapid slump in the price, the Government could reduce the costs of copper production at Cloncurry by £6 per ton by the manufacture of coke at Bowen. One hon. member stated that it cost £3 10s. a ton to take coke out to the Cloncurry field. He made a slip, because the cost is £5 10s. a ton.

Mr. PETERSON: Where from?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: From the South. As a matter of fact, the freight charged by shipping companies from Sydney is less than from Brisbane. It cost the Government more to take coke manufactured at Ipswich to the North because of the absurd shipping rates than to take it from Sydney.

Mr. PETERSON: Did not the Government charter a boat for the purpose?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes, the Government chartered the "Allinga." During the war period they were forced to convey coal and coke to the North so that the copper companies could continue operating and supply Britain and her allies with copper. The Government made a profit of £6,000 on the first year's charter. They did not charge the same freight as the shipping companies, but conveyed coal from Sydney to Townsville for 2s. 6d. a ton less and coke for 5s. a ton less. The second year showed a profit on the charter of £5,000. My point is this, that, if the Cloncurry smelters were in operation to-day, coke could be made on the Bowen coalfield, which would enable them to reduce the cost of copper production by £6 a ton. Assuming that it takes 3 tons of coke to smelt 1 ton of blister copper, there would be a saving of £2 10s. per ton on every ton of coke landed at Cloncurry. At Bowen the Government have a splendid seam of coal, known as the Garrick seam. It is 8 feet 6 inches in thickness and is a splendid coking coal. The standard of ash is 16 per cent., and, unlike the Ipswich and other coals, there is no necessity to go to the expense of a washing plant. I called a conference of the copper companies operating in the Cloncurry district. Two of the companies were willing to confer with me. They received the proposition of the Government, but one of the companies held out and would not meet the Government or entertain any such suggestion. I do not know what their reason was, and I have not found out. I have discussed this matter with the Premier, and he said he was prepared to recommend to the Government that the companies should be allowed to put up their own coke ovens and the Government would supply them with the coal necessary to make the coke, provided they gave an assurance to the Government that they would keep their smelters in operation. They did not even accept our suggestion.

Mr. HARTLEY: It shows their bitter intolerance of any suggestion that the Government may make.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The price of copper during the war was very high. The Government had to suffer from the depression in mining and the reduction in prices just as the private companies had to suffer.

[Hon. A. J. Jones.

One hon. member opposite said that the State should not go on producing copper when the price was low. The only copper mine that the Government were working was at Einasleigh, and that had to be closed down as it could not be operated profitably. The only copper produced to-day in Queensland is by the State smelter. There is a little bit of copper recovered that is associated with the silver-lead ore from the Mungana, Lady Jane, Constance, and other mines about Chillagoe. The Government are not engaged in the copper-mining industry at the present time. I regret very much that operations on the Cloncurry field are suspended for the present. It is one of the best, though undeveloped, copper fields in the world. Its surface has merely been scratched. Many of the gougers show copper with percentages as high as 40 per cent. and down to 25 per cent. I regret that a smelter is not working in that district, although there are three smelters there. An hon. member suggested that the Government should erect a smelter. The Government would be very foolish in these days with the price of copper so low to erect a reverberatory furnace or a smelting plant which is not up to date. There is a great possibility of the cost of producing copper being brought down by the introduction of a new process known as the leaching process. But even though the Government could save £6 a ton on the fuel costs, it would be foolish for them to erect a smelter while smelters are already erected in Cloncurry. There is no reason why, when the amalgamation of the companies is effected, costs of production should not be reduced in other ways than by the reduction in wages, which has been suggested. These costs might be reduced by a reduction in overhead charges and the elimination of waste. With copper at £80 a ton there should not be the inactivity that prevails. I am satisfied that the cost of production can be reduced by the use of Bowen fuel. It would be foolish for the Government to erect smelting works, unless they are built on the same up-to-date lines as the processes in use in other countries. I believe that the mineral wealth of Queensland is great, and that the day is not far distant when, whether it is done by the State, Commonwealth, or private enterprise, up-to-date metallurgical works will be established in North Queensland. The power for those works will be obtained by harnessing the Barron Falls, and probably Cairns will be the site for those works.

If there was anything that would be a pillar of support to the Northern mining industry, it would be the up-to-date treatment of ore. We know that we had to produce our ore at Cloncurry and Chillagoe and that during the war time we had to send it to Port Kembla to be electrolytically refined, when it was sent again to the North of Queensland before being sent overseas.

With regard to Chillagoe, some hon. member made reference to the Chillagoe operations. The first year's operations were during a period when the prices of metals were not so low as they have since been, and they produced a profit of £1,000. That was very good, considering the outlay. The plant is quite different to-day to what it was when we took over. While we have shown losses for three years, due to the depression in the mining industry and due to prices over which we have no control in Australia, I think we

did the right thing by keeping the works in operation and facing a loss rather than closing down.

The leader of the Opposition justified the subsidy of about £1,000 a week to the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company. He applauded the Government for keeping in operation the Mount Morgan works—a company that has paid dividends almost since its inception.

Mr. COLLINS: Over £8,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was at one time the richest mine in the world, and it was the third richest in the world up to the time when the Government came to its assistance. Yet it is said we were not justified in keeping the Chillagoe mines open and having a loss. Now, the loss at Chillagoe has been much less than the subsidy given by the Government to the Mount Morgan Company. I am not going to say anything about my own action. The Mount Morgan subsidy was given in the form of a railway concession, and it amounted to £1,000 or £1,100 a week to keep the men in employment. Were the same Government not justified in facing a similar position in Chillagoe and keeping 1,000 men on the pay list rather than shut down during the serious period of depression, which, after all, was the aftermath of the war?

Mr. HARTLEY: Quite justified.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Before we purchased Chillagoe there were many miles of rusty railway lines—

Mr. HARTLEY: A monument to private enterprise.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Dilapidated machinery, broken down machinery, two engines that were running only once a month, and valuable ore products lying dormant. A few lonely women were living at Chillagoe while their husbands were all over Australia trying to earn money to send for them and take them away from the accursed place.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You are getting quite poetic.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: To-day the place is a hive of industry and prosperity, and we have produced yearly more than £250,000 in wealth for the country—gold, silver, and copper. We have a State store in Chillagoe with prices as cheap as those obtaining in Queen street, Brisbane. We have a State butcher's shop controlled by the general manager for the Department of Mines—not by the State Enterprises Department—where we sell the cheapest meat in Queensland. The butcher shop and the store show a profit, and because there is a slight loss—I say it is a slight loss compared with the nature of the industry and the capital involved—we hear a complaint from hon. members opposite. We showed a loss of £178,000 in three years, and it must be remembered that over £90,000 of that amount is interest on the capital expenditure. If we closed down, that interest would incur, comparatively, a much greater loss. I say with the hon. member for Bowen, that anybody can manage a mine when the going is good and the prices right, but it takes courage to manage a mine during a period of depression.

Mr. VOWLES: And it takes money.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The State would have been worse off had it not

been for Chillagoe. We faced the situation, showed a loss, and we are now pulling up.

Mr. MORGAN: You would not have done that with your own money.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is making the North.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: When I am able to stand up and say that we have made a profit and that the loss is now wiped out, what will hon. members say? Will they give the Government credit for it? No—they will say that the undertaking should be controlled by private enterprise and the profit should belong to private enterprise. Private enterprise made a failure of the undertaking.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: What about the Bowen coalmine?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think the hon. member was out of the Chamber when I made reference to the profit on the coalmine at Bowen and also the great amount of money that we saved the Railway Department during the year by supplying it with coal from the State mines. I am satisfied with our mining enterprises. The arsenic mine has done good work, and the coalmines are payable enterprises from any point of view you like to take them. Chillagoe has paid indirectly.

Mr. TAYLOR: What about Yampi Sound? You did not tell us about it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I can quote from previous reports showing that the revenue of the Chillagoe railway line was about £200 a year. It is some thousands a year now. That is another aspect to consider.

The hon. member for Windsor interjected, "What about Yampi Sound?" That was purchased by this Government for £30,000; but I remember that the hon. member for Burnett was called to order for referring to Yampi Sound, and I am not desirous of being called to order. (Laughter.)

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Don't be afraid.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not expect differential treatment. (Laughter.)

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You are afraid.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. I challenge the hon. member to raise it on another vote. The hon. member for Toowong made some reference to the purchase of the Mungana mines by the Government. For two years since I have been in this Chamber the hon. member has asked that question, and I do not need to hear it quoted from "Hansard." The Mungana mines were purchased for £10,000 cash and £30,000 to be paid by way of royalty as the ore is taken out of the mine. They were purchased from the Mungana Mining Company, Limited, Mr. Fred Reid being the principal of the company and a prospector of those mines, which had been deserted by the previous company.

Mr. MAXWELL: When they were deserted, did they not go back to the Government?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. We had advanced the Mungana Mining Company, Limited, between £3,000 and £4,000, which was paid back to the Department of Mines from the £10,000. They did not receive the £40,000 in cash. The balance was to be paid on a royalty basis, and we are still paying it off. I consider that is one of the best deals that the Government have entered into. Mungana is now one of our largest producers of silver-lead ore. Included in that purchase was

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the Lady Jane mine, on which we have spent some thousands of pounds. We had to do a lot of renovating and spend a lot of money in opening the Mungana mines. Now we have thousands of tons of high-grade ore ready to take out, and hon. members should appreciate the fact that there will not need to be nearly the same expenditure in that direction this coming year. According to the last report of the general manager at Chillagoe, we have sufficient ore reserves in the Mungana, Girofla, and Lady Jane mines to enable us to keep going for two or three years, independent of the new find and other suppliers, and there would have been no new find at Chillagoe if we had not purchased the Chillagoe works.

Mr. TAYLOR: Between the time these people deserted the mine and you purchased it, had it not become the property of the Mines Department?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Department of Mines never owned Mungana till we purchased it, and it was not part of the assets of the company from which we purchased the Chillagoe works.

Mr. MAXWELL: Did they not forfeit the lease to the Crown?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was Crown land, and was taken up from the warden and held as a claim, and if we had stepped in and taken that lease from Mr. Reid and his party hon. members opposite could justly have accused us of repudiation.

Mr. MAXWELL: I am not doing that.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member inferred that the Government purchased the Mungana leases when they were originally part of the assets of the company from which we purchased the whole of the Chillagoe works, mines, and railways.

Mr. MAXWELL: Did not the people who formerly owned the "Girofla" and "Lady Jane" mines forfeit the leases, which then reverted to the Crown?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Not the original people. The original people from whom we purchased the Mungana leases held them from the time they took them up till we purchased them.

Mr. VOWLES: Were they forfeited?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Of course, they were forfeited by previous owners years before.

Mr. MAXWELL: They reverted to the Government then?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No; they became Crown lands. We had not purchased Chillagoe then. Mr. Fred Reid held the Mungana leases before we purchased Chillagoe.

Mr. MAXWELL: I take it that the Crown gave the leases to Reid.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If a lessee finds a valuable lode outside the areas we have reserved by proclamation, do you mean to say that, because it is Crown land, I must step in and acquire the lease?

Mr. MAXWELL: Then the Government bought the leases back again?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: My policy in regard to "Nightflower" and other discoveries at Chillagoe is to reward the discoverer of these valuable fields, in accordance with the Act. The hon. member wants to infer that the Government should

have taken the Mungana leases, knowing that they were valuable, and he wishes to infer that they were part of the original leases held by the company from whom we purchased the Chillagoe works. That is not correct. Anyhow, the natural inference is that if a man forfeits a lease it is forfeited because it is no good. Under the Act, a man is allowed to surrender a claim and take it up as a lease.

Mr. HARTLEY: How long did the Reid syndicate own these leases after the Mungana Company forfeited them?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Reid syndicate got hold of the Mungana leases before we purchased Chillagoe.

Mr. HARTLEY: That knocks the argument of hon. members opposite sky high.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I can tell the Opposition that there has been no maladministration in the Department of Mines since I became Minister.

The hon. member for Enoggera stated that the production of gold had declined to a very considerable extent. That is so, but neither the Minister nor the geologists or other officers of the department are responsible for that. It is a regrettable fact that the towns of Gympie and Charters Towers have gone back as gold producers, but there are other goldfields springing up.

Mr. KERR: In my electorate there is a big one.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If the hon. member looks at the records of the Department of Mines, he will see that every genuine prospector who has come along with a promising show has received assistance, and the assistance given by the Government has been of some benefit to the State. I will not say that there have not been a few cases where it has been abused. We have always had that, but I contend that it is a good thing to give this assistance. If men are willing to go out and search for the latent wealth, and probably bring much revenue to the State, we should encourage them to do so, and have a better class of men than those who want to hang round the city and not work. I say that without fear of offending anybody. This class of man should be encouraged, and we would not have discovered these two silver-lead fields to-day, which promise to be such valuable wealth-producers, had it not been for the assistance given by the Mines Department when the copper depression existed in the Cloncurry district. By granting assistance and by making advances to the miners against their ore until they could get it sold, the Government have kept a good many gougers in that district until at last they have discovered what promises to be one of the best silver-lead fields in Australia.

Mr. TAYLOR: Another optimistic statement.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I wish Mr. Saint-Smith was standing in my place and describing this great field in the Cloncurry district.

Mr. VOWLES: Are you a mining expert or a geologist?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am neither, and in spite of what hon. members may say regarding my optimism, I never made any statement about the Cloncurry silver-lead show or the Chillagoe show being equal to Broken Hill. I never passed any opinion about it. I know too much about the mining industry to pass an opinion.

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That opinion was expressed in a report from Mr. Goddard that I handed to the Press, and it was credited to me, and, unfortunately, I have to carry it.

Mr. KERR: Do you contradict it?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not contradict it. I know too much about the mining industry to pass any opinion about the mine, and any opinion I expressed to the Press was an opinion from the experts of the department—from the geologists or from Mr. Goddard, who knows all about it. He went out and visited the field; and in passing I want to say that his appointment as general manager of Chillagoe was the best appointment the Government ever made. The fact remains that we kept the gougers going in Cloncurry, and thus gave them an opportunity of discovering, as they have discovered, a very rich lode. I want to say, on behalf of the gougers of Cloncurry, that those miners are an honest body of men. I have had some sad cases brought under my notice. During the 1919 depression, I think we advanced between £2,000 and £3,000 to gougers. There was one case where a man had paid £16, and owed the Government £42, which had been advanced against his ore. This man died, and his widow thought she had to pay the debt. She sent £10 or £12 down, and applied for a longer period to pay the balance.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I hope you sent it back to her.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I was just going to say that I hoped no one would object to my having sent it back to her. We sent it back and wiped out the debt. I believe that the adoption of the system of paying £1 10s. a week to single men—which is not a wage but an encouragement to go out and prospect—and £2 a week to married men, is a good thing. I believe it would be a good thing to form prospecting parties under the charge of a geologist or a competent miner. There is much mineral wealth not only in North Queensland but in South Queensland. We have areas in the South which have not been scratched. Speaking broadly on the mining industry, in my opinion we have discovered sufficient mineral wealth to go on with for many years. The thing that is wrong with the mining industry to-day is not so much not having mineral wealth discovered as the method of treatment of ore. It is all a matter of treatment.

Mr. HARTLEY: And the control of companies.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes, and the control of companies also. We want to reduce the cost of production in the mining industry. I am in favour of reducing the cost of production in every way rather than reducing wages.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have forty men and over on the paysheet of the State arsenic mine. We pay 5s. 6d. a day more than our neighbours at Sundown, some distance away, and the miners deserve it. Anyone who has had any experience underground will never begrudge a miner the highest rate of wages paid in the State. He sticks a long time to his job in most cases. He often suffers from miners' phthisis, and is subject to the dangers which miners are exposed to in regard to explosions in coalmines and accidents in other ways. We should try to

obtain control of metal prices in Australia, and also to reduce the cost of production. That can be done by the elimination of waste and the reduction of overhead charges, and the chief things we require to do that is up-to-date plant. No one thinks of establishing any plant—especially in the copper industry—unless it is on very up-to-date lines. Another thing that is wrong is that the American copper ring controls the price of the product. Although we use a lot of copper in Australia—we electrically refine it and have got all the skill necessary to extract the most minute specks of copper from the most refractory and complex ores—we have no control over the price. We have all the skill in Australia, but there we stop. We do not attempt to manufacture our product in our own country, and are subject to the oversea price.

Mr. PETERSON: We have not got enough protection.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is a matter for the Federal Government. The hon. member's interjection reminds me that the Federal Government during the war, when we had an opportunity to get big prices for copper, kept the industry back. Under Mr. Hughes's Government we were forced to accept the lowest price paid in any part of the British Dominions, although the price of copper was fairly high. For molybdenite, of which we produced more than half the world's production during the war period, and which was used for the hardening of steel and the making of high-speed steel during the war, we were forced to take £525 per ton from Great Britain, while Canada got between £1,100 and £1,200 a ton. Mr. Hughes placed an embargo on the material. When we were operating in Chillagoe we were forced to sell our copper through the Copper Producers' Association, an outside body created by the Commonwealth Government. We were forced to send all our copper down to Port Kembla because of the embargo imposed by Mr. Hughes, under which nothing but refined copper must leave Australian shores. We were just as desirous of sending copper to Great Britain as was Mr. Hughes. That kept the metal industry back for a considerable number of years.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: All the companies were subject to the same embargo.

Mr. HARTLEY: No; they got a higher price for their copper.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: All the companies had to do this, and the hon. member, strange to say, could not find one copper company producing in Australia which agreed with the act of William Morris Hughes. The great Mount Elliott Company in Cloncurry, early in the war, placed a little copper refinery at Bowen because of the embargo which had been placed on the industry by Mr. Hughes, in order that they might get a bigger price. They did not refine any copper at Bowen, as the hon. member knows. They were forced, as were all copper companies, to come under the Copper Producers' Association. I have to admit that the Copper Producers' Association, formed by Mr. Hughes when he was Prime Minister, was powerful enough to make the Government of Queensland come under it also. The new Federal Prime Minister has removed that embargo, and we get £7 a ton more for our copper by sending it direct from Cairns. When we produce an article in North Queensland we should have the

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right to send it direct to England from a port in the State, and not from a port down South and through any particular company.

The hon. member for Normanby referred to the syndicate formed on the Palmer for deep sinking. Owing to the high cost of living up there, the Government also arranged with the syndicate to pay a share of the expense involved, when it exceeded a certain amount. I thought that it was a fair thing to pay our share of the expense. There were three men in the syndicate, and unfortunately two of them died. They were prepared—and their executors are prepared—to spend so much money in sinking a shaft to develop the Palmer reefs. That undertaking was taken on by myself on the strength of Dr. Jack's report. I claim that Dr. Jack was perfectly correct in his report.

Mr. HARTLEY: Geologists sometimes make mistakes.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Geologists probably do make mistakes. He who never makes mistakes never makes anything. Dr Jack considered that, as the Palmer had produced so much gold, and the gold existed down to about 100 feet where the sandstone was encountered and the reefs remained although the gold had gone out, we might come into different strata if we pierced the sandstone and gold would be found again underneath in the slate. That has been proved by boring operations, and I hope to prove it further by sinking a shaft. The syndicate are prepared to go on, and we are hoping that we may yet revive the Palmer goldfield. Hon. members may say that it is speculation, but mining is necessarily speculative, except coalmining in which it is easy to prove seams by boring. Mining is not as certain as some other industries; no man can see very far underground. There is no man in Queensland who recognises the speculative nature of the industry more than I do. I have tried, and I believe I have been successful, in encouraging mining to some extent, and next session, if I am here—and I hope I shall be here—I intend to introduce an amendment of the Mining Acts which will enable us to overcome some of the difficulties and meet the suggestions which have been offered to-day, for which I am thankful.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Do you believe in mining on private property?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think we should have mining on private property, so long as we make adequate compensation, on the principle that, if there is a greater wealth in the ground than on the surface, the latter should give way to the former. The newspapers—the “*Courier*” in particular—have described me as a “smiling optimist.” I much prefer to be called that to being called a pessimist, because, if anything is keeping Australia back, it is the pessimistic cries of some of our public men, not only in Queensland but throughout Australia. Hon. members opposite would lead people to think that I am so optimistic that, when a man comes to me with a bottle of oil, I regard it as a great oilfield and when a man comes to me with a little specimen of gold I talk about a future goldfield. That is wrong, and a great many men who come in with a little worn-out specimen go out with quite a different opinion of the Minister from that of hon. members opposite. I have no sympathy with the squandering of public funds in that way.

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If anybody is desirous of going out prospecting, I assist him to the limit of the funds placed at my disposal, and we have spent quite a lot of money in that way. But I deny that I have no regard for the public funds and that I would pay away public money when I would not pay away my own. That is an unfair comparison, because I have no money of my own and never shall have. After leaving a very good position I worked for £2 10s. a week and put £1 a week into a show in the hope of getting something out of it; and, if it had developed well, I would have been entitled to something for my hard-earned £1 a week. I have worked my own show for three months for a return of about 10s. Nobody realises more than I the speculative nature of the mining industry, and I am just as careful of public funds as a man can be. I have no desire to mismanage them or see any of the money with which I am charged in the administration of my department misused.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

#### IN AID OF MINING.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I move—

“That £16,000 be granted ‘In Aid of Mining.’”

Last year the vote was £19,500, but we did not spend all of it. Last year the vote for prospecting was £13,000 and this year we provide £10,000. The vote for “Deep Sinking” is £5,000, as last year, but the vote for “Roads and Bridges to Gold and Mineral Fields and Water Supply” is reduced from £1,500 to £1,000. The reason is that we have now a Main Roads Board in Queensland, and many main roads lead to mining centres, so that the expenditure of the Mines Department is relieved to that extent. I believe that roads should all be under one department. The remainder of the item is still required, because we have cases where it is necessary to get water quickly. In such a case, where there are a good many miners, I have wired urgent instructions to spend £150 to make a well, so that they will be able to carry on operations.

Hon. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I do not wish to delay the vote unduly, but I would like the Minister to tell the Committee how much was spent last

[7 p.m.] year in connection with prospecting. I notice that last year £13,000 was put down, and this year the vote is £3,000 less. I assume that the explanation is that, as the full amount was not utilised last year, the Minister does not expect to spend so much this year. The Minister made reference to the fact that he believed in assisting those who go out prospecting.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): The amount set down for prospecting last year was £13,000.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What amount was spent?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have my figures here, but they have not been totalled up. I know that about £10,000 was spent on deep sinking, which is provided in another vote. That vote was exceeded, and

we got permission from the Treasury to transfer part of the money to that vote from this vote.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: As a matter of fact the whole amount was really appropriated on this vote for prospecting purposes and deep sinking?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes. The total amount of £13,000 was not spent on prospecting alone.

Mr. COSTELLO (*Carnarvon*): I would also like some information regarding this vote. In view of the fact that the mining industry has slumped and there is very little prospect of the industry being revived on the old fields, one of the best things to do is to encourage the prospector. The Mines Department and the Minister have been very liberal indeed in connection with supporting prospectors when recommendations have been made. I find that the prospectors in the country are following other occupations, probably because they have lost heart in the mining industry. I think one reason why the full amount in this vote was not utilised is because no bonâ fide prospectors can be found in the country. I would like to see the vote very much more liberal than it is now, and I would like the Minister to carry out his suggestion to have prospecting parties under geologists or persons of authority from his department, so that the vote could be expended to the best advantage. When a prospector gets the backing from the Mines Department for three or four months or perhaps longer, we have to rely entirely on his honour. The department makes no attempt to see that he gives full return for the money that he obtains. The money is voted in small amounts.

Mr. BRUCE: The Minister takes care that the vote is not over-expended.

Mr. COSTELLO: The Government should encourage prospecting on a more systematic scale. I appreciate this vote, and I am sorry it is not a great deal more. There is a vote for "Roads and Bridges to Gold and Mineral Fields and Water Supply, £1,000." The Minister will probably guess that I am now about to make a request in respect to the Sundown arsenic mine. At the present time arsenic which is second to none in the Commonwealth is being obtained in the Stanthorpe district. Exceptionally fine ore is now being obtained at the Jibbenbar and Sundown mines. We are looking forward with great hope to the important part that these mines will play in the eradication of prickly-pear. There has been a good deal of activity displayed in working the Sundown mine. The ore has to be carted from the Sundown mine over 18 miles of rough road to the Ballandean siding. It costs £2 10s. a ton to cart the ore. That enhances the cost of treating the ore, and makes the arsenic cost twice as much as it would if there was a better road there. I ask the Minister whether he will consider a request to make a grant from the vote for roads and bridges to assist the companies to make the road more trafficable. I suggest that the grant should be on the basis of £1 for £1. A request in that direction was made to me recently. The opinion was held that, as the Sundown mine was competing with the State arsenic mine, the Minister might not give a sympathetic hearing to the request. I asked the companies at Sundown if they were sincere in making

the request to the Minister, as I was sure the hon. gentleman would assist in every way to develop the arsenic mines in the Stanthorpe district. There is a great opportunity of finding a satisfactory market for the arsenic in the world's markets.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I now have the figures which the hon. member for Wynnum asked for. The vote for prospecting last year was £13,000, and of this amount £8,772 was spent.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Then you had a surplus of over £4,000?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes. Of course £10,000 goes a long way in aiding prospecting by grants of 30s. or £2 a week. The department in very deserving and necessitous cases have made grants of 30s. and £2 a week. Every genuine case in Queensland has been met—I do not say that we have not turned a few down.

Mr. COSTELLO: That shows the difficulty of getting genuine prospectors.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is so. The vote for "Roads and Bridges to Gold and Mineral Fields and Water Supply" last year was £1,500, and of this amount £1,350 was spent. An amount of £5,000 was made available last year for loans for deep sinking, and £4,958 was spent. The amount now placed on the Estimates is greater than the amount expended last year and will probably meet the case. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Carnarvon, I want to say that there has been an application on behalf of the Sundown mine since we have been operating Jibbenbar. I think I granted £500 altogether—I know that one grant was for £250. I do not take a narrow view of the case because these people are operating an arsenic mine. The arsenic from Sundown, by the way, was of lower value than the State mine arsenic.

Mr. COSTELLO: That grant was made some time ago.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes. Towards the end of the financial year my road grant was exhausted, therefore the later application had to be refused. I can assure the hon. gentleman that I have not taken a narrow view.

Mr. COSTELLO: I am sure of that.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have tried to encourage the mining industry, no matter what kind of operations were carried on.

Question put and passed.

#### MINING FIELDS.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—

"That £29,573 be granted for 'Mining Fields.'"

This amount includes the Geological Survey Office. As far as that branch is concerned, I rather regret the opinion expressed here a few nights ago that the geologists of Queensland have very little to do. It has been stated during this debate that we have severed Dr. Jensen's connection with the Mines Department. Dr. Jensen resigned his position, but that position was available if he had cared to take it again; but he never accepted other

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than an appointment as temporary geologist. I must admit that he is a gentleman of great scientific knowledge and full of energy, and that he does not spare himself in field work as others do. I notice by to-day's paper that he has been appointed consulting geologist to an oil company who intend to take up an area and prospect for oil in this State. I suppose the appointment comes as the result of the passage of the recent oil legislation.

Regarding the geologists of the State, mention was made of Mr. Saint-Smith by the hon. member for Fitzroy in refutation of the statement that the geologists are not assisting the mining industry. Since I have been in the Department of Mines, I prefer to rely on scientific investigation for the development of not only our oil but of our mineral fields rather than any other methods. Some people may favour the divining rod to find minerals, but I think it is my duty as Secretary for Mines not to encourage any other than scientific investigations in this respect. We have a staff of geologists in Queensland second to none in Australia. The Deputy Chief Geologist is a most able man, and one of the most careful geologists in this State. By no stretch of the imagination can he be described as being too optimistic or too sanguine, and he gives very safe opinions on mining matters. The other geologists never spare themselves in their work, and I regret the hon. member for Cooroora is not here to-night, because he made the statement that the geologists of Queensland were not doing good work. I was surprised to hear that from an hon. member who has a good knowledge of mining. The geologists of this State have saved investors hundreds of thousands of pounds by their scientific knowledge. From the Chief Geologist down to the junior assistant in the office they are ever ready with their advice, and I think this branch of the service deserves every encouragement. The fact that Dr. Jensen has accepted a position with a private company as an oil geologist is proof positive of the fact that he is a very capable scientific man. We should make the Department of Mines attractive to geologists rather than that they should seek work with private companies, as in the department they have a wider sphere for scientific investigations.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I would like to draw attention to the difference in the amounts appropriated for the various districts for "Wardens, Mining Registrars, etc." The amount for Charters Towers is £2,500, for Chillago £745, for Clermont £995, for Cloncurry £1,235, for Cooktown £752, for Croydon £430, for Georgetown £744, and so on. Judging from the report of the Department of Mines, in some of these districts mining is going back steadily, yet the same expenditure seems to be incurred. The amount asked for in connection with Charters Towers is £2,500, yet in the annual report of the department, Mr. Linedale, the warden at Charters Towers, speaking of that district, says—

"At all centres, with one exception, mining activity continued to decline, resulting in a shrinkage in output both of gold and industrial metals. The high prices of all mining requisites which have ruled throughout the past five or six years have militated against the industry."

Further on, the report says—

"Tin mining has been almost entirely neglected. No mining was carried on at  
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Rishton or on any of the provisional gold-fields, but it is probable that Lucky Creek will be given a further trial."

Later on it says—

"The collections at his office during the year totalled £22,704 11s. 8d., of which sum an amount of £3,000 19s. 5d. was received as warden's collections; a decrease for the latter office when compared with the takings for 1921, of £459 3s. 9d."

It has struck me in looking at the amounts put down for the various districts that it would be well if the Minister could arrange for some economies to be effected in connection with this matter. Perhaps the removal of some of these officers could be arranged—I do not believe in sacking men—to fields where there is likely to be more activity in mining operations. It seems to me that there is going to be a fair amount of activity at Chillago in connection with mining. I find that there is an amount set down a little later on for the assay office at Cloncurry. I would like to know from the Minister whether the officer there at the present time is needed or whether he cannot be transferred to some other field which is showing more activity. Matters seem to be at a low ebb at that centre. Probably something might be done to rearrange matters in different localities and get better service for the money we are spending at the present time. I am speaking of places where there is an actual decline in mining and there does not seem to be any immediate prospect of any improvement.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): I would like to put in a claim for some attention to be given to the Warwick district, which I suppose is one of the oldest mining districts in the State. Prior to the breaking out of the Gympie field, there were many places where gold was found in the Warwick district, amongst which I might mention Pratten. I know that a great many years ago a former member for Warwick, the late Mr. Jacob Horwitz, found gold in various localities around Warwick. The department rendered very signal and gratifying service in reporting on what appeared to be the discovery of a silver lode some time ago. Certainly nothing eventuated, but the department did its level best, and the efforts made in that direction by the department were very highly appreciated. Some discoveries of copper have lately been made. Without being able to say anything definitely with regard to the success or otherwise of those discoveries, the reports coming to hand show that the indications at a place called Lucky Valley are not at all unfavourable. The configuration of the Warwick district, I am sure, will indicate to the geologist that it is a most likely place for minerals to be found. I would put in a strong claim for consideration in regard to a geological survey being made of the Warwick district. I have had some conversation with the Minister with regard to oil. The indications are sufficient to warrant some investigation being made, and I earnestly submit this matter to the consideration of the Minister. I might mention that Dr. Jensen reported that the oil-bearing country in Southern Queensland would be comprised within a line drawn from Beaudesert to Warwick and Killarney, and so on right away to Roma. Many years ago the son of the late Mr. Gibson assured me that oil had been found

in the district, although he never told me in what particular part it was found. Mr. Gibson passed away, and only some soakage of oil has since been found. The attention of the scientific side of the service should be directed to any place where there is a possibility of making good discoveries, and I think that in the expenditure of public money we should look to other localities than those which have so far been favoured by the department. I urge on the sympathetic consideration of the Minister the desirableness of making a general survey of the Warwick district.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): The hon. member for Cooroora has been criticised for some remarks which he made the other day indicating that he did not place much reliance on geologists or experts. Probably in the past we have had experts, so-called, and experience of men like that may set a man against them by general analogy. But I want to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that the hon. member for Cooroora made very flattering references to Dr. Jensen and, as a business man, during his term as chairman of the co-operative company which controls the Murarrrie Bacon Factory, he was the very man who brought into the undertaking experts who made it a very great success. I want to compliment the Minister upon taking notice of his experts. I believe that we are living in a time of experts, and that they are going to make the mining industry.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is why we are over here.

Mr. WARREN: The hon. member for Fitzroy has made a point there—the first one he has made to-day. I do not think we have enough scientific investigation, and I do not think we are prepared to offer a salary that will bring the very best men into our mining or agricultural departments. I have too much common sense to wish to pay high salaries, but I have sufficient business acumen in my composition to wish to get the very best men for these important positions, and I am prepared to pay a good salary to get the very best. I believe that in the Department of Agriculture we have lost good men because we were not prepared to pay them properly, and I am afraid it is just the same in the Mines Department. I compliment the Minister on his declared intention of being guided by the experts of his department.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): I forgot to make reference in my previous remarks to the discovery which has been made in Lucky Valley. I understand that a geologist has been sent to report upon it, and I want to mention the fact to show that the people are alive to what is going on. It should impress on the department the desirableness of expediting a geological survey of the Warwick district.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): With reference to the point which has been raised as to the number of officers at Charters Towers—I would like to point out that these officers are not only doing Mines Department work. They also do work for the Department of Justice. The warden, for instance, is also police magistrate. In Gympie the warden is an officer of the Mines Department, and

is also the police magistrate for the district, and he is paid by the Mines Department.

There is quite a lot of work to [7.30 p.m.] be done in Charters Towers. The mineral field is very large, extending down to Ravenswood, and the officers there have outside work and Justice Department work to do. The work is not confined to that of the Mines Department. It would be unwise to transfer those officers to another department. The Cloncurry assay office is a very valuable one. The assayer is one of the best officers in Australia. Never since I have been in the department have his assays been questioned. I know many instances in which companies have been prepared to accept his assays without question. He is of great assistance and does valuable work in assaying all ores for Chillagoe and the ore brought in by the gougers. This office is helping to keep the Cloncurry field going, and without it the gougers could not possibly keep on. I have to thank hon. members for their appreciation of what has been done and for their criticism, although sometimes it has been a little unfavourable. I am fully indebted to the loyalty of the staff of the Mines Department for the invaluable service they render me as Secretary for Mines and to the State.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: What about the mining field around Warwick?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There is a good deal in what the hon. gentleman has stated. The country round there is auriferous, and quite a lot of gold was found in the early days round Thane's Creek and Lucky Valley. An application was received from that district for a boring plant to test a certain field. I am not in favour of using a diamond drill for boring for gold reefs. The drill is a splendid method for prospecting coal areas, because coal seams generally run horizontally, whereas metalliferous reefs are generally vertical, and a person may miss a very rich gold reef with a diamond drill. I only favour the use of the diamond drill as a method for prospecting in coal areas where there are very big lodes like at Chillagoe, where the lodes are sometimes 20 to 30 feet wide, and have already been discovered and have proved their extent. In the case of the Palmer goldfield the strata were proved. There we were boring for the strata, and we were able to prove them. The same was done in Gympie. We did not there bore for a reef, but we carried out boring operations for the strata. If we yielded to an application for the use of a diamond drill on little fields boring for reefs, I am afraid that our action would not be backed up by geological opinion. I have been advised, and it is my personal opinion, that it would be unwise to do so. We have three or four plants prospecting in Queensland, especially for coal, and we have proved our fields. By boring we were able to estimate the tons of coal per acre on the Styx River field, the Baralaba field, and the Bowen field. Boring for reefs would be unsound. I am pleased with the remarks of the hon. member for Warwick, and I can bear out what he says about the auriferous country around those parts.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I wish you would send a man to make a geological survey.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I promise any hon. member in this House that.

[Hon. A. J. Jones.]

if he approaches me for the services of a geologist, the department will be only too glad to send out a geologist to report.

Question put and passed.

#### STATE MINING OPERATIONS.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—

“That £10,550 be granted for ‘State Mining Operations.’”

The amount set down last year for the State battery at Bamford was £250, and it is the same this year. I am sorry to say that that is only to cover caretaker's wages and the necessary money to keep the battery in order. There is an amount of £800 set down for the Charters Towers battery. That battery was purchased for the small sum of £2,000 rather than allow that field to be left without a battery. I make no apology for doing that, because I know that a good many hundreds of tons of ore have been crushed. The hon. member for Queenton will bear me out in that. A fair amount of coal has been used, and some men have been kept in work. One year we showed a slight profit, but this year there is a loss of something under £300.

Mr. TAYLOR: Is that the only battery there?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There is Clark's battery there now, and they will crush their own stone. Fancy being able to obtain a battery for £2,000 when one could not be erected under £40,000 to £50,000! It is just as well to keep one battery in case ore is required to be crushed. Last year the amount of £4,000 was set down for boring for petroleum at Roma, but this year there is no expenditure in that direction as someone else is doing the boring work. An amount of £6,500 is set down for Government drilling operations, which is the same as the amount set down last year. I claim that the drilling plants do good work, especially on coalfields. We have three in operation now. The difference between the £10,550 set down this year and the £15,550 set down last year is accounted for by the fact that this year there is no expenditure for boring for petroleum at Roma. The bore has been taken over as a water supply for the Railway Department. That bore cost £36,000, spread over a period of about seven years, and I claim that it has given us a lot of knowledge useful in connection with the discovery of oil in Australia. It has given us a considerable amount of geological information, and it has encouraged other persons to expend a certain amount of money in that area.

Question put and passed.

#### “QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT MINING JOURNAL.”

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—

“That £1,843 be granted for ‘Queensland Government Mining Journal.’”

The “Queensland Government Mining Journal” is recognised not only in Australia but throughout the mining industry of the world as one of the leading mining journals. The exchanges from America and other countries prove that assertion. It is very often quoted in the mining journals in America

[*Hon. A. J. Jones.*

and Canada. The exchange of the “Journal” with other journals in various other countries is invaluable. The editor is Mr. Chester Reynolds. His predecessor, Mr. Morley, raised the journal to a very high standard. It was regarded as a splendid journal under his editorship. It has not suffered in any way since Mr. Morley handed over the editorship to Mr. Chester Reynolds. I have a copy of the last “Journal,” and anyone interested in the mining industry must admit that every page of it is worth reading. I wish to pay a tribute to the new editor, who, though he has not been with us very long, is keeping the “Journal” up to its previous high standard and gives evidence that it is not likely to lose any of its value.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I congratulate the Minister on the improved setting up of the “Journal” under the editorship of Mr. Chester Reynolds. I quite agree with the Minister that it is a very useful production. As the hon. gentleman has said, it is recognised in all mining centres throughout the world. I want to see it circulated more in our mining centres, and I suggest that it be made free to all mining centres who apply for it.

Mr. KERR: You want “Hansard” to be made free too?

Mr. COLLINS: If the secretaries of the various branches of the Australian Workers' Union or the Australian Federation of Mine Workers ask that the “Journal” be sent to them, the request should be complied with, as it contains very useful matter. It is useful to people outside and within the Commonwealth, as it generally contains all the geological reports, which I do not think hon. members opposite read too much.

Mr. TAYLOR: They do.

Mr. COLLINS: I am glad to hear that. I read them myself, and have been reading them ever since the “Journal” was first published. It is a very useful publication.

Question put and passed.

#### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

##### CHIEF OFFICE.

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

“That £54,517 be granted for ‘Department of Public Lands—Chief Office.’”

This vote shows a decrease of £1,361 compared with the vote for last year. There have been some slight increases of salaries, and some decreases in the “Miscellaneous Branch.” There has been so much land legislation this session that I expect the Estimates of this department will have a rapid progress through the Committee. We have discussed land matters practically from A to Z during this session, so I will content myself with formally moving the vote.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): As the Minister has said, we have had a considerable amount of land legislation during the present session.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Unfortunately it is not finished yet.

Mr. TAYLOR: No, it is not finished yet, and some quite new principles have been

introduced in a number of the measures that we have discussed. The Minister is very sanguine and hopeful, as he naturally should be, that the new Bills will be successful and will meet with the approval of those who are acquiring land in the State. I hope that his wishes in that direction will be realised. During the passage of some of those measures the Opposition made certain suggestions and brought forward some amendments which they believed would improve them, but the Minister did not see eye to eye with us and would not accept them.

I want to draw the attention of the hon. gentleman to land settlement generally. The report of the Lands Department for 1922 is not yet ready; it does not usually come out until fairly late in October. If we take the seven-year period from 1908 to 1914, we find that the total area selected in Queensland was 10,240,214 acres. The total area selected for the seven-year period from 1915 to 1921 fell to 4,816,417 acres. That is a decrease for the past seven years as compared with the previous seven-year period of 5,423,797 acres, or a decrease of 53 per cent. The average area selected per annum from 1908-14 was 1,462,888 acres, and the average area selected per annum for the 1915-21 period was 688,060 acres, or an average decrease per annum of 774,828 acres. I quite realise that during that period the great war was on and that it lasted for four years. I also realise that for a year or two after the war things did not settle quite down to normal again. At the same time the decrease in land selection is so serious that the Government might well consider whether their policy is the best policy or not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Those figures are very misleading. You want to consider the reports to find out what they mean. In some years some big selections might be taken up which would give an enormous acreage. We have to consider the number of settlers.

Mr. TAYLOR: The population of Queensland in 1914 was 676,707 persons, and in 1922 it had increased to 790,522, or an increase of 17 per cent., as against a decrease in land settlement of 53 per cent. The population of the State has grown very considerably during the period in which we are faced with this falling off in land selection. One of the reasons probably for this decrease in land selection is the policy of the Government. That policy is the total abolition of the freehold tenure and the substitution of the perpetual leasehold tenure. If I am informed correctly, in New Zealand there is no reappraisal of rentals under their perpetual leasehold tenure. That may be one reason why people do not like to take up land under the perpetual leasehold tenure in this State. Notwithstanding what hon. members on the Government side may say, I still think that it is an incentive to a man to take up land if he has the knowledge that at some future time the farm that he is working is going to be his own. I certainly think that it is a stimulus to the man to put more energy into that farm than it is if he knows that at certain periods he is going to have his rental reappraised, and that even after thirty or forty years the land will not be his. I think that freehold tenure is an incentive to men to put in their very best in working their farms and making them a success. We

all know this, and the Minister knows quite well that it is easier for a man to raise money on a freehold than on a leasehold property. You have something tangible and real in a freehold on which to advance money. I do not think that the land policy of the Labour Government commends itself to the community generally. Certainly there may be some instances where perpetual leasehold is preferable to freehold, but, by and large, I do not think it is going to tend to the successful increase of our settlement throughout the State.

At 7.51 p.m.,

Mr. F. A. COOPER (*Bremer*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. DUNSTAN: There are settlers in the Widgee area who prefer perpetual leasehold to freehold.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is quite probable that a number of people were asked to take up land that was over-capitalised, and they found a difficulty, on account of adverse seasons and one thing and another, in making the land pay.

With regard to resumptions, notices have been sent out by the department that they intend to resume certain lands. I think the Minister should exercise great care to find out exactly what is being derived in the way of income from those lands at the present time, and what will be derived after the resumptions have been made. If the resumptions are going to result in less productivity and money coming into the State, I do not think they will work out in the very best interests of Queensland. It is very easy to talk about closer settlement and resumption of land. I believe in closer settlement, but I think that we should satisfy ourselves that those resumptions, especially where there are railway lines, will be in the interests of the State. I hope the Minister will take every possible precaution to see that those resumptions will result in something better than what is existing at the present time.

I desire to compare the perpetual leaseholds selected during the past four years, from 1919—of course, we know the war ended in 1918—

|         | Perpetual<br>Leaseholds. |
|---------|--------------------------|
|         | Acre.                    |
| In 1919 | 609,483                  |
| In 1920 | 490,546                  |
| In 1921 | 419,886                  |
| In 1922 | 250,588                  |

There has been a decrease in the selection of perpetual leases in each of those four years. The area of prickly-pear land selected during the years 1908-1914 was 5,723,611 acres, and during the period 1915-1921 2,176,384 acres—a decrease for the seven years during which the present Administration have been carrying or their policy of 3,547,227 acres. Those figures speak for themselves, and show that our land settlement policy is not encouraging people in the way it should. I have no doubt the Government think it should, but the figures do not reveal such to be the case.

There are quite a number of other matters in the Estimates which I do not propose to deal with to-night, because we shall be able to deal with them later. I am particularly keen with regard to the Forestry vote and

*Mr. Taylor.*]

the irrigation proposals that we have been considering during this session. Notwithstanding the criticism in the Press and by public men, especially with regard to the Dawson irrigation scheme, I think that we have a right to go on with it, because, if the estimates of the men in charge are anything like the net result that will be achieved, I cannot see but that it will result in good for Queensland. If it has been found necessary in the other States of the Commonwealth—where they have a more normal and regular rainfall than we have—to conserve water and go in for irrigation, then we in Queensland, where our rainfall has changed so much in the last twelve years, must do likewise if we want to preserve our existence. If we do not do this, we are doomed so far as agriculture is concerned.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I quite realise that there is a certain amount of wisdom in the policy of opening up new areas. At the same time, before we go to such expense as I understand is contemplated in some directions in opening up new lands and building railways, we should look to the lands in the hands of the Crown that have a good rainfall and are within easy reach of our railways. I think that the Department of Public Lands might assist the Railway Department in making our railways more profitable if they cast about and paid attention to their lands within easy distance of our railways and opened them up for closer settlement.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Your Government allowed private people to alienate them.

Mr. SWAYNE: Some time ago I obtained rather voluminous figures from the Department of Public Lands on this subject. I have not got them all here but I have a precis. We have 355 holdings under lease, with an annual rainfall of between 24 and 30 inches—which is good for agricultural purposes—held in areas exceeding 5,000 acres, the aggregate area being 5,006,179 acres. Some of the holdings are very large indeed and are within 10 miles of the railway. Then we have land under lease with an annual rainfall of not less than 30 inches and up to 60 inches, held in areas exceeding 1,280 acres. Of course I know that

[8 p.m.] in many parts an area of 1,280 acres is comparatively small, and,

when you get into the Western country, that is not nearly enough; but, when you get into a district where the rainfall ranges from 30 inches up to 60 inches and the land is within easy distance of a railway, the question arises whether some of these holdings could not be subdivided. I find that under that heading there are 929 holdings containing an area of 9,055,467 acres. Again I find, with an annual rainfall of between 24 and 30 inches, there are unoccupied Crown lands of a total area of 581,231 acres, and with a rainfall over 30 inches there are unoccupied Crown lands, including reserves, of an area of 2,635,467 acres. We have a new Minister in charge of the department, who I think will be a good Minister, and I would ask him to go into this matter and see whether some of this land with a good rainfall could not be subdivided into small areas so that it would maintain a larger population, and by being more closely settled furnish more freight for our railways.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Where is that land?

[*Mr. Taylor.*

Mr. SWAYNE: I have given the hon. gentleman the headings.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Never mind about the headings. Where is the land?

Mr. SWAYNE: Within 10 miles of a railway.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What railway?

Mr. SWAYNE: All the railways. The rainfalls show that the land must be close to the coast.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You tell me where it is, and I will see that it is opened up.

Mr. SWAYNE: Surely the hon. gentleman and his staff between them can locate that land? It is within 10 miles of the existing railways.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Which railways? Why keep it dark?

Mr. SWAYNE: The hon. gentleman's department furnished the figures in the first place, so they must know where the land is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I think you have got a bit mixed with those figures.

Mr. SWAYNE: I know that the Government are very anxious that the settlers shall not get anything in the way of a bargain in land by anticipating railway construction. Their policy is to build railways and then open the land for settlement. A great deal can be said in favour of that policy, but the thing can be overdone, and that policy has been overdone in connection with the land between Mackay and Bowen. North of Mackay there are some very fine Crown lands, and that land has been held back from settlement past the time when it should have been opened. Directly it was a known fact that the North Coast Railway was going through that land, it reached its maximum value, and the department could then have obtained a fair thing for the increased value arising from the railway. But that land has been kept for over two years after it should have been thrown open, and the result will be that the railway will be languishing for freights because the settlers will not be put on that land until after the railway is completed. If they had been put on the land when it was first known the railway was going through there, the settlers would have had their preliminary work done and they would have been in a position to grow sugarcane by the time the railway was completed. In some instances, too, the settlers have been exploited. Adjacent to the North Coast line there was a reserve—I have not got the particulars with me, and I am not certain that there were not two reserves—however I am quite safe in saying that there was one reserve. That reserve was put up for sale and a number of farmers were hopeful of getting it, as it was quite large enough for agricultural purposes. The upset price put on by the department was £40, and the settlers should have been allowed to ballot for it at the upset price, as evidently the department considered that a fair price. We know that in pastoral land the system of competition by auction has been done away with. The pastoralists do not have to submit to such competition, and I do not see why the agriculturist should. In this case two sugar-mill companies wanted the land. They did not want it altogether for agricultural purposes but, no doubt, they will lease it to agriculturists. They wanted it as a starting point for a new tramline which

they were building. It was put up to auction, and one of these companies got it at something like £140 or £150 per acre, although the upset price was only £40. The farmers who wished to get that land direct from the Crown were cut out, but no doubt one of them will get the land as a tenant of the mill. I do not think it is right to bleed an intending settler to that extent. It looks to me very like profiteering at the expense of the settler. Under the old system of homestead settlement at 2s. 6d. an acre we got settlers of a good type. I know that some of the selectors in those days had a very hard life, but there is no doubt that settlement on cheap land was a most profitable transaction to Queensland, as it enabled us to secure a good type of settlers who laid the foundation of the settlement that we have at the present time. It is a mistake for the Crown to try and squeeze the utmost farthing in the way of land values from the intending settlers.

The leader of the Opposition has spoken about irrigation schemes and the amount proposed to be spent in that connection. As he said, money spent wisely and on business lines in that direction would be a very good thing; but at the same time we have large areas near the coast with good rainfall where they do not want irrigation. The Minister asked for the names of these places, and I will mention one—the Eungella Tableland. I have brought this matter up year after year for a long period. I believe the Secretary for Public Works visited the Tableland just before the last election and promised to do great things in that connection; and I understand that he is going to take the Secretary for Public Lands up there shortly, but, although I am the member for the district, I am never advised of these visits. It is disgraceful to think that that land has been held back so long. The few settlers who, since this Government took office, went on the land have been treated very badly. Before this Government came into office there was a prospect of good settlement there. The Tableland comprises 13,000 acres of scrub land, with a good rainfall and within 5 miles of the railway. The sum of £17,000 has been spent in making a road to it. Just before the 1915 election, a group of farmers from the Tweed and Richmond rivers, in New South Wales, arranged with the Denham Government to take up this land and put it under artificial grass, and to bring up their dairy cattle with them. If those group settlers from the Northern Rivers had been allowed to complete the arrangement entered into, this area of scrub country would have been cleared and put under artificial grass. The department at the time said there was a great deal of cedar in the area which should be reserved for the State. The land was opened under perpetual lease to this group from New South Wales, but they refused to take it under that tenure, and 3,000 acres were reserved for a State forest. After another two or three years had elapsed another body of settlers took up pretty nearly the whole of the land which had been designed for settlement except the 3,000 acres reserved for a State forest. This area of 3,000 acres was situated right on the frontage, opposite where the road reached the top of the range. The settlers found that being at the back of this virgin scrub on the frontage was too inconvenient. They could not make the necessary roads, and the local authority was not in a position to make them, so the settlement has lapsed with the exception of a few settlers who are still hang-

ing on. Since then the area of the State forest reserve has been increased. There are now between six and a dozen settlers still hanging on and doing their very best, and trying to clear the land under great disadvantages. Some of the settlers have had to send their families away to the South. The settlers claim that, unless it was the intention of the Government to allow the intervening country between their holdings and the frontage to be settled, they should not have been allowed to go on the country at all. They hold that it is not right to reserve a large part of the area, including the frontage, as a State forest, making it impossible for them to make a proper road. I have here a letter from the clerk to the Mirani Shire Council calling attention to the matter, which was sent to the Department of Public Lands in 1921—

“ I have the honour by direction to again bring before your notice the matter of relief by the improvement of roads for settlers on the Eungella lands.

“ I am enclosing a copy of a letter received by this council from Mr. C. Dunning, who is in occupancy of Perpetual Lease Selection 1755, portion 48, in the parish of Eungella.

“ A somewhat similar case was brought before your notice (Messrs. Carr and Brooks) in July, 1920—see my letter of 13th July and yours in reply dated 7th August, 1920, wherein you advised that ‘ as the Eungella lands are being opened for selection under the Lands Acts and not under the Discharged Soldiers’ Settlement Acts, they will be subject to payment of rates to your council upon occupation by the selectors, and the question of improving the roads serving the lands is one for the consideration of your council.’ Assistance was given the two settlers referred to by this council in the matter of clearing the road to their respective selections. No revenue has, however, been derived from these selections, and it would appear that they have now been abandoned. These two cases are typical of others who have selected the Eungella lands. Eleven other selections have been forfeited or surrendered this year.

“ This council has already spent a large sum on road work within the area in question, and in a large number of cases the rates levied will have to be written off as bad debts.

“ The Eungella Range road in itself is a very heavy burden and with very little revenue to bear same.

“ It is the desire of this council in every way to assist in the settlement of the Eungella lands, but the present method does not appear a sound proposition either to the settler or to the council. To give the necessary relief would take a large part of the revenue of this council, and it must be evident that until such time as road transport is possible (there is no railway in this area) settlement on the Eungella lands will be very slow.

“ In the case of the application by Mr. C. Dunning—he is locked in by large reserved areas of scrub, and only by the clearance of same can he expect an outlet.

“ To metal and clear the road desired by Mr. Dunning would be very expensive, and seeing that he would be the only

*Mr. Swayne.]*

person benefited, the expense would hardly be warranted.

"Until the scrub adjoining the roads is cleared allowing the sun to dry up same it will be almost impossible to keep the roads in trafficable order in the Eungella area.

"The amount already spent since June, 1920, on road work, clearance, and repairs to areas recently selected is over £140, including £5 to present applicant, and £12 11s. to previous applicants, Messrs. Carr and Brooks."

The proper thing to do is either to open up an additional area of this land and get a sufficient number of settlers so that a dairy factory and school can be erected, or else recompense the settlers who have been holding on so long and hoping for something better to turn up. If they were recompensed in some way, the whole of the area could then be turned into a State forest. I know the area well, and there is room for a fine State forest. There is a considerable quantity of cedar there. At the same time there is also room for a sufficient number of settlers to enable the necessary facilities I have spoken of in the way of a dairy factory and a school to be provided. I hope that with the advent of the new Minister something will be done in this direction. His predecessor had the matter brought before him year after year, and it is a disgrace to think that such a fine area of land, within 5 miles of a railway and with a good rainfall, should be locked up as it is. I am inclined to think that some of the projects which the Government have in hand might very well stand over until land such as this is fully settled.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I suppose that there is no vote on the Estimates so important as the vote for the Department of Public Lands. In a new country there is nothing so important as land selection, and it is astounding that so little interest is taken in the matter. It is remarkable to find that not one Minister on the Treasury bench is taking an interest in the vote. Even the Secretary for Public Lands is over on this side cracking jokes with the hon. member for Warwick. (Laughter.) I think that when a matter so important as this to the future of Queensland is being discussed it is a shame that we have nobody listening to the voice crying in the wilderness. I recognise the necessity for reform in land settlement, and I want to draw the attention of the Minister to the over-capitalisation of land, which is the most important thing that is wrong with Australia and New Zealand to-day. We are only begging the question by talking about minor matters as being the causes of our difficulties. A man with a farm which cost £3,000 but is worth only £1,000 commercially must be on a losing proposition. He cannot make interest on his capital and a living as well. I know that there is another side to it, and we have people who say that the speculator does good because he makes men work the land; but the man who is only going to scramble out a poor living from his land is not as good as a settler as the man who is working land in a winning position. I know that there are many ways of bringing down the capital value of the land. The Government profess to have solved the problem by their system of perpetual leasehold, but that is not so. A perpetual leasehold is a negoti-

able title. People can sell the land and make a profit on it. I maintain that it is absolutely impossible to get people to take up land unless than can transfer it. It is impossible in a free country to put people on the land and say, "You must stay on it." Some Government must try to solve this problem. To my mind there is only one way—and I am not stating this for my party but as my own opinion—and that is that something must be done in respect of the unearned increment. I do not mean that a man should not be allowed to make some profit out of his land; but, where a man buys a property for £300 and holds it for a year and pays rates on it and then sells it for £400, there is something wrong. (Hear, hear!) We can talk about perpetual leasehold, but it is an absolute failure, and has not touched the fringe of the problem. It is worse than freehold, because you hold less interest in the land.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What is the difference between perpetual leasehold and freehold?

At 8.25 p.m.,

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

Mr. WARREN: I presume the hon. gentleman has gone to school, and I think that is a very silly question for him to ask. If there is no difference between them, where was the necessity for altering the Act? Take Canada! I do not wish to say that Canada is the best country for land settlement, but I know that the cold countries will always carry more population than the hot countries. The cheapness of the land in Canada is remarkable. You can get good farming propositions there for a little over a dollar an acre, whereas we ask enormous prices for land which is no better from the producer's standpoint. While that is so I say that we are on the wrong lines, and the Government should first of all set out to put men on the land, not for the sake of the collars they get from them, but with the idea of getting a man who is prepared to become a farmer to settle on the land and produce—not for the sake of Queensland but for his own sake. I would not give a rap for the man who would go on the land for the sake of Queensland alone. I want to see men on the land for the sake of making something out of it as a business proposition. Our system to-day is producing a type of man who is here to-day and gone to-morrow. In nearly every centre you will find that the population is constantly changing. I know a man who boasts that in seven years he has sold one farm six times. The very commission that he has taken out of that land is sufficient to buy a decent farm. That speculative element in our farming land or any other land is detrimental to the State and the producing interests.

I would like to compliment the department upon having a business man at its head. Since the hon. gentleman's accession to the office there has been a distinct improvement in the Lands Department. I do not want to say that we did not get courtesy and attention before, but although I think that the Soldier Settlement Branch could be managed a little better than it is, the department is to be congratulated on the upward move that has been made within recent months. I am sure that the Minister is big enough and strong enough to make reforms

if he makes up his mind to do so. He is the very man to do it. (Hear, hear!)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There are a good many smart young officers there now.

Mr. WARREN: I am glad to hear the Minister say that, because, after all, young blood stirs things up. There are defects which the hon. gentleman will have to be very careful to eradicate. However, I have better hopes of the department, and I believe that it is the duty of hon. members on this side not only to draw attention to its faults but also to help it to work smoothly and as much for the benefit of Queensland as possible. It is right for hon. members to give credit where credit is due. The department should not put men on inferior land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Did you hear the hon. member for Mirani urging that we should put men on inferior lands?

Mr. WARREN: I did not. I know that the hon. member is too good a farmer to wish to see land settled which is not fit to produce.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: But he is a good politician too. (Laughter.)

Mr. WARREN: Even along the North Coast Railway there is some very inferior land, and the people settled on it find it absolutely impossible to make a living.

Why, a goat would die on it. I [8.30 p.m.] do not wonder at people going "dilly" on it. We want to take these people off the inferior land. It is nonsensical for the Minister to say that he has not got sufficient good land. The people on this inferior land are absolutely struggling, and not only is it breaking their hearts but they are producing nothing for Queensland. It is time that the Government of the day woke up to the necessity of taking these poor, unfortunate devils off the land and putting them on to some useful land. It is no use saying there is no useful land even along the North Coast Railway. There is more room there for settlement. I know that we are going in for better methods of farming, and that is absolutely essential if we are going to make this State prosperous. That can only be done by settling a greater number of people on the land. There are very few people on the land at the present time in Queensland. I do not wish to compare Victoria with Queensland, but I know that it is hard to get an acre of land in Victoria. The whole of the land has been alienated. The Minister could find very good land in the unalienated Crown land. It is a bad time now to talk about land settlement because we are experiencing a drought; still, while we occasionally experience these droughts, we have got to settle the land in Queensland and to have a larger population settled on it. We have to go in for some system which will resist droughts. I do not mean only by water conservation, but by some new method of farming. The settlers should be able to obtain land at a reasonable price, and it should not be over-capitalised.

At 8.34 p.m.,

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

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

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

The House adjourned at 8.35 p.m.