

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 1924

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TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER, 1924.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Maree*) took the chair at 10 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

Weights and Measures Bill;
Public Curator Act Amendment Bill;
Government Loan Bill;
Diseases in Plants Act Amendment Bill;
Justices Act Amendment Bill; and
Oaths Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS.

INSTALLATION OF HEATING AND COOKING APPLIANCES, BRISBANE SICK CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

“ Will he lay upon the table of the House the whole of the papers dealing with—

- (a) Tenders called by his department for the installation of heating and cooking appliances to the kitchen of the Brisbane Sick Children's Hospital?
- (b) The number of tenders received, with their prices?
- (c) Tender accepted?”

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

“ (a) Tenders were not called by the Department of Public Works.

“ (b) See answer to (a).

“ (c) Quotations submitted by Messrs. Wildridge and Sinclair, Limited, and approved by the Hospital Committee, were forwarded to this department on the 8th February, 1923, for action. On 26th March the Under Secretary, Department of Public Works, instructed Wildridge and Sinclair to proceed with the work.

		£	s.	d.
Refrigeration plant and				
installation	...	1,196	9	9
Kitchen equipment and				
installation	...	1,825	18	8
Total	...	£3,022	8	5

“ Papers may be perused by members at the Department of Public Works.”

STATEMENT IN “ POLICE JOURNAL ” IN RE CONSTABLE REGULATING TRAFFIC IN QUEEN STREET.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*) asked the Home Secretary—

“ 1. Will he inquire into the statement made in the ‘ Police Journal ’ of 25th August that during the recent Show Week a constable who was regulating traffic in Queen street was publicly abused by a Minister of the Crown because the former insisted on doing his duty?

“ 2. As it is reported that the Minister threatened to transfer the constable to

Thargomindah, will he inform the House, if the statement is true, who was the Minister; and will he take the necessary steps to censure the said Minister, if necessary?"

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*) replied—

"The official report does not bear out the statement contained in the 'Police Journal.'"

PAPER.

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

Report of the Department of Public Works for the year ended 30th June, 1924.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—FIFTH ALLOTTED DAY.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

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

"That £23,884 be granted for 'Department of Public Works—Chief Office.'"

That amount is an increase of £1,254 over the amount voted last year, the rise being due to classification increases.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I just want to enter a protest against our getting the report of the Department of Public Works only on the day when the Estimates are before us. Surely it is possible for the report to be tabled in time, so that hon. members may have an opportunity of reading it before the Estimates come on! It is most unsatisfactory to have it tabled on the very morning when we are considering them, because it means that it will not be printed until to-day, and we shall not get it until to-morrow. This is an important department, and I think we should be in a position to read the report before being asked to consider the Estimates. To my mind, it would have been perfectly easy to have the report tabled at the end of last week.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I just got it from the printer this morning.

Mr. MOORE: How can we deal with the department under these conditions? We want to see particulars of the expenditure that is going on, and know exactly the position, but we are unable to do so.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): I also want to protest against the delay in tabling the report of the department until the very morning when we are dealing with the Estimates. It is bound to lead to a lot of dissatisfaction, and it is impossible for the Opposition to criticise the department properly without it.

I have something to say regarding the condition of the public buildings of the State. We ought to do a fair thing by them, but they are being allowed to deteriorate. All over the State they are the dirtiest and most dilapidated buildings in every town you enter, and I am quite sure that no private person, whether in a large or small way, would allow his buildings to get into a similar condition. We see private owners everywhere painting up and doing

repairs, although it is expensive, and I hope that the Minister will be able to offer some explanation as to why Government buildings are allowed to get out of order for the want of a few small repairs.

We have plenty of inspectors, but they are about all we have got. The Department of Public Instruction, realising the expense of constructing schools, are very often quite satisfied to erect a smaller school but one suitable for the needs of the district, but for some reason or other the smaller buildings are not erected. I do not know the reason for it. I do not know whether the architects are to blame, or whether the department constructing these buildings do not take into account that this cheaper and most useful type of building would be very useful in the small centres. There are many districts to-day requiring new buildings, and which have been waiting for a very long time for them. My own electorate is suffering from the lack of school accommodation, and I dare say that is the complaint of almost every hon. member. Just recently a large school was erected at Toowoomba.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. DEACON: I am only referring to that in passing because I consider that in the construction of schools the Department of Public Works should give preference to the country districts over the large cities.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I also protest against the tabling of the report of the Department of Public Works on the day on which the Estimates in connection with that department are being discussed. The last report dealing with that department was tabled last year, and deals with operations up to 30th June of that year. This is one of the largest departments, and essentially a spending department, and it is unfair to ask us at this stage to criticise intelligently the operations of the department. It is impossible to do so because we are not the administrators, and until we obtain knowledge as to the internal workings of the department as contained in the report we are unable to criticise the department's operations. It is from these reports that we obtain information enabling us to ventilate the apparent position of our finances in Queensland. The hon. member for Cunningham stated that public buildings in the country have deteriorated to a considerable extent.

I desire to deal with the policy of administration adopted by the Department of Public Works. The Minister during the last couple of years has consistently denied that there has been a change of policy with respect to expenditure of loan money and revenue. I intend to show as clearly as I can that there has been a change of policy, and by reason of that change of policy we should have had a greater surplus each year. Prior to this Government coming into power the amount of loan money so expended was very small, but taking the expenditure of loan money and revenue combined, the amount expended by the previous Administration was approximately the same as the amount expended by the present Administration. The effect of this Government's policy is that money is being put into ventures which are giving absolutely no return. In proof of that statement I wish to point out that in 1915, the year prior to this Government coming into power, the amount expended on public buildings out of revenue

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was £190,438. The amount expended from loan money in that year was £73,355. That shows that nearly three times as much was spent out of revenue on public buildings as from loan expenditure. In the year 1923-1924 the amount expended on public buildings from revenue was £99,931—somewhere in the vicinity of £100,000 less than was spent by the Government in 1915, when the revenue was much lower. The amount expended by the Government on public buildings last year out of loan money was £246,580, as against an expenditure of £73,000 from the same fund by the previous Administration. Those figures show that there has been a transformation of expenditure in regard to those two funds. When it is found that public works are being built from loan money instead of revenue no hon. member can deny that there has been a change of policy by this Government. That is one reason why the finances of the State are in the position they are to-day. If loan moneys are expended on public works from which the State has a chance of securing some return, then it will have an opportunity of meeting its interest obligations. If loan money is expended in avenues which do not give any return, there can be only one result. Rentals are charged for a number of the Government buildings, but it will be found that the amount is only in the vicinity of £15,000. If the total amount that has been expended by the Department of Public Works from loan money in Government buildings is considered, it will be found that the return falls short of the interest on the money expended by many thousands of pounds.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There are quite a number of departments occupying those buildings which are charged no rent at all.

Mr. KERR: That is the whole trend of my argument. Under the previous Government it will be found that these buildings were built from ordinary revenue, which carried no interest charge whatever. To-day, under the present Administration, the revenue of the State is being utilised for other purposes, and loan moneys are being utilised to carry out works which at one time were constructed from revenue. That policy should stop, and has got to stop, because it is affecting the whole of the State. One of the direct results of such a policy was the necessity to reduce the salaries of public servants in order to get extra revenue to make ends meet and pay interest. This state of affairs will continue so long as loan money is spent on the public works policy of the Government to an amount altogether out of comparison with the amount expended from revenue, and the finances will continue to be in the position they are in to-day. It is no argument for the Minister to say that the Government will require £1,000,000 from loan money in order to build schools. The revenue was so watched by the previous Administration that they were able to meet their commitments. The same conditions exist to-day as in 1915, and if public works are needed to-day and no money from revenue is utilised in that direction, why is it they were able, in 1915, to pursue that policy? The trouble will continue so long as they go on spending these enormous amounts of loan money. The expenditure in the aggregate is practically the same as it was in 1915, but at that time most of it came out

of revenue. In addition, there has not been a comparatively great increase in our revenue. I think the amount received in 1915 was almost similar to that received in 1923, from a comparative point of view. Yet we find that the loan money expended in 1923 is three times greater than that expended in 1915.

The hon. member for Nundah, when this matter was under consideration last session, asked the Secretary for Public Works a question by way of interjection. It was—

“Mr. Kelso: Do you provide a sinking fund for these loan moneys?”

“The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No.”

Yet the Secretary for Public Works later said that it was fair to cover the period of expenditure of forty years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Government loan policy is a matter for the Treasury and not for this department.

Mr. KERR: I am just bringing in the policy of the loan money expended on the administration of the Department of Public Works in previous years. I think that is purely a question of administration.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member cannot discuss it under this vote.

Mr. KERR: Perhaps not so far as this particular vote is concerned, but the Secretary for Public Works has been expending that money for his department, and, if he says there is no provision for a sinking fund, I take it that I am in order in discussing the matter. Perhaps I shall be able to do so in detail when discussing other Estimates. It is not fair to say that this loan should be extended over a period of forty years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must insist on my ruling being obeyed.

Mr. KERR: I bow to your ruling, Mr. Pollock. I felt justified in discussing the matter under this vote, as I thought I was on the right track. I ask the Secretary for Public Works to give a logical explanation. Year after year he has denied the statement about this loan money. The figures I have quoted show absolutely that there has been a change of policy. I think that the policy which I have outlined is acting detrimentally to the State, and that it should stop. We cannot go on spending money in that way.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KERR: All right, Mr. Pollock. I have said enough in that regard. I do not intend to speak at length on our public buildings, but there is one item in connection with my electorate which needs attention—the Taringa State School. The last time I saw that building it was an outstanding disgrace. The paint was coming off—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must deal with that on the proper vote.

Mr. KERR: I suppose I must wait until the correct vote is reached. At this stage I shall restrict myself to the statement I have made as to the change of policy. I hope that the Secretary for Public Works will give some explanation.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I must add my complaint to others about not receiving the departmental report in time. We desire to

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make some intelligent criticism, and the Minister will agree that it is necessary to have the report before us. By having the report we are able to deal with matters intelligently. It is not right that we should be kept in ignorance as to the working of the department for the past year.

I take this opportunity of complaining about the continuance of the Government's policy with regard to day labour. I think most hon. members who take an interest in the works going up throughout the State must agree that we should have an altered policy regarding the erection of public works. The contract system should be given a chance. I contend that the Government should agree that the Department of Public Works should compile an estimate of the value of the building by day labour, and also ask for estimates from contractors. If the estimates [10.30 a.m.] from the contractors are more favourable than those under the day-labour system, the department should allow a contractor to do the work, subject to the supervision and satisfaction of the department. Surely that will be a sound and fair enough policy! It cannot be contended that employees working for contractors can be harassed by their employers, because to-day we have industrial awards, and the workmen have the protection of the Arbitration Courts. Under the awards of the Court the men working for contractors have the same conditions as those working under the day-labour system.

Mr. COLLINS: Yes, but we get scamped work on contract.

Mr. CORSER: I do not know that there is any of this scamped work, which is always said to be somewhere under the ground. I make the statement that this work should be done under the supervision of the Government's own inspectors, and surely it is the business of the inspectors to see that there is no scamped work.

Mr. COLLINS: It would be necessary to have an inspector there all the time.

Mr. CORSER: There would be no necessity for an inspector to be there the whole of the time. We know that certain Government works are carried out under the supervision of Government inspectors, who only visit the works periodically. If a policy is wrong in one regard, it must be wrong in the other. All our huge administrative buildings were constructed prior to the introduction of the day-labour system. Take the Executive Buildings, the Treasury Buildings, and other large Government buildings. Can anyone say that they were scamped? The present building that we are in to-day is a credit to the State, and is equal to any building constructed for a similar purpose in the Commonwealth, and the greater portion of it was constructed over fifty years ago. Yet it stands as a model to-day so far as usefulness and style go. There is no Parliament House in the Commonwealth to-day that can show anything in the way of conveniences that are not provided by the designs of this building. Has this building been scamped? If it is contended by the Labour Government that the contract system leads to scamping, then it must be the result of their own policy. I do not hold that view. I contend that any workman who is worthy of his hire will do his work well, whether he is working for a contractor or under the day-labour system, and if he cannot do his work under the one

system as against the other, he should not look for that kind of employment. The present policy of the Government is leading to a state of affairs that is not of advantage to the State. In going over the works in connection with the great irrigation proposals, we found that the Commissioner, Mr. Partridge, could erect his buildings for far less than it costs the Government to erect buildings. Further, the buildings that have been erected for the irrigation works are of more convenient design and are finished in detail in a way that has never been attempted by the Works Department, because of its shortage of funds.

Mr. GLEDSON: All done by day labour.

Mr. CORSER: No—by contract labour. It is useless for the hon. member to try and refute that statement. We know that buildings erected at a cost of £300 by Mr. Partridge would cost the department £800; and one of the pleasing features of that irrigation scheme up to the present is that so great a value has been received for the money expended in building. I am not blaming the officials of the Works Department; I am blaming the policy of the Government in insisting that this day-labour system shall continue. It has gone on so long now that it has become a shame. Under a different system a great many more buildings could be erected for the amount of money expended.

Mr. HARTLEY: Buildings fit to be used as a woolshed.

Mr. CORSER: You could not build many woolsheds for the money expended, when it costs so much to erect a little school building that will provide accommodation for about thirty-two children.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would ask the hon. member to keep to the vote under discussion.

Mr. CORSER: I will endeavour not to be drawn aside. If the Government insist that their policy of day labour is better than the contract system, it is up to them to allow contractors to tender for the jobs available to ascertain whether the buildings can be erected under the department's estimates. The department have the estimates of their officials, which are unknown to the contractors, and the price tendered by the contractor would be a check on the department. If the Minister allowed that to be done, it would be of advantage to the State.

Our system of expenditure in the past has to a very great degree been a drain on our revenue. We find that to-day there is a tremendous amount more in proportion drawn from loan funds for public buildings than there was in the past. We find that in 1923-1924 71 per cent. of the money expended on public buildings was drawn from loan funds as against 28 per cent. in 1914-1915. That shows that, in regard to expenditure on public buildings, the Government are favoured, inasmuch as a considerable amount of money for public buildings has been drawn by them from loan funds, whereas past Governments have expended the money from revenue. Had the same ratio of expenditure from revenue as against loan been adhered to by the present Government as was the case in 1914-1915, there would have been a considerable difference in our surplus. The expenditure on public buildings

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paid from loan moneys in 1923-1924 would have shown a difference of £149,000, or it would have shown that since the present Government came in they have saved themselves through not finding the money from revenue an expenditure of £781,000 in nine years. Had they carried out the same policy as the previous Administration in not spending more than 28 per cent. or 29 per cent. from loan funds, there would have been a loss to revenue of £781,000 in nine years. In a comparison of the total expenditure and expenditure on public buildings during the period of this Government and that of the last Government, we can take it that the total expenditure from revenue and loan in 1914-1915 was £9,000,000, and in 1923-1924, £18,000,000. The expenditure on public buildings in 1914-1915 was £263,000 from loan fund, while in 1923-1924 it was £346,000, or 1.19 per cent. in 1923-1924 as against 2.7 per cent. in 1914-1915. I contend that the buildings which have suffered under this policy are the school buildings, but, as there is a special vote under which those buildings can be discussed, I am not going to digress and allow myself to enter into a controversy with you, Mr. Pollock, at the present time. What I will say is that, if the Government are going to continue a policy of ever increasing the amount spent under the Buildings vote from loan, they should be more and more careful in spending loan money on public buildings which are not going to last for a very long time or be the best of security. The Government should see that care is exercised to the maximum extent. We should provide for a system of contract work, if that system is going to give us a better result for the expenditure of our money than is now being obtained. I contend that the Government should alter their policy in that direction if necessary, as it will be a sound policy and be best for the State and for those who want public buildings, because our money will go further in that way.

Mr. COLLINS: The best for the contractor.

Mr. CORSER: The contractor may make something out of it, but I cannot see very much difference in that. We must have a supervisor. Does the hon. member say that the contractor never loses money? We know that all contractors do not always make money, and that contractors are not any more wealthy than quite a lot of people who are hangers-on of the Labour party. There are many men outside who claim to have Labour sympathies and support hon. members on the other side, but who are wealthy as well. Why attack the contractor if the contract system is a sane system? Why not give him an opportunity to use his brains as against the brains of the department? There is no other argument against that proposition than the fact that day labour is supposed to be popular with the multitude, and therefore the Government have adopted it whether it be right or wrong. They seem to be determined that they are not going to give it a reasonable chance of competing with day labour, although they know that their business may be improved very considerably by allowing the contractor to use his brains.

Mr. F. A. COOPER (*Bremor*): We all admit that in discussing the question of the contract system as against the day-labour system we must have some basis for argu-

ment. If the hon. member for Burnett had pointed out that this building was built by contract and not by day labour, that there was nothing scamped, and that it is substantial and a credit to the builder, when I say that he would have some fair and reasonable argument. For I say we could have nothing better, nothing more decent than this; and if this is a typical result of the contract system, then we are bound to say that it speaks well for the contract system. But I would just like to quote the following paragraph from this book, "Queensland Politics during Sixty Years, 1859-1919," to which I would draw the attention of the hon. member for Burnett and his party:—

"The records of 1866 mention the fact that the contractor for the new Houses of Parliament encountered extreme difficulty in securing the necessary supply of freestone, and after innumerable difficulties with contractors a quarry was rented at £150 a year and the stone procured by day labour. Enthusiastic parliamentary advocates for the day-labour system will no doubt be pleased to be reminded that the very building in which they legislate was responsible fifty-three years ago for the initiation of the system of day-labour work."

(Government laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: The building was not constructed by day labour. It was built by contract. That refers to securing the supply of stone.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: The stone was provided by day labour, and I would recommend to the hon. member that he follow the advice which he will find in a well-known cookery book, "First catch your hare." I advise him first to catch his facts. If he will first catch his facts, he may then be able to build up a theory. The question of the superiority or otherwise of day labour admits of no argument. Given the same set of circumstances, the same amount of work to do, and same men to do it, under the day-labour system the necessity for profit is eliminated, and therefore the necessity for bad work is eliminated. The question leaves no room for argument. If day labour had failed, if there had been any instance in which it had gone wrong, there would be some room for argument. I know that in ninety-nine cases out of 100 you can put your finger right down on the trouble, and it is a matter of supervision. Do not forget that the excellent work done under the day-labour system needs supervision, but no more than work under the contract system. I do not care how you arrive at the result or how you argue. It is so self-evident that with the same men, the same appliances and conditions, you must get better work and a cheaper job under the day-labour system than under the contract system. It admits of no argument. I would like to point out that a contractor is more liable to scamp work—the hon. member for Burnett thinks he is not—than is the case under the day-labour system.

This may be only a small matter, but it is a straw that points the way the stream flows. The sanitary system of the city of Ipswich is conducted by the city council under the day-labour system, and it is an efficient system. The sanitary system adopted by the Moreton Shire, which is the adjoining local authority, is the contract system, and

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the other day the Moreton Shire had the painful necessity of fining the contractor £50 for inefficient performance of his duties.

Mr. KELSO: Or the men's?

Mr. F. A. COOPER: No, the contractor. These are the same men, the same kind of men, the same flesh and blood, and born under the one flag—exactly the same men. They are paid the same wages, and there is no difference between them, except that under the day-labour system, with proper supervision, the work is more efficiently performed for the city council than it is performed for the Moreton Shire Council with its contract system, which is a leaky system, and can be traced from one end of the shire to the other. The day is past when we can argue against day labour, but we can insist upon proper supervision, and we can insist upon seeing that those who supervise are in earnest, and want to do the job properly.

Mr. KELSO: Blame the supervisor every time.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: I blame the supervisor if anything goes wrong. We have not yet arrived at the magnificent state of society when every cog does its work automatically.

Mr. KELSO: Does the hon. gentleman admit that?

Mr. F. A. COOPER: We still need keeping up—there is no question about that. I am not blind in these matters. All workmen need keeping up. Every job needs its proper supervision, not only to keep the men up but to see that the work dovetails and is carefully done.

Mr. KELSO: That is a big admission.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: The work of the supervisor is not to walk round with a whip and flog the men, but to see that the work co-ordinates in every way. That is the proper duty of the supervisor. If when building a school a supervisor sends out first the iron for the roof, the window frames second, the lining boards third, the uprights fourth, and three or four months afterwards sends out the piles for the building—

Hon. J. G. APPEL: That has been done.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: I know that has been done, but that is no condemnation of the day-labour system, but is absolute condemnation of inefficient supervision. Before we can get the full effect of the day-labour system, we must stand for efficient supervision. A proper system will mean nothing more or less than efficient supervision. Those who think that when we reach a proper social system there will be a happy go lucky, go as you please system will be making a very big error. It will be more onerous on a man because of the fact that it will be necessary for him to do his share.

Mr. KELSO: He will be a slave?

Mr. F. A. COOPER: If he is a slave, he will be a slave to the community, and not a slave to the individual. If he is a slave to the community he will be a better slave, and we shall all be slaves working in the one interest.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman is speaking with his tongue in his cheek.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: I am not speaking with my tongue in my cheek, and, unlike

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the hon. member, I have my brains in my head.

Mr. KELSO: According to the hon. gentleman's statement he is a monopolist.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: It is clearly impossible for me to be a monopolist. The doors are wide enough, and will admit the hon. gentleman. He may have an opportunity of speaking after I have finished, and I will leave to him proof of his capacity which he has not exhibited to-day. The day-labour system with supervision that is efficient and competent is the basis of what we have still to see for our betterment.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): I quite agree with the remarks of the leader of the Opposition and other hon. members on this side in connection with the delay in the presentation of the annual report of the Department of Public Works until the last moment, and thus preventing hon. members on this side from having the opportunity of digesting it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Hon. W. H. Barnes, the previous Minister, did not table his report until 10th October

Mr. MAXWELL: However, I compliment the hon. gentleman upon recognising the intelligence of hon. members on this side in being able to grasp the contents of the report immediately, and to present their views upon it at a moment's notice.

The views expressed by the hon. member for Burnett in connection with day labour and contract are similar to the views I have put before the Committee on various occasions. Hon. members opposite associated those views with employerdom, and turned them down. The hon. member for Bremer stated that the day is past for criticising day labour. If there was no bad, scamped work done under the day-labour system, there would be no reason for us to deal with the question. I am going to deal with that point, and ask the Secretary for Public Works how he accounts for the fact that £4,110 12s. 3d. had to be spent to reinstate the State school at Virginia which was constructed by day labour and was afterwards blown down in a storm. That is one case in point. This school was held up to the public as extraordinary work done under the day-labour system by good, honest working men, while hon. members opposite at the same time held up to ridicule employers who were prepared to scamp their work. I want to know whether that job was scamped?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you say it was?

Mr. MAXWELL: I say that it was blown down after it was built.

Mr. FOLEY: Half Townsville was blown down in the "Leonta" cyclone.

Mr. MAXWELL: That is all very well. Hon. members opposite asked me for an instance, and I have given them one. I will give them another instance of scamped work under day labour before I finish.

Mr. WEIR: What do you want to prove in that case?

Mr. MAXWELL: I have proved that one of the day-labour jobs of the department was blown down and that £4,110 12s. 3d. had to be spent to reconstruct it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Don't forget there was a new addition added, too.

Mr. MAXWELL: I suppose we shall be told that that was the result of lack of supervision. The Secretary for Public Works stated by way of interjection that an addition was also made to the school. Will the hon. gentleman deny that the building was blown down?

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you blame the men who put in the piles, or whom do you blame?

Mr. MAXWELL: Let us read what the Royal Commissioner said in connection with the day-labour work carried out by the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. I have a recollection that, when I was speaking on the question of contract and day labour when these Estimates were before the Committee on a former occasion, the Secretary for Public Works interjected to the effect that the day-labour system was in operation in the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, and that it was not a Tory body. Let us analyse this report. A section of the sewer at Newmarket, from Campbell street to Creek street, was constructed under the day-labour system. This is what the Commissioner said about it in his report, and I am quoting it because it has been said by hon. members opposite that the employer scamps his work. If that is so, it is possible to get at the employer, as has been pointed out by Mr. Harris. If the employer's job is defective, it is possible to cause him to make the work good. This report says—

"I am quite satisfied that the men so arranged things as to lead their foreman to believe that the work was being properly done, and then, when his back was turned, the men neglected to perform the work they were being paid to do. In each of the sections opened up there is evidence of a systematic course of scamping, definite and premeditated. I am quite satisfied that the men wilfully and advisedly deceived their foreman both at Campbell street and at Creek street."

That is one of the day-labour jobs we hear so much about.

Mr. FOLEY: That is a question of supervision.

Mr. COLLINS: Yes—bad supervision.

Mr. MAXWELL: In the case of the work at East Brisbane, it was a trick put up by a section of men who were out to damage the good reputation of others. A man named Ryan was discharged by Gorrie, who was Mr. Hornibrook's foreman. A few days later Ryan laid a charge regarding the scamping of certain work. Hon. members opposite say that there was a lack of supervision. When the chairman of the Commission asked certain questions, those concerned shifted their ground, and said that it was not their work at all—that others were responsible for it. Notwithstanding all that, we find that the men had definite work to do. Charges were made about defective pipes being put in, and when the Commissioner went into that question he could find no trace of any defective pipes. That merely shows the venom and spite exhibited by a section who attempted to ruin absolutely the reputation of a decent contractor.

I say it is a sorry state of affairs when men resort to tactics like that. It is all very well for people to advocate the day-labour

system, but, as I have emphasised on various occasions, when those men and when hon. members opposite want work done for themselves the contract system is good enough for them. When it is a question of public buildings and of public money being expended, the day-labour system is brought into operation.

As the hon. member for Burnett has pointed out—and his remarks endorse my former statements—if you put a contractor's tender for a certain piece of work alongside the estimate of officers of the department, it will soon be seen that the contractor's tender is the more favourable. I am quite satisfied as to the result. As was emphasised by the hon. member for Burnett, can hon. members opposite say that the Treasury Building, Executive Building, and the State Insurance Building were scamped? They were all built by contract. I have heard that a Trades Hall in Rockhampton was erected by contract.

Mr. CORSER: Even the Brisbane Trades Hall was finished by contract.

Mr. MAXWELL: I want to say that I hold no brief for any dishonest employer or employee. The penalties are there for dealing with the dishonest employer who scamps his work. At the same time, I am emphatically against hon. members on the other side, who do not know the position at all, attempting to traduce a body of decent men who have their livings to make, and who are not the wealthy men that some hon. members opposite are. They have not been so fortunate.

The gods have not been so good [11 a.m.] as to allow them to make a lot of money. I know of numerous instances where men have lost on their contracts. Take the State Insurance building and the amount of money the contractor lost on that. Mr. Mason told me that he lost £4,000 on that job, and he said to me, "You can make this statement on the floor of the House. You can make it where you like—I lost £4,000 on it." I know what is running through the minds of hon. members opposite—they do not always lose money. They do not. If they did, they would have to file a schedule in insolvency.

What does the Commissioner say in connection with Lind's contract? He says that the contractor honestly believed that the work had been done, and on page 55 of his report he says—

"It seems to me that the men deliberately and intentionally scamped the 12 feet of packing in this drive."

That is in rebuttal of the statements that have been made by hon. members on the other side about the scamping of work. Hon. members opposite say that under the day-labour system you will get a better job and you will get it done cheaper. Did they get a cheaper job in connection with the sewerage scheme in the metropolitan area? They paid pretty dearly for that. Mr. Oliver, the Commissioner appointed to inquire into the cost of those works some years ago, stated that day labour was always more expensive than contract, and that he got more satisfaction out of the latter system. That was the statement of the man appointed for the purpose of going into the whole question with a view to arriving at some definite idea as to the advice to be given to the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board.

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He gave that advice, and it was ignored. Why? Because day labour is the policy of hon. gentlemen opposite, irrespective of whether it is going to be a loss to the State or not. They do not seem to mind. They do not care so long as they get the people's money to spend where they like. Throw it to the four winds of Heaven! It does not matter to them. It does not matter what it costs, so long as they can say to their supporters, "You got employment while the money was available."

I want to quote a statement that I made in 1923, as reported in "Hansard," vol. CXLIII, page 1495, and the hon. gentleman will have an opportunity of challenging it when he gets up. Up to the present the Government have done nothing. I referred then to the cost of buildings in the Innisfail district, and we have heard nothing about that. This is what I stated—

"A building erected under the day-labour system cost £102 per square, and a building erected for the Workers' Dwellings Board under the contract system was erected for £58 per square."

These buildings were both supervised by the officers of the Department of Public Works, and you may rest assured that they saw that the contractors for the Workers' Dwellings Board gave a good job. How does it come that it cost £102 per square to construct a building under day labour, and in the very same area and under the very same conditions it cost only £58 per square under contract? They were both superintended by officers of the department. It has been stated by hon. members opposite that, if it could be proved that under the day-labour system work had been scamped, they would be in a position to review the whole situation. I have given two illustrations this morning. I have instanced a new building—the Virginia school—which was erected by day labour and blown down, and I have also quoted sections of the report of the Commissioner, Mr. Harris, P.M., who was appointed to deal with the question of contract and day labour in connection with the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board's works. I claim exactly the same rights for the community as hon. members opposite claim for some of their friends. I say that the taxpayers have a legitimate right to submit estimates for work required, and if they do not carry out their work in accordance with the plans and specifications, then the department have their clerk of works to rectify matters. I do not say that the officers would neglect giving proper supervision. I do not think they would. I have a better opinion of the officers of the Department of Public Works than to think that; but I say that the same privileges should be given to the contractors as are being given to the advocates of the day-labour system. I certainly hope that the Minister will review the whole situation in the face of the facts that have been brought forward. I can understand the smile of the hon. gentleman.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you object to me smiling?

MR. MAXWELL: If it was his own money, I venture to say he would require full value for every 20s. spent—

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is as much my money as yours.

[Mr. Maxwell.]

MR. MAXWELL: But seeing it is Government money it does not matter.

MR. COLLINS: That is nonsense.

MR. MAXWELL: It is nonsense to do it, and I am arguing as I am because I think it is nonsense. It is the biggest fraud that was ever perpetrated on the people.

MR. HARTLEY: What is?

MR. MAXWELL: That this system should be continued, and hon. members on the other side know it. They can hear, and they can see, and they know the condition of affairs as they are to-day.

MR. FARRELL: That is why we are still over here.

MR. MAXWELL: With a minority. Hon. members opposite represent 13,000 less electors than are represented by members on this side.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

MR. MAXWELL: I am not going to deal with that matter—that was in reply to the hon. member for Rockhampton. I do not know that it will do any good for hon. members on this side to ventilate this question, but at any rate we can let the people outside know the condition of affairs as they obtain to-day; and I am quite satisfied that the time is not very far distant when hon. members on the other side will be occupying the benches on this side, and that we, at any rate, shall be given an opportunity to do what we can for the advancement and betterment of the people of this State.

MR. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I have not very much to say in connection with the Estimates of the Department of Public Works. Before I deal with the department, I say straight out that, if you show slipshod management, you will get slipshod work. I tell hon. members here that, if they think they can come into this Chamber five minutes before the consideration of the Estimates and throw the report on the table, and then expect that sound and solid criticism can be given to them, they are very much mistaken. I enter a very emphatic protest against the tabling of the report of the Department of Public Works five minutes before we are asked to consider the Estimates of the Department. I do not think it is a fair thing to ask the Committee to consider this vote without having the departmental report in their hand. I know the report was tabled this morning, and the few copies that were intended for the Press were given to members of the Opposition, but it was not until five minutes ago that there was a report available except the official report on the table. That is about as slipshod a way of treating the people's representatives as you can get, and I, for one, pretty warmly resent, and always will warmly resent, action of that kind.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HARTLEY: If we want good work in a community we should set an example from the top, and it will then be followed by those at the bottom. I do not care what class we may be dealing with. I am not dealing now with the question of whether the day-labour or contract system is better. What I say is that, taken all round, the officials of the Department of Public Works do good honest work. In some cases their

work is a little more expensive than it might be if done by a private firm.

Mr. KELSO: How do you account for the difference?

Mr. HARTLEY: When people compare the cost of a school built by private contract with one built by day-labour, they do not take into consideration the differences in the size of the materials and the methods of building. After all, what the hon. member for Bremer says is right—that in a day-labour job the incentive to cheat—that is what it is—by putting in poor material or scamping the work is not so great as it is in contract-work. On a day-labour job a man, unless he is offered a bonus, cannot get more than his wages, and his incentive is to do the very best he can, both from pride in his work and in return for his wages. But that is not the incentive which obtains in contract-work. A contractor has to give a low price to compete with others, and after he has got the contract he may find that the price is too low, and that he cannot make a sufficient margin over and above what it is costing him for material and wages. The first thing he does is to put materials in that are not in accordance with the contract. I have seen contractors filling in holes in posts and doctoring them up, and putting in too much sand and not sufficient cement.

Mr. KELSO: You admit that the inspection must be bad in that case.

Mr. HARTLEY: You can only have one inspector, and it is not practicable to put a Government inspector over a contractor the whole time. You could not have inspected the State Insurance building with one inspector; it would have taken four or five inspectors to watch that big job; you would have wanted one on the concrete board, one on the timber, and some on other things; it would be nonsense to talk about that. The contractor there was an honest contractor.

Mr. KELSO: According to your argument, it is not necessary to have an inspector on a day-labour job.

Mr. HARTLEY: It is not so necessary to have an inspector on a Government day-labour job as on a contract job, because nine times out of ten you have a staff of men whose ability and honesty have been previously tried. You do not get that on a contractor's job. He is always changing his men and staff, but on a Government day-labour job you have a team of men whose capabilities, skill, and honesty as workmen are well known. You certainly want an inspector to keep the work running smoothly, and to see that undue delays do not occur by one section of the work getting ahead or behind the other as the case may be.

A very pertinent point has been brought up—the wrecking of the Virginia State school by a cyclone. So far as I could find out, there was nothing wrong with the building of that school; there was nothing wrong with the reinforced concrete piles that it was built on. What happened was that a very fierce cyclone came along and, owing to the big expanse of the wall and the track of the storm striking broadside on the building, it pushed it over and blew it off the piles. That was not at all unusual, because on the very same day through the same cyclone a brick church, thoroughly well built, with a concrete foundation—built by

contract I am informed—was completely wrecked. That shows the fallacy of the argument used in that connection. It simply means that, when you get up against the forces of Nature, as in that cyclone, it does not matter whether a building is constructed by contract or day-labour, it is bound to go. I want to say again that I want to see the report brought earlier before the Committee, and that we should get first preference before departmental reports go outside.

Mr. FARRELL (*Rockhampton*): It was interesting this morning to hear the hon. member for Toowong giving the Committee the benefit of what he was given by his boss during the week end.

Mr. KELSO: What boss?

Mr. FARRELL: You know what boss I am referring to—the same boss that you have got outside. We have the contractor member for Toowong coming here this morning and running down the principle of day labour that Labour has stood for for many years. Before I deal with that question, I want to say that I appreciate very much the civility and the help that has been given to me at all times both by the Secretary for Public Works and his staff in the office in Brisbane. In Rockhampton we have also a very efficient staff in the Department of Public Works, and some of the public buildings which have been constructed in that city reflect very great credit on the working of the policy of day labour and on the administration of those who are in charge of the department in Rockhampton. I notice in the report which has been issued a photograph of the Rockhampton baby clinic, which is one of the finest public buildings we have in Rockhampton at the present time. I want to pay a tribute to the foreman who was in charge of that job and to the excellent work accomplished by the men. The hon. member for Toowong, in referring to some of the work done in the sewerage work in Brisbane, complimented Mr. Hornibrook and the contractors generally for the work done in that connection. I want to refer to some of the work which has been done by contract system in Rockhampton during the last twelve months, and part of which is being continued at the present time. We had in Rockhampton tenders called for the building of a power-house in connection with our electricity supply. The contract was finally given to a Mr. Renshaw, one of the Rockhampton contractors, and a man whose politics never have coincided with mine. Being a firm believer in contract work himself, probably this can be taken as a good example of the cost that contract work can be carried on at. Mr. Renshaw's estimate for building the power-house was £7,300, and the council gave him the contract to build the power-house on a 10 per cent. commission basis.

I find from the last issues of the Rockhampton papers that I have to hand that in answer to a question by one of the Labour aldermen the Mayor stated that the power-house, instead of costing £7,300 and giving the contractor £730, as he estimated, has cost up to date £19,000, and that the contractor has drawn £1,900. I say quite definitely that, if that work had been carried out by day-labour under a competent foreman such as we have in the Department of Public Works, the estimate of £7,300 would not have been exceeded at all. The additional money has been wasted through lack of super-

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vision and through other causes upon which I do not intend to touch just now.

Mr. TAYLOR: Was the building not erected out of money borrowed from the Government and was not the work subject to Government supervision?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; they borrowed the money outside the Government.

Mr. FARRELL: As a matter of fact, the money was borrowed from the Queensland National Bank. Any hon. member who has followed the building of that powerhouse will agree with me that it is a standing disgrace to the contract system, and is merely another in the long train of examples which go to prove that sooner or later the policy of the Labour party in favour of the day-labour principle will be carried into effect throughout the State. I hope that in making available the loan money which is being given to the City Council for the erection of the new Moore street bridge at Rockhampton the Department of Public Works will insist that the work be carried out by day-labour. I can quote another example in Rockhampton in which the same contract system prevailed, and in which the people's money is being squandered without the supervision which should be given to it by the contractor. Let me take the particular contractor mentioned by the hon. member for Toowong. The contract for carrying out the water supply station for Rockhampton, running into an amount of something like £240,000, has been given to Mr. Hornibrook, who at present is enjoying twelve months' holiday in the old country.

Mr. KERR: At his own expense.

Mr. FARRELL: Yes, but who is supervising the work, for which we are paying 10 per cent.?

Mr. KERR: His officers—experts.

Mr. FARRELL: Who is doing the general supervision? The man who has the contract is holidaying in the old country. If it is right for the contractor to be well paid and yet be away for twelve months' holiday in England, surely it is right that the work should be performed by day-labour and the foreman put on a decent wage? There is an example of Mr. Hornibrook enjoying himself out of the money he must be making out of the ratepayers of Rockhampton.

There is another point to be noticed in this argument of day-labour against the contract system. When erecting the public buildings of Rockhampton under the day-labour principle, the workmen enjoyed decent conditions and there was no complaint whatever, although the work was well supervised. Since the job was started at Yaamba for the supply of water to the people of Rockhampton, Mr. Hornibrook's agent has been in the court no fewer than three times as a result of prosecutions by the industrial inspector for refusing to carry out the award, and on the last occasion for refusing to provide decent housing conditions for his men.

Mr. MOORE: What was the finding of the court?

Mr. FARRELL: The magistrate remarked that the men must have decent working conditions, and Mr. Hornibrook's agent was

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financed for not carrying out the award. That was the third time the industrial inspector had him in the court, and I suppose that before the job is finished the agent will be in the court another dozen times to force him to give decent conditions to his men. I do not think there is any room for argument as between the day-labour policy and the contract policy of our friends opposite. I know of course that, when the hon. member for Toowong makes a speech in this Chamber in favour of the contract system, he is not giving his own views but is speaking as a result of what his bosses have told him during the week end.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): There is just one thing I want to say in reply to some hon. members opposite who have addressed the Committee on this question. I want to point out that Mr. Harris, P.M., the Commissioner at the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board inquiry, said in reference to the work on the section of the sewer from Campbell street to Creek street, on page 72 of his report:—

“Here the men were employed and paid directly by the Board, and they purposely and intentionally deceived their foremen and loafed for a portion of the time they should have been working. Men who have intentionally deceived the Board's supervisors in this way ought to be no longer employed by the Board.”

That is an example of what can happen under the day-labour system and the comment of the Commissioner upon it.

So far as I am personally concerned, I want to say that I am not working for any boss. I am a free man, and the people I represent are the only bosses I recognise. At any rate, I need not carry out the dictates or the instructions of the Caucus or the Trades Hall as to what shall be done or shall not be done. I leave the hon. member for Rockhampton to the tender mercies of the Rockhampton police.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I was very pleased to hear the hon. member for Fitzroy backing up the protest which has been made by members of the Opposition against the delay in the presentation of the report of the Department of Public Works till a few minutes ago. I certainly think it is not a fair thing to bring on the Estimates of a department when the report has not been in our hands at least for twenty-four hours. I do not know what the object is, but it looks as though it were to stifle discussion. If hon. members are expected to get up here on the spur of the moment and discuss what is in the report under those conditions, I am afraid it is expecting us to do the impossible.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It would be impossible for you to discuss it intelligently or fairly.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member must have a twisted mind. He must believe that if there is any man in the world who has any intelligence, it is himself.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If my mind was as twisted as yours, it would be like a cork-screw. You have neither intelligence nor fairness.

Mr. KELSO: If the hon. gentleman would show his intelligence instead of throwing innuendoes—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If you are throwing them at me, you will get all you are looking for.

Mr. KELSO: I think that the policy of the Department of Public Works in insisting upon deciding what work shall be carried out is unfair to the other departments. Each department is supposed to be responsible for the loan money debited to its account, and, if a department has decided that certain work shall be done, it should have the right to say in what order it shall be carried out. It is not good that the decision should be left to the Works Department. I admit that on every occasion on which I interviewed the Minister or his Under Secretary I have received every consideration, and I take it that it applies to other hon. members on other occasions. I cannot understand the Minister being so touchy.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Don't you think you can come into this Chamber and make imputations without stating the real facts.

Mr. KELSO: Without being personal, I think my statement is a very fair one. The matter was taken up by the hon. member for Fitzroy. He complained about the unfairness of asking the Committee to discuss these Estimates when the report affecting the department is handed round at [11.30 a.m.] the very minute we commence to discuss the Estimates. I know the Minister may be quite within his rights in saying that the report need not have been tabled until a later stage, but I contend that in that case the Estimates should be brought forward at a later date. We should have a report at least twenty-four hours before being called upon to discuss the Estimates affecting that department. It is absurd to expect hon. gentlemen to discuss the matter intelligently without having the report.

Mr. WEIR: We did not ask the hon. gentleman to discuss the question intelligently. Perish the thought!

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman's own colleague has admitted that it is absurd to expect hon. members to intelligently discuss the Estimates without the report.

Mr. WEIR: He has something to growl about, but you have not.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member for Fitzroy admitted that he could not intelligently discuss the Estimates without the report. I do not know whether he was speaking for the rest of hon. members opposite. A great deal has been said about day labour versus contract, but it is an extraordinary thing, when the department are standing up very strongly for the day-labour system, that the homes constructed under the Workers' Dwellings Act and the Workers' Homes Act are constructed under the contract system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that they are built for and on behalf of the borrowers, which is a different proposition altogether. If a borrower desired to have a house built under the day-labour system he could have it built under that system.

Mr. KELSO: That is the answer to the whole argument. The hon. gentleman has

given the whole show away. He knows perfectly well that the average man who wants to build a home under the Workers' Dwellings Act is aware that, if he has his house constructed under the day-labour system, it will be far more costly than under the contract system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not necessarily.

Mr. KELSO: While the department supervise the job so far as tenders are concerned, they have not the audacity—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Department of Public Works does not control those operations. They are controlled by the State Advances Corporation.

Mr. KELSO: I thought the Department of Public Works exercised that control. The State Advances Corporation is a Government department, and day labour is the policy of the Government, and it is an extraordinary thing that that system is not adopted when constructing homes under the Acts I have mentioned. If hon. members opposite were going to construct a house, would they have it carried out under the day-labour system?

Mr. W. COOPER: Of course we would.

Mr. KELSO: Only a very small percentage of them. I have nothing to say against an hon. member who builds his own home, or paints his own home, or puts the roof on if he has the ability to do that; but, when it comes to employing other people, is the system of day labour adopted, or is the contract system preferred? He calls for tenders, and accepts the lowest tender. It is all very well for hon. members opposite to say that the policy of the Government is day labour, and that it is more satisfactory. The hon. member for Toowong has quoted from the report of the Commissioner who inquired into certain defective sewerage work. If hon. members opposite were honest, they would admit at once that the fault is not altogether with the contractor, if there is any fault.

Mr. W. COOPER: In connection with the construction of the main road between Ipswich and Brisbane, we have the contract system condemned.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member for Bremer very frankly stated—I think he made a very sensible speech up to a certain point—that it was all a question of supervision. Hon. gentlemen must admit that you cannot expect perfection from working men, for we have not yet reached that ideal stage. This is the first time that we have had the admission from hon. members opposite that the worker sometimes is to blame, and that he is not the angel that he has been painted. He is not the man who is supposed to take an interest in his work under day labour, and he is not the man—as we were told last year—who has the incentive to do the very best work he can under day labour. He is not the man who is free from any suggestion of slumming work. At the Breakfast Creek sewer, under the day-labour system, the very same tactics were adopted by the men as were stated to have been adopted by the men engaged by the contractors.

Mr. WEIR: It might be a disease that they caught from your people.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman is pretty wide of the mark. It is a difficult thing for

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the workman, who is supposed to be a little angel, according to hon. members opposite, to do everything correctly.

Mr. WEIR: I only say that the workman is better than the hon. gentleman.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman should recognise that the workmen possess the same common frailties as he does himself. He would see that under the day-labour system there is no more incentive for him to do any more than he is forced to do. I ask why it is that men can do better work under the contract system—as we claim in many cases—than under the day-labour system.

Mr. W. COOPER: They cannot.

Mr. KELSO: They can in many cases. It was stated this morning that all men worked under Arbitration Court awards, and hon. members opposite cannot say that a contractor sweats men to-day, if they were able to say it years ago. Whether a man works under the day-labour system or under the contract system, he receives just the same rate of wages. Then it comes to the question of the man himself. What mental attitude does he adopt towards his work? Does he look upon his work as something higher and nobler under the day-labour system than work under the contract system? In connection with the sewerage work, the very same neglect of work was shown in the case of the day-labour work as in the work done under contract. It was not altogether the question of supervision, for there was bad supervision even in connection with the day-labour work. In the final analysis, the position is that, under a day-labour job controlled by the Government, a man feels that he is in a secure position, and there is no incentive for him to do any more than he is compelled to do. Under the contract system a man knows perfectly well that, unless he does a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, he will get no more work when the next job comes along. I think the late Commissioner for Railways, Colonel Evans, made a statement that did not suit the book of the present Administration. When he was going out of office and could speak quite frankly, he said that he believed in every man getting a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Mr. WEIR: I worked under him, and I know differently.

Mr. KELSO: He said also that he believed that a man should give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Dealing with the general question, it is all a matter of incentive. A man has not the incentive to do as much work, without sweating himself, under the day-labour system as he has under the contract system. That is the reason why there is some profit for the contractor.

Mr. BRUCE: Do you know anything about real work?

Mr. KELSO: I had intended to refer to the addition to the Treasury Building and ask one or two questions in relation to it, but as that comes under the Loan Fund Account I shall defer my remarks until we come to that part of the Estimates.

The question of the Virginia State School has been discussed. I am not going into the merits of that work. All I have got to say with respect to it is that it was a most unfortunate act.

Mr. WEIR: Whom are you blaming for it? Who sent the blow?

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Mr. KELSO: I am not going into that question to-day, but it is a mercy that what happened did occur on a Saturday when the children were not there.

Mr. HARTLEY: It was better for the church, too, that the blow did not happen on the Sunday.

Mr. KELSO: In view of what happened the Department of Public Works have taken every precaution in the new building to see that a similar occurrence does not happen again.

Mr. WEIR: Have you anything to say about the construction of the old building?

Mr. KELSO: I do not want to say anything about that.

Mr. WEIR: Come out of your shell.

Mr. KELSO: The design for the old school building at Virginia did not provide for a lateral push in case a heavy wind came. That has been obviated in the new school. Rails have been affixed to each corner of the building and bolted right down to the ground. The experience that the department suffered will stand it in good stead, more especially in similar buildings in the North.

Mr. WEIR: Have you seen any building yet that will stand a cyclone?

Mr. KELSO: I have yet to learn that it was a cyclone; it might have been a semi-cyclone. At the same time it was a very disastrous wind. I believe that the department of Public Works have taken every precaution to see that the same thing does not happen again. I hope that no similar disaster will ever again happen to a State school.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): One or two questions have been raised in the discussion of this vote that call for some reply. I wish to say, first of all, that there was no intention of discourtesy towards the Committee in presenting the report of the department on the day that the Estimates were under discussion. I presented the report to Parliament as soon as it came from the Government Printer. The fact that the Estimates are being considered earlier this year than ordinarily is the reason why the Committee were not in possession of the report before the Estimates were considered. Hon. members must realise that the Department of Public Works is a department with very wide ramifications throughout the State. Its expenditure last year was approximately £604,000. It had branches everywhere working for a large number of Government departments, and the annual report could not be presented to the printer until the reports from all the district officers had been received and the figures checked and verified by the audit inspectors. As soon as that was done the report was sent to the Government Printing Office, and was presented to the Committee as soon as it arrived from the printer. As a matter of fact, the copy I presented to the Committee was handed to me by the messenger of the Government Printing Office as I was passing that building this morning. The department is not blameworthy for any alleged delay. Two months from the close of the financial year is not a long time for the department to get out a report on its wide ramifications. The report was presented last year on 25th September, so that it has been presented this year sixteen days earlier. It would be as well to remind the leader of the

Opposition, who raised the question, that in the last year his party was in power it was not presented to Parliament until 10th November. That fact deals with the question of whether or not the department has been dilatory in presenting its report this year. We have nothing whatever to hide from this Committee. If there is anything in the working of the department that hon. members wish to know, they can secure that information fully during the debate. The reason why the report was not in the hands of hon. members before this vote was being considered was because the extensive ramifications of the department prevented its compilation earlier.

Mr. KERR: It is merely a coincidence that it was presented to-day?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I understand that the hon. member who just interjected is an accountant. He must know that in concerns having the ramifications of the Department of Public Works it would take a considerable time before a report and balance-sheet on its operations were presented to the shareholders. If any company with such wide dealings as the department got out its balance-sheet in two months, it would do very well.

Mr. KELSO: That shows that you ought to bring the Estimates on later.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I wish first to refer to the financing of Government buildings that has been alluded to by the hon. member for Enoggera. It is rather amusing to hear hon. members opposite complain of certain things, and then proceed to make the same speeches over and over again. This is the fifth year that I have had control of the Estimates of the Department of Public Works, and the one thing that has struck me has been the lack of initiative or versatility of hon. members opposite. They get up and quote the same old incidents over and over again, and use the same old arguments couched in the same language. They appear to possess no originality of mind, initiative, or ideals.

Mr. KELSO: You have the monopoly of them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member for Enoggera argued that the Government had been building schools and other public buildings out of loan money, and that it is what he calls unproductive expenditure and does not give any return on the capital invested; therefore, he argues, the revenue should be used almost entirely in the construction of such buildings. It is rather difficult to follow the reasoning of the hon. member. Hon. members must realise in connection with the construction of public buildings such as have been built by the department that they will be in use for a large number of years. Consequently it is only fair to spread the charge for the payment of those buildings over the people who will get the advantage of them. The State Insurance and Treasury buildings, for example, will be in use by the people of Queensland long after we have crumbled to dust. It is a fair thing, therefore, that the future citizens who will receive the benefit of that expenditure should contribute towards its cost. One might as well argue that, if a worker desires a home, he should not borrow the money to build that home, but should wait until he is able to erect it out of his income.

Mr. MOORE: But he has to pay interest on that borrowed money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There arises out of this discussion the question of whether a sinking fund should be attached to such expenditure, but that phase of the question can be touched on when the Estimates of the Treasury Department are under consideration. It should be dealt with in connection with the general financial policy of the State.

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman is dodging it very well.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The debate, as usual, proceeds on the lines of contract versus day labour. We had the hon. member for Toowong lashing himself into a fury in defence of his colleagues of the Employers' Federation, and making a special plea on behalf of the contractor. We are not advocates of the day-labour policy because we are opposed to contractors as individuals. We know that contractors are not in the business for the good of their health. They are in the business because they hope to make a livelihood and as good an income as possible from it. Therefore, if they know their business at all, they add a percentage to their estimates which will represent their profit on the enterprise—quite legitimate from their point of view—they would be foolish if they did not do so. Our point of view is that a Government having a large amount of work to do every year can set up as good a staff as any contractor can employ. By the direct employment of labour without the intervention of the contractor we secure good results and eliminate the margin of profit usually provided for by the contractor in his estimate.

That, briefly stated, is the case for day labour. The contractor, if he were building houses, schools, and public buildings generally to the amount of £250,000 annually, would have to employ a large number of experts in his business to superintend the work. He would require a large amount of plant and equipment so that he could carry on the work suitably. The Government can employ that labour just as favourably as a firm of contractors, and, in addition, we save the profit that is looked upon as a necessary margin under the contract system.

Under proper supervision day labour gives good results. There is no incentive to scamp work. We know, of course, that sometimes in cases where competition is very keen and prices fall, there is an incentive to scamp work to get out of some of the work that is specified, with a view to saving the margin of profit looked for. There is no such incentive under day-labour work, and we have to take into consideration that the Government maintain their buildings, and it is well to build those buildings properly in the first instance and so save expenditure in maintenance for a number of years. Everyone knows that the standard of work in Government specifications is of much higher quality than is usually carried out by private individuals. The reason is that we have to maintain those works over a period of years, and it is desirable that they should be properly and substantially built in the first instance.

In the Department of Public Works we have a highly trained staff who have been carrying on operations for many years and who are carrying out those operations pretty successfully. Where you get intelligent and conscientious men in charge of those works.

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and where the men give the department a fair deal, then the results to the State are everything that can be looked for. Anyone who examines our public buildings must admit that the general standard and excellence of the work is of a very high order indeed. I am quite satisfied that the work is worth the money expended. So far as our employees are concerned, we receive from them excellent service. I have never tolerated scamping on the part of anybody, nor have I tolerated any dereliction of duty. The Department of Public Works have a very excellent body of officials employed, and they are intelligently supported by the men who carry out the actual work on the buildings. I am proud of many of the men who work on the Department of Public Works. The work is satisfactory to the department and creditable to the men carrying out the work.

Mr. KELSO: The same thing can be said of many contractors and their establishments.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Occasionally we come across men who do not desire to give a fair deal. Those people are dealt with. If they are under the idea that they can do as they like, they are speedily disillusioned. The department insist on getting a fair deal from everyone concerned.

The hon. member for Toowong made reference to the inquiry by the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board which was presided over by Mr. Harris, P.M. That Commission was appointed by my department at the request of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board themselves. The Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board passed a resolution and asked me to appoint a committee of inquiry that would have authority under the Official Inquiries Evidence Act of 1910 to conduct that investigation. The result of the inquiry indicates that the work was carried out in many quarters in a very undesirable way. An attempt has been made to excuse defective work. The Labour party, above every other party, must stand for a spirit of civic conscience that will not tolerate anything of that nature. The Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board's operations are works carried out for and on behalf of the people of Brisbane. Consequently, if any contractor or any workman fails to give the service he is paid to perform, he is guilty of dishonesty to the general public, and lacks that spirit of civic conscience that is necessary in any intelligent and free community.

Mr. KERR: What is the remedy?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: One would imagine, to hear the hon. member for Toowong, that the result of that investigation was a complete and wholesale condemnation of men engaged on day-labour work. For the benefit of the Committee, it is just as well that I should quote the facts as reported to me by the Commissioner in his report. In that connection, having regard to the interjection of the hon. member for Enoggera, it is interesting to know that the Brisbane "Courier" of 24th July last—and a similar expression of opinion was also made in a leading article of the "Telegraph" of about the same date—states—

"Had this work, whether day labour or contract, been under the supervision of the Public Works Department, or under the control of an expert Commission, it is safe to assume that such scamping would never have been tolerated."

From that hon. members will see that a very

fine compliment has been paid to the staff of the Department of Public Works. They sum up the position very fairly as [12 noon] one of supervision. In connection with the Laidlaw parade contract, East Brisbane, this is a précis of what the Commissioner had to say—

"The Commissioner found that the contractor's agent took no active steps to satisfy himself whether the work in any specific section had been actually done. So long as the work in any place was not taken exception to by the Board's supervisors, and the monthly expenditure compared favourably with the monthly progress payments, the contractor's agent was satisfied.

"The Commissioner dealt at great length with the negligence displayed by the contractor's agent in the matter of refilling the drive, and considered that the cost should have indicated to the agent (by profession a quantity surveyor) whether the work of refilling had been actually performed.

"The contractor's agent stated that he did not go down the shaft during the week this refilling was in progress, although it was his custom to go below about once a week.

"The Commissioner commented very strongly on the fact that after the faulty work had been discovered, the workmen were still retained in the employ of the contractor, and the foreman, instead of being discharged, was kept on.

"The Commissioner found that the root of the trouble was non-exercise of supervision, and such supervision should have been rigidly exercised both by the contractor and the Board.

"He was not satisfied that the men took it upon themselves on their own initiative to scamp the work.

"In view of the conduct of the contractor's foreman, and taking into consideration all the circumstances, Gorrie, the contractor's foreman, impliedly, at least, acquiesced in the action of the men, thereby giving substance to their belief that they were not expected to make a complete job of the refilling.

"The Commissioner further added that he saw no reasonable ground for supposing that these particular workmen are not likely to work properly under honest and efficient direction."

In those few words is summed up the whole position so far as it applies to public works of any kind—honest, careful supervision and effective carrying out of the work by all concerned. Where local authorities and Governments carry on works of any magnitude, it is desirable that the public should realise what is involved. If a local authority establishes sewerage works in the interests of the health and wellbeing of the people, it is the duty of everyone concerned to see that value is given in those works, and that the work is of the highest possible order. We can only build up a free and intelligent nation where the civic conscience of the people is highly developed, and it is in that direction that intelligent organisation and education should go. There is a tendency on the part of some people at all times to attack the workmen concerned in building operations or public works of any kind. That is not a good thing.

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I believe that men should be encouraged to do their best, and given commendation when that is done. This continual cry about Australian workmen going slow is doing much to injure the general community, and it is not founded on any fact at all. The general standard and excellence of the work carried out in Queensland is comparable with any class of work in the world, and it is interesting to note that the general manager of Bergers Limited, an American organisation which established works in Sydney about ten years ago, stated at the annual meeting that Australian workmen compared favourably with the workmen of any country in the world, and so far as he and his firm were concerned, they had nothing but the highest praise to give to them.

Another point raised by the hon. member for Toowong was the unfortunate accident that took place at the Virginia State school. He spoke of this matter as if there was something in that disaster for which the Department of Public Works was to blame. What happened? Buildings at Virginia were blown over during a very severe storm. The school building stands out in the open, presenting a very wide face for the pressure of the wind. The gale that afternoon was very severe, and damaged quite a large number of buildings in the district that were not in the immediate track of the storm. One would imagine, on listening to the hon. member for Toowong, that a Government building only had been destroyed. On the same day a church at Kedron was made a total wreck. One is not blaming the contractor for that. We know perfectly well that, given a storm of sufficient strength, almost any form of building will be destroyed. For example, some of the best vessels that have ever been constructed in a shipyard have been piled up and made total wrecks in a storm, but one does not blame the shipbuilder in those cases, unless it can be shown that faulty workmanship was the cause. As the hon. member for the district clearly pointed out, the fortunate thing about the whole matter was that it happened on a day when the children were not in school. It is much easier to rebuild a school which has cost about £4,110 than to deal with children who may have been injured in such a disaster. The remarks of the hon. member were entirely uncalled for, and have no bearing on the case in dispute; but seeing he has referred to it, it is worthy of note that the only buildings that were left standing in the whole of the township of Babinda after the severe cyclone there a few years ago were those which had been erected by the Department of Public Works, which was attributable to the general excellence of the work carried out by the department. I do not think there is anything further that need to be said in reply to the criticisms that have been made up to the present. The debate is proceeding along the lines it has followed every year, and I have replied to everything that it is necessary for me to reply to at this stage.

At 12.8 p.m.,

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

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): I am very pleased that the Minister has decided to make additions to the West End State school, and that my representations have been successful. I understand the alterations and

repairs will cost £1,500. These additions were asked for on 5th October last year, when the hon. gentleman promised that the matter would be gone into. Nothing has been done so far, but I am very pleased to know that instructions have been given for the work to be gone on with. I hope the work will be continued, and that the structure will be large enough to accommodate the children attending the school. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the infants' school is not large enough, as the small additions that were made were by no means sufficient. It was a poor attempt on the part of the Government to do something. I visited that school recently when the school was in full working order, and I found that the Government could very well have added another 30 or 40 feet to the building. The money that was spent was illspent, in so far that further additions could have been made. I also wish to call the Minister's attention to the fact that the sheds at that school have still the holes in the roofs that they had two years ago. The shingles are rotten, the rain comes through, and the sun can get through on a sunny day; yet the children are forced to go into those sheds for instruction because the school buildings are not big enough. These matters require attention, and while I thank the Minister for his decision to make the necessary repairs to the girls' school, I also urge upon him the necessity of attending to these other matters. The Minister informs us that the debate on the Department of Public Works has assumed the same old monotonous course on the part of the Opposition, and he must admit that it has assumed the same old monotonous course on his part.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No, there is nothing monotonous about me.

Mr. FRY: The position is always going to be the same in connection with the Department of Public Works. Hon. members are here for the purpose of helping the Government to spend money wisely, while the Minister is here to refrain from spending any money at all. He is going to get up and defend his department and to save whatever money he can, and hon. members are going to try and get from him and from the department as much as they can for their electorates, and so it must go on from time to time. The defence of either day labour or contract is immaterial. If the Department of Public Works gets full value for the money spent, it is only getting what it should get, and if other people are not getting full value for their money, there is something wrong with the supervision. From year to year I have pointed out that it is a question of supervision. You have the same men and the same machinery to do the work, and the result is a matter of efficient supervision. In my opinion, the weak point in connection with day labour under Government or public bodies is the political influence that is brought to bear. Political influence is always on the job. Take day labour and contract work in connection with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, for instance. According to the report of the Commission, the work done by day labour was the worst. It was worst simply because political influence was at work. The men knew that their political influence was greater than that of the foremen, and according to the report, they sat down and smoked and scamped the work. It is all

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a question of supervision. If political influence is not removed, we are going to have the same old story over again. It is useless to say that the men who work under contract cannot work under day labour, because they can. Every job depends first of all upon organisation, upon supervision, and upon honest work. If that is given, there is no reason to complain. Human beings have their limits of endurance. Surely we can advise these men what they should do, and if they want supervision, that supervision should be given. If they are slacking on the job and not doing the work as they should, then supervision comes into operation to compel them. No honest man will object to give a fair return for the money he gets. No man should object to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wages. There are sometimes occasions when a man is ill or not so well on one day as another, but that is a matter for the discretion of the supervisor. At the same time, if the supervisor is afraid that the political boss above him is going to fire him out of the job, as it is a matter of simply getting votes, that destroys all good work. Every Minister on the front Treasury bench knows that it is the political pull that does the job. Is it not a fact that it was the political pull that put men on the railways before the election and sacked them after the election was over? The same political pull is at work throughout the public works of the State. We went up the Dawson Valley a little while ago, and we passed a vacant camp lately used by men who had been discharged before the line was completed. Those men were put on before the last election, and there is no use for them now, according to the Government; but when the next election comes on they will be put on again. That is the rotten part of the day-labour system. So far as I can see, contract and day labour are the same; it is supervision and organisation which counts for everything.

There is one thing which day labour has to contend with, and which in my judgment is a cancer on public life and the civic conscience which the Minister has been talking about—that is the political pull and the influence which is exercised on every job, more especially when it comes to election time. The Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board business was brought out at election time to gain political kudos. If we could rid the Government and the civic conscience of this cancer, we would find that the civic conscience would be purer and that work would be more efficiently performed. The Minister would not have to complain of the monotony of the debate upon his department, and he in return would not be called upon to deliver the monotonous reply which is delivered from year to year. The principle which should govern the work, whether done by the Government, by public or by individuals, is the necessity of getting the value for the money spent. When the Government, the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, or any other public body are spending public money, they should get just as good a return for the money expended as if it was their own money. The fact that a man has been elevated to a position of trust in a public institution does not entitle him to go on and spend money foolishly.

I say, in conclusion, that so far as I can see, work done under contract and day labour is practically the same—supervision counts for

[*Mr. Fry.*

everything. The Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board inquiry blasted the hopes of many people who favoured day labour. There are many men in the Minister's own party to-day who received a great shock when they found from the report that, under the day-labour system, men were sitting down smoking instead of working. The position in that respect was far worse in regard to day labour than with respect to contract work. Many men in the State who pinned their faith to day labour received a shock. The position is not due to the men themselves, but to the fear of the control of the political bosses who run the show, and who can discharge them at any moment. If we take away the political cancer which is destroying the control and supervision of the work generally, we shall rid public life of the worst feature that it has to-day.

Question put and passed.

SERVICES—PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

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

“That £36,900 be granted for ‘Services—Public Buildings.’”

This is an increase of £1,450 on the vote of last year, due to the increased accommodation required for different departments, necessitating increases in rent.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): I would like some information from the Minister with regard to the increase in the amount required for water rates from £7,500 to £8,000. Is it just a matter of an extra consumption of water or increased rates? I would also like to know in reference to the item “Fire Insurance, £400” with whom the Government insure their buildings. Is it the State Insurance Department? I notice that there is an increase in the amount from £350 to £400.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): The increase required for water rates is due to the fact that Government buildings are gradually increasing and there is consequently an increased consumption of water. With regard to fire insurance, it is customary to insure with the State Insurance Office.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): There is also a reduction of £500 in the item required for “Cleaning (Metropolitan District).”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): Last year we asked for £9,000 and spent £8,188, and we are only asking for £8,500 this year, as we think that amount will be sufficient.

Question put and passed.

BUILDINGS.

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

“That £111,317 be granted for ‘Buildings.’”

This is an increase of £10,317, due to increases in the items “State School Buildings: Additions, Improvements, Furniture, Repairs and Painting”; “Technical College and High School Buildings: Additions and Equipment”; and “Hospital Buildings: Additions.”

Mr DEACON (*Cunningham*): I notice that the amount asked for "General Repairs, Painting, Improvements, and Incidentals" is the same as last year, £30,000. I would point out that a lot of repairs to buildings are urgently needed but are left undone. Surely it is better to bring all these things up-to-date?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you want it all done in one year?

Mr. DEACON: Yes. We are getting further behind. Anybody can see that buildings have been needing repairs for many years and they have had to be put off. They have to be brought up-to-date, and the sooner the better. We had better put all buildings in repair at once and have done with it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You say that we should do this year all that we did not do last year?

Mr. DEACON: There are a lot of men out of work. Why not put them to work? We are losing money under the present system. I notice that there is an increase in the vote for additions, repairs, and painting of State school buildings. I would like to know from the Minister whether the increase is caused by the ordinary increase in the number of State schools. Some of the buildings are getting into a very bad way, and, if the Government hang off, they will go further and further back, so that sooner or later the Government will have to face a heavy expenditure.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): I notice that there is an increase in the item "Technical College and High School Buildings: Additions and Equipment," and I would like to know from the Minister if the additions required to the Technical College at Warwick have received his consideration.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have not been able to give them that yet.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I think that the late Secretary for Public Instruction gave some fairly good promises with regard to those buildings, and I hope that the Secretary for Public Works will not turn the request down.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have not said that it will not be done. I have not come to it yet.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is still under consideration?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have not decided one way or the other.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I understand that the additions are urgent, and I believe that the intention was to carry them out some time ago. With the hon. member for Cunningham, I also want to draw attention to the speech delivered by the Minister in which he seemed to indicate that the Government gave special attention to repairs to school buildings, but which is quite a contradiction of what actually happens. Certainly, some small works have gone on in my electorate in the way of repairs and painting, but they are not general. The old Technical College at Warwick, which was gradually mouldering into decay and was a standing disgrace to the

department, has recently had a new dress and looks very greatly improved. But our Government buildings generally should be kept up to standard, and I say that the attention which they should receive is altogether lacking. They do not receive that attention in regard to repairs and painting which they should receive, and which the Government, furthermore, insist upon in connection with workers' dwellings. I do not think that the amount set down for additions, improvements, etc., is sufficient to enable the department to carry out its obligations in that respect.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): There is an increase of £4,000 in the item for additions, improvements, etc., to State school buildings, but I do not think that is sufficient, because each year we are building a greater number of State schools, and it will be necessary to have them properly attended to [12.30 p.m.] if we are going to keep them in a decent state of repair, and then we have to consider the deplorable state that many of the present buildings are in. It would be a very wise policy for the Government to give serious attention to the matter of painting buildings, because there is nothing more serious than the lack of painting to interfere with the life of a building. The Minister knows that. I have approached the department on several occasions asking that certain buildings be painted, but I have been turned down because funds were not available. I trust that more will be done this year than was done last year. I want to protest against the delay that takes place from the time we get word that the Minister has approved of the erection of a school and the time the work is commenced. Last year I received word from the Minister that two schools would be erected in my electorate, at Beenham Range and Dagon. I was told last year that the Dagon school would be proceeded with during that year, but it was only completed about two months ago. The Beenham Range school is not yet in use. I have only just received word that it has been completed. If we induce people to go out into the country with their families and settle on the land, and they get the promise of a school, it is the duty of the department to expedite the work so that the children can receive a fair share of education. Nothing will go further to make a country district prosperous than for the Department of Public Works to work in with the Department of Public Instruction as much as possible in providing the necessary schooling accommodation for the children in those districts. I know, and the Minister knows, that the people in the country districts have greatly assisted his department in the construction of schools. I know that in almost every instance where I have made an application for a school I have been able to announce that the settlers would find the blocks, cart the material, or clear the land. These people are prepared to meet the department in that way, and it is the duty of the department to give more consideration to the country people than is being extended to those in the city. I hope that during the forthcoming year the Government will look after the interests of the people in the country in a better way than they have done in the past.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): Like other hon. members representing country electorates, I must say that the public buildings in the

Mr. Morgan.]

country are generally in a deplorable condition and in need of a coat of paint. They are becoming more dilapidated year by year, and in some instances are almost a disgrace to the town in which they are situated, showing clearly and distinctly that the Government have not appropriated sufficient money for the purpose of doing the necessary repairs. The Minister knows very well that it is necessary to paint a wooden building periodically to preserve its life. Unless it is painted it becomes dilapidated through being exposed to the rigours of the weather, and unless it is so painted every few years its life is shortened. I think hon. members on both sides have cause for complaint that sufficient money has not been devoted in the past to keep public buildings in the state of repair necessary for the good of the people and the future welfare of the State. We hear complaints on all sides about the cost of the work undertaken by the department. We always have the contentious subject in this Chamber of day labour versus contract, and, while we have a Government in power whose policy is day labour and not contract, we cannot expect to get a fair test as to which system is cheaper from a departmental point of view. When schools and other public buildings have been erected in certain localities and the cost of construction has been made known, people competent to form an opinion have been astounded. Many who are in a position to know, assert that it costs the department one-third more than it would under the contract system. It is difficult for us to ascertain at the present time whether that is so or not. Complaints of that nature are heard not only from electorates represented by hon. members on this side but by hon. members opposite, and the people in those electorates are astounded at the cost of work undertaken by the department. If that is so in one part of the State, then it is equally applicable in another.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The question of day labour versus contract was discussed on another vote. It cannot be discussed again on this vote.

Mr. MORGAN: I was absent at the time. I am not going to enter into a controversy on day labour versus contract. I am dealing now with the public buildings. I would like a commission of inquiry into the cost of erection of many of those buildings. It would be to the advantage of the department. Just recently we had a Commission of Inquiry into sewerage construction in Brisbane, and many deplorable things were discovered. It was almost impossible to imagine that such scandalous things would have occurred under both the day labour and the contract system; I am not blaming one more than the other. The workers engaged on the day labour work were under the supervision of officers of a semi-government body.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Government had nothing to do with that.

Mr. MORGAN: I am not saying that the Government had anything to do with the spending of that money. The supervision was exercised by officers of a body elected by the taxpayer, and it has been proved beyond question that scandalous things happened on both the day labour and the contract work.

[Mr. Morgan.]

At 12.37 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. MORGAN: I would like the Minister, for the good of his department, to make a statement as to whether buildings could not be constructed more cheaply in the country by adopting different principles to those now employed, without interfering with the rates and conditions of the awards under which the men work.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Where the error is often made is this: A person hears that a certain school building costs a given amount. He then criticises the amount and states that it could have been built for less. The amount stated, however, includes furniture and all forms of equipment, which is not often taken into consideration by the critics. Nevertheless, it is an important factor in the cost.

Mr. MORGAN: I admit that that may be so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If I give the cost of a school building, that cost includes the cost of equipment.

Mr. MORGAN: Those hon. members who had the privilege of visiting Castle Creek recently had the opportunity of inspecting the school and other buildings that have been erected there. I understand that they cost very little over £250. I am quite satisfied that the department have not erected similar buildings in my electorate situated a long way from the rail head for less than £450 to £500.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You can readily understand that the Irrigation Commission, which owns the sawmills, etc., on the job, can put up a building cheaper than where the materials are not available.

Mr. MORGAN: I understand that the carpenters at Castle Creek receive 25s. a day, which is a little more than the award rate, and the timber used is obtained from the sawmill in the locality. There may be something in that fact. I understand that the sawmill is run on the basis that it must show a profit after providing for all expenses. There seems to me to be an enormous difference in the cost of the school buildings at Castle Creek and the cost in country electorates. I suggest to the Minister that the whole system of management and construction of public buildings by the department be reviewed by some practical board of inquiry. I do not care whether that inquiry is a public or private one so long as the board is composed of practical men and they have all the information placed at their disposal. The people outside will then be able to form an opinion of whether the cost of buildings undertaken by the department is extravagant or not. There is an opinion held throughout the State that any work conducted by the department costs about one-third more than it should actually cost. There may be some reason for that opinion. I would like to know what charges are added to the cost of a building as departmental costs. For instance, if a school costs £450, what is added to that amount to defray the cost of carrying on the department?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The only amount that is added to the actual cost is a charge to cover the cost of the work of

the construction branch. It would be unfair to load a school building with administrative charges.

Mr. MORGAN: I have been told on reliable authority that the charges added on to the actual cost of the building are excessive. That might be one of the reasons why the public labour under the impression that the cost of a school in a country electorate is excessive. I have advocated year in and year out that estimates should be obtained locally for all work that the department proposes to carry out. The workmen in the locality should have an opportunity of tendering for the erection of a building in their area instead of adhering to the absurd practice of bringing workmen long distances to carry out the work. The Minister has assured me in the past that he adopts that principle wherever possible. The same argument applies in regard to the supply of timber. I have been told that the department is bound in almost every instance to accept timber from the State sawmills.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is ridiculous. If we can get the timber locally at a less cost than timber supplied by the State sawmills landed on the job preference is given to the local material.

Mr. MORGAN: Is that principle being adopted at the present time?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes.

Mr. MORGAN: I was once informed by a high officer of the department that they were bound to take their timber from the State sawmills. Complaints in this regard have been made to me by sawmill owners at Yeulba, Miles, and Jackson.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The difficulty with the local sawmills is that they are only able in cases to supply hardwood.

Mr. MORGAN: I was told by the owners of these sawmills that the timber used in certain work in their locality could have been supplied by them. Nevertheless, the timber had been sent 250 or 260 miles from Brisbane. My information on the subject was that wherever possible, notwithstanding the fact that there were sawmills in the neighbourhood which were able to supply timber suitable for the work, timber had to be obtained from the State sawmills.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Who told you that?

Mr. MORGAN: I admit that it is some years since I made the inquiry, but I was told by a responsible officer of the department that, where it was practically possible, the timber was ordered from the State sawmills.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not if we can get cheaper timber in the locality.

Mr. MORGAN: I am glad to know that is so. I go further and say that, if there is a sawmill in the locality cutting suitable timber, that timber should be purchased, even if no cheaper than that obtainable from the State sawmills. I do not think it right that timber should be sent all the way from Brisbane to a country locality when local timber is available at satisfactory prices.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We do not send timber or materials by rail unless

we can supply it cheaper than it can be purchased locally.

Mr. MORGAN: I am glad to receive the Minister's assurance. I think that it is a wrong policy for any Government to bolster up an industry carried on in the city instead of patronising local establishments.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Of course sometimes country sawmills will receive an order for timber, and then humbug us about the quantity and time of supply.

Mr. MORGAN: I am not going to say anything about that. My contention is that we should support mills in the country in preference to sending right back to Brisbane, even if the price is no cheaper. Recently the Government gave a big Maryborough firm an enormous advantage over other concerns because it was a Queensland institution. It was not a matter of the same price, for there was a difference of between £20,000 or £30,000, but the Government thought it advisable to keep the contract within the State. If that policy was good in regard to the machinery contract placed with the Maryborough firm, it should be good in regard to our country institutions. It must be admitted that the more people we have in the country the better opportunity there will be for our State railways to pay.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Local people have a right to share in the expenditure involved in the erection of public works.

Mr. MORGAN: Of course they have. The same thing applies to local painters and carpenters. Instead of sending men from Brisbane and paying their travelling and living allowances, thus keeping local men idle, it is better to employ capable local men. I know of cases where men have been sent from Brisbane 100 to 150 miles out to do a job.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Our endeavour is to employ local men if they are available.

Mr. MORGAN: I have referred to this on previous occasions, and I am inclined to believe that it is not altogether done. I am inclined to think that the local foreman should be reminded that that is the policy of the Government, and that the Government should insist upon it becoming a general practice. I again ask the Secretary for Public Works to institute some inquiries as to the cost of buildings generally that are being erected by his department. There is a feeling throughout the State that something is wrong, and that the Department of Public Works are extravagant and not getting the best results for the money expended. That feeling is general, and in order to allay it I think the Minister should institute some inquiry, and that he should go over the Department of Public Works generally and ascertain whether the accusation is just or not.

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): Following on the remarks of the hon. member for Murilla, I would suggest that the Secretary for Public Works put a couple of the members of the Opposition on the investigating Board to go through his department. I feel sure the hon. gentleman would get a lot of interesting information.

Mr. Fry.]

Getting on to the question of the vote, if the Government expended £45,000 last year on repairs, paintings, and general upkeep of buildings, it would be hard to see what they did with it. They have added another £4,000 this year, and it would be very difficult to know what they are to do with it. I issue a note of warning that throughout the length and breadth of the State public buildings are deteriorating and going into decay for want of a coat of paint. The Secretary for Public Works knows the result. Everywhere one sees public buildings falling into a state of disrepair through this want. It means extra expenditure to the country later on. We are only putting off this expenditure from 1924 to 1925 and 1926, and then it will have to be done. I feel sure that, when the Minister said that he was going to commence jobs this year that he did not do last year, he is only trying to pick up jobs that he has failed to do before. My advice is that he should put on a few pounds of steam and get the work put through, that he should appropriate a little extra money, put on some unemployed men, who are painters—there are plenty to be had—and get them to paint these buildings under proper supervision. This would result in the buildings being preserved and in unemployed receiving work.

Perhaps hon. members would like an instance of how neglect has brought about extra expenditure and destruction. In my electorate the West End Police Station was neglected. Had the work been undertaken when the necessity first arose, this work required would have cost no more than £30 at the very outside. It was neglected, not painted, and no attention was given to the building at all. As a result, borers and white ants got in to the building.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: White ants, eh?

Mr. FRY: Yes, the same as are getting into the hon. gentleman's party, only this was wood. That job cost the Government £300 as against the original £30.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Nonsense!

Mr. FRY: That is true. I admit that a small alteration was made to the part used as an office. The Minister may turn up the records of his department and find out all about it. That is a case in point which hon. members in this Chamber can investigate. It is only within a mile of Queen street, and a penny section in the tram from Parliament House will bring hon. members to the building I am referring to.

What may cost the Government £10,000 to-day will cost £30,000 next year or the year after, and that extra money has to come out of the public purse. The Secretary for Public Works spoke about a civic conscience. If that civic conscience does not cause the hon. gentleman to have our public buildings painted and preserved, then I think that civic conscience itself needs a coat of paint. I suggest that the hon. gentleman undertake a thorough overhauling to see if that civic conscience cannot be brought up to date.

I could go on dealing with case after case, from the North of Queensland right down to the New South Wales border. Wherever I go

[Mr. Fry.

I take note of the public buildings and see how they are looked after. I must confess—and every hon. member who is observant and takes note of what happens must likewise confess—that the Government have been shamefully and criminally neglectful of their duty in looking after public buildings. The word of warning that I am giving to the Government to-day is only something to cause them to put on their thinking cap and do a little more work so far as repairing and painting are concerned. It flashed across my mind just now that the last time I was at the boys' school at West End the partition on the veranda nearest to Hardgrave road was getting dry rot into it. That should receive the attention of the department.

[2 p.m.]

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): There is one matter in regard to which I would like some information from the Minister. The other day the hon. member for Toombul ask the Secretary for Public Works—

“1. What is the total cost to date of the erection of the wharf and cold stores at the Hamilton?”

“2. Has the cost exceeded the department's estimate?”

to which the Minister replied—

“1. £276,672 0s. 7d.

“2. No.”

In 1920 the late member for Port Curtis, Mr. Fletcher, asked the Minister in charge of State Enterprises—

“What is the estimated cost of the Hamilton Cold Stores when completed?”

The Minister replied—

“£250,000.”

There seems to be some discrepancy somewhere. We were told that the estimated cost in 1920 was £250,000, and we find up to date it has cost £276,000—£26,000 more, and, when a question is asked if it exceeds the estimates, we are told “No;” and the works are not completed yet! It seems a rather extraordinary state of affairs that there should be this large discrepancy and no explanation given about it. The Hamilton Cold Stores were supposed to have been completed twelve months ago, but they are not completed yet, and I understand they will not be completed till November. If they take all that extra time and the cost is still within the estimate something must be wrong, and I should like an explanation about it.

We see many instances of useless expenditure through carelessness and lack of supervision in the Department of Public Works. Take as an instance the Oakey Court House. The officials of the Department of Public Works must have known that that building was to be removed. Yet about six weeks ago a gang of men came along and painted the court house as though it was to stay there for ever, and about a month after that another gang of men came along, pulled the building down, and removed it. That seems to me to be a waste of money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is being removed somewhere else.

Mr. MOORE: It is being removed to another place, but what was the object of painting it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The money will not be lost.

Mr. MOORE: It will be pretty well all lost. The cost was £146, and it seems rather a want of supervision that that sort of thing can happen. They must have known it was going to be removed, and it would have been much better to do the thing in one job and not send one gang of men to paint the building and then send along another gang to remove it, and then find that it had to be painted again.

In 1915 there were seventy-seven new schools built at a cost of £103,645. They were not all small schools either. Some very large ones were built, and as much as £15,000 was spent on one school. Last year £114,000 was spent on new schools, and only twenty-eight new schools were built. We know that the schools at the present time are tremendously overcrowded. An article appeared in the "Daily Standard" a little while ago in regard to the overcrowding of schools in Brisbane. There may be overcrowding of schools in Brisbane, but we know also that the overcrowding of schools in the country is a very serious matter. The space in many of the schools is very congested, and the scholars have to be put on to the verandas, where in some cases there are no proper breaks for the wind, and the position is most unsatisfactory. It seems that our school buildings have not increased in accordance with the population. There certainly wants to be a greater expenditure in the schools to-day, so that the children may have reasonable accommodation. In the "Daily Standard" a month ago this article appeared—

" DANGEROUS STATE PARSIMONY.

" GOVERNMENT APATHY THAT DEMANDS SPECIAL EXPLANATION.

" *Children's Welfare at Stake.*

" It may be argued that in the metropolitan areas the population has advanced so rapidly in the last ten or twelve years that it has been difficult to keep pace with the extra schools and additions needed. The whole State has advanced substantially in population and Brisbane in that period has increased by 80,000 people or 50 per cent. The number of taxpayers is greater and so there are more shoulders to bear the large burden of the schools, housing, and staffing required.

" *Widespread Grievances.*

" Other big expenditure has been incurred to meet increased wants in different directions, but State schools have been starved. There have been complaints from Ipswich, Townsville, and other country centres. Over-crowding and under-staffing, however, are generally admitted to be worst in the metropolitan area. Of course there are exceptions. A new school here and there and additions have relieved pressing wants. But only the fringe of the trouble has been touched.

" The outstanding evil is inadequate accommodation. It is nothing short of a menace to the well-being of the State, for it affects the children most and usually those of infant classes and thus of most susceptible years."

The difficulty seems to be the excessive cost

of building. In 1915, when practically only £10,000 less was spent, seventy-seven new schools were built, while last year only twenty-eight new schools were built, much the same class of building. That only goes to show the enormous cost of building, and the action of the Forestry Department is causing a difficulty not only to people who want homes but in connection with the erection of new schools. To my mind the charges of the department are altogether too high. The desire of the Forestry Department to rake in as much money as they can is a mistake. It is far better to give people an opportunity of getting cheaper timber rather than to take a huge amount from them, as the Forestry Department is doing. Anyone looking back on the reports of the Forestry Department and the Department of Public Lands during the last fifteen years cannot but be struck by the enormous increase in the cost of timber. When timber is about to be imported here so that people can use it at a reasonable cost, we find the aim and object of the Director of Forestry is to conserve the forests, and the best thing would be to use the cheaper timber which can be imported at the present time, and so conserve our forests. But rather than do that, as soon as there is a chance of cheap timber being used, we find the Director of Forestry heading a deputation asking for the import duty to be increased so that the cost of timber can be kept up. That is all very fine from the point of view of securing revenue, but, if the conservation of forests is really the aim and object of the Director, in my opinion it is far better to allow us to use the cheaper timber while it is available and get the proper accommodation at a reasonable cost, so that the schools in the country and metropolitan districts can be given sufficient accommodation. We find that it is stated in the article I have quoted from that the population of Brisbane has increased 50 per cent. in ten years, while the school accommodation is overcrowded to the extent of 50 per cent. We have experience all over the country of excessive overcrowding, and the difficulty has always been to secure sufficient money for the erection of schools. I quite understand that the Government are limited in the amount of money they have to spend, but it seems to me that the difficulty is a great deal of their own creation through their endeavour to secure the highest possible rate for the timber that is used for building the schools. If the Government are going to continue to be in the position of wanting to conserve State timber, why do they not endeavour to secure the cheaper classes of timber that can be used? When Mr. Cohen was speaking to us in the late Legislative Council Chamber the other day, he mentioned the cheap timber which could be landed in Queensland from Java, which would enable buildings to be carried on here at an excessively cheap rate, and would have the double effect of allowing the department to catch up with the arrears of buildings as well as conserving the State forests. It would be quite possible for the Government to secure revenue by selling a limited amount of timber from the State forests to meet the expenses of the Forestry Department and still conserve the forests, while enabling the people to get timber at a reasonable rate from abroad to build houses and to enable the department to carry on works of an urgent nature which

Mr. Moore.]

at the present time we are stopped from doing because the Forestry Department is unable to keep up with the growing demand for timber.

Wherever the Secretary for Public Instruction goes the same trouble confronts him. The people whom he meets point to the inadequacy of the school accommodation. As has already been pointed out, money seems to be found for erecting large works in Brisbane—very heavy building operations are going on in the metropolis—but in places outside the conditions of the people are not as they should be. It is very hard for the people who are asking for a school to be told that, if they provide the accommodation, a teacher will be sent. It is going back to what I suppose the hon. member for Bowen would call the “middle ages” to require that the people should provide schools for the accommodation of their children; yet that is what happens in cases where the attendance ranges perhaps from fifteen up to eighteen children. Of course the people provide the accommodation because they want to get their children taught, but to my mind it is an unfair system. The whole matter seems to boil down to a question of the expense of building, and that to a large extent is in the hands of the Government, because they have the timber or can make arrangements to secure it if they want to conserve their own forests. Year by year we find less and less accommodation being provided for the money expended, and the fact that last year the Government spent £114,000 in building twenty-eight new schools shows the enormous amount which schools are costing and the expense which the people outside must be bearing in their endeavour to secure adequate accommodation—which in fact they are not getting. This does not apply only to one portion of the State, but so far as I can see to all the State. It is not a question of day labour or contract, but the ascending cost of building. It is not merely a question of school buildings; it is also a question of other buildings. People are suffering from a lack of accommodation in both respects. As a result of the Hospitals Act an increased tax is to be thrown on ratepayers. If people are at the present time by no means satisfied with the method of securing the amount of money which the Government require, and if they are going to be taxed to provide extra accommodation at hospitals, and if they also are required to find school accommodation for their children, it is going to make the position very hard. To my mind the position is such that the Department of Public Works should carefully consider it to see whether it is not possible to make better arrangements. The Government should at any rate review their stumpage charges, so that the Department of Public Works will be able to secure its timber without the unnecessary cost involved in it. It seems extraordinary that money should be paid from one department to another merely to make up fictitious revenue, and, if the Government are finding it difficult to secure money sufficient to provide proper accommodation, then they should see whether some better arrangement cannot be made with the Forestry Department so far as royalty and stumpage are concerned, and see whether it is not possible to secure the proper means of accommodation that is so urgently required. I think the Minister recognises the necessity for some other system, seeing

[Mr. Moore.

the number of applications that come before him. The State is going to lose nothing. Nothing is lost when the money goes out of one department into another. If arrangements could be made with the Forestry Department for an adequate supply of timber, it would be a benefit to the people who are urgently requiring better accommodation, and probably there would then be no need to complain of the excessive cost of construction. It would only mean a commonsense arrangement between two departments whereby 25 per cent. or 30 per cent. of the cost could be saved, and the people would have proper accommodation for their children.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): I have listened with considerable interest to the remarks made by various hon. members who have spoken. No doubt this is a very important vote. The hon. member for Cunningham raised the question of deferred work. He said there was a good deal of work required to be done in various districts that had been deferred. It must be borne in mind that the Department of Public Works does not initiate work for other departments. That is to say, we are only architects and builders for all Government departments, consequently we only deal with work that we are asked to deal with by the departments concerned, and in all cases it does not follow that the proposal is one that can be immediately approved of, or is the best scheme that can be initiated. There is no doubt that it is a bad policy to allow buildings to get out of repair. Everyone must realise that, but one must also remember that we can only make one pound do the work of twenty shillings. That is to say, no Secretary for Public Works can spend more money than has been appropriated for him, and he cannot build more than the money is capable of paying for. The increase in the school population each year is 4,000 children, after allowing for the number of children who leave school each year. On a basis of £10 expenditure for each new child, that would represent a sum of £40,000. Probably more than that would be required in the case of new buildings. I mention that to give hon. members some idea of the problem that confronts us with regard to school buildings.

The hon. member for Wide Bay complained of the delays that he said occurred between the time certain work had been approved and the time those works were proceeded with. That is so, and in the natural course of events it must always be so. It would be unwise for the department to approve of all the work at once and immediately endeavour to proceed with it. It would mean that the department would be endeavouring to get all the skilled artisans available, and immediately the work was finished there would be no more work for those men for the remainder of the year. It has always been my policy to go ahead with the most urgent works first and to spread the work over the twelve months of the year, and during periods of depression we can accelerate our programme so far as it affects the building trades generally. The policy of the Department of Public Works is to carry on during periods when there is no demand for a certain class of work by the general community, and, in my opinion, that is a wise policy and one that should

commend itself to everyone who considers the question. In addition, it must be borne in mind that the approval of the job does not mean that everything is ready to start that job. The department does not go ahead with any preliminary works until it is known whether the job has been approved. What happens is this: Plans are prepared, and on those plans and a provisional estimate the work is approved. When the work receives the approval of the Executive Council, the various details, drawings, and so forth are got out, the material assembled, and the district foreman is given instructions to proceed with the work. The carrying out of the work at the first opportunity is left in his hands. It would be absurd to expect the district foreman to carry out simultaneously the whole of the work approved for twelve months.

The hon. member for Warwick raised the question of the technical college in his electorate. That is a matter on which a full report has been presented by the inspector of the Department of Public Instruction in conjunction with the inspector of the Department of Public Works. That report is now under consideration, and an estimate will be presented to me at an early date. When that estimate is submitted to me I shall be in a position to say whether we shall be able to proceed with all the recommendations contained in that report, whether we shall adopt a modified scheme, or whether the work shall be proceeded with at all. The hon. member can rest assured that the needs of every part of the State are given full consideration. We are given a certain amount of money to expend, and the needs of every district must be taken into consideration. It is only after mature consideration that works are approved of and proceeded with, my desire being to expend the money to the best possible advantage, having regard to the needs of the various portions of Queensland.

It has been suggested by the leader of the Opposition and also by another hon. member that the Government were building up Brisbane to the detriment of the country districts. That is an attitude of mind that I deplore. It is a state of mind that is continually endeavouring to set town against country, or country against town. It is a very short-sighted policy, and one which, while not in the best interests of the State as a whole, might have serious consequences. All the people, including the children of the State, have equal rights.

Mr. VOWLES: The people in the country do not get them, though.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The facts in connection with the expenditure by the department last year are that we spent on school buildings £114,818 19s. 6d., and of that amount £9,033 19s. 10d. was expended in the metropolitan area and £105,784 19s. 8d. was expended in the country districts. In other words, three new schools were built in the metropolitan area and twenty-five in the country districts, while there were six additions to school buildings in the metropolitan area and twenty-nine additions outside of that area.

Mr. VOWLES: What do you call a country area—outside of Brisbane?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The leader of the Opposition and other speakers sought to convey a wrong impression in connection with this matter. There has been a considerable increase in the school population in Brisbane. Certain school buildings are overcrowded, and approval has already been given for additions to be made to those buildings in the metropolitan area during this financial year. Approval was given to-day to a further application for additions to the State school at Woolowin. The hon. member for Windsor spoke to me on that matter some time ago; the school is in his district. A new building is also required further out in the Kedron district. A site has been secured, and arrangements will be made to provide facilities for the children there.

Mr. VOWLES: I suppose you will call that the country?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have an interesting table in connection with school buildings generally which I would like to have printed in "Hansard."

This list illustrates the increased cost of all forms of building construction since 1914. I select the following figures for comparison:—

Bricks per 1,000—				£	s.	d.
1914	...	...	...	2	15	0
1924	...	...	...	5	7	0
Sawn timber (hardwood) per 100 super. feet—						
1914	...	...	...	1	2	6
1924	...	...	...	1	17	0

And so it goes on.

Mr. VOWLES: What is the difference in royalty between 1914 and 1924?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The list deals with all forms of material in use in any way in connection with the construction of buildings by the Department of Public Works. I have also a table showing the increase in labour cost, which shows that—

In 1914 carpenters were paid 1s. 5d. per hour;

In 1924 they were paid 2s. 7½d. per hour.

All this represents an increase in the cost of construction.

Take also the case of the cost of a building of six rooms, each room 14 by 12 feet—

In 1914 a wooden building would cost per 100 superficial feet ... £40

In 1924 it would cost ... £60

That covers all the cost, including painting, plumbing, and so on.

In 1914 a brick building would cost per cubic foot ... 10d.

In 1924 it would cost ... 1s. 6d.

And so it goes on.

Hon. W. Forgan Smith.]

The tables from which I have quoted ask, for the information of hon. members partially show the actual increase in all forms and of the general public, that I be allowed of building material and labour costs con- to have those tables put into "Hansard." needed with construction generally, and I

BAROMETER OF PRICES FOR BUILDING MATERIALS RULING IN BRISBANE FROM 1914 TO JULY, 1924.

	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Common bricks .. per 1,000	2 15 0	3 0 0	3 0 0	3 5 0	3 10 0	3 15 0	4 15 0	5 15 0	5 15 0	5 10 0	5 7 0
Portland cement .. per bag	0 5 0	0 6 4	0 7 0	0 6 0	0 6 4	0 5 4	0 6 8	0 8 6	0 7 2	0 6 9	0 6 6
Lime	0 5 0	0 5 6	0 6 0	0 6 0	0 6 6	0 6 6	0 7 6	0 8 0	0 8 0	0 7 6	0 7 6
Sand per c. yd.	0 6 6	0 6 6	0 7 0	0 7 6	0 8 6	0 10 0	0 12 6	0 12 6	0 11 0	0 11 6	0 12 6
Broken hardstone ..	0 9 6	0 10 0	0 10 0	0 11 0	0 12 6	0 13 0	0 14 0	0 14 6	0 13 9	0 13 9	0 14 6
Plaster of Paris .. per cask	0 18 6	0 18 6	1 7 6	1 15 0	2 5 0	2 5 0	2 5 0	2 5 0	3 5 0	3 10 0	2 5 0
Timber—											
Sawn hardwood .. per 100 sup.	1 2 6	1 4 6	1 6 6	1 8 6	1 10 6	1 15 0	2 1 0	1 19 0	1 17 0	1 17 0	1 17 0
Dressed hardwood ..	1 4 6	1 6 6	1 9 0	1 12 0	1 13 6	1 18 0	2 4 6	2 11 0	2 4 6	2 6 6	2 4 6
Sawn pine	1 0 0	1 2 6	1 4 0	1 5 6	1 7 6	2 1 6	2 8 6	2 8 0	2 0 0	2 0 0	2 8 6
Dressed pine	1 2 0	1 4 6	1 6 6	1 8 0	1 10 0	2 5 0	2 12 6	3 0 0	2 5 6	2 11 0	2 11 6
Pine flooring and lining	1 4 0	1 6 6	1 8 6	1 10 6	1 13 6	2 8 6	2 15 0	3 0 0	2 7 6	2 11 0	2 15 6
Hardwood flooring and lining	1 2 6	1 3 6	1 6 6	1 9 0	1 12 0	2 2 0	2 15 0	2 11 0	2 9 6	2 9 6	2 9 6
Hardwood weather boards	1 3 6	1 4 6	1 8 0	1 11 0	1 13 0	1 17 0	2 6 0	2 3 0	2 2 0	2 2 0	2 2 0
Iron—											
26-gauge galvanised corrugated .. per ton	18 0 0	29 0 0	46 0 0	55 0 0	65 0 0	66 0 0	67 0 0	46 0 0	29 0 0	30 0 0	23 10 0
24-gauge galvanised corrugated ..	17 0 0	28 0 0	45 0 0	54 0 0	64 0 0	65 0 0	65 0 0	44 0 0	27 10 0	28 5 0	27 0 0
Bar	14 0 0	19 0 0	21 0 0	26 0 0	28 0 0	29 0 0	30 0 0	35 0 0	22 10 0	18 0 0	13 0 0
Steel rolled joists	15 0 0	22 0 0	28 0 0	35 0 0	37 0 0	38 0 0	40 0 0	21 0 0	20 0 0	20 0 0	13 10 0
Paints (mixed) .. per gall.	0 13 6	0 14 3	0 15 6	0 17 0	1 2 0	1 3 6	1 11 6	1 13 0	1 5 0	0 15 0	0 15 0
White lead per cwt.	2 0 0	2 7 0	3 2 0	3 15 0	4 12 0	4 18 0	5 10 0	4 3 0	3 8 0	3 3 0	3 9 0
White zinc	2 9 0	2 18 0	3 16 0	5 0 0	5 15 0	5 18 0	6 0 0	5 10 0	3 18 0	3 10 0	3 10 0
Oil—											
Raw linseed .. per gall.	0 3 8	0 4 3	0 5 4	0 6 6	0 8 3	0 8 3	0 17 0	0 6 6	0 6 5	0 6 1	0 5 3
Boiled linseed	0 3 10	0 4 6	0 5 6	0 6 9	0 8 5	0 8 6	0 17 2	0 6 8	0 6 9	0 6 8	0 6 3
Turpentine	0 3 6	0 4 0	0 4 9	0 6 0	0 7 6	0 8 0	0 12 0	0 8 6	0 8 9	0 11 0	0 8 0
Copal varnish	0 13 6	0 14 6	0 16 3	0 19 6	1 1 0	1 1 0	1 1 0	0 18 0	1 1 0	0 14 6	0 12 6
Sheet lead per cwt.	1 7 0	1 9 10	1 19 0	2 5 0	2 5 0	2 5 0	3 5 0	3 5 0	2 1 0	2 3 0	2 16 0
Glass—											
16-oz. per ft. sup.	0 0 3	0 0 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 7	0 7 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 9	0 0 10	0 0 10	0 1 1	0 0 10	0 0 10	0 0 9
21-oz.	0 0 4	0 0 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 9	0 1 10	0 1 0	0 1 1	0 1 1	0 1 6	0 1 0	0 0 11	0 0 10
$\frac{1}{2}$ -inch plate	0 1 8	0 1 10	0 2 3	0 2 6	0 2 9	0 5 6	0 3 0	0 7 6	0 4 6	0 4 6	0 4 6
$\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mill rolled	0 0 10	0 1 1	0 1 4	0 1 6	0 1 8	0 2 0	0 2 0	0 1 6	0 1 6	0 1 6	0 1 6

RATES OF WAGES IN BUILDING TRADES IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Carpenter	*1 5	1 5	1 7½	1 8½	1 10½	1 10½	2 3	2 6	2 7½	2 6	2 6	2 7½
Bricklayer	1 7½	1 7½	1 9	1 9½	1 11½	1 11½	2 3	2 6	2 7½	2 6	2 10	2 10
Plasterer	1 5½	1 7½	1 9	1 9	1 9½	1 11½	2 3	2 6	2 7½	2 6	2 10	2 10
Plumber	1 4½	1 4½	1 8	1 8	1 8½	1 10½	2 3	2 6	2 7½	2 6	2 6	2 7½
Painter	1 3	1 6½	1 7½	1 7½	1 8½	1 9½	2 3	2 6	2 7½	2 6	2 6	2 7½
Labourer	1 0	1 3	1 5½	1 5½	1 5½	1 8	1 10½	2 1½	2 2½	2 1	2 1	2 2½

From 31st May, 1914, 1s. 6½d.

BAROMETER OF BUILDING COSTS, BRISBANE DISTRICT.

THE TOTAL COSTS IN ROWS NOS. 3 AND 4 ARE FOR A BUILDING OF SIX ROOMS, EACH ROOM 14 FEET x 12 FEET.

	1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.
1. Wood Building, per 100 ft. super	£40	£45	£47 10s.	£55	£62 10s.	£70	£65	£62	£60	£60	£60
2. Brick Building, per cubic foot	10d.	1s. 0d.	1s. 0d.	1s. 1d.	1s. 2d.	1s. 2d.	1s. 4d.	1s. 5d.	1s. 6d.	1s. 6d.	1s. 6d.
3. Total for 6-room house. each room 14 ft. x 12 ft. in wood	£400	£450	£475	£550	£625	£700	£650	£620	£600	£600	£600
4. Total for house as above in brick	£750	£900	£900	£975	£1,050	£1,125	£1,200	£1,275	£1,350	£1,350	£1,350
5. Brickwork per rod	£22 12s.	£26 5s.	£26 10s.	£29	£30 10s.	£35	£38 10s.	£50	£52 10s.	£55	£55

Supply.

[9 SEPTEMBER.]

Supply.

I think hon. members and the public generally will be interested to know the true state of affairs in regard to the increases.

The expenditure on State school buildings during the past eight years is as follows:—

In 1916-17—	£
From Loan Fund ...	32,492
From Revenue ...	55,467
Total ...	£87,959

In 1923-24 we spent from both sources £115,102.

That shows a steady increase in the expenditure of the department for that purpose during the last eight years. The highest year was in 1919-20, when £144,279 was spent. That was the year when building costs were at their apex. The expenditure on buildings generally during the last year was—

	£
Schools	115,102
Technical Colleges and High Schools	29,626
Hospitals	22,823
Court Houses and Police Buildings	13,780
Other Buildings	245,052
Baby Clinics	10,650
Maternity Wards	69,262

Or a total expenditure on buildings of 506,295

That represents a pretty big amount of work carried out by the department and covering various forms of governmental activity.

The leader of the Opposition raised a question of a little job at Oakey. It was a natural question for him to raise, and no doubt was fully discussed with his friends there. The facts are these: The department approved of certain repairs and painting to the court house and police buildings there. It was only a small job. When it was practically completed the Police Department secured a new site in the same area, and requested us to remove the building to a new site. The building was removed bodily to the new site, and that did not in any way affect the cost, so that the conclusions arrived at by the hon. member are erroneous.

Mr. VOWLES: When was the painting done?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It would certainly have been better not to have done the painting in the first place, but the responsibility for that was not with us, as the securing of the land was carried out by the Police Department.

[2.30 p.m.]

He also asked for information with reference to the Hamilton Cold Stores. That building has been under erection for a considerable period, and at one time, owing to the shortage of funds, the operations were definitely brought to an end. I think the work was entirely suspended for a period of six months.

I may inform hon. members that I get a monthly report from each district setting out the amount of work that has been completed, also a progress report of the work under construction so that I can keep a check on expenditure each month, know how much work is being done, and whether jobs are proceeding with that rapidity that the

[Hon. W. Forgan Smith.

requirements of the State demand. I have here the monthly report on the Hamilton Cold Stores, which reads—

“Nine (9) butter-rooms on ground floor complete.

“Four (4) fruit and cheese rooms, first floor complete except cement topping to floors.

“Remaining five (5) rooms on first floor ready for plasterers.

“Cheese and butter grading rooms practically complete.

“Battery lofts nearing completion.

“Condenser house complete.

“Compressor house complete, except railing to stairs and painting, which work is now in hand.

“Approximately 285,000 ft. of 2 in. cork board fixed, leaving about 4,000 ft. to be fixed, which work is now in hand.

“The whole of the 1,400 ft. of 1 in. cork board has been fixed.

“With the exception of plastering (which has been delayed through shortage of tradesmen), the building should be completed by about the end of October.

“The first section of building (capacity of approximately 70,000 boxes of butter), also compressors, etc., were ready for use at the latter end of last year.

“The office block is complete except for plastering and a few minor items.

£ s. d.

“Estimated cost (including extra work) for:—
Buildings, electrical equipment, wharf, and dredging, railway siding, machinery, piping, etc. 310,932 14 0

“Expenditure to 26th August, 1924 278,514 2 3

Balance 32,418 11 9”

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Will that balance complete it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That balance will probably complete it. There have been other additions made to meet the requirements of the Department of Agriculture, and certain additional work has been done that was not included in the original estimate. Take as an example the plant for the manufacture of ice. That has been provided for, and will considerably improve the value of this enterprise. It is necessary to have large quantities of ice to insulate cars that may be there, and to carry on the enterprise of the cold stores generally. That was not included in the first estimate, as it was not then intended to erect such a building. It is one of the additional works that has been approved of recently. However, the work is in hand, and the whole job will be completed probably about the end of next month. A large part of it could have been in use for a year now had it been considered necessary, but the Department of Agriculture pointed out that it would not be wise to occupy these rooms until the whole building was completed.

I think I have covered the whole of the criticisms of hon. members, and answered all the questions asked.

Mr. DEACON (Cunningham): I would like to know from the Minister whether the

Atherton maize silos were constructed under contract and under the supervision of the Works Department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes, that work was done under the supervision of our inspectors.

Mr. DEACON: Were the plans and specifications prepared by your department?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not by the Department of Public Works. The Department of Agriculture had their own plans and specifications.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I would emphasise the importance of the Minister making some preparation for schools in our new areas. During last year an allocation was made as far as possible to meet the most urgent cases where new schools were required in various districts, but we are now opening up a new area and placing quite a lot of people in the Burnett and Callide districts. There has been no special appropriation to meet the requirements of that particular locality. At present I think there are nine schools applied for, and they are being dealt with in the same way as ordinary schools. If a certain amount was ear-marked to ensure education being provided in those localities, it would be a very great benefit to the people who have been invited to go there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The people in those districts will be catered for. It is no use asking people to settle on the land if educational facilities are not provided for their children.

Mr. HARTLEY: I thought you said we were hunting men off the land.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member should not raise an Aunt Sally and then knock it down himself. I said that we were putting men on the land in the Burnett district. On two or three occasions this year I have made the request that provision should be made for schools and other works which it is expected will be built by the department in connection with the huge settlement scheme there. It has been stated by some hon. members on this side that in our settled districts certain happenings have occurred that are driving the settlers off the land, but that has nothing to do with the position in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valleys, where the settlers are being placed under an Act of Parliament. A special appropriation might be made to meet the requirements of these settlers. In some of the localities concerned there are as many as forty children now, and some of them have been there for over six months. I trust that the Minister will accede to the request of these settlers and make some special effort to meet their requirements. In many of our country districts we have overcrowding in the schools. I notice in the "Daily Standard" of 5th June, 1924, a report from which it appears that overcrowding of schools seems to be established as a fact. It states—

"Further visits to metropolitan schools provide convincing evidence that in its presentation of the case for bigger financial provision for State schools the 'Standard' has not overstated the position."

It appears from the article that overcrowding exists right throughout the State—

"Inquiries in country centres have secured the information that six schools in the Cairns to Babinda districts are

overcrowded. In Townsville one, Rockhampton two, and in the Warwick-Stanthorpe district five schools are reported to need more accommodation. In other country centres, additions to schools are badly needed, and this list could be extensively increased. Those in the sugar districts are considered to be worse."

It also states—

"One is on the south side, in an outer area in which population has rapidly increased. The other is in a similar North Brisbane area, which bears striking testimony to the prosperity of the metropolis under Labour Government."

That cannot refer to the prosperity of the country districts unfortunately—

"The average attendance at these two schools are, of course, smaller than the enrolments, but, allowing for that, they are 80 per cent. overcrowded. Others which could be mentioned are 50 per cent. short in proper accommodation for the number of scholars enrolled."

This article appears to have been written by somebody who has some idea of present conditions, and sets out to show the erroneous manner in which the Department of Public Instruction or the Department of Public Works estimates the area required in a country school. It appears that 8 square feet of floor room is generally allotted to each child and the required accommodation in the new school is calculated accordingly. This article points out that the calculation is probably made more on a 6 square feet basis than on an 8 square feet basis, because every available space—verandas, passage-ways, doorways, and everything else—is included, and it sets out that no provision is made for the teacher, where he is to sit, or for the tables or the blackboards.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Most of the blackboards are on the walls.

Mr. CORSER: They are on easels in most cases.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: As a matter of fact, most of them are not black. They are dark-green. (Laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: In most of the favoured districts they are dark-green. This article points out that no allowance is made for passage-ways or for tables and so on. When a complaint is made that a school is overcrowded and the department replies defining its area and stating that it should accommodate such and such a number of children, basing the calculation on an average of 8 square feet and that therefore it is not overcrowded, it is obvious that the charge is not answered at all. This article clearly sets out that, although the department does not admit of overcrowding in many cases, nevertheless it exists in those cases to the disadvantage of the scholars, to say nothing of the teacher. The teacher does not want to have the children a couple of feet from the blackboard—it is not a fair thing. The Minister has made a lot of promises, and I am sure he would keep quite a lot of them if he could; but unfortunately sometimes we have the idea that some of the smaller country schools might receive the attention which is given to the bigger ones, and that the city schools might hang out a bit longer while our wants in the country are attended to. Whether it is right or not, I do not know. They

Mr. Corser.]

might take a wing off the South Brisbane High School to supply me. I hope the Minister will do all in his power to make provision for the children of settlers in new districts who have no accommodation at all and cannot house teachers, to say nothing about the requirement that they should erect some temporary building in which to hold the school until the department needs one. They very often have difficulty in housing their own families in these new districts, and it is hard for them to be asked to provide a school building as well.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): It is high time that the Government gave serious consideration to the question of day labour versus contract, particularly as it affects people in the country. I know your ruling, Mr. Pollock, with reference to another vote, and I do not intend to discuss it here, but something ought to be done to catch up with the work which is waiting to be done. On the question of deferred works we were told by the Minister that it was because of the trouble that existed between one department and another.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No, you misunderstood me. I said that we did not initiate work.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman said that the Department of Public Works did the work when asked by another department, and then did only what was considered as the most urgent works.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes.

Mr. VOWLES: There seems to be a system of jugglery of work and responsibility. When we approach the Department of Public Instruction, pointing out the necessity for certain work, we are told that the work is being approved of and forwarded to the Department of Public Works to be done.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: For consideration.

Mr. VOWLES: We get those replies, but we do not get the work done. In the past each department was responsible for its own internal working, but it now appears that the Department of Public Works dominates the Department of Public Instruction, and, although the latter department ought to know the necessity for urgent work in various localities, and notwithstanding all the trouble experienced in getting that department to agree to certain work, you find yourself in the hands of another department, and the Minister says—in effect, but not in fact—that the most urgent works are proceeded with, and he does not take into consideration the interests of the children but the interests of the people who are engaged in the work of construction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; that is quite an unfair inference.

Mr. VOWLES: That is the only inference I could draw. The hon. gentleman stated in effect that he gave more consideration to the workers and the distribution and continuity of work than he gave to the interests of the children.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will not allow you to misrepresent me in that way. You are stating what is not a fact. You are deliberately trying to misrepresent me.

Mr. VOWLES: That is the only construction that could be placed on the words of the hon. gentleman.

[*Mr. Corser.*

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I said the most urgent works—

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman said that he studied the people engaged in the trade.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I said that the most urgent works were proceeded with.

Mr. VOWLES: And you spoke about the work of the artisans. We are not concerned so much about the work of the artisans as with the completion of the work for the children interested. When the Minister was speaking about the expenditure in the country as against the expenditure in the town, he drew a parallel and said that £114,000 was spent in the country, and only £9,000 was spent in the city. What does he call the country?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I did not use the word "city." I referred to the metropolitan area.

Mr. VOWLES: In speaking of the town and country he spoke of Kedron. Does he include that in the country area?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; that is included in the metropolitan area. Don't try your police court methods here. I will not allow you to misrepresent me.

Mr. VOWLES: In drawing a parallel and saying that £9,000 was spent in the city as against £114,000 spent in the country I want to know where the country begins and where the city ends.

Mr. WEIR: I thought it began in Dalby.

Mr. VOWLES: Some of the country begins there, but there is very little expenditure there. The expenditure of money is not indulged in even in the upkeep of existing buildings and keeping them in a decent state of habitation, or protecting the old buildings from the weather in the form of painting. Look at the police court premises and the sanatorium in Dalby. Look at the money that should have been spent there and in other Western towns; yet we are told that the money is largely expended in places outside the metropolitan area. Anybody who did not understand would be led to believe that the whole difference between £114,000 and £9,000 was spent in the country. It was not spent there. During a previous session of Parliament Mr. J. H. C. Roberts, who represented Pittsworth before the jugglery in electorates resulted in the wiping out of that electorate, was consistent in his demand for proper accommodation for the children at Milmerran.

As a result of the energies and efforts of the ex-member for Pittsworth, the late Secretary for Public Instruction agreed that a school should be erected in that centre. When that school was erected it was found that it was an old school building that had been dragged down from Pittsworth. The result was that the accommodation provided in that rising country district was not sufficient for the number of scholars attending the school. I was present at the opening function of the school. I then pointed out to the Hon. J. Huxham that it was regrettable that, when the Government put up the school, they did not cater for present requirements, let alone for future requirements, and he pointed out that the downstairs portion of the building could be latticed and the floor cemented, which would give some additional accommodation. That is only one case in point, but

there are many others similar to it in the Western districts of Queensland. Only at the beginning of this session we dealt with legislation which required private individuals to provide a certain amount of veranda space for the workers. If that is necessary for the workers, what about the children? Surely reasonable accommodation should be provided for the children of the Western districts, who have to endure the intense heat of summer and the intense cold of winter. It is all very well for the Secretary for Public Works to say that the expenditure has been properly apportioned, but it has not. The country has not got a fair proportion of that expenditure.

Mr. COLLINS: The country got nearly all the Commonwealth grant for main roads.

Mr. VOWLES: The people have to pay for that money, and, unfortunately, it is not being judiciously expended, either.

Mr. COLLINS: We represent the country on this side of the Chamber.

Mr. VOWLES: No, the hon. member and his party misrepresent the country. The hon. member represents a town, but you, Mr. Pollock, know more about the conditions of the hinterland, because you live away from the coast and you know that what I am referring to is perfectly correct. It would be in the best interests of the settlement of Western Queensland if more sympathetic consideration and better conditions were given in isolated cases for the education of the children. Hon. members recently saw the benefit of community settlement at Castle Creek as against isolated settlement in the Western districts, inasmuch as the people have all they require in the way of schools and are living in a state of civilisation. Although civilisation cannot be transferred to isolated districts in the back-blocks, which to my knowledge have been selected fourteen or fifteen years, the Government, through the Department of Public Works, can give them one of their most vital needs, and that is to educate their children who are growing up, and accommodate them under decent conditions. I regret that that is not being done, and I would again urge the department to look into the claims of the country districts. The Government have told us that the salvation of Queensland is the opening up and peopling of its Western areas, but, as we on this side have continually pointed out, the best and most attractive way to do that is to provide facilities by which the children in those areas can be educated.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): It is very patent, and naturally so, that every hon. member is deeply concerned about facilities for the education of the children. I would be very unfair if I did not say two things. One is that every hon. member on both sides of the Chamber appreciates to the fullest extent the need for schools for the country. They are most essential. The other matter is that every hon. member is deeply anxious, when requests come from his own electorate, to try and do his very best to see that the request is granted. I would also be unfair if I did not say that I have never hesitated to fight when necessary, and hon. members cannot say that I sit on a rail. I have at all times, in all requests within reason, been treated by the Secretary for Public Works with reasonable consideration.

Mr. FARRELL: That is the experience of most members.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have said that to the hon. gentleman by letter, and I have no hesitation in saying it now. The hon. gentleman has not granted all that I have asked for; probably I should have had an unfair proportion if that had been so. But it is only fair to say that the hon. gentleman has tried to meet all reasonable cases put before him.

I rose to ask a question—and I do not know whether I am in order in asking it now—a question in which I am deeply concerned—and that is whether workers' dwellings are still being erected by the department, or are workers' dwellings "off"?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Where applications were lodged during the last financial year we are proceeding with workers' dwellings. Until those applications have been disposed of we are not dealing with new applications.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Unfortunately that really bears out the information that I was afraid would be supplied—that the department are not at present dealing with applications for workers' dwellings.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Only those that were lodged in the last financial year.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I understand. Unfortunately the hon. gentleman has distinctly stated that only those applications received during the last financial year will be dealt with. To me that is a most unfortunate thing, and it is attacking one of the most beneficial things we have in Queensland. I have here a table showing that in 1922-23 1,121 applications were received from members of the community desiring homes. I strongly urge upon the Minister that he should do his utmost and endeavour to bring about the resumption of this good work.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): A few years ago members of Parliament used to think that whenever they wanted a new addition or a new school in their electorate all they had to do was to get the sympathy and support of the Secretary for Public Instruction. That is a fallacy. I have had the ex-Secretary for Public Instruction, Mr. Huxham, out in the Coorparoo district, and have shown him the Coorparoo school working under favourable and under unfavourable conditions, and he was very much impressed indeed, and he came to the conclusion that we needed additional accommodation very badly. That was all very well. We had his support and sympathy, and thought we were all right; but we found eventually that, although the Department of Public Instruction might approve of certain additions or certain schools, that was only one hurdle that we had to get over. We had then to go and settle with the Secretary for Public Works, who, of course, has to find the money. So far as my electorate is concerned, I must admit that the hon. gentleman has treated me very fairly indeed.

Mr. FRY: Perhaps you need another school? (Laughter.)

Mr. KING: I admit that I do. I must say that, when a favourable case is put before the Secretary for Public Works, he gives it favourable consideration. I heard the hon. gentleman say just now that, although approval may be given to certain additions or improvements, it does not follow that

Mr. King.]

those additions or improvements will be carried out forthwith. As I had got notification from the hon. gentleman in connection with three large schools in my electorate that favourable consideration had been given to our applications and that the additions would be carried out, I was fondly hoping that those additions would be carried out very shortly.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: So they will, as the work is looked upon as urgent.

Mr. KING: It is, and I am glad to know that the hon. gentleman recognises that. I shall say no more on that subject.

[3 p.m.]

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Junction Park school is one.

Mr. KING: Junction Park school is one, and Coorparoo is another. Certain additions have been made to the Greenslopes school which have fairly met the case, but the Minister also promised certain painting in regard to that school, and I trust that the good work that has been done there will not be allowed to suffer for the want of a little painting.

Then an application has been before the department for some considerable time for a school at Sandy Creek. This is a thickly populated district, and there are no schools in the immediate neighbourhood, consequently it is very hard indeed for the children of Sandy Creek to get that education which is necessary. I hope the Minister will look into the matter, and that, if he can possibly see his way clear, he will grant relief in that direction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Under Secretary is taking note of all matters brought under my attention.

Mr. KING: There is another matter I wish to draw attention to. We have within easy access of the city the Diamantina Hospital for chronic diseases. That institution is very much overcrowded; in fact it is taxed to its utmost capacity. There is provision made for erecting a hall there. That work has been approved of, I understand, by the Home Department, and it only awaits the approval of the Secretary for Public Works. I would like to urge on the Minister the necessity for getting on with that work as speedily as he possibly can. We know that the inmates of Diamantina are just undergoing a living death. A small committee was formed—what we call the Welfare Committee—for the purpose of trying to bring a little sunshine and a little happiness into the lives of these people. Last night we opened a cinema show at Diamantina. The Home Secretary officially opened it, and the inmates highly appreciate what has been done in that regard; but at present it is rather difficult to make the best use of that cinema. Last night some of the inmates were on the verandas, and some were out on the grass on forms, and it was not a good thing for them to be exposed to the night air. Furthermore, the stand with the cinema has to be taken to pieces and the whole thing put away, and that all takes time. If this hall were erected—I understand the plans and specifications have been prepared and have been approved by the Home Department—the whole thing could be fixed up and made a permanency, and the inmates would be able to enjoy the whole performance without any discomfort to themselves. As soon as the hall is in a fit state

[Mr. King.

to take the cinema apparatus, the committee have in view the further idea of installing a "listening-in" apparatus for the use of the patients. Hon. members will all agree that this is going to lighten the burdens of the unfortunate people who are undergoing a living death in that institution. It is going to make their days a little bit happier, and will bring a good deal of pleasure into their unhappy existence.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): The hon. member for Burnett referred to the necessity for school and other buildings in the Burnett and Callide Valleys where new settlers are being placed. On our soldier settlements at the present time there are a lot of schools and residences which have not been up very long, and I should say that a great many of them are in excellent condition and order. I would suggest that it might be worth while for the Minister to see if it is not possible to utilise some of these buildings as schools and teachers' residences in the new areas, as I understand that quite a number of the soldier settlements have been abandoned. I do not know whether the suggestion is feasible.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We might be able to use them in some instances, but the distance is too great in many cases.

Mr. TAYLOR: The buildings are there, and, if we could utilise them in some of the areas which have been mentioned to-day, it would obviate the heavy cost of new buildings.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): One matter which strikes me in connection with the buildings which are going up in our midst is that it may be necessary sooner or later to take some action in regard to the height of buildings. I take it that in a State like Queensland where the sun shines strongly at times attention should be given to the height of buildings, so as to prevent the erection of sky scrapers here. Anyone can see at once that, if there were a succession of buildings of extreme elevation in Queen street or any other street in the city, the position would be almost intolerable. It is being rendered more acute by reason of the fact that transit difficulties are not as easy as they might be. In these times motor traffic is the order of the day, and, unless we can have a very much wider street than we have now, we should give attention to limiting the height of the buildings. I do not know whether the Government have given any attention to this matter. In view of the conditions I have mentioned and the danger from fire, the matter will sooner or later have to receive attention.

Question put and passed.

COURT OF INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION.

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

"That £4,132 be granted for 'Court of Industrial Arbitration.'"

Last year we spent £3,430. This year there is an increase of £702, due chiefly to increased railway fares and so forth, and also to the operations of the two industrial boards in connection with the agricultural industry.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): On this vote I have a few words to say with reference to the increased scope of the Court of Industrial Arbitration. We all know that the Court has appointed a board to consider

whether it will extend its operations to the agricultural industry generally, and I hope that it will be worth the money spent upon it. An award has already been made in the sugar industry, and I sincerely hope that every consideration will be given to the primary producer, which up to the present time he has not had. Of course, we know there is going to be an award, and we shall have to put up with it.

With reference to the powers of the Court generally, it cannot take into account in making its awards any difference in efficiency, or whether a man is married or single. It has to fix a rate of wages to apply all round, and it cannot give consideration to one particularly deserving class of man, that is, the married man with a family.

Mr. HYNES: Are you in favour of the other rural workers getting the same wages as the workers in the sugar industry?

Mr. DEACON: The matter is still sub judice, and I cannot refer to it now. I have already referred to the fact that it is not a fair thing that a single man should be entitled to the same amount that is paid to a married man. The former lives in a state of luxury, whereas the latter, who belongs to a much more important class, is having a very hard struggle.

Mr. COLLINS: Tell us your remedy.

Mr. DEACON: I can tell the hon. member that we have a remedy, but we are not going to give it to the other side.

Mr. HARTLEY: Who is having a hard struggle to live?

Mr. DEACON: The remedy of the hon. member for Townsville is no remedy at all. His remedy is simply to fix higher wages all round and let somebody else find the money; but when the people cannot find the money and then men have to go without wages at all, it is a different thing altogether.

Mr. HYNES: That is the perpetual whine of the employer.

Mr. DEACON: It is the perpetual whine of the unemployed at the present time, too. If the hon. member will look at the amount being spent on the unemployed, he will see that it is an enormous amount and is increasing year by year. A great deal of that expenditure is due to the fact that the Court has not taken, and cannot take, into account the fact that many men are not efficient enough to earn the wage they get, and no specific power is included in the Industrial Arbitration Act under which men shall get the value of their work in proportion to the standard of the efficient worker.

Mr. HYNES: Many business men do not run their businesses efficiently.

Mr. DEACON: I do not know what business the hon. member is engaged in, so that I cannot say whether he is conducting it efficiently or not.

Mr. COLLINS: He was a good organiser.

Mr. DEACON: He may have been, but I suppose he organised to get into this Chamber, as many other organisers have done.

Mr. COLLINS: That is the reason you are in opposition—because you have no organising ability.

Mr. KERR: We have not your fund to do it with.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

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Mr. DEACON: Something ought to be done to try to equalise the difference between the wages of the single man and those of the married man. It is not possible to make two different awards.

Mr. COLLINS: What do you propose?

Mr. HYNES: The Court prescribes a minimum. You can give the married man as much more than the minimum as you choose.

Mr. DEACON: Hon. members know very well that the Court prescribes a minimum wage, which becomes the maximum and is as high as any man can expect.

Mr. HYNES: Your class make it the maximum.

Mr. DEACON: An hon. member opposite asked me for my remedy, but the hon. member for Townsville is not in a listening humour.

Mr. HYNES: I am.

Mr. DEACON: Something could be done by retaining part of the single man's wages, investing it in Government stock at a low rate of interest, the stock to be inconvertible until marriage, and then a bonus could be paid to the married men out of the funds accumulated as a result of the difference between the low rate of interest paid and the present rate of interest paid by the Government. I think something could be done along those lines, but it is not within my province to go into the details of the scheme. Certainly something will have to be done, because you cannot expect things to go on as they are now. The married man is not getting a fair deal, and the single man is getting more than a fair deal. Hon. members opposite are governing the country, and, if the law does not give justice to the married men, it is the Government's place to remedy it.

Mr. HYNES: There are no awards covering the rural industries. Are the married men in your district any better off than those in other districts?

Mr. DEACON: The married men in my district are much better off in comparison than single men without any award at all. They are much better off than many married men living in the town working under awards.

Mr. HYNES: The hon. gentleman admits that the rural industries can afford to pay a decent rate of wages?

Mr. DEACON: The rural industries have always paid as much as they could afford to pay. The farmers are always willing to do that; but what they can pay is based on what they can obtain, and they cannot pay if they do not receive the money. If you are going to increase the burden on the primary industries, you are either going to increase the cost of living for everybody in the country, or on the other hand make it impossible for those engaged in the primary industries to employ anybody at all; they will carry out all the labour themselves. Sooner or later the hon. member for Townsville will find out the truth of that. Before the present board has completed its inquiries into the agricultural industry, and before the Court is asked to make an award, the Government should consider the holding of an independent inquiry as to what will be the effect on the primary industries of an award. It is going to have a much greater effect than hon. members opposite dream of.

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It will not only affect farmers individually, but it will have a disastrous effect on all the primary industries in the country. It is futile to hope that the Government will do anything like that, but later on they will regret what they have done when they see the effect of their legislation.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): While the hon. member for Cunningham was speaking I asked him for his remedy for a certain position, and he pointed out that a single man gets the same rate of pay under an Arbitration Court award as a married man, and rightly so. Both perform the same amount of work, and both render useful service, and the hon. member said that, while he might have a remedy, he was not going to tell us what that remedy is. Hon. members have heard me say on more than one occasion that all reforms rest on finance. A remedy will have to be found. It is one of those questions which will have to be financed. A married man under the awards of the Arbitration Courts at the present time does not get a greater wage than a single man; but, if we are going to encourage population, something more will have to be given to a married man than a single man. That proposal is embodied in the platform of the Labour party in the form of an endowment to motherhood. In effect, that means that there should be an endowment for each child. The problem is where the money is to come from. A scheme has not as yet been thought out, although several men such as Mr. Piddington in New South Wales and other thinkers in different parts of the world have given a good deal of thought to it. The scheme depends solely on the ability to finance it. It would not be fair to ask a single man to work alongside of a married man and receive a less rate of pay. As I said in 1915 when the Government introduced the Industrial Arbitration Act, arbitration is not the be-all and end-all of the Labour movement. That movement has got to grapple with this problem. No one will complain more than hon. members opposite when we do start to grapple with the problem.

Mr. KERR: What are the proposals?

Mr. COLLINS: If I suggested that a part of the profits made by the employing class should go into a fund for motherhood endowment, hon. members opposite would squeal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. COLLINS: I hope, Mr. Pollock, that I am in order in dealing with the question of arbitration. I have in my hands the "Industrial Gazette" containing a very long article by the Chief Justice, Hon. T. W. McCawley, who has given a good deal of thought to the question of arbitration. Hon. members will have to give more thought to this question than they have given in the past. It is no use saying that the standard of wages should be fixed on the basis of what it takes for a man to support a wife and three children. If that is to be the basis, then we shall require immigration from other countries to build up a large population in Australia. I am one of those who believe that in fixing wages we should not stop at a basis of what it costs to keep a wife and three children. We must formulate a scheme separate from any other whereby an endowment can be paid to married men for each child. I am satisfied that before long the Labour party to which I belong will be able to evolve a scheme, and, when we set out to

make the friends of hon. members opposite contribute to it from a financial point of view, we shall hear hon. members getting up in their places on the other side and stating that the reason why more secondary industries are not being established in Queensland is because of the heavy taxation.

Mr. KELLO: You will search their pockets?

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member for Cunningham offered no solution of the problem. When hon. members on this side sat in opposition they were always prepared to show how problems could be solved.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): The hon. member for Bowen has not studied "Hansard." He evidently has not paid any attention to speeches made from this side of the Chamber with regard to child endowment. Hon. members on this side recognise as thinking men that the time must come when a policy of child endowment will have to be adopted in Australia.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. KERR: It is not my intention to deal with that particular question. There are a couple of items I want the Secretary for Public Works to explain. One question is whether the Government have given any attention to the matter of the overlapping of the State and Federal Arbitration Court awards. It will be recollected that last year a conference to discuss this matter was convened by the Prime Minister of Australia, consisting of the various State Attorneys-General of Australia. Some explanation should be forthcoming why the Minister representing this State was absent from that conference. Every other State of Australia tried to solve this difficulty, and we must solve it, because I think there are something like 800 awards in the Commonwealth. When we have all these conflicting awards in operation the matter requires some consideration. I would like to know why representatives of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia were present to discuss this vital question and Queensland was not represented.

I know very well that this question of whether certain powers of control of industrial matters should be taken over by the Commonwealth or not was submitted to the people on three occasions—in 1910, 1912, and 1919—and on each occasion the people of Australia said those powers were not to be given to the Commonwealth. I think those decisions rested purely on the question of State rights. That question will often decide the people in their views. I think the Constitution of the Commonwealth should be altered to permit the Commonwealth Government to take a greater part in connection with arbitration rather than conciliation.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why?

Mr. KERR: I will answer that question as I go on. I have already explained that the Federal and State awards overlap and there is a great deal of dual control. The hon. member for Fitzroy is quite justified in asking for some of the reasons why I think the Commonwealth should be granted more power. I shall quote five distinct reasons—

"1. Overlapping of Commonwealth and State awards.

"2. Two sets of industrial authorities dealing with the same subject-matter.

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"3. Differing awards of State tribunals in competing industries in different States.

"4. Lack of power to harmonise the inequality between the awards of different States.

"5. Lack of equality of trade conditions."

When Federation came in first one of the foundation points was free interstate trade. If we are to have free interstate trade, we have only one outlook—equal conditions throughout Australia so far as arbitration is concerned. If hon. members turn up the reports of the various Government Statisticians, it will be found that there is not one State paying the same amount of money as another, nor one in which the hours of work are the same as those in any other State. In every State there is something dissimilar. When arbitration is discussed only a few points are taken into consideration.

Mr. HARTLEY: What proof have you that a Commonwealth Arbitration Court would be better than the State Court?

Mr. KERR: That is a very pertinent question. I have no proof that it would be better than State arbitration.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is the important point.

Mr. KERR: I say the subject demands consideration. My reply to the hon. member for Fitzroy is: What proof have we that we are not going to get better satisfaction from the Commonwealth?

Mr. HYNES: It takes two years to get a Commonwealth award.

Mr. KERR: If it is only a question of delay, I say that delays can be overcome. I am prepared to say that the Court should sit in Queensland, and that it should lay down similar principles for the whole of Australia. The main factors which decide arbitration are the cost of living in a State and whether the industry of a State is in an average state of prosperity.

[3.30 p.m.] When you consider these two factors in this State, you must consider these two factors in the other States and reconcile them. The only way to give full effect to the Commonwealth Constitution is by an amendment of the Constitution. Section 51 lays it down that all the States concurrently must refer the matter to the Commonwealth. That is only side-tracking the issue, but if all the States do concur, then we have a chance of getting a temporary measure until the people of Australia say what shall be done. This is where I have a kick coming to the Minister, because he did not attend that conference.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Which conference?

Mr. KERR: I do not accuse the present Secretary for Public Works. I think it is a matter for the Attorney-General.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; it is a matter for the Secretary for Public Works.

Mr. KERR: The Minister was not present, while every other State was represented at that conference.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Which conference do you mean?

Mr. KERR: You attended one conference and missed a later one.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I was present at all the open conferences, but there

was a sort of secret conference held in New South Wales, but not with the authority of the Commonwealth, and the Queensland Government did not receive an invitation to be represented at that conference.

Mr. KERR: It seems a rather peculiar thing to me that there should have been a secret conference on this question.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I do not say that it was secret altogether, but it was not an interstate conference.

Mr. KERR: I have a report which shows that all the other States were represented, but even at that conference all the difficulties would not have been got over, for the simple reason that the question dealt with was conciliation more than arbitration. There must be an explanation forthcoming as to why the Minister was not present at the latest conference on this matter.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There has been no interstate conference since the last one I attended.

Mr. KERR: I am sorry I have not the report here, but it distinctly states that Queensland was not represented.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Queensland was not invited to be present at that conference.

Mr. KERR: There must be some explanation. If Queensland had desired to be represented, the Government could easily have obtained an invitation.

Mr. GLEDSON: You will have to see your Tory friends in the South about that.

Mr. KERR: It is not a question of our Tory friends in the South. It is a question of keeping up our own end. The Commonwealth seemed to be in some difficulty in regard to the classification of industries; but that is only side-tracking the whole thing. I do not think it is possible for the Commonwealth to classify industries and bring those industries which they classify as Federal or State under a particular award. I do not think that is possible, because in each of these industries nearly every craft is represented. Take an engine driver. He is represented in nearly every industry. You will find one man working in a Commonwealth industry and another man in the same craft union working under a State award.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: How many Commonwealth awards do you think there are in Queensland?

Mr. KERR: I do not know how many there are in Queensland, but in Australia there are about 800. I know the Minister mentioned the fact that Queensland employees should have the right to go to the Commonwealth Court if they so desire. He also says he wants to keep the State Court open to them in case they get better conditions from the State Court. That means dual control and further expenditure from the public purse. You cannot get away from these facts. This overlapping of Federal and State awards must receive the close attention of the Government.

Mr. HANSON: What overlapping is there?

Mr. KERR: There is a good deal of overlapping. If there is no overlapping, the hon. member will agree with me that every time a plaintiff is argued before the Arbitration Court in this State the conditions in another State are quoted if the award is

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higher in that State, and, if the Commonwealth award is higher, the Commonwealth award is quoted. We have one State fighting against the other all the time in regard to rates of pay. It is against their best interests to have that happening.

Mr. FARRELL: It is against the interests of the boss.

Mr. KERR: The hon. member should take a broader view of this matter. Hon. members opposite seem to get the idea that the boss is everlastingly trying to lower the conditions of his employees. Some of the claims which are submitted to the Arbitration Court by the employees' representatives are absolutely ridiculous. One union went into Court the other day and asked for a 100 per cent. increase in wages. The judge told him straight that it was a ridiculous claim, and to go back and amend his claim. Some of the unions are making a farce to-day of the Arbitration Court. The hon. member for Bowen mentioned what their objective is to-day. He said that it is not the Arbitration Court. I want to know whether, when their objective is reached, the Arbitration Court will be required. It is frankly acknowledged by unions to-day that the Arbitration Court is not successful, and is not meeting all their requirements. They are undermining the Court all they can, in my opinion, by reason of the false doctrines they are teaching. That is what is happening in Queensland. It is not the boss who is trying to take advantage of the employees. Why do the unions not want the Arbitration Court? It is because the employees under the Arbitration Court awards are becoming more and more shareholders in the various businesses in which they are engaged. Take the printing industry to-day, for instance. The employees are becoming shareholders in that industry.

Mr. GLEDSON: To the detriment of the public.

Mr. KERR: The workers go to the Arbitration Court, and the Court says that the industry in question is one of more than average prosperity. Their wages will go up because they are now practically shareholders in the firm. Why is that happening? The fact that these workers are becoming shareholders in the concerns in question is undermining the Government, who no longer want the Arbitration Court. They want the worker to be the bottom dog, so that he will have to struggle as he did in years gone by.

Mr. HYNES: Your crowd have kept them ground down in the dust for centuries.

Mr. KERR: That is the sort of nonsense and piffle that the hon. member talks. The reasonable people in the community are beginning to realise that the platitudes of the socialists on the opposite side are worn out, and the thread will snap when they try to bring in the policy of the leader of the left wing opposite.

Mr. HYNES: That is why the workers' representatives are all on this side of the Chamber.

Mr. KERR: Hon. members opposite apparently are against the workers becoming shareholders in the concerns in which they are working. What is Mr. Tim Moroney's antidote? He and his associates are afraid that, if the workmen are in a series of isolated craft unions they will have a chance of taking part as shareholders in the industries they are working in. He and others who preach

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false doctrines say that the day is coming when these isolated unions will be no longer required, and they are seeking to form one big union and to abolish craft unionism. I want to advocate the principle of arbitration.

Mr. HYNES: You said you were in favour of abolishing the Arbitration Court.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: You had better be careful or you will have that trotted out at you.

Mr. KERR: I would not be at all surprised at any underhand thing. It is not true.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: No? I will quote from "Hansard."

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman can quote what he likes, but he cannot quote that.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the hon. member address the Chair.

Mr. KERR: I want to advocate the principle of arbitration. I am here, as a member of the Opposition, to criticise what the Government are trying to do, and in that respect we have the very definite statement from the Premier who said that the ultimate aim of the party with which he was connected with was socialism.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KERR: Let me put in plain English what his plan is. What does socialism mean?

Mr. COLLINS: Step by step.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the hon. member connect his remarks with the vote for the "Court of Industrial Arbitration"?

Mr. KERR: I am trying to point out how the policy of the Government is going to undermine the Court of Industrial Arbitration: I am not criticising the administration of the Act but the policy of the Government; and, if I am not permitted to do that, I shall not be able to discuss the question at all. Socialism is defined thus: that the country and all the machinery of production in the country shall belong to the whole people and shall be used by the people and for the people.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the hon. member connect his remarks with the vote?

Mr. KERR: It is the aim of the Labour party to achieve that end. They want to break down something without having anything to put in its place. It has been claimed that, when the time comes, the people will know how to handle the question. But they do not know how to handle it. Our only solution is contained in this vote. It is arbitration. If we can get the Government to tell the people that that is their policy and that they will not go beyond that, and that they are not going to undermine arbitration, the better it will be for this State. I recollect reading what a great Labour man, I think, in the old country, said when an election came along. Of course these things are kept in the dark at election time—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is only connecting his remarks with the vote by mentioning the word "arbitration" occasionally. I ask him seriously to connect his remarks with the question.

Mr. KERR: All right, Mr. Pollock. Arbitration, in my opinion, has given a good deal of satisfaction in Queensland, but the Government were not responsible for bringing it into being. In principle it followed the

old wages board system, the only difference being that, instead of having round-table conferences, the employees were allowed to go direct to the Arbitration Court. The same principles are in operation to-day, and I hope that the time has not arrived when those principles have to be wiped out.

Mr. COLLINS: There is a vast amount of difference.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then why did you stonewall it with many all-night sittings?

Mr. KERR: There are many sections in the Act, but I do not know that it was stonewalled. I was not in the House when it was passed, and I do not know that that is a fact. The principles contained in the Industrial Arbitration Act were contained in previous legislation—there is no denying that—and I do not want to see it wiped away by the recent teachings of the Government.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I notice that by the time any law is ready to be wiped out our friends opposite have reached the stage when they are able to accept it. That is practically their attitude on the question of arbitration, but, if this Chamber is going to vote £4,132 for "Court of Industrial Arbitration" the court will have to produce better results than have been obtained during the last two or three years. Any system dealing with wages that cannot do more than say, "We cannot go any further" is going into the scrap heap, and that is what is going to happen to the arbitration system if it cannot find a solution of the problem that faces us to-day. It is no good saying that we are up against this, and up against that. The workers are not going to stand still and simply be put off by the speeches or opinions of judges or politicians or anybody else.

Mr. KELSO: What do you want—an increase every time?

Mr. HARTLEY: I do not know what the hon. gentleman wants, but what I want to get, and what I am working for as my ultimate objective, is that every man shall get the full result of his industry.

Mr. KERR: He can get that under arbitration.

Mr. HARTLEY: Any system that is going to stop short of that is going to get a very hard knock shortly. It does not matter how much you may quote the cost of living or the progress of industry, or whether industry will pay or not. That does not matter twopence to the man who is getting about £2 a week when he ought to be getting £6 or £8 a week. That does not appeal to him in the least. He may stand it for a certain length of time, but the time will come when he will knock the system over.

Mr. KELSO: Who gets £2 a week under an Arbitration Court award?

Mr. HARTLEY: I did not say that anybody got that, but there are plenty of people who are not getting it. It does not matter what awards there are, but so long as you have a system fixing wages and that system provides the conditions I have stated, then it will eventually be swept away altogether.

Mr. MORGAN: That is a condemnation of the Labour Government.

Mr. HARTLEY: The hon. member for Cunningham was very much concerned about the application of the principle of arbitration

to the rural industries, and as to what would be its effect on those industries. It will not affect those industries any more than it has affected the ironworking trade, the plumbing trade, the carpentry trade, or anything else. The conditions will adjust themselves.

Mr. MORGAN: Will it not mean dearer foodstuffs?

Mr. HARTLEY: No. It will only mean that the middleman and the produce agent will not be able to rob the farmer quite so much. They have to get their foodstuffs from somebody, and they will have to go short of a little bit of profit. There is no need for the farming community to be unduly alarmed. Taking them as a whole, if there is any section of the community in this State who are well off, it is the farmer. Hon. members opposite are always talking about the farmers and the taxes they have to pay. In perusing a Commonwealth report dealing with the matter, for the years 1921, 1922, and 1923, I find that there were 43,597 farmers whose incomes were not taxable. That is the income from all sources that was not taxable. Nevertheless, their total income was £24,280,000. Those figures show that even among the lower ranks of the farming community who are not earning a taxable income the average income runs out at about £550 per head. I know that is not correct as net income, but I cannot get the exact income, neither can I get what their living income is. Any farmer who is earning that amount is getting his living and a little more. Notwithstanding drought and bad crops, those figures show that he is getting a comfortable living and his clothes. Why should there not be some principle laid down under which a man out of work through no fault of his own, but through some defect in our commercial and industrial system, should not be paid some amount? That is what hon. members opposite are always advocating for the farmers.

Mr. MORGAN: Does not the Unemployed Workers Insurance Act make some provision for the out-of-work worker?

Mr. HARTLEY: It makes provision for a beggarly payment, but that payment is not anything for any hon. member to shout about. It is merely an insurance against starvation. It might be the beginning of a system which might work out for something better, but at present it is nothing to boast about.

I want to say in regard to arbitration generally that, if the commercial community and every one else who talks glibly about arbitration in its relation to the adjustment of wages cannot realise in the face of the published figures concerning the incomes from the State and Commonwealth that the people cannot see through their talk, they are mistaken. The report of the Commonwealth Commissioner for Taxation for 1921, which is the latest available, shows that the total taxable income for the Commonwealth, after all deductions have been made, amounted to £200,516,000, and of that amount only £14,689,600 was taken in taxation. If we add a couple of million for the payment of the State income tax, and about £3,000,000 for the payment of the land tax, it will be seen that very little, comparatively, is being taken from the great income of the Commonwealth towards the cost of administration of the States and Commonwealth.

I want briefly to touch on the remarks of the hon. member for Enoggera, who said that his party gave the present system of

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arbitration its blessing, and that hon. members on that side of the Chamber inaugurated it.

Mr. KELSO: Our people introduced the system.

Mr. HARTLEY: I have very acute recollections of working under the old arbitration system, and I will tell the hon. member of the system that was introduced in the first instance to adjust wages. The first system was a wages board system—a very good system as far as it went. In my opinion—and I differ from a number of others—it was the best method of adjusting conditions and wages as between employer and employee.

Mr. KELSO: Who brought that in?

Mr. HARTLEY: Wait a moment; I want to deal with the matter in my own way. It was the best system when you were able to get an unbiased umpire to act as chairman. In addition to being unbiased, he would need to have a knowledge of the employers' side of the industry and also a knowledge of the employees' side. It was a very difficult thing to get such a man, I admit, but, as far as the system went it was a very good one.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HARTLEY: It was a system that tended to bring employers and employees together and to create a better understanding between them. My opinion is that the bulk of the employers are not hard and bad, but 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. of unscrupulous employers, by their sneaking tricks in cutting down wages and otherwise gaining points over competitors, compelled the better class of employer to make his system uniform with theirs.

That was the original system of arbitration, and the main fault was that there was no sincerity behind the administration of the idea. It took years for one to get in front of a Court. The cumbersome machinery of the Wages Boards Act entailed a very long expenditure of time, work, and money to get before the Court, and very often the department that hon. members on the other side have been talking about time and again deliberately drove the whole matter back months when the parties were on the point of coming to a decision. I remember the Storemen and Carters' Board was right on the point of coming to a decision. They had a very fine chairman, and had had very fine sittings, and were likely to come to a very good decision. The present hon. member for Wynnnum was at that time Secretary for Public Works and, to the consternation of everybody in the Central district, the hon. gentleman cancelled the Wages Board for the time being. If you treat the workers with insincerity like that, you can bet there is going to be a "come-back" from the workers themselves. One other disadvantage was that there could be no appeal against an award; an award could not be altered when it was made. But even with all its disadvantages, it was only the insincerity behind the system that caused it to be a failure. After all, those are the drawbacks governing the payment of wages to-day. If it were not for the inherent selfishness of some employers and some employees—the spirit is not universal, but more or less there exists in everybody the idea of getting as much as possible as employees or withholding as much as possible as employers—we would not be faced with the industrial troubles of to-day. Even with all its failures and disadvantages we were

getting somewhere under the Wages Boards Act. Then came the big strike in 1912. The Government of the day cut the vital part out of the Act. They emasculated it beyond recognition and brought in the Industrial Peace Act, which was one of the cruelest and meanest Acts you could possibly put on the statute-book.

[4 p.m.] Let me tell the hon. member for Enoggera this for his own information, and perhaps when he knows it he will begin to understand why I always look with suspicion on anything that comes from members on his side or from the bosses generally. I was in Rockhampton at the time, and, as hon. secretary of the Australian Workers' Association, I undertook to form a Cabinet and Furniture Makers' Union—a very poorly paid class of employee—under the Industrial Peace Act. They said, "What sort of an Act is it?" I said, "Never mind, we will fight it right through if you stick together." We fought it through and applied for an award under that Act, and it took months and months. We had to go from Rockhampton to Mackay, from Rockhampton right down to Bundaberg, and from Rockhampton right out West to find if there were any members in those centres. It took months of inquiry to be sure if we were right. We got our application for an award in, and it was held in the pigeon holes in Brisbane for a very long time. Finally the Court sat in Rockhampton. By that time a year had elapsed since we first took action. We first of all attempted to settle the matter by open conference with the employers, but they would not meet us in conference because they thought they could beat us under the Industrial Peace Act. After a year had elapsed we got an award. What happened? The employers appealed, and it was hung up for a year and nine months, and I ask what is the good of any system when you can play tricks with it like that? That was the Industrial Peace Act that we repealed when we came into power, and it is a very good thing that it has gone. This system is fairly sound as far as it goes, but what is wanted behind it is real genuine sincerity in order that the objects for which it was framed are carried out. I do not want to hear any excuse as to why this is done or any excuse as to why the other thing cannot be done. What the workers want are better conditions for themselves, and, if they cannot get that, they will find some other method and some other party to do it.

With regard to the hon. member's desire that we should in some way amalgamate with the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, I say it would be a mistake for any State to merge its arbitration system with that of the Commonwealth. The less any State allows the Commonwealth to interfere with its internal affairs the better it will be for that State. Nothing but chaos, confusion, and disorder would result for an amalgamation such as the hon. member talks about. The hon. member stated that one of his reasons for advocating the amalgamation of the State and Federal Arbitration Courts was on account of the unequal conditions of trade in the various States. That to my mind is one reason why each State should keep its own arbitration system, because its people know the conditions of trade in their own State. It might be possible for the arbitration courts of the various States to agree on a uniform policy on broad principles, but that is as far as they can go.

[Mr. Hartley.]

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): It was very refreshing to me to listen to the hon. member for Bowen a little while ago. He said that, when they were in opposition, they were always anxious and willing to make suggestions for the betterment of conditions, but that hon. members on this side had nothing to criticise and did not offer any suggestions. It seems a very peculiar thing that, if hon. members opposite were bursting themselves during the time they were in opposition to offer to the then Government constructive criticism which they considered would be helpful in the interests of the State, it has taken them all these years simply to think about things. The hon. member said this afternoon that he thought that in time they would be able to evolve some scheme in connection with the wages paid to single men and those paid to married men. In the light of what the hon. member said, it strikes me that the constructive ideas on the other side, according to the statement of the hon. member for Bowen, cannot be of a high order.

Mr. COLLINS: I said it was all a question of finance.

Mr. KELSO: It is partly that, but, considering the enormous amount of money the Government have had to spend during the last nine years—a larger amount probably than any Government of a different political colour will have the temerity or conscience to spend—surely some of the money might have been allocated to that particular purpose. It would have been wiser than spending it on some of the socialistic enterprises which have been such a loss to the country.

It has been admitted that the so-called Tory Government introduced the principle of arbitration in Queensland. It was brought in in the form of the Wages Boards. I am quite in agreement with the hon. member for Fitzroy—we seem to be in agreement a lot with him to-day—when he says that he is rather inclined to the idea of the Wages Boards.

Mr. COLLINS: He said with an unbiased board.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There is power under the Arbitration Act to set up industrial boards now.

Mr. KELSO: At the pleasure of the judge, I presume.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not necessarily—at the request of those engaged in the industry.

Mr. KELSO: Under the present Act, where the plaint is considered by a judge of the Arbitration Court, the evidence is brought up by two experts. A gentleman like the hon. member for Townsville, for instance, will plead in court on behalf of Labour, and there will be a representative of the employers. To my mind the principle adopted should be that which was contained in the Wages Board Act, namely, to discover in the first place whether the difference between employers and employees is or is not susceptible of solution without having recourse to the court.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: As a matter of fact, there is provision under the Act for setting up Conciliation Committees.

Mr. KELSO: I suppose the Minister has to agree to their constitution?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am the most conciliatory individual of the lot. (Laughter.)

Mr. KELSO: The Minister would ingratiate himself with anyone he was sweet with. We are getting down to the hard fact that conciliation does not materialise at the present time. I remember that on one occasion I gave evidence before a Wages Board in a furniture matter. The hon. member for Fitzroy was very fair in his argument this afternoon. He does not assume that all employers are rogues, thieves, and vagabonds, nor does he assume that all employees are right. He referred to a certain proportion of 10 or 1 per cent. of the employers who were unscrupulous.

Mr. HYNES: Do not damn the hon. member for Fitzroy with faint praise.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member does not hold the view that the employer is a curse to the country and the greatest enemy of the working man. I know that it has been the business of the hon. member for Townsville to do that. His business is to tell the working man that it does not matter what advantages he has got, even if he thinks he is well off.

Mr. HYNES: He has been pretty successful.

Mr. KELSO: Such men live by creating in the minds of the workers the idea that they are being ill-treated by their employers. Getting back to the point, the present idea seems to be different. Under the old wages board system half a dozen men sat down representing the employers and half a dozen men representing the employees, and they had a chairman elected by themselves, who naturally knew something about the industry upon which he was adjudicating.

Mr. COLLINS: Never.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member says he never did. That may have been his experience in the industry with which he was concerned, but one swallow does not make a summer and in many cases the chairman did know something about the industry on which he was adjudicating. What struck me in the instance to which I have alluded was that the chairman had local knowledge of the subject the wages board was dealing with, and in conversation with one of the men afterwards it was pleasing to know that they realised that there were prejudices on both sides, and that some of the employees, at that particular conference at any rate, realised the employers were not as bad as they had thought they were, and that the employers realised that the employees were not as rapacious as they had thought they were. That was the old system. This Government brought down the Industrial Arbitration Act, following the Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and I think by that means knocked on the head the principle of conciliation. First of all, the whole spirit of the Industrial Arbitration Act is that there shall be no legal assistance to anybody before the Court. That is the root idea of it—keep the lawyers out, as these men are a danger. Yet the Government appointed as president of the Court a man who was a lawyer, and who also became a judge of the Supreme Court. They appointed as the other judge a lawyer who was already a judge. Therefore they immediately introduced legal men—men they said they did not want. If they wanted to keep such men out, surely they could have picked

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some men who had a largo experience of life and of business, and who had passed through all the phases of industry with which these men were likely to have to deal and who were able to give unbiased decisions—I shall not say “unbiased,” because all judges are capable of giving unbiased decisions—but who were more likely by reason of their knowledge to do justice to the case and be of benefit to the employer and employee. Instead of that, we have professional agitators appearing before the judges of the Court. We have on the other side men representing employers, who by virtue of that fact naturally advocate the employers' side just as strongly as the hon. member for Townsville would put that of the employees if he were before the Court. Is there any conciliation in that scheme?

There is another point I wish to speak about. I think most hon. members will agree with me that it would be far better if the Court fixed the minimum wage to commence at twenty-three years of age instead of at twenty-one. Cases have come to my notice in which a young man receives progressive increases year by year till he is twenty years old. When he gets to twenty-one years of age there is such an enormous increase that the employer begins to wonder whether he cannot do without that man. Speaking in the interests of the workmen, it seems to me a pity that a lot of those men are thrown on the labour market just at twenty-one years of age, which is the most interesting period of their life, because they are then looking forward to settling down. I believe that, if the maximum wage was paid at twenty-three years of age—

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: They would be sacked at twenty-three, just as they were going to be married.

Mr. KELSO: I am arguing in favour of the employee himself, because this reacts like a boomerang on him, and he is the one to suffer in the long run. Hon. members opposite know that.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: I remember when employers sacked them because they had to pay an increase of 2s. 6d. per week. That argument will not wash.

Mr. KELSO: If the graduation in the increase was just as general between the ages of twenty and twenty-three, as between sixteen and twenty, the probability is that man would hold his billet, and at twenty-three would be an employee who would carry on, and there would not be any disturbance in the labour market. Hon. members opposite know that. Of all the phases of arbitration I think that is one of the worst. When a man reaches the age of twenty-one years he is thrown on the labour market, and all his experience is gone. I think that is a very serious thing. It does not affect the employer, but it has a boomerang effect on the employee. The question has been raised about the payment of the same wages to single men as to married men. The question is how it is going to be overcome.

Mr. HYNES: That is the point.

Mr. KELSO: We can talk as we like, but the thing is to get a solution of the difficulty. Some time ago Mr. Piddington elaborated a scheme, and a scheme I believe has been considered by Chief Justice McCawley, but, after all the consideration, they cannot offer a solution of the difficulty. It is

[*Mr. Kelso.*

manifest to the public that an injustice is being done to the man with the average family—husband, wife, and three children. The single man has only to support himself. It has been stated that he is entitled to the same wage as the married man so as to be able to save and get married.

Mr. FRY: He may support a widowed mother and brothers and sisters.

Mr. KELSO: Yes, there are exceptions to every rule.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. gentleman must take into consideration the value of the work performed.

Mr. KELSO: I am not overlooking that. We have to take into consideration the value of the work performed. How are we going to get over this difficulty? Hon. members know perfectly well that it would apparently be all right if those young men at that impressionable age were to make good use of their surplus money, but it seems they do not. They have a big wage at twenty-one years of age, equal to the wage received by the man of twenty-five or thirty years of age, who has greater responsibilities.

Mr. WRIGHT: If they earn it, why should they not get it?

Mr. KELSO: From the single man's point of view, he earns the money.

Mr. WRIGHT: Why make him wait until he is twenty-three years of age?

Mr. KELSO: I believe there is only one way in which a solution will be found. The married man must be subsidised. He has certain responsibilities, and must be subsidised over and above the basic wage received by both married and single men. The trouble is. How are we going to do it? We can criticise as we like, but the man who can offer a solution of that difficulty will have the thanks of the community. I find that hon. members opposite, who generally know everything, say that this is a matter for which they can offer no solution. It will either have to be done by a contribution by the Government or by the subsidising of the married men by the employer. It has been suggested that we should have a bachelor tax. The question is one that is too big for one to go into at the present time.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. KELSO: I am only touching on the fringe of the question. Hon. members have also had a solution from hon. members opposite who profess to be authorities on every industrial subject.

The bell indicated that the hon. member had exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *MacKay*): I wish to discuss one or two matters in connection with this vote. The Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916 has been the most successful Act that has yet been put into operation in any State of the Commonwealth or in any part of Australasia. The most difficult problem of any that confronts any society is the laying down of a basis which shall give those engaged in industry a means of livelihood and properly recompense them for their labour. The Industrial Arbitration Act did not purport to be an Act which was going in any way to alter the fundamental economic basis of society; and any one who thinks that

the Act could be used in such a way has not a full and complete understanding of the problem. The Industrial Arbitration Act, in effect, lays down that there are two parties to industry—those who use the instruments of industry and those who own them. It also recognises the fact that in all forms of industrial operations the public are affected. In past years, before the machinery of the Arbitration Court was called into operation, there was no method whereby a man could secure a certain minimum wage by legal right or protect his industrial position. Wages were then fixed on what was known as the basis of supply and demand. If labour was plentiful and more men were offering their services to an industry than there was work for, wages fell. In industries where workers were properly organised, and particularly where that industry was a skilled one, they were able by means of their better organisation to exact better wages and conditions than those who were not so well organised. Nevertheless, the fact remains that industrial warfare took place between the two contending parties, and those who could hold out the longest won. The Labour party recognised that this was a barbarous form of struggle to be allowed in a civilised community. We therefore set up a form of machinery which laid down that the basis should be a certain minimum standard of living for a man with a wife and three children. An Arbitration Court, free from any political control, was set up with arbitration judges to deal with those industrial matters which were entrusted to their control. The Queensland Arbitration Court has been the most successful Arbitration Court in any part of the world. (Hear, hear!) There is no doubt about that.

At 4.25 p.m.,

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

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You will realise, Mr. Dunstan, the point that I made in the beginning that an Arbitration Court cannot alter the existing economic fabric of society.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: All it can do is to protect the workers against the undue power that the owner of the instruments of industry can exert at given times when more men are offering than are required by a particular industry. It also protects the public interest in this respect: It provides a basis on which the contending parties can meet, and lays down an arbitrary decision which both sides shall be called upon to adopt. That is an important factor. It is the recognition of the public interest in arbitration. Under the old method of direct action we know the suffering that took place in the community. We know that those who were not directly engaged in the struggle were often dragged into it and vitally affected, and they and their interests suffered. Therefore I say that, within the scope of the Act and the possibilities that exist for the operation of an Arbitration Act, the Industrial Arbitration Act in Queensland has been singularly successful.

I realise, of course, that there are many people at times who are dissatisfied with the decisions of the Arbitration Court. It is only natural that it should be so, because

there is arbitrary power on the part of a judge to decide between two contending parties. There are some people who give lip service to arbitration, who say they believe in arbitration; but the difficulty with them is that they want to be the judges, too. That of course cannot take place.

The hon. member for Enoggera referred to certain proposals that have been made from time to time in connection with what he called "the conflict of State and Commonwealth industrial powers?" We know that there were certain proposals placed before the public of Australia—I think, speaking from memory, on three occasions—they were asked to give increased industrial powers to the Commonwealth. On each occasion those proposals for the amendment of the Commonwealth Constitution were rejected by the people. Since then efforts have been made spasmodically to come to an agreement between the States so that power could be surrendered simultaneously by the States to the Commonwealth to operate in certain industrial ways. At the last Premiers' Conference, which has been discussed in this Chamber, there were two definite proposals put before the Conference. One was by certain State Attorneys-General; the other was a proposal that came from the Commonwealth Government. Mr. Bavin, Attorney-General of New South Wales, Sir Arthur Robertson, who was at that time Attorney-General of Victoria, and Sir Henry Barwell, then Premier and Attorney-General of South Australia, came to a certain agreement in connection with the industrial powers of the States and Commonwealth. They were also supported by the representatives of the Governments of Western Australia and Tasmania. Briefly, their proposals were that the employees of State instrumentalities and the employees of statutory bodies operating under the law of the State should be debarred entirely from the operations of the Commonwealth law. That meant that anyone engaged by the Government, by a local authority, or by any public or semi-public body, would be denied the right of access to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. On behalf of the Queensland Government I opposed that, chiefly on the ground that it had no regard to the conditions under which such men would be employed; but I felt that, were the people affected by that proposal debarred from appealing to the Commonwealth Court, it was reasonable to assume that the Governments who were putting forward those proposals would also debar these men from the operation of their own State Courts. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bavin and Sir Arthur Robertson made no secret at all of the fact that, in their opinion, Government employees or Government bodies should not be subject to the operations of an Arbitration Court at all.

I stated the opinion at the time, [4.30 p.m.] and no one took exception to it, that there was a reasonable suspicion on the part of everyone concerned that, if this were agreed to, the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, at that time controlled by Tories, would deny the right of access to the Arbitration Court to their employees. The Commonwealth proposal was that certain defined industries should be included in the schedule to the Commonwealth Arbitration Act and that in respect of those industries the Commonwealth should have full and complete power. I also opposed that on behalf of

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Queensland on the ground that it was a very inadequate way of dealing with the question. If that proposal had been adopted, it would have meant that where a State industry was more advanced than a Commonwealth industry, men operating in those industries defined to be Commonwealth industries would have been denied the advantages of any advanced legislation that the State Government might bring forward. That is to say, if the Commonwealth were given complete industrial powers in certain avenues of industry, the conditions laid down by the Commonwealth might be less favourable to the employees than the State Arbitration Court would give, with the consequence that, instead of that state of affairs improving the system of arbitration or promoting industrial peace, it would lead to increased industrial unrest and give rise to greater dissatisfaction than has existed in the past. In Queensland there are very few Commonwealth awards, and the difficulties that existed in other States through the overlapping of State and Commonwealth awards do not exist in Queensland. The award dealing with coastal shipping and the Seamen's Union generally is the only Commonwealth award that operates in its entirety in Queensland. There are other Commonwealth awards such as those in the clothing trade, the carting trade, and one or two others that have been adopted by the State and made a common rule, so that in effect they become State awards. One of the chief difficulties in regard to Commonwealth awards is that they only apply to employees who are cited in a plaint before the Commonwealth Arbitration Court; there is no power to make a Commonwealth award operative on individuals who may come into the industry after the award has been made, whereas under the State law an award made by the State Arbitration Court is obligatory on all persons covered by that award. In other words, it becomes what is known as a common rule. Therefore we are justified in assuming that, where a State gives employees access to the State Arbitration Court, there is little or no need for the Commonwealth to operate in that arena. In the State Courts there have been 270 awards and industrial agreements, and it is interesting to note that 124 of these awards provide for a 44-hour week or under; five of them for a 45-hour week; two for a 45½-hour week; eleven for a 46-hour week; one for a 47-hour week; and sixty-eight for a 48-hour week.

It will be seen that, so far as hours are concerned, the majority of awards already stipulate a 44-hour week.

The most important problem confronting us to-day, however, apart from the continual agitation that must go on between those who own the instruments of industry and those who use them, is the position of the worker operating under the basic wage. The basic wage is supposed to provide for a man and his wife and three children. In Queensland, at least in the southern portion of the State, that has been fixed as being £4 per week. No one can argue that a man with a wife and three dependants can live riotously and fare sumptuously every day on that wage. The hon. member for Nundah referred to single men receiving the same wage as married men. I interjected by pointing out that in all wages questions one must also give due regard to the value of service rendered. We believe that every

man should receive the full fruits of his own industry—in a word, that he should get all he earns. I also believe that he should earn all he gets.

Mr. KELSO: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The position must be unsatisfactory also in cases where the families are greater than the number set out in the Act. It is interesting to note that various countries in the world are investigating the position. In France, for example, where they are recognising the importance to them as a nation of the decrease in the population, large and well organised industries already have voluntarily established a fund out of which they pay an increased bonus to married men with families. In the iron and steel trades, for example, those engaged in the industry voluntarily provide a fund on the basis of the number of men employed, and from the fund employees with families receive a bonus for every child under a certain age.

Mr. TAYLOR: Who make the payments to the fund?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The employers, by an arrangement among themselves, from which they pay a bonus or a form of endowment to everyone of their employees.

Mr. KERR: No State subsidy at all?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The State does not come in at all in the case I am alluding to; it is a voluntary system. It certainly does not provide for an adequate motherhood endowment, but it is valuable as implying recognition of an important principle. There are some people who advocate motherhood endowment, and claim that the basic wage should be altered and that the endowment should be based thereon. To that, the single man without dependants replies, "Motherhood endowment is all right, but you are not going to do it at my expense." If that scheme were put into operation in Queensland on our present standard, it would mean that the basic wage would be £3 10s. 6d. A further amount would be charged on industry, which would be paid into a Government department, and from the fund endowment would be paid for each child under a given age. It would not place an increased charge on industry—it would merely be a reshuffle of the amount of wages payable. Naturally, that is opposed by many people on the ground I have stated. They say that motherhood endowment is all right, but you have no right to do it at their expense. At the present time many people advocate a reduction of the basic wage to £3 10s. 6d., which is looked upon by them as a sufficient wage for a single man, with a further payment to those who have families. Personally, I believe that motherhood endowment raises a problem which should be faced by the Australian people.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I say definitely that, if we are going to encourage the growth of population within our own borders something in this direction should be done, and it is not outside the capacity of a Government to find a means for doing so. I do not think, however, that a practical scheme can be put forward by a State. I do not think that the State has the taxation resources which will enable it to do so adequately, but I believe that a large

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portion of the Commonwealth revenue from the tariff and other sources of taxation should be ear-marked for this purpose, and that from the fund so created endowment should be paid to those who have dependants under the age of, say, sixteen years.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Under such a proposal the basic wage, or wages as they exist to-day, would continue, and workers with wives would receive from the Government Department endowment for every child under sixteen years of age. A Royal Commission has been appointed to deal with this question.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): Mr. Dunstan, I rise to a point of order. On this vote, when Mr. Pollock was in the Chair, I wished to discuss the Government policy with regard to arbitration but I was pulled up, and I suggest the same action should be taken with the hon. gentleman.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Speaking to the point of order—in which I submit there is nothing—I want to point out that, in the first place, the hon. member was called to order for attempting to discuss something by way of a definition of socialism. I am taking the question of motherhood endowment as it affects the basic wage, and I submit, therefore, that it is quite in order to discuss it on this vote. We have on this vote the right to discuss the question of whether the Arbitration Court is adequately carrying out its powers, and we can discuss ways and means of improving those powers or other forms of providing for the object we have in view.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I rule that the Minister is in order in discussing on this vote the question of motherhood endowment as it affects arbitration.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is rather a pity that hon. members opposite—or at least one of them—do not desire to have this question discussed, as it is one of the most important industrial problems that exist. I cannot regard with equanimity the condition of a man with a large family endeavouring to struggle along on £4 a week. It is not a source of satisfaction at all, and I have been investigating very closely the practicability of a motherhood endowment scheme, and have collected a very large amount of information on the matter which will be available if I am called upon by the Royal Commission when they come to Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I say definitely, in conclusion, that our Arbitration Court within the limits of its power and within the scope in which it operates has been singularly successful. I believe it constitutes a system which benefits the workers and society generally. I think that under any form of society arbitration will always be required to deal with the differences of contending parties. As we improve our civilisation, as we increase in our concern for the well-being of the community, so shall we move in the direction of establishing tribunals to deal with disputes without necessity for an appeal to the arbitration of the strike, which is only a form of civil war. I think arbitration will continue to be the policy of the Government, and, while I admit that it may be improved and

extended from time to time, it is a principle that is valuable to Queensland as a whole.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): This is a most important vote. I had something to do with the old wages boards as a representative of the workers, and I also watched with a great deal of interest the activities of the court under the old Industrial Peace Act; and in 1916, when the Industrial Arbitration Act superseded the Industrial Peace Act, I was one who saw that a great deal of good was going to accrue, not only to the workers employed in the State, but also to the employers and the State generally. The hon. member for Nundah stated that previous anti-Labour Governments had been instrumental in introducing the principle of arbitration into this State and making it a State enactment; but there is no true analogy between the existing Industrial Arbitration Act and the old Wages Boards Act. The whole of the good conditions, points, or features of the Wages Boards Act are contained in the existing Industrial Arbitration Act. The hon. member for Nundah also stated that under the old Wages Boards Act the parties to a dispute gathered round a table and discussed the best means of settling their dispute, or, in other words, they accepted conciliation. The same condition obtains to-day. Almost invariably the judge of the Arbitration Court orders the parties into conference to see if they cannot come to some arrangement without the conditions being arbitrarily fixed by the judge. In some cases we have been successful, but, generally speaking, such conferences have proved abortive.

Some suggestion has been made by some hon. members opposite about the substitution of the Federal Arbitration Court for the State Court. I have had some experience in connection with the operation of the Federal Court, and I know of cases where industrial organisations have had to wait four and five years before they could get their cases heard by the Court. Such a condition as that does not tend to industrial peace, and does not tend to encourage the workers to put any confidence in arbitration. On the other hand, it makes converts for direct action. There is another objectionable feature regarding the present Federal Arbitration Act, and that is the fact that there must be an interstate dispute before the Court can be moved. Just compare those conditions with the conditions obtaining in our own Industrial Arbitration Act which was placed on the statute-book by this Government. I certainly am not one of those who are enamoured of our Arbitration Act. I realise that the workers can only accept arbitration as a palliative. I agree with an hon. member opposite who stated that our objective was socialism. Our objective is certainly socialism, and everything that I can do or say inside this Chamber or outside of it will be with a view to expediting our progress towards the goal of our desire.

Mr. KELSO: A number of your supporters are afraid of it.

Mr. HYNES: I realise that at the present juncture I do not see anything better to supersede arbitration. Through the Arbitration Court, established in Queensland under the 1916 Act, we have been able to deal effectively with the sweating evil; we

Mr. Hynes.]

have been able to improve the conditions of the workers of Queensland; we have been able to preserve a certain amount of industrial peace; and we have been able to do that without condemning ourselves and our dependants to the hardships that a strike invariably inflicts upon people who are most in need of our protection. We have been able to do that; and that is why arbitration commends itself to me as opposed to direct-action methods. There are some defects and some glaring anomalies existing in the present Act. The feeling is getting abroad among the workers of Queensland that only the big militant organisations have any chance of securing preference to unionists. It is a principle that we in the past have fought, starved, and gone to gaol for. We believe in preference to unionists, but, as the Court is operating at the present time, a great deal of criticism has been levelled at it by reason of the fact that non-militant unions have had some difficulty in getting preference. I shall refer to one case in particular. The Clerical Workers' Union in this State have done a great deal of organising through their association, and those workers have benefited by the amount of money expended by the association in securing better conditions and wages in that industry; but there are a vast number of pen-pushers who refuse to become unionists and accept their responsibility of paying their quota towards bringing about these better conditions. The large organisations—what are known as the key industries—have been able to secure preference of a kind from the Court. The organisation that I refer to has year after year approached the Court for preference and have been turned down. I do not pin my faith to the Arbitration Court as the be-all and end-all of the aspirations of the working class.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HYNES: We are looking for something better; we accept arbitration as a palliative. Just imagine the position if hon. members on this side who are endeavouring to bring about a betterment in the conditions of the workers and reach our objective—that is, to secure for the workers the full result of their industry—were to pin our faith to the Arbitration Court! It is a system under which a judge drawing something like £40 a week decided that £4 a week was sufficient for a married man with a wife and three of a family to live on. We do not stand for that system; but it is the best we can obtain under existing conditions at the present juncture. Hon. members opposite have criticised the policy of the Labour party, the Industrial Arbitration Act, and a good few other things; but their arguments have been absolutely devoid of any constructive criticism. After all, it is constructive criticism that counts. Hon. members who are students of Queensland politics must admit that the Labour party, when in Opposition, assisted the Government of the day in their legislative proposals by the constructive criticism which they offered, and they assisted in passing legislation which has done a great deal of good for the people of Queensland. There is another feature of the Arbitration Court to which I, as a person who has been associated with it, particularly object. The Secretary for Public Works, in the excellent speech delivered by him, made reference to the fact that the existing Court based the basic wage on what it costs to keep a man, his

wife, and three children in reasonable comfort. I say that £4 per week is not doing that. Only to-day while I was coming to work—I should say to the "talk-shop"—I met a lady with a baby in arms who was proceeding to a place to do washing. I spoke to her, and said, "Are you a widow?" She replied, "No, my husband is on the basic wage, and I have to go out and do washing to help to support us."

Mr. KERR: And that is after ten years of rule by a Labour Government!

At 4.56 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. HYNES: During the time that the party of which the hon. member is a member were in office they did absolutely nothing at all. We do not stand for that. We are trying to do something better than give men £4 a week. £4 a week is not a living wage. I would like to see some of the big legal potentates who sit on the Industrial Arbitration Court bench live on £4 a week for only one week.

Mr. KELSO: What is a fair wage, in your opinion?

Mr. HYNES: More than any of your political "cobbers" or any of your associates are prepared to pay. There is one big grievance in connection with the Arbitration Court, and that is that the whole of the award is based on data compiled from the Commonwealth Statistician's figures on the cost of living. My objection is to the method employed by the Commonwealth Statistician in collecting that data. I know exactly what I am talking about. That data is collected from the employer. For instance, in connection with the cost of commodities the drapers in the various towns of Australia send along lists to the Commonwealth Statistician in Melbourne—I think every month. The people who are house agents send along a list giving the average rent in their particular districts. I have been in the position of appearing in the Arbitration Court advocating the workers' claim for an increase in wages, and I have had under cross-examination men who had actually sent down lists from which the Commonwealth Statistician's data is compiled. Those men were giving evidence against the workers, and they were employers. That is an anomalous position, and one which should not obtain any longer in the State. I would suggest the foundation of a bureau in the State, and that all data in connection with the cost of living should be collected by that bureau. If that were done, I think it would do away with a good deal of the criticism that is at present levelled against the present method of collecting data. We of the Labour party do not pin our faith to arbitration, which we regard as only a palliative, but at present we do not know of anything better to super-

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): I notice that there is an increase of £700 in this vote, and I think that increase will be necessary when one considers the industrial trouble that the Government are likely to have to face in the near future. We have been told that the Government in power are responsible for the Arbitration Court, yet, if one gets out amongst the rank and file, it will be found they are very much opposed to any awards that are not absolutely in their

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favour. I have here a copy of to-day's "Standard," in which there is an article headed—

"IPSWICH TROUBLE.

"MANIFESTO ON POSITION ISSUED BY STRIKE COMMITTEE."

Here we have the failure of arbitration emphasised by a move in favour of a strike because the workers, in their opinion, have not received sufficient from the Arbitration Court. The article reads—

"A manifesto has been issued by the Strike Committee in control of the forgers' assistants dispute at Ipswich, on behalf of the unions concerned, the departmental attitude during the appeal to the court being criticised hotly.

"The manifesto reads—"

For the information of hon. members I shall read it, as possibly hon. members opposite have not had an opportunity of reading the paper that they hold so dear in their hearts. It says—

[5 p.m.]

"This dispute is one that received careful consideration from the following:—Australasian Railways Union, Amalgamated Engineering Union, Blacksmiths' Society, and Coachmen's Union.

"In the first instance, the above unions went fully into the rates of wages and conditions appertaining to the forging shop, with the result that a claim was placed before the Commissioner and Minister for Railways for increases as follows:—Forgers, 1d. per hour; furnacemen, ½d. per hour; forgers' assistants, 2½d. per hour.

"The Railway Department replied: 'That no increase could be granted beyond the amount laid down in the award, but when the award is again under review the matter will receive favourable consideration.'

"On receipt of the reply it was decided to lodge a claim in the Arbitration Court. This claim was lodged. Mr. Justice Macnaughton fixed a date for the hearing of the claim, and also came to the Ipswich shops to inspect the work done. During his visit, the judge expressed himself on the heavy nature of the work, and its effect upon the eyesight of employees.

"The case eventually came on for hearing in the Arbitration Court, when evidence was taken, and the judge reserved his decision. It is worthy of note that the Railway Department to their utmost opposed the claim before the court."

Here you have a Railway Department controlled by a Labour Administration doing its utmost to oppose the claim. While hon. members on this side are accused of not paying a decent wage and of not giving men what they earn, you have the "Daily Standard" saying that the Railway Department, under a Labour Government, is opposed to the increase that the men are asking for. It goes to show that arbitration is not the success that we are led to believe it is. This article further says—

"Naturally those concerned, together with their unions, were practically struck dumb, when the court's decision became known. If the above is a species of redress received on departmental promises and constitutionalism, can the workers be blamed for any future action

that they may take? Strong indignation has been expressed by the men concerned at the court's decision."

I think hon. members should view these statements very seriously, because it looks as if this little flare-up in the Ipswich Railway Workshops is going to be a very serious thing to this State. The article goes on—

"This report will show that the unions concerned have used every endeavour to have the dispute settled amicably. But the heads of the Railway Department seemed determined to force the unions concerned to the extreme measure in this case. The conditions of the forging shop are intolerable, the work being of a heavy nature. Strong, able-bodied men are picked and forced into the positions, the only hope in the past of these men getting away from the job being a breakdown in health, or death."

I would like to see hon. members on that side go to the Ipswich Workshops to-day and advocate arbitration. If they did, I am inclined to think they would find that the men, in preference to obeying an Arbitration Court award, would endeavour to use what the Minister spoke of as "that brute weapon, strike." Not only are the workers dissatisfied with the wages fixed by the Arbitration Court, but before the primary producers—the backbone of the country—have had an opportunity, through their Council of Agriculture, of establishing their industry on a sound basis, we have the extreme element on the Government side getting the Australasian Workers' Union to apply to the Arbitration Court for an award.

We know that under this Government—and I do not say that it is altogether the fault of the Government—many of the primary industries are in a languishing condition. I say that those engaged in the dairying industry are not any way near making the wages that would be fixed by the Arbitration Court in that industry. If farmers are to be asked to submit to an Arbitration Court award, it is the duty of the Council of Agriculture, which is controlling the organisation of the farmers, to see that they are getting an adequate return for the many hours of labour they have to put in. It is refreshing to know that the Council of Agriculture is taking on the fight on behalf of the farmers in opposition to the Australasian Workers' Union. I know that the Australasian Workers' Union is responsible in many instances, through the selection of men in the plebiscites, for the election of hon. members on the opposite side of the Chamber. I know that the Council of Agriculture is in a position to fight the Australasian Workers' Union, and to see that the farmers get justice. I say unreservedly that, if the Council of Agriculture will put the farmers into a position which will allow them to get a sufficient return for the many hours that they work the farmers will be quite prepared to come under the Arbitration Court, but until that is done the farmers are forced to fight against the suggestion. It is gratifying also to me to know that the Council of Agriculture, which has not up to the present opposed the policy of the Government in any regard, is taking up this fight, and I hope that it will be successful.

Mr. HARTLEY: You want to read the income tax returns. If you do, you will see that the farmers in Australia made £28,000,000 last year.

Mr. Clayton.]

Mr. CLAYTON: If the farmers' gross incomes amounted to £28,000,000, which is a very small amount when you take into consideration the large number of primary producers in Queensland, what has that to do with the question?

Mr. HARTLEY: That is the taxable income. The gross income was £64,000,000.

Mr. CLAYTON: I understand that you, Mr. Pollock, have ruled that it is not in order to speak on the question of taxation, so I will not refer to it; but I will refer to the extension of the Industrial Arbitration Act to the farming industry. I say that at the present time many of those engaged by the farmers are quite content to carry on as they are doing. They are getting a very fair return for the work which they perform, and, knowing as I do that unemployment is increasing in this State as well as in other States, I venture to say that, if the farmers are brought under an Arbitration Court award before they are put into the position we all want to see them in, more unemployment than we have at the present time is going to be created.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): It seems to me from the discussion we have heard to-day that hon. members on both sides are not quite satisfied with the conditions which exist under the Arbitration Court awards. I am one who thinks that the Arbitration Court has been the means of causing a great deal of unemployment in this State. It has been the means of shutting down a number of factories and of preventing progress being made in the establishment of new factories in Queensland. The figures show that in Queensland we are employing something like 1,100 people less in our factories to-day than we employed in 1914, when we were under a different system of arbitration altogether. The system then in vogue, in my opinion, was much better than the present, owing to the fact that the wages boards at that time were composed of representatives of employers and employees, and dealt with the industries in which they were engaged and with the conditions of which they were all familiar. No man living is capable of giving a fair decision in respect of all the numerous industries we have in this State. In order to give a fair award from the point of view of wages and hours it is necessary for a man to have a certain amount of special knowledge in connection with the industry concerned.

He cannot altogether decide on evidence produced by those concerned, and the result has been that in many cases awards have been made having the effect of closing down industries and causing unemployment. Under the old system of wages boards there was representation of the men employed in a particular calling and of the employers, and when it was made clear that, if something were done, the industry would not be able to compete with the corresponding industry in the Southern States, the men naturally respected their bread and butter, and, before they were prepared to close up an industry in which they were engaged, they would as reasonable men accept a wage and conditions which would enable the industry to compete with similar concerns in the Southern States. We cannot deny that the bulk of the goods which are being used in Queensland are being manufactured in the South, where the people have had many opportunities to build up their industries at a cheaper rate

[*Mr. Clayton.*

of wages than we pay here. It is owing to the fact that in many of our industries the employees have got better conditions—that is, because they may be working for only 44 hours a week or because they may receive better wages—that some of our industries have had to close down. It is far better for a man to work a fair number of hours a week and get a decent wage than to walk about the streets and have no work at all, or to come along and get doles from the State. No hon. member opposite can deny the fact that our industries in Queensland have not progressed and that they are employing fewer hands to-day than in 1914.

Mr. HARTLEY: If you will look at the "Quarterly Summary of Australian Statistics" you will find that you are wrong.

Mr. MORGAN: We have had figures from both sides, and the hon. member cannot deny that there are 1,100 employees fewer in our factories to-day than there were in 1914.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is so, but what is the value of the output?

Mr. MORGAN: In the other States they have increased their numbers by leaps and bounds. Every other State in Australia has had the same opportunity to get up-to-date machinery as Queensland—Victoria and New South Wales and even Tasmania; and notwithstanding that fact—perhaps to a greater extent because of it—in the South they have increased their numbers whilst we employ fewer than in 1914.

Mr. HARTLEY: But we have a greater output.

Mr. MORGAN: Of the six States we are the only one which employs fewer hands in the factories than in 1914. That is what we have to account for. Why is it that we have not got secondary industries? Why is it that wherever you go in Queen street you will find the bulk of the stuff they are selling over the counter has been manufactured in some of the other States? That is so even in the case of leather, of which we should manufacture more than any other State, because we have the best hides and the bulk of the beef cattle; yet one of the most up-to-date tanneries in Victoria will turn out more leather in twelve months than our fifteen pastry tanneries. It goes to show that "There is something wrong in the State of Denmark" when we cannot employ our people in the manufacture of the articles we require. Why? Simply because the shopkeepers in Queen street are discovering that, notwithstanding the freight by sea or rail, they can bring goods from the South and make a greater profit than by buying them in Queensland.

Only recently a big shirt manufacturing firm ceased manufacturing here and dismissed its employees because they were not able to compete with firms who bought their shirts from the south. The cost of manufacturing the article here was so great that the article could be bought cheaper in the South, with the result that this factory has closed up and has ceased to manufacture, and its owners now bring their stocks from the South. All that shows that the present system of arbitration is rotten. It is no good hon. members saying to the workers who are out of work, "Look what we have done for you! We have obtained for you higher wages than men are getting in Victoria or New South Wales." They will reply, "It

is not high wages we want, it is constant work that we prefer." It is no good having men going from police station to police station getting rations and camping on river banks because they cannot get employment. It is no good telling them that the basic wage is £4 5s. or £4 10s., when those men want to know where they can get employment. It is far better for them to be working on £4 a week than walking about carrying a swag, knowing that they cannot be employed until industry is capable of paying them the wage that is fixed. Some men, including some Arbitration Court judges, have taken the stand that, if industry cannot afford to pay a decent wage, it should go out of existence. What is being done at Mount Morgan? The men working in the mine there are earning 12s. 4d. per day, which is a lot less than the basic wage, but it is far better for them to earn that amount than have no work to do at all. We are subsidising Mount Morgan to the extent of £60,000 per annum to keep that town in existence; otherwise it would have to go out of existence like many other mining towns, not only in Queensland but in other parts of Australia. The people of Queensland are subsidising the Mount Morgan Company to the extent of £60,000 so that the men can earn 12s. 4d. per day, because the metal produced is not bringing a sufficient price to enable the mine to pay a higher wage to the workers. It is very nice to say that the man who works with a pick and shovel should be getting more than other men engaged in certain industries. I say the pick and shovel man should perhaps be getting a higher wage, because he is engaged in the hardest work, but that is not the point. The point is: Can industry afford to pay a certain wage and compete with other parts of the world, more especially the southern parts of Australia? In order to carry on that competition, is it advisable for the Arbitration Court to fix a wage which will result in those engaged in the industry being eventually dismissed and the factory close its doors?

Mr. HARTLEY: You are advocating a lower wage?

Mr. MORGAN: No. My contention is that industry can only afford to pay a certain wage.

Mr. HARTLEY: Apply that to Mount Morgan.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not think we should be subsidising Mount Morgan to the extent of £60,000 per annum. If Mount Morgan is going to be a burden on the rest of Queensland, it should be closed up like many other mining towns have had to close up. I believe there are 1,200 men engaged there, but it would be far better if those men took up farms in the Dawson Valley. They would be a hundred times better off growing fodder and rearing cattle and sheep than in going down the mine contracting miners' phthisis and other diseases. If the mining industry cannot pay decent wages, and if it means that the workers are going to suffer in health, as they are in Mount Morgan, and are going to their graves earlier than they should, then the quicker we allow Mount Morgan to sink into insignificance the better it will be for Queensland. I say that with all due respect to Mount Morgan or any other mining centre. It would be better for the Government to say to the Mount Morgan Company,

"You cannot pay decent wages," and allow it to go down, and place the 1,200 men engaged there on the irrigation settlement in the Dawson Valley. That would give those men an opportunity of leading a healthy life and producing something which would be adding to the wealth of Queensland and Australia.

The hon. member for Fitzroy stated that £4 a week is not a decent living wage. It may not be; but the point is this: If we are to apply the principles of arbitration to the various producing industries, will the price of butter and produce remain as they are to-day?

Mr. HARTLEY: Do you think £4 a week is a living wage?

Mr. MORGAN: The price of butter will advance from 1s. 6d. to 3s. a lb., and the price of all other produce will increase proportionately. The very moment that arbitration is applied to the production of food-stuffs those articles will increase in price, and wages will have to be increased again to meet the increased cost of living.

The "Daily Standard" recently published figures showing that the purchasing power of the sovereign to-day is not as great as it was in 1914, and that the worker is correspondingly worse off. The same argument applies to house rents. A worker has to expend £700 to secure land and a home for himself to-day which could have been acquired a few years ago for £350. He has to pay 7 per cent. interest on £700, which means that he has to meet an interest bill of £49, which in itself is a fair rent allowance. All that money goes to pay the higher wages of the various tradesmen engaged on the job.

Mr. HARTLEY: And to pay the profiteer who sells the timber.

Mr. MORGAN: The remedy of the present situation is not higher wages. It is to try and make £1 go further than it does at the present moment. If higher wages are going to close down industry as it has done in Queensland, we are not doing a good thing either for the workers or the State in advocating them. I do not care whether a man gets 10s. or £1 a day if the 10s. gives to him the same degree of comfort and the same standard of living that he enjoys with his wages at £1 a day. The question is not higher wages, but the purchasing power of the sovereign. The person who is misleading the workers in advocating higher wages and shorter hours is not doing the proper thing by them. What we want to do is to reduce expenditure in connection with the various industries.

At 5.25 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and asked leave to sit again.

The resumption of the Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PAPER.

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

Report of the Director of Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops for the year ended 30th June, 1924.

The House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

Mr. Morgan.]