

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 1924

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

QUESTIONS.

COST OF MAIZE SILOS IN ATHERTON DISTRICT.
Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

“1. What was the total cost of maize silos in the Atherton district, including all machinery necessary?”

“2. What is the amount of interest and redemption payable each year?”

“3. What is the total storage capacity of silos?”

“4. What is the average return of maize crops in Atherton district over years 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923?”

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

“1. Final payments have not yet been made, the erection not being completed, but the estimated cost, including railway connection, warehouse accommodation, weighbridges, etc., is £69,100.

“2. £6,973 15s.

“3. About 400,000 bushels.

4.—				Bushels per acre.
1920	...	...	...	43.12
1921	...	...	...	29.64
1922	...	...	...	35.49
1923	...	...	...	42.94 ”

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT OF 1923—
TAXATION OF INTEREST ON GOVERNMENT
LOANS.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*), for Mr. Elphinstone, (*Orley*), asked the Treasurer—

“In reference to the provision made in the Income Tax Act Amendment Bill of 1923 to bring the interest on Government loans within the ambit of taxation, what is preventing a Proclamation being made to give effect to this provision?”

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

“This is a matter for uniform action by the several States. The subject is under consideration, but a decision has not yet been arrived at.”

WATER SUPPLY AND TREATMENT OF PATIENTS
AT LAZARET.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Home Secretary—

“1. What were the dimensions, depth, and cost of the well recently sunk at the Lazaret?”

“2. Is it a fact that for long periods there has been a shortage of water at the Lazaret for bathing purposes, and what has been the position in this regard during the past two years?”

“3. Is it a fact that the water supply for consumption and cooking is also insufficient—(a) in the male division; (b) in the female division?”

“4. Are fresh green vegetables now supplied only twice weekly?”

“5. Is the store kept sufficiently well stocked to meet all reasonable requirements of the patients?”

“6. Is it a fact that recently the supply of injection ampoules ran out

and that patients were unable to obtain treatment?

"7. If so, has the necessary treatment yet been made available to patients, and has action been taken to obviate such an occurrence in the future?"

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*) replied—

"1. 4 feet 6 inches by 3 feet; depth, 15 feet; cost of new well, £90 10s. 4d.

"2. There was a shortage of water for bathing purposes at the Lazaret towards the end of the recent long drought. During the past two years, owing to droughty conditions, available supplies had perforce to be used with care.

"3. Water supply for consumption and cooking at present plentiful both in the male division and female division. This supply depends on rainfall, being stored in tanks.

"4. Fresh green vegetables twice weekly, Tuesday and Friday; fruit weekly, Tuesday; daily issue of vegetables to patients.

"5. The store is kept sufficiently well stocked with necessary foodstuffs for all reasonable requirements, whilst supplies of clothing, blankets, etc., are furnished as requested, so as to safeguard against ravages by silverfish, etc.

"6. Supplies of injection ampoules were only exhausted on the 8th instant, and Calcutta, on 1st August, 1924, advised 100 boxes, each containing 12 ampoules, being forwarded first parcel mail. This supply should reach Brisbane any day. In the meantime, an ample supply of the drug in tabloid form is available and is being used.

"7. Treatment, with the exception of recent injections, has been always available, and to obviate any future shortage, due to delay in obtaining delivery from India, larger quantities are being ordered."

BLIND, DEAF, AND DUMB CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTION BILL.

INITIATION.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to make better provision for the instruction of blind, deaf, and dumb children in Queensland."

Question put and passed.

BABINDA SUGAR WORKS BILL.

INITIATION.

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, this day, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to authorise the transfer of the Babinda Sugar Works from the Corporation of the Treasurer to a company or association, and for other consequential purposes."

Question put and passed.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE INCOME TAXES AGREEMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, this day, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to ratify and confirm an agreement made between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Queensland relating to the assessment and collection of Commonwealth Income Tax and State Income Tax by one agency, and for other incidental purposes."

Question put and passed.

CITY OF BRISBANE BILL

INITIATION.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill for the good government of the City of Brisbane."

Question put and passed.

SEWERAGE OF METROPOLITAN AREA.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I beg to move—

"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable to amend the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, 1909-1923, to make provision whereby the ratepayers may have a greater opportunity of securing better results in relation to the Sewerage of the Metropolitan Area."

It may be said that this particular function is outside the jurisdiction of Parliament, particularly for the reason that the personnel of the Board connected with the sewerage of Brisbane is elected by the system of adult franchise—a popular vote. Whilst that argument may be used, we must remember that Parliament to-day provides the sinews and also the legislation under which this Board operates.

These two factors were taken into consideration when this motion was first mooted by myself. The Water and Sewerage Board controls the most important undertaking in the metropolitan area. It is also the most costly, with the exception of the railways. Public attention has not yet been focussed on the financial position of this Board particularly, for the reason that the public have not yet been called upon to pay. I venture to say that, when the attention of the public is focussed on the financial position of the Board, there will be many heart-burnings in regard to the whole functioning of the Board and the operations which to date they have carried out. I want to lend force to my argument in regard to this matter by drawing attention to the fact that 80 per cent. of the revenue collected by the Board is contributed by people who own land of a value between £20 and £300, and the remaining 20 per cent. of the revenue is contributed by people who own land of a value between £300 and £65,000. We have to realise that there are 29,000 householders who pay £168,000 a year in water rates,

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while 4,400 householders pay £68,000 a year in rates. That shows that what we are discussing to-day is going to affect possibly every person in this community—that it is a question affecting the whole of the population of the metropolitan area, and chiefly the man on the basic wage. That is one of the important factors that we must consider in regard to the sewerage scheme. “Hansard” will disclose the fact that the Hon. W. H. Barnes, then Secretary for Public Works, piloted the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board Bill through this House at the end of 1909. Some of his remarks at that time are applicable to-day. He had this to say—

“The Brisbane sanitary system was a disgrace to such a large community.”

The Bill constituted a Board to be elected by the ratepayers. Subsequently, in 1921, the Government altered the franchise to the popular vote. That amendment of the franchise only meant one thing—that between 80,000 and 90,000 voters are responsible for electing the Board, while half that number have to foot the bill. To my thinking the popular vote is unwise in connection with a body such as the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. The results achieved have been the direct opposite to what was expected. It is impossible to get the best results under the present method of electing that Board. It seems to me to be inconceivable that a number of men elected on the popular vote, and only meeting at intervals, can carry out the work in the most efficient manner. We know that it is impossible, in connection with an undertaking of such a scientific nature, for a number of men elected on the popular vote to carry out the work properly. I am not criticising the ability of the men or their experience. They may be men of experience and ability, but they cannot possibly, by meeting once a week or twice a week, decide factors connected with such a scheme. The only way in which this scheme can be handled properly is by the appointment of a commission of expert men who will give their whole time and their concentrated attention to the scheme.

It is the only possible way in which we can secure results. Under the popular franchise you do not get the class of men who are able to give the very best service to the people. These men may in certain directions have experience; but, apart from experience, it is necessary to have men appointed who can give concentrated attention in regard to every side issue of this important undertaking. The President himself—the executive officer—gives this matter all his attention; yet he calls together a body of men who can override him in regard to the things he desires to do. He therefore suffers from a dual control, which undoubtedly leads to a lack of control. Dual control always ultimately leads to a lack of control. Every ratepayer should know what he is getting for his money. If we turn to the reports issued by the Board, I defy any hon. member in this Chamber to get one atom of information from them; it is impossible for the ratepayers to obtain any information from them. We are in the unfortunate position of having the most important and costly undertaking in operation in Brisbane, and the people concerned are not in a position to judge how it stands. I venture to say that

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the estimates which have to be made from time to time have been out of all proportion to the cost of the undertaking; in fact, they have not been in any way near the cost. The scheme, as a whole, was to include the main sewers, branch sewers, reticulation sewers, and everything but the house connections, and it was first estimated that the whole scheme would cost £1,168,164, plus 5 per cent. for contingencies, making a total of £1,834,980. The figures in regard to the undertaking show that on 31st December, 1923, the liabilities amounted to £3,010,186. I want to quote from “Queensland Politics during Sixty Years” by Charles Arrowsmith Bernays, p. 177, dealing with the Water and Sewerage Act—

“Incidentally it might be mentioned that, while the last-mentioned Act was passed in 1909, the sewerage system, through a series of unhappy causes, is still unaccomplished.”

No one can say that Mr. Bernays was a pessimist, for immediately after he has this to say with regard to the session—

“Considering the short time available, it was a good session’s work.”

Mr. Bernays there refers to “a series of unhappy causes,” but it is impossible for me at this stage to go into detail about the unhappy causes which have come into being in connection with the Brisbane sewerage system.

I want to quote one or two instances to amplify and confirm my statements. There has been a great discrepancy in regard to the levels, an error being discovered in one case which involved the reconstruction of 509 feet of levels at a cost of over £7,000. Because of another error, work was abandoned in one place, which had cost £53,000. That amount of work had been completed. The cement was not tested in one job and it cracked, involving an extra cost of £8,400. Some 58 shafts were completed and subsequently abandoned. We find throughout the scheme that the errors which have been made have cost the ratepayers many thousands of pounds.

These are very serious accusations. It must be remembered that the Government have been in power for nine or ten years. In 1921 they appointed a Royal Commission as the outcome of a memorandum of the Auditor-General at that time.

I want to know what action was taken by the Government, as a result of the report of that Royal Commission, to protect the ratepayers. The report itself bristles with serious errors. I think the position can be summed up something like this: The Commissioner, Mr. Oliver, was an aged gentleman who was suffering from ill-health. It is well known that during the time when he was taking evidence he was sometimes fast asleep. No counsel was permitted at the inquiry, although the ratepayers asked that they should be represented. Another point is that the Commissioner was one of the engineers who reported on the original scheme, and therefore could not be possessed of that free and impartial mind which was necessary on such an important inquiry. He had originally given his assent to the scheme, and then later he was asked to conduct an inquiry as a Royal Commissioner into the result of his own recommendations. Summed up, I venture

to say that nobody can put any other interpretation on that report than this—

- (1) It constitutes a general evasion of the whole issue.
- (2) It gives no explanation regarding the present cost.
- (3) It contains no findings.
- (4) It makes no recommendations.

The last is a very important point. In effect, a Royal Commission conducted an inquiry at a cost of many hundreds of pounds of the ratepayers' money and the report was a fiasco. No result came from it, and in a practical sense the sewerage scheme to-day is as far off as ever. The undertaking so far has been a deplorable failure.

The point may be taken that the cost of material because of the war was partly responsible for many of the errors which occurred, but I venture to say that the main trouble does not rest there at all. It is the continual error after error that has been made and the lack of Government control in the way of a comprehensive inquiry of which we complain. What do we find in regard to the recent inquiry—another side issue which cannot camouflage the financial position of the Board. Mr. Harris, the Commissioner, attributes the trouble to inefficient supervision and the dishonesty of workmen and foremen.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Under contract.

Mr. KERR: I do not want to deal with that point—it would take me too long—but I want to point out what the result may be of that inefficient work. Possibly no person in Queensland can estimate what it is going to mean. The full effect will only be discovered when the house connections are being made, and we may find that this work—which has cost about £3,000,000 up to date by day labour and by contract—is going to cost the ratepayers nearly as much again. If the contractors are going to be called upon to do their part, the ratepayers to that extent will be saved expense; but if the Board have to correct defects in the day-labour jobs, the ratepayers again will have to foot the bill. In connection with the Campbell-street and Creek-street sewers in Newmarket, the sewer in Laidlaw parade, East Brisbane, and the Alfred-street sewer in the Valley we find that a great deal of the work is defective, and nobody knows how many more defects there are. I was told only recently, for instance, that it has practically cost many thousands of pounds to remedy an error that occurred in one of the concrete sewers at the end of the system near the mouth of the river.

Now I want to deal for a little with the uncompleted work. Whilst the cost to the end of 1923 was over £3,000,000, the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board's report for that year contained particulars of many contracts and day-labour jobs which were still incomplete. I think the number was nine or ten. Last year the main sewer even was not completed. We have to-day nothing like the branch sewers or the reticulation sewers that we ought to have. We have nothing, I might say, other than a few connections in the main part of the city to show for the expenditure of £3,000,000 on a scheme which was estimated to cost half that sum. We have nothing in the true sense of the word to give us a return on that expenditure.

We find no branch sewers in many thickly populated parts of the city, such as Toowong, far less reticulation sewers or house connections. I venture to say that the report is so insufficient and inefficient that it gives no indication whatever of when the job is likely to be completed.

I hope the hon. member for Fortitude Valley will tell us whether the estimate that has now been arrived at represents the total cost of the sewerage scheme, or whether, in his opinion, that [10.30 a.m.] estimate, like the former estimate, cannot be depended upon.

Apart from the reticulation sewers, an authentic estimate would be somewhere in the vicinity of £4,000,000 as a minimum. The interest on the money expended in connection with the scheme as capitalised on 31st December, 1923, amounts to £387,993. The scheme, like many other undertakings in the State, is undoubtedly over-capitalised, and whether it is intended in the suburban area to deal with this scheme in the same way as the Inkerman irrigation scheme was dealt with, by wiping out some of the over-capitalisation, I do not know. Throughout his report Mr. Oliver, the Commissioner who inquired into the sewerage construction, makes use of the words "for present requirements." When the original legislation was introduced in 1909 by the then Secretary for Public Works, the Hon. W. H. Barnes, it was proposed to include the municipalities of Brisbane, South Brisbane, Ithaca, Hamilton, Toowong, Taringa, Windsor, Toombul, Coorparoo, Stephens, and Balmoral, Sandgate and Wynnum and other such places are not included in the present scheme and when they require a sewerage system we shall again have the spectacle of separate costly works being carried out for those districts. The valuation of the land comprised within the present sewerage system is about £13,000,000 for the area referred to by Mr. Oliver when he used the words "for present requirements," whatever that might mean. I understand that the sewerage rate is estimated on each 300 feet of sewer, but I am open to correction on that point, and for that area, assuming that the value of the land comprised within the area will be within the vicinity of £10,000,000, and if we take the total cost of the work at £4,000,000, it will probably be found that the sewerage rate will be something like 6½d. in the £1. It really looks as though we shall have to spend another £1,250,000 in connection with the reticulation areas, and it will then probably be found that the minimum sewerage rate in Brisbane will be 9d. in the £1. It may be said that in Melbourne the sewerage rate is 1s. in the £1, but we must remember that the Melbourne sewers have double the capacity of the Brisbane sewers, and are of greater mileage and benefit a greater area. We also have this astonishing fact, that, whereas the Melbourne sewers cost £14,000 per mile, the sewers in Brisbane to-day are costing us £68,000 per mile. There is a wonderful difference between £14,000 per mile for a sewerage system with double the capacity of a system costing in the vicinity of £68,000 per mile.

Mr. W. COOPER: How long ago were the Melbourne sewers constructed?

Mr. KERR: I hope the hon. gentleman will realise that the cost of material and

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labour has not gone up to such an extent as to warrant such a difference in cost. There can be no possible argument or comparison in any way. I want to know where the representatives of the people stand with regard to seeing that the people obtain the greatest possible benefits. The ratepayers must pay. Under the scheme some 25,000 occupiers desire house connections. It was stated in this Chamber that the average cost of a house connection would be between £40 and £50. I venture to say that to-day it is costing nearer £50, and estimating the cost of the scheme at £4,000,000 it will mean that at £50 for each house connection the cost will be about £5,250,000. That is a tremendous amount.

I want now to deal shortly with the reticulation work. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley has said that the Board could not undertake more reticulation work unless it obtained another loan, and that out of the loan of £1,000,000 that was secured the other day only £60,000 could be made available for reticulation. That is a very serious statement. According to the remarks made by the hon. member, the progress of the sewerage work fifteen years after the Bill was originally introduced by a previous Administration is a disgrace to the city. It is a disgrace. I cannot yet see that the people of Brisbane have received any benefit or when they are going to receive any benefit. I venture to say that five or six years will yet elapse before Ithaca, Kelvin Grove, and other thickly populated suburbs will be connected with the sewerage system. Dr. Halford, another member of the Board, speaking recently said—

“Brisbane has been waiting a long time to get the reticulation areas. Under the present arrangements populated places like Ithaca will have to wait three or four years before reticulation is started there. We want to make the tortoise travel a little faster.”

The progress of the work has been tortoise-like, to the detriment of the State and the pockets of the ratepayers. The people of Brisbane demand that there shall be a speeding up of the work. They demand the completion of the branch sewers, the reticulation sewers, and the house connection branches in order that the system may become revenue producing. The work has to be hastened as much as possible to save the ratepayers' money and unnecessary over-capitalisation of the work. So far, no return has been secured from the work that has been completed. We all know that the scheme is approaching a serious position. The ratepayers have to foot the bill. The policy of entrusting such a vast undertaking as the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board to a popular vote is one causing very grave concern.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Are you opposing adult franchise?

MR. KERR: I am not opposing adult franchise. The hon. gentleman knows better than that: or at least he should.

MR. GLEDSON: It is a very narrow view.

MR. KERR: Let me put it this way: If eight or nine men directed the operations of the Main Roads Board and were elected periodically does the hon. gentleman think that the Board could effectively do its work? It could not. Such a Board would be more concerned with the popular vote, and the putting on of men to do that work where that

work possibly was not required. That all means loading the scheme with extra costs. The popular vote in regard to such an undertaking has one tendency. The members of the Board are paid fees, and their efforts would not be in the nature of securing efficiency from the point of view of the taxpayer, but of securing the confidence of the voters in order to retain their position. Labour ideals and politics have crept into the business of the Board, and the members think more of the Labour policy than of the policy of giving the people of Brisbane their deserts. That is the trouble absolutely in regard to the Board. The policy of appointing on a popular franchise a number of men to adjudicate and govern such a large undertaking—a larger undertaking I suppose than any public works excepting the railways—is a very unwise one. The members may be efficient and conscientious, but it is impossible in the conditions under which they are elected to do the work as it should be done in the interests of the ratepayers. Their energy and attention cannot be concentrated to that end. Instead of a Board composed as at present, a professional gentleman to receive a salary in the vicinity of £3,000 to £5,000 a year should be appointed to carry the work through. If the services of such a man could be obtained, the ratepayers might possibly get some results.

I want to deal now with the loans that have been floated in connection with this work. On 31st December, 1923, the Government loan amounted to £1,766,282, and debentures sold in London amounted to £983,500. These debentures were the first loan floated with this object in England. The original loan was submitted in 1921, and was for twenty years. We must consider what we gave to the holders of those bonds. Investors receive a flat rate of interest of £6 15s. 4d. per cent., the loan, with redemption, costing £6 17s. 6d. per cent. The underwriters were unsuccessful, and had to take up 75 per cent. of the loan themselves. Here was a local authority going on the market with a large venture, and I say that the Government and the State should have stood behind them and helped the Board.

Another loan was secured in May of last year for £500,000 for a period of twenty-five years, yielding a flat rate of interest of £5 6s. 5d. The issue price was £94. In that case a small amount was over-subscribed. It seems an extraordinary thing about these London loans that they ranked in priority to the £3,000,000 borrowed from the State. It seems an extraordinary piece of legislation that gives the Board priority in the London market to the advance by the State. Whether that fact has any significance or not, I do not know.

The third loan was for £1,000,000 at 5 per cent., and the underwriters had 49 per cent. of the loan left on their hands; in other words, applications amounted to only £510,000. The issue was at £94, but there was a stamp duty proviso which made it equal to £96. The Board has not been successful at all in regard to its financial operations in raising loans.

We had a most extraordinary statement from Alderman Barry, the Mayor of Brisbane and a member of the Board, and it might be well to have some details in this matter, as people are not familiar with the workings of the Board. We cannot get

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any information from the reports. It may be said that the meetings are open to the Press, and possibly to the public, but we never receive any statements from the Board to tell us how much the scheme is costing and when it will be completed. I remember reading a report by Mr. Manchester, the President of the Board, who said that the scheme would take £100,000 to complete. Then Mr. Oliver said it would cost £500,000. Finally we have the rumour that it will cost millions to complete. I venture to say that it will cost millions before we get any real benefit from the scheme. Some benefit may accrue to those in the thickly populated parts around the General Post Office. Reticulations have been made around East Brisbane, and the South Brisbane Council have used one of the sewers to take away storm waters. The scheme is incomplete throughout.

Alderman Barry, the Mayor of Brisbane, in reply to a note of warning from the President of the Board, said—

“You know we have the offer of another million.”

The newspaper then made the comment—

“It has been asked where this additional million is to come from. While the Board was negotiating in respect of the £1,000,000 loan just floated in London, there was an offer by a Brisbane firm of repute to provide the sum required. The terms were not mentioned outside. Probably it was to this incident that Alderman Barry referred.”

Here again we have a statement without any backing. It was stated that a million was available in the city or somewhere in Queensland, but no definite information was given to the public. The public were simply asked to be content and rest assured that the money was available. We are looked upon as a lot of children, who are to take these statements and swallow them as correct.

We discover that, while the sewerage scheme has cost such a great amount of money, large amounts of money are being diverted from the Water Supply Fund to the Sewerage Fund. Last year £48,563 was paid in this way according to receipts shown in the Sewerage Fund. The transfer to Sewerage Fund from the Water Supply Fund shows £40,168. I do not know which of these two amounts is correct.

I have no desire to occupy the time of the House any further on this all-important question. I have approached it with a certain amount of diffidence. I decided to keep away from technicalities as far as was possible, and to lay the position before hon. members as well as I could from a layman's point of view. I have given a good deal of study to the question, and I have found it most difficult to get information to enable me to prepare my speech. If I could not obtain information of a reliable nature, I ask how is it possible for the members of the public to get information? On behalf of the taxpayers, and on behalf of the ratepayers who are mostly working men on the basic wage owning a small home, I ask that the matter be given serious attention. The time is opportune to let us know how much this scheme is going to cost, and when it is going to be completed.

Mr. GLEDSON: Ask us something easy.

Mr. KERR: I know it is desperately hard to give that information, but we have a member of the Board here, and I venture to say that I have been wise in raising this all-important question this morning, as an open discussion in the House will possibly induce the Board to go a little faster than they have gone during the last fifteen years.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I would like to say a few words on this question, not that it is particularly interesting from a country member's point of view, but because of the extraordinary apathy of the people of Brisbane in allowing the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board to continue in the way they have been going during the last ten or twelve years without making any fuss about it. The people in the metropolitan area to-day are not being asked to pay interest on the cost, because it is being capitalised, and they do not seem to care how much money is being wasted or what the ultimate cost is going to be. That is what I think is so extraordinary. We get statements now and then from responsible officers of the Board showing that the cost is mounting up—showing how ridiculous was the estimate made in the beginning. We get further indefinite estimates put forward by the engineer. These indefinite estimates are continually being exceeded and then huge further estimates are put forward. Yet the people do not seem to care. What disturbs me is that the cost will become such an enormous burden on the people of Brisbane that they will eventually be allowed to wipe off £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 and the general taxpayers of the State will have to bear the burden. That is something that has to be guarded against. Anybody looking at the tables given in Mr. Chuter's book, “Local Government Law and Finance,” cannot but be struck with the tremendous amount the people of Brisbane and South Brisbane have to pay in rates. And this is before the sewerage connections are made. In spite of that we have an ever-increasing amount of money being spent on the sewerage scheme, and we seem to be just as far away from the end as we were ten years ago. There is no definite statement as to when the work is likely to be finished. We find the Government, instead of assisting the people who have to pay the interest on the cost, are only concerned as to how many men can be employed and what high wages they can be paid.

In the report of Mr. Oliver it is pointed out that through the legislation the cost was increased to an enormous extent. The report states—

“Legislation.—Making the sewers mines under the Mines Regulations Act, whereby mines managers had to be placed in charge, as well as the superintending officers of the Board, two men thereby doing one man's work. Shift bosses also had to be appointed to take charge of miners.”

In 1915 this legislation was brought in, not for the benefit of the people of Brisbane but for the benefit of the employees on the work. Employees in other States on sewerage work were not brought under mining regulations, but that was done in Brisbane, and there was an enormous expense added to the water and sewerage scheme, which

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the people of Brisbane will have to pay—at least, I suppose Brisbane will have to pay, unless there is such an agitation got up that the cost will be put on to the general taxpayer.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you say that the men working in the shafts and drives should not be subject to the mining regulations?

MR. MOORE: Why should they be?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: In the interests of the health and safety of the men.

MR. MOORE: The health and safety of the men are safeguarded in the other States as well as they are here, and they do not think it necessary to employ two men where one will do, or to bring in legislation to the detriment of the city they live in. What I find fault with is that the Government have not safeguarded the interests of the people of Brisbane. They have been more concerned in trying to employ as many men as possible in the interests of the employees. Do the Government not understand that there are hundreds of employees around Brisbane who will have to pay for these things in future—that the extra expenditure in connection with sewers will all have to be paid by the householders? It is all very well to try to gain popularity at the present time by bringing in conditions better than those which obtained in other places, but they will have to be paid for by the householders of Brisbane both now and for many years to come. It is only an attempt to gain a little temporary popularity to assist the Government, but it is imposing a burden on the taxpayer.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: Do you say that the regulations providing for the safety of the men are not necessary?

MR. MOORE: It is perfectly justifiable and proper to provide for the safety of the men, but nobody will say that it was necessary to apply the mining regulations to provide for it. We have had sewerage works constructed in other places in Australia where the safety of the men has been safeguarded in every way without bringing in mining regulations.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: The geological conditions here are quite different. This ground is the most unsafe ground in the world.

MR. MOORE: It is most unsafe, I will admit. This is an attempt to gain a little temporary popularity by the Government by imposing conditions which are unnecessary, and the cost of which the householders will have to pay for.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was not unnecessary to bring in the Mines Regulations to provide for the safety of the men engaged in the work—it was absolutely necessary.

MR. MOORE: I say that the men could have been protected under the ordinary regulations in connection with sewerage work, instead of bringing in other regulations altogether merely to make the conditions more difficult for the Board. What can be said of the scheme; the original estimate for present requirements was £1,544,009, and for the future requirements of the whole scheme £1,834,980? I am going to admit that all sorts of things cropped up. I admit that the war came along, and the price of

materials and everything else went up. But in 1921, after the war was over, we find that Mr. Manchester estimated that another £100,000 would be required to complete everything for connecting up with the reticulation and £300,000 would pay for the reticulation, and that the whole work would be finished in eighteen months. Mr. Oliver said in his report that he thought it would take another £500,000 to complete the work yet to be done, and that it should be finished inside of two years if funds were readily forthcoming. In 1924 Mr. Manchester, the President of the Board, who is an engineer and supposed to be a capable official, gives this estimate—

“What he termed the ‘practicable proportions’ (as set out) could be accomplished in seven years if the money were available, and would cost £2,000,000. The whole scheme would cost about £6,000,000. To make a definite statement would be impossible, it being evident that estimates must be dependent upon costs, the conditions of the money market, and the ruling rates for labour, matters over which the Board had no control.”

MR. WILSON: There is nothing wrong with that.

MR. MOORE: Does the hon. member mean to tell me that the state of affairs is satisfactory when a competent engineer in 1921—after he had been on the Board for nine or ten years, knowing the original estimate and knowing that other things have cropped up which are going to increase the cost, and having become acquainted with all the conditions under which the work is carried on—hints that the sewer work could be completed for £100,000 in eighteen months—a statement which is qualified by the Commissioner by an opinion to the effect that it would cost £500,000 and take two years—does the hon. member think it is satisfactory that the same engineer in 1924—three years after he made that first statement—should express the opinion that the whole scheme would cost £2,000,000 more and that it was impossible to make a definite statement as to when it would be completed? You have your engineer—an engineer who is supposed to be competent—I do not know anything about his competency or otherwise—

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS interjected.

MR. MOORE: I do not know whether the Secretary for Public Works is satisfied with that condition of affairs.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: What do you recommend?

MR. MOORE: I recommend a board of experts with a continuous policy, not an elected board, meeting every now and again and changing the policy from time to time, whose members are continually going as members on deputations to the Premier suggesting that more money should be given to the Board.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What you suggest applies to members of shire councils.

MR. MOORE: I am not going to say that that would not be a benefit to the State. I would have no objection to that because I believe in a continuous policy. What I want to point out is that we get no continuity of policy under the present system, but that all

[*Mr. Moore.*

sorts of outside issues are introduced, not for the benefit of the ratepayers—that is, for the benefit of the people who have to pay—but for the benefit of the individuals who are working on the undertaking. On this aspect of the matter I want to call attention to a statement made by the mayor of Brisbane, Alderman M. J. Barry, at a meeting of the Board, in reference to a deputation to the Premier on the 28th July—

“The mayor . . . declared that he had notified the Press that he was not there as an official representative of the Board. Whether he was there as mayor of Brisbane or in any other public or private capacity did not matter; he was there to assist able-bodied men who wanted work to get work.”

It is a most extraordinary thing that you should have a member elected to the Board—that is, elected for the purpose of seeing that the money of the Board is spent to the very best advantage and that the ratepayers get proper value for it—that you should have that very man, who has been put in a position of trust, going on a deputation to the Premier and saying that he is not there as a member of the Board, but in another capacity as mayor of Brisbane, or in some other public or private capacity, and asking for money to be given to the Board for the benefit, as he admits, not of the Board, but of outside people altogether. The position is most extraordinary, and, if that is the position into which we are going to get through having elected boards, I say that the sooner the principle is abolished the better; and the sooner we get a reconstruction of the Act and have a board of experts appointed the better it will be for the people who have to pay. Consider what it means to any householder! Mr. Macfarlane, a member of the Board, is reported to have made this statement—

“There were 8,088 tenements to be connected up within the next two years, and there was no use spending any more money on reticulation when it would be lying idle. It was of no use extending areas. The burden on the ratepayers was large enough at present, and there was no use borrowing any more money. In 1926 the ratepayers would have to face £700,000 rates without any relief. To go on borrowing more money to do more reticulation they would only be putting a bigger burden on the ratepayers than they were able to bear. The committee could not recommend any further reticulation areas being gone on with.”

Yet you have a member of that very Board going to the Premier and asking for more money in order that that very reticulation should be proceeded with! All this shows what an extraordinary position the

[11 a.m.] Board have taken up, and what an enormous burden is going to be placed on the ratepayers of this city. Mr. Macfarlane, a member of the Board and an accountant, pointed out that in 1926 £700,000 would have to be paid in rates. We also have Mr. Manchester, the President of the Board and an engineer, pointing out that it will take another £2,000,000 to complete the scheme, and he is not certain of that estimate, because he says that it would be impossible to make any definite statement as to the cost, because the position of the money market and the ruling rates of payment have to be considered. This scheme, which originally

was going to cost £1,514,000, is now stated to be going to cost £6,000,000. I cannot for the life of me see how the unfortunate ratepayers are going to carry the burden. The water rates are jumping up year by year, as is shown by this table—

	Amount Collected.	Percentage Increase.
	£	Per cent.
1918	140,824	9.9
1919	161,863	14.94
1920	224,485	38.65
1921	275,312	22.64
1922	311,952	13.3

Can you imagine what sort of a position the ratepayers are going to be placed in? The extraordinary position is that the Government find that the Board's estimates are inaccurate and that they have made the grossest mistakes in connection with much of the work; yet they still allow the same system to be continued in face of the fact that it has been characterised as being unduly extravagant. Mr. Oliver in his report says—

“The slow progress of the sewerage operations is not due to any action or inaction of the Board or its staff, but the cause is independent of both. It was the new legislation insisting on the appointment of mine managers and shift bosses which first caused divided control . . .”

Part of the trouble has been divided control. Mr. Oliver continues—

“ . . . thereby adding to the cost and confusion, while the effect of the war was also felt by the Board in increased wages and increased cost of materials. With the approach of normal times, and with the scheme well in hand, if the requisite money is forthcoming the Board will be able to make up for the past, and public sentiment will be directed in its favour.”

Has there been any sign of the Board being able to make up for the past? We have the same discrepancies in the estimates and the same indefinite statements by the engineer. At one period we got a definite statement concerning the cost, and three years later we get an absolutely indefinite statement, which is totally opposed to the one previously made. Mr. Oliver further says—

“Mr. D. McGrath also deserves well of the Board for his past work on the Albert and Alice street sewers and in charge of the reticulation operations. He made one mistake in putting an airlock door in position in the reverse way. He also gave offence by putting men off work, and was called on by the Board to reinstate them. That does not lead to good management. When Mr. Dunlop put on a plumber to do some temporary work he was reprimanded by the Board and told he must engage one of the Board's plumbers. When he allowed the carpenters to start earlier than the allotted hour in order that they could leave earlier to catch a convenient train he received a rap over the knuckles from the Factories and Shops Department and was told that the carpenters would have to be paid overtime for starting before time.”

The whole thing goes to show that legislation in various ways has interfered with the conduct of the Board and forced divided control upon it. The Government all the time

Mr Moore.]

are being backed up, not by the ratepayers who have to pay but by individuals who are being employed. This is a very serious position. Mr. Oliver further states—

“During my inquiry I have seen proofs of the wide range of the Board’s activities, but there must be more co-operation between all parties if the Board wishes to successfully achieve the object it has in view. There has been too much overlapping. One officer should be put in charge, and he should see that his subordinate in control of each shift supervises the work efficiently and carries it to a prompt and proper execution. All plant not in use should be assembled at a convenient place (or places) and put under the control of the storekeeper, who alone should be responsible.

“In the past men have been put on to provide employment, but if that work is not necessary it is waste.”

We had a deputation of various members—one being a member of the Board—waiting on the Treasurer asking for the same system to be continued, and asking to be allowed to borrow money—not because it was required for the scheme but to provide employment. Surely to goodness it is time that the Government took notice and insisted upon a proper inquiry to ascertain what is going to be the total cost of the scheme, and as to whether it is not better to do away with the present Board—which has proved to be an absolutely total failure—and constitute a board of experts to see whether the work cannot be completed in a reasonable and satisfactory manner. Mr. Oliver points out that the overlapping is due to the legislation to a large extent and in a large measure to the undue expenditure. It is time that the people of Brisbane woke up and realised how the money is being wasted, and what it is going to cost them in the future. We have to recognise that the people who are so apathetic to-day are going to have an enormous burden placed on them, but they do not seem to realise it. While the rates are being capitalised they are remaining apathetic, and if the people are not prepared to make a move, then the Government should endeavour to protect them from the burden which is being placed on their shoulders, which will be almost too much for them to bear.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): I followed the hon. member for Enoggera as closely as possible. While the hon. member was very condemnatory of the Board and everyone connected with it, he put forward little or nothing in the way of constructive reform. Any proposal that has been made in that direction was made at the conclusion of the speech of the leader of the Opposition. Summed up, his case was that the elective Board should be done away with and a commission of experts appointed to carry out the work. Presumably he has in mind something in the nature of the Main Roads Board, where three engineers are charged with the administration and the carrying on of that work. The history of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board is interesting, both from the viewpoint of local government and from the engineering standpoint, in connection with providing the necessary sanitary facilities for a great city. Speaking from memory, I understand the Act was passed in 1909 by

the Kidston Ministry, and an elective Board was appointed to carry out the duties of providing a suitable scheme for Erisbane. The Department of Public Works had something to do with the adoption of the scheme that was finally approved of by the Board. The Under Secretary for Works, Mr. Brady, one of the engineers responsible, was sent by the then Minister, the Hon. W. H. Barnes, to America, Great Britain, and elsewhere to investigate schemes in operation in those places. On his return Mr. Brady submitted a report and made certain recommendations. The Board was finally appointed on the basis set out in the Kidston Act, an engineer was appointed by the Governor in Council, and work was commenced. Immediately the work was commenced a number of engineering difficulties were encountered. The Board found that the nature of the country through which the drains had to be made was of a most treacherous and impossible character. That is proven by the difficulties experienced in carrying out certain main sewers that were commenced at that time. Contracts were let to three firms for the construction of those sewers, but two of the contractors abandoned their contracts after they had been in operation some time. Messrs. Carr Bros. were the only contractors who carried out their contract. Much loss was incurred and difficulty encountered by the Board owing to the abandonment of those contracts. The only course open to the Board was to endeavour to proceed with the work and carry it through to completion in the best possible manner. They have been carrying on that policy since that time. The increased cost of the work could be exaggerated a good deal, or at least unsatisfactory inferences could be drawn from that increased cost. Every hon. member knows that estimates prepared as far back as that time have been found to be of no value at all in every form of industrial enterprise. I know that since I have been Secretary for Public Works—and that includes the years 1920 and 1921, when costs of construction were at their very highest—every estimate submitted by local authorities for works to the Treasury, which has passed through my department in the ordinary course of events, has been exceeded. All forms of costs in regard to public works during the years under review were exceeded enormously. It was a common practice for deputations from local authorities to come to the Treasurer asking for increased amounts of money, due to the increased costs of carrying out the work. Every hon. member who looks into the question knows that to be the case. There are hon. members in the House to-day who have introduced those deputations and pointed out that, owing to the increased cost of material, labour, and other matters, the Government were justified in granting those applications for increased loans. That means that there are two factors in favour of the Board. The first factor is that the estimates were made at a time when costs of all forms of construction were considerably lower than they are to-day, and the second, that the extremely treacherous nature of the ground was not fully manifested until the work had actually commenced. Two of the largest contracts let by the Board were abandoned by the contractors who took them in hand owing to the fact, no doubt, that after proceeding some little distance they realised that the work could not be carried

out profitably on the tenders they had submitted. A further difficulty confronting them was that the cost of material and all other costs had increased enormously.

Certain strictures were passed by the hon. member for Enoggera on the investigations made by Mr. Oliver, an engineer of high standing and considerable capacity, whose probity has never been doubted at any time.

Mr. MAXWELL: You would not accept his recommendations.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is very injudicious, putting it mildly, that an hon. member with little or no knowledge of construction problems should get up in this House and express opinions affecting the standing of a professional man who is an expert in his own business. I protest against that kind of conduct, in the interests of men who have given services in their professional capacity to this State. However, we know that irresponsible statements of that kind made by people who are not in a position to judge can be disregarded by anyone who knows the facts. The investigation that was conducted by Mr. Oliver was the result of certain charges having been made and certain comments by the Auditor-General in his report on the operations of the Board. The findings of that Board of Inquiry were conveyed to the Board, and I understand that certain action was taken by the Board. In dealing with the functions of a local authority, it is well to bear in mind that criticism should not be levelled at the Government in connection with the carrying out of the operations of a local authority working under its own statute.

Reference was made by the mover of the motion to the fact that the Secretary for Public Works recommended construction orders to the Governor in Council, and that he has certain responsibilities under the Act. For the information of those hon. members who feel that they do not understand them, I want to say precisely what those responsibilities are. The Secretary for Public Works has submitted to him the minutes of the meetings of the Board, and requests are made through him for any construction orders that the Board desire to have so that they can proceed with their work. No authority is given to the Secretary for Public Works to interfere with the Board in the carrying out of their own policy. It would be very improper indeed for him to interfere with the operations of any local authority operating under a statute passed by Parliament, so long as they are carrying it out. I do not know whether the hon. member for Enoggera suggests that I should exercise some form of oversight over the Board. That is not desirable.

Mr. KERR: You appointed the recent Board of Inquiry.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member is trying to put me in the position of the Board. If I am to be the final authority for the carrying out of all those classes of work, that would not be of benefit to the Board at all. That is the logical position. The Government certainly have the power to see that the work is carried out properly by the Board, and to call their attention to anything that may be considered necessary in the public interests.

Mr. KERR: Did you not initiate the recent inquiry in regard to the defects in the sewerage scheme?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Quite so.

Mr. KERR: They why not initiate another thing?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Certain reports were made to my department regarding alleged defective sewerage work. That defective work was first revealed in a report by the district foreman of the Department of Public Works, who, in putting a connection into one of the Government buildings, discovered faulty work in connection with a certain sewer. That fact was reported to my department and conveyed to the Board. Then further information was received by the department, and that again was conveyed to the Board. The nature of the reports was such that it was considered advisable to suggest that investigations into the truth or otherwise of those statements should be made by the Board. That was done, and the Board carried a resolution asking the Government to appoint a chairman, who should have the statutory power under the Official Inquiries Evidence Act to conduct a full and complete inquiry into the whole of the operations of the sections in dispute. I did not tell the Board that they must have that form of inquiry. I simply passed on to the Board certain information that had come to the knowledge of the department for investigation by them, the same as we would do with any other local authority. The investigation into the allegations was made on the initiative of the Board itself, the Government providing them with a chairman with statutory power to subpoena witnesses, secure their attendance so that they would give evidence, and exercise all the powers contained under the Official Inquiries Evidence Act. When that investigation was completed, the report of the chairman was submitted simultaneously to the Government and the Board. The Board have taken action on the report, and this is an extract from the minutes of one of their meetings—

“The committee deliberates and, after lengthy debate, Dr. Halford states that he considers it will be necessary to inform the Honourable the Minister for Works of the Board's views on the matters dealt with in this report and of the action which the Board intends to take thereon. He moves that the Minister be informed—

The Board has carefully considered the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into certain defective work in sewerage reticulation construction work, and is of opinion that the evidence taken by and the findings thereon by the Commissioner indicate a disgraceful dereliction of duty on the part of the Board's officers concerned and on the part of those employed by the contractors.

It is abundantly proved that work has been scamped in a way that it is incredible to think that those concerned were not cognisant of.

Even taking into consideration the exceptional nature of the work, the extensive area covered by each job, it is impossible to believe that blame is not attachable to all responsible officers connected with the defective works detailed in the report by the Royal Commission. In conformity

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with this opinion, the Board has decided to call upon all those officers of the Board indicated in the report as employed on the various jobs and therefore held responsible for omission to detect defective work, to resign their positions forthwith; and that those responsible for the actual scamping of the work be not re-employed."

I shall now read a copy of the letter that was sent to the men concerned in the strictures passed by the Royal Commission—

"Sir,—The report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into certain alleged defective work on reticulation sewers was considered by the Board at its special meeting held on the 22nd August, 1924, when it was resolved, *inter alia*, that all those officers of the Board indicated in the report as employed on the various works, and therefore held responsible for omission to detect defective work, be called upon to resign their positions forthwith, and that those responsible for the actual scamping of the work be not re-employed.

"In pursuance of this resolution and by direction of the Board, I am now to call upon you to forthwith submit your resignation from the Board's service.

"I have also to inform you that a copy of the Commissioner's report can be seen at this office.

"Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.)

"Secretary."

That indicates, of course, that the Board were alive to their responsibilities, and were taking every step in their power to prevent a recrudescence of such disgraceful conditions as were revealed by the Commissioner.

Mr. KERR: Did they resign?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is necessary to have effective supervision in all public works. It is a fact well known to everybody that in large works—particularly works underground—there is a tendency to scamp the work and omit certain things required by the specifications. Consequently it requires very careful and rigid supervision to see that the requirements of the specifications are properly carried out.

The other day the hon. member for Toowong raised the matter on the Estimates for the Department of Public Works, and I stated that no one would be justified in condoning the action of men who were responsible for defective work. Any man or contractor who fails to carry out his duty to the Board is not only doing an injustice to the Board, but he is guilty of an injurious action against the whole community.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I advocated that a high standard of civic conscience was necessary throughout the community so that there may be a thorough understanding of the fact that anyone who fails to carry out his duty when engaged on any works connected with the Government or a local authority is guilty of inflicting injury on the community represented by the Board or the authority concerned.

It has been suggested that the basis of rating by the Board is unsound in principle and operates unjustly in its incidence.

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That is a matter entirely in the hands of the Board, and they must take full responsibility for their action. Section 20 of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act states—

"Subject to this Act, the Board may from time to time make by-laws with respect to all or any of the matters mentioned in the fourth schedule to this Act."

Subsection (3) of section 22 states—

"After a by-law has been sealed it shall be submitted for the approval of the Governor in Council, and if approved by him shall be published in the 'Gazette,' and thereupon such by-law shall have the force of law."

Section 23 follows—

"A by-law or part of a by-law may be repealed by the Governor in Council by Order in Council."

A section in the schedule which deals with the matter is section 38, which reads—

"Defining the basis upon which water rates may be assessed, which basis may, subject to this Act, be—

- (a) The value of the land; or
- (b) The total superficial area of the floors measured externally in the buildings, if any, erected on the land; or
- (c) The uses to which the land or such buildings are put; or
- (d) The mean height of the land above sea-level; or
- (e) Any basis arrived at, taking into any consideration any two or more of the abovementioned bases; or
- (f) Any other basis fixed by the Board."

Section 39 of the same schedule provides similar powers—

"Defining the basis upon which sewerage rates shall be assessed, which basis may, subject to this Act, be—

- (a) The value of the land; or
- (b) The uses to which the land or the buildings erected on the land are put; or
- (c) Any other basis fixed by the Board."

It has been said that the basis adopted by the Board is unjust in its incidence, and a member of the Board, when he was candidate for the election—I refer to Mr. Macfarlane—blamed the Government for the basis of rating adopted by the Board, thereby indicating that he had never studied the schedule of the Act or gone into the matter. The responsibility for the basis of rating under the sections I have quoted is a responsibility entirely for the Board to bear. It is not my responsibility to do the work for which the Board is elected. The Board is elected by adult suffrage of the people within the metropolitan area or within the ambit operated upon by the Board, and it is their responsibility to see that a Board is elected which carries out the public policy in the interests of the general community. I have no intention or desire to interfere with that power so long as the Board carry out the provision of the statute under which they operate.

The leader of the Opposition made reference to increased costs, which are the result,

he said, of certain legislation. Now the legislation to which the hon. member alluded is in the principal Act itself. It provides that all main sewers and other sewers of given dimensions shall be subject to the Mines Regulation Act. As I interjected to him, that was done in the interests of the men working for the Board or for contractors when carrying out that work. I interjected that it was necessary to safeguard the health and general safety of the men. If the leader of the Opposition looks up "Hansard," he will find that the hon. member for Wynnum—when I introduced the Bill—and other hon. members supported the principle that every safeguard should be adopted that was necessary to ensure the safety of the men carrying out the work.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Certainly, and I would do it again.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is a very sound principle. Nobody understanding the nature of the work involved who had any humanity whatever would object to that principle.

I pointed out at the beginning of my speech that the strata through which the sewers were constructed is, in many cases, of a most treacherous nature. The work was carried out under great difficulties from an engineering point of view, consequently it was found necessary to protect the safety of these men so that there would be no subsidence, resulting in the injury or death of a large number of men. I make no apology whatsoever for providing those necessary safeguards. I believe that policy has resulted in protecting the lives of many men who, if such regulations were not in force, might have been in danger. As a matter of fact, evidence could be brought forward, if it were considered necessary, to show complete justification for those regulations. Men carrying out work of this kind are subject to certain disabilities. [11.30 a.m.] The work is certainly dangerous in itself, due to the danger of subsidences, and there have been several fatal accidents. In addition, the work is of a very arduous and disagreeable kind. It would do the leader of the Opposition good—I am sure it could be arranged if he so desires—if he would proceed along some of these sewers and ascertain exactly the difficulties under which these men work. No doubt the hon. member for Enoggera agrees with me that certain precautions are necessary. Anyone who argues otherwise must be entirely ignorant of the nature of the work involved. I, at any rate, support a continuance of the principle that everything necessary should be done in all forms of public work to ensure the safety of the men engaged on it. We have certain mining regulations which provide for the safety of men who work in mining. These regulations, where they are applicable, apply to the sewers. We have the Inspection of Machinery and Scaffolding Act to protect men working on buildings, and I can understand from experience the necessity for that Act. I have known, when work was scarce in certain industries, men being asked to work on dangerous scaffolding, and, if they objected, they got the sack and other men were placed in their positions. I remember working 50 feet from the ground on a 5 inch by 2½ inch scaffolding plank. If anyone can say that is a safe scaffolding, he does not know anything about the matter.

Under the Queensland Inspection of Machinery and Scaffolding Act, the man responsible for such a scaffold as that would be subject to a very severe penalty. That also applies to the operations of the Board in certain particulars and is applicable to this question.

I think I have covered most of the points dealt with in this debate other than the suggestion by the leader of the Opposition at the conclusion of his speech. He argued that an expert commission of engineers might have carried out the work better than the present Board. In investigating that proposition, it must be remembered that someone would have to be in control of those engineers. Probably the idea is that it should be a sub-department of the Department of Public Works. Personally, I dissent from that view on the ground that it is purely a matter affecting the people in the metropolitan area. Therefore, it is something that comes properly within the ambit of local government. I believe in the principle that those things which affect the State should be dealt with by the State Parliament, that those things which affect the Commonwealth as a whole should be dealt with by the Commonwealth Parliament, and that any works of this kind which purely affect the people living within the metropolitan area, or those within the sphere of influence of the Board, are purely local government matters, and the proper subject for the control of an elected board. There is no more reason why the Government should take control of works in Brisbane than there is for taking control of works in Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, or elsewhere, and it would be an unwarranted interference with the legitimate functions of the Board. Furthermore, the Board themselves have a staff of engineers who are responsible to the Board for carrying out all the engineering work. If a so-called expert commission had been set up under this Act, they would have had to deal with the same difficulties that the engineers employed by the Board have had to deal with. They would have had to pay the same increased cost for material and machinery, etc., and there is no reason to assume that they would have been able to carry out the work any cheaper than it has been carried out by the Board. I think it is unnecessary for me to proceed any further with the case for the Board.

Mr. KELSO (*Yundah*): I would just like to say a few words in reply to the arguments put forward by the Minister. I do not see that it is any crime for the hon. member for Enoggera to express his opinion.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I never said it was.

Mr. KELSO: I say it is not a crime for the hon. member for Enoggera to express his opinion although he differs from the expert. The Minister took up the position that the hon. member for Enoggera was speaking on a subject with which he is not conversant and therefore his remarks do not carry any weight. The same thing applies to members of the Government. I have a very vivid recollection of the Secretary for Agriculture last year taking up the position of a cotton expert in certain matters. He was quite right in doing so, but it is proved now that this cotton expert made a mistake.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is not proved at all.

Mr. Kelso.]

Mr. KELSO: The recent action of the Government is an absolute admission that the advice which was tendered by the cotton expert was not correct.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not at all.

Mr. KELSO: The Government have reversed their policy on the question of cotton. If that is the case then I think the hon. member for Enoggera is quite justified in criticising an undertaking which has been, and is likely to be in a still greater degree, a very costly thing for the city of Brisbane. I have never altered my opinion for some years as to what the constitution of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board should be. I think it is the greatest mistake in connection with a great public utility of this kind to have a Board elected on a popular franchise, and absolutely make the election of that Board a political fight. We know perfectly well that one of the biggest political fights we have taking place is in connection with the election of members of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. At the last election the people in Brisbane had a duplication in miniature of the elections for the House. The Minister tells us that if we had a body of experts they would be faced with the same difficulties that the present Board were faced with—the same difficulties as to costs and the same difficulties as to mistakes—but he overlooks the fact that on various occasions the policy of the Board has been reversed. When the Labour party get a majority they bring in motions to suit their political ideas, and probably it is the same with the other side. There is no continuity of policy with a Board elected on the popular franchise, and it would have been far better if a commission of three men had been appointed—one an expert sewerage engineer, one an expert business man, and one an expert in sanitary plumbing. If three such men were given a free hand to do the best they could, I am perfectly certain that a lot of the mistakes that have been made would never have happened.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: To whom would they be responsible?

Mr. KELSO: In reply to the interjection I would ask to whom are the members of the Main Roads Board responsible? In the last resort they would be responsible to Parliament. They would be working under an Act of Parliament, the same as the present Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. I would point out to the Secretary for Agriculture that, when establishing the Main Roads Board, the Government did not provide for a popular franchise throughout the State. They took the right course for once, and appointed three men capable of doing the work, and, although I must admit that the work of the Main Roads Board is very costly, yet it is very thorough, and nobody will say that those three men have not done their work well. What would be the position if we had a commission of three men instead of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board? You would not have every little detail published in the Press and argued by different people trying to influence the Board in one direction or the other. There is no chance of doing efficient work where you have a board which has the power to

[*Mr. Kelso.*

undo what you consider to be the right thing to do. I am not reflecting on any particular member of the Board—we have an hon. member in this Chamber who is a member of the Board—I am speaking in a broad spirit on the general principle. I do not care who the men are who are representing the ratepayer on the Board; I disagree with the principle. We shall never have satisfactory work while we have an elected Board which one week can come to one decision and next week can change it. For instance, suppose the engineer in charge of sewerage decides on a certain thing, is it right, having appointed that officer on account of his professional ability, for the Board to come in and undo what has been done?

Mr. POLLOCK: Parliament can do that with every Government department.

Mr. KELSO: Is Parliament going to interfere, for instance, with the Main Roads Board?

Mr. POLLOCK: We could.

Mr. KELSO: The Government say to the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, "Here is a sum of money at your disposal," and they say in what particular direction the money has to be spent. They lay down the basis, and all they ask these men to do is to "deliver the goods," as the Americans say. If these men are incapable of delivering the goods, the best thing to do is put an expert in their place. I am not going to criticise the expert officers of the Board and say whether they are capable of carrying out their duties or not, but one thing that struck me was the tremendous waste that occurred over the Pinkenba main pipe line—this is not hearsay—I have it from a member of the Board that, when the pipe line was laid from the Hamilton out to the mouth of the river, the experts who designed that work must or should have known that they were going practically through blue mud, and they forced the pipe through blue mud and it collapsed and broke its back. I am informed that they have not found some of the pipe yet.

Mr. WILSON: Who informed you? Do you know whether that is correct?

Mr. KELSO: I can assure the hon. member, with all due deference to him, that the gentleman who told me that knows more about sewerage than the hon. member. I do not suppose the hon. member claims to be an expert in sewerage.

Mr. WILSON: I do not—I never did.

Mr. KELSO: No, the hon. member did not; I give him credit for that.

Mr. WILSON: I hope that you do not claim it, either.

Mr. KELSO: In the case I am referring to they made a deviation on ground which would hold the pipe. That particular deviation and the mistake which was made probably cost the ratepayers £150,000, and the hon. member knows that.

Mr. WILSON: I do not know that.

Mr. KELSO: I am sure the House will be delighted when the hon. member contributes to the debate and lets us know the position. I am with the hon. member for Enoggera in urging that there should be an amendment of the Act. I think the time has come when there should be some alteration in the constitution of the Board. They have had a jolly good spin. They have put the

ratepayers to an enormous expense, and at the present time to a certain extent the result of the work of the Board is a by-word in the community. People are beginning to wonder when the end is going to come.

Mr. GLEDSON: You want to take it off their shoulders and put it on to the Government.

Mr. KELSO: An enormous amount is being spent, but the end of the sewerage works is not in sight yet. If this is the result to be obtained from a popularly constituted Board, it is a question whether it would not be better to put it in the hands of a commission of experts.

Mr. POLLOCK: Somebody has been pulling your leg over the Pinkenba business.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member is making an interjection probably at the suggestion of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley. If not, I can assure the hon. member that he does not know anything about it.

Mr. POLLOCK: Wait till you hear the hon. member for Fortitude Valley.

Mr. KELSO: We shall be delighted to hear the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, because his views will be very illuminating. I do not know whether the hon. member is wedded to the present system; but I think that, with the experience he has had, he must see that a popularly elected board is not going to run successfully a great scheme of this kind—a scheme which is only in its infancy at the present time and is likely to grow tremendously as the city of Brisbane grows. I am sure we are all proud of the city of Brisbane, and believe that it will grow at an accelerated rate.

This matter is well worthy of consideration. We have had several Commissions. The hon. member for Enoggera, in reply to the Secretary for Public Works, interjected, "Have the Board taken notice of the finding of the late Commission of Inquiry?" I would ask the hon. member for Fortitude Valley kindly to reply to that. Have the Board carried out the suggestions made by the Commission? I hope the hon. member will answer that question. He certainly is possessed of the information. I do not think the Board have acted on the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. Had they done so, there would have been an adequate change made. I have pleasure in supporting the motion of the hon. member for Enoggera.

Mr. WILSON (*Fortitude Valley*): I desire to say something in reply to the remarks made by hon. members opposite. I was somewhat surprised at the speech of the hon. member for Enoggera. He ran over the whole matter with his usual dash and use of figures, and made innuendoes about this, that, and the other, and, from the way he dealt with the whole of the ramifications of the Board's work, one would think he was an expert engineer. I have a good idea where the information which the hon. member gave came from.

Mr. KERR: I can assure you that I received no information from anyone.

Mr. WILSON: The information which has been given about the matter is, in my opinion, not right. I shall refer to the water and sewerage scheme from its commencement. Tenders were called for applications for the position of engineer for sewerage some con-

siderable time ago. Mr. Thom, the present engineer, was selected from a number of applicants, and was brought from Hobart to formulate a scheme. The scheme came before the Board, which wanted to get expert advice before they adopted it, with the result that they asked for a report from Mr. Oliver, of Melbourne, Mr. Smail, of Sydney, and an Adelaide engineer. Unfortunately the Adelaide man could not come. We could not have done a wiser thing, because each of those States had a sewerage scheme in operation, and we could therefore benefit by any mistakes which might have been made in the Southern capitals. Mr. Oliver and Mr. Smail were here for some time going into the scheme submitted by Mr. Thom, with the result that they recommended the adoption of Mr. Thom's scheme with very little alteration indeed. The work was commenced, and tenders were called for the main sewer. It might be just as well, as it has been mentioned very often in the Chamber, to give the result of the first tenders which were called for the work. We had a gentleman here from Melbourne, whose price was so high that it was impossible to look at it. Tenders were called for three different sections of the main sewer. A Mr. Atherton, who was representing an English firm, Rhys Jones, McTaggart, and Birch, got the contract from Pinkenba up to Nudgee road, and a Mr. Adams got the tender from Nudgee road along to James street. We know the result of that. The third tenderer was Mr. Carr. He was the only one who carried through his contract successfully.

Mr. MAXWELL: They lost a lot of money on it.

Mr. WILSON: I am not disputing that fact. The result of the other two contracts is well known. The contractors could not finish their jobs, and left them in a most deplorable condition, with the result that there were two big law cases, both of which the Board won. But although the Board got judgment in both cases they did not get one solitary penny from the contractors. They had, therefore, to take that work on themselves. Hon. members had only to look at the condition of Breakfast Creek road near the Bowling Green to understand the condition in which one of the contracts was left. The road fell in on the big sewer 60 feet below the surface in slurry, and the Board had to use expensive machinery and had to work in that area to get through those places where the contractors had neglected or failed to do the work. The contractors sank a number of shafts, but water got in, which made the whole work defective, and the ground fell in. The Board could do nothing else but take up the work at once by day-labour, although some of the political friends of hon. members opposite—a majority of them—considered that fresh tenders should have been called. However, the Board took up the work, and hon. members know the result of the burden which fell upon them through the inefficiency of the contractor and his inability to carry out the work. It cost the Board a very considerable sum of money. Perhaps before I get off that question I had better say that, as you go from Hamilton hills across the flats towards the cutfall, the ground is nothing but a big bottomless sea of slurry and slime. That was the kind of ground in which a foundation for the sewer had to

be found, and hon. members can understand what it was like.

Mr. KELSO: That is so, but did not the engineers take borings?

Mr. WILSON: From the railway gates at Meeandah a deviation was made. Mr. Adams, on behalf of the English firm I have mentioned, had put down a number of shafts on the line of the sewer, but had never bottomed any of them. The position was getting worse, and it was considered that it would be much cheaper to abandon the route along the main road and go across what were known as the meatworks paddocks.

Mr. KELSO: Had not the engineers taken borings previously—before the contracts were let?

Mr. WILSON: They had, and the contractors took borings too. They were not supposed to rely on the borings put down by the Board. That was the crux of the whole question in the law cases. The contractors claimed that they had got false information from the Board, but they did nothing of the kind, and the result of those cases was in the Board's favour. They were under an obligation to take out borings for themselves.

Mr. KELSO: You admit that it is slime and slurry?

Mr. WILSON: The hon. member for Enoggera said that the rating system was unfair. We know perfectly well that this was a burning question at the last election. The hon. member stated quite rightly that 80 per cent. of the Board's revenue comes from persons owning land of a less value than £300, and that the other 20 per cent. is found by people each owning land from £500 in value up to something in the neighbourhood of £65,000. I have not got the figures here, but I remember them sufficiently to give hon. members that idea of how unfair the system is. We want to abolish that system of rating, and last year some steps were taken to that end. The Board practically unanimously agreed that some alteration was necessary to put on the wealthier people more of the burden which had been borne by the unfortunate poorer classes who owned property up to the value of £300. When we agreed on that system, there was such a squeal from the wealthier classes, including the Property Owners' Association, or some body by some such name, who held a meeting and kicked up an awful row about the extra amount they would have to pay. I have tackled Mr. Macfarlane on this question, I do not know where the hon. member for Enoggera has got his information, but I assume that it is by looking up the "Telegraph" newspaper, which contained two or three columns of a report of the association's annual meeting, in which credit was given to Mr. Macfarlane for having the system altered, whereas the Board came to see the Premier and got some redress by getting some of the expenditure capitalised. That was agreed to by a majority of the Board, whereas the report I have mentioned gave Mr. Macfarlane all the credit for reducing the rate from the figure at which it was carried by the Board, although, as a matter of fact, Mr. Macfarlane had actually moved the resolution fixing the new basis of rating. In passing, I may point out that the landowners subscribed a certain amount of money to support the election of Mr. Macfarlane. It shows how money is raised

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so that the finances of the Board may be straightened out in such a way that certain persons will get relief. As a matter of fact, the new basis was carried almost unanimously, only one member, Mr. Frew, opposing it. I only mention that in passing because credit has been given to Mr. Macfarlane, and I assume that the hon. member's information comes from him.

Mr. KERR: I got no information from Mr. Macfarlane. I have never spoken to him in my life. You will have to accept my assurance.

Mr. TAYLOR: Mr. Macfarlane is a good man.

Mr. MAXWELL: He is a good man.

Mr. WILSON: There is no use denying that the cost of material and labour and everything in connection with the ramifications of the Board is far greater now than when the work was commenced some years ago.

Mr. KELSO: Everybody admits that.

Mr. WILSON: Now, in Melbourne roughly £16,000,000 have been spent on the water and sewerage schemes up to the present time, but their water scheme there is very different from ours. At Mount Crosby there is a set of engines going night and day all the year round. I know that the hon. member for Enoggera has paid a visit to our pumping station and has seen the system in operation there, and therefore he is able to compare it with the systems of the other States. In Sydney the expenditure on water and sewerage runs into roughly £20,000,000, and here in Brisbane the total expenditure up to the present is about £6,000,000, of which the greater part has been spent on the water supply. So far as my knowledge of the concern goes it will run into about another £2,000,000, £1,000,000 for water—including the Stanley River dam—and £1,000,000 for sewerage.

Mr. KERR: Does that include reticulation under the sewerage scheme?

Mr. WILSON: Yes. I am not an expert, of course, but that is my opinion. On that point I want to say that from my knowledge of experts in connection with the Board and in other ventures I have not got much time for them. The inference to be drawn from the remarks of previous speakers is that it would be better to have this system under the control of experts.

Mr. Hazon came from America to report on a water scheme many years ago before I was a member of the Board, and he was taken over to Stradbroke Island, where he explored a good deal of the country in connection with a water supply scheme. I believe that Mr. Kemp was the engineer for the Board at the time. The Board cut quite a lot out of his report as being absolutely worthless. I do not want to detain the House, but I could quote some of the ridiculous statements and suggestions that were made.

The sewerage scheme has been a very difficult undertaking for the Board, and I am sure, if hon. members were to go down and see the amount of work that is done 60 feet below the surface, they would not care to go in where the men were working [12 noon] under air pressure. It takes a fairly strong man to stand those conditions, because he is liable to bleed at

the ears or the nose. The rates of payment are pretty high for that class of work. If we compare the rate of wages paid now and the present cost of material with the rates of wages and cost of material before the war and compare the present cost of sewerage construction with the cost of constructing the sewers in existence in other States, it will be found that the Board has been up against considerable difficulties. It is a great pity that the work was not commenced twenty years ago.

A good deal has been said by the hon. member for Enoggera and others about speeding up. The main sewer is completed, and we are getting along remarkably well with the reticulation. I want to inform the hon. member for Enoggera that it is not a very easy matter to carry out the house connections. The reticulation work is all right, but we have a good deal of reticulation work completed ahead of the house connections. We had a man from one of the southern States where he is in charge of the house connection work, to give us an idea of the number of connections we would be able to make each year, and we are pushing along with them as quickly as possible.

Mr. KERR: Has the Board got plenty of money?

Mr. WILSON: We have got sufficient money for the present. Hon. members must remember that to carry out the work by the Board we shall have to borrow £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 for house connection work, but we cannot force the people to connect up if they have not got the money, and so it is necessary for the Board to take on the work and do it for them. It is rather a hard thing to compel a working man with a wife and family to carry out the work when it is going to cost £50 or £60. How can we force such men to do it even if their properties are free of encumbrance?

Mr. KERR: The Board will have to help them.

Mr. WILSON: Yes, the Board will charge a fair rate of interest. It was necessary to have an amendment of the previous Act to enable the Board to do that. We have done all that we can in connection with the speeding up of house connections. Hon. members must realise that the Board is confronted with the task of supplying water as well as carrying out the sewerage scheme, and I have always advocated both on the Board and elsewhere that water should come first. Next after air and light I consider water is the most essential thing to our existence.

Mr. KELSO: You cannot have a sewerage system without water.

Mr. WILSON: You cannot wait for water. In the past the trouble has been that we have not had enough trunk mains to bring the water from Mount Crosby. At the present time we have 280 men working in constructing a pipe line from Mount Crosby to Tarragindi Hill, where the new reservoir is. That reservoir has a capacity of 13,000,000 gallons.

Mr. KELSO: The Board have not hurried with the water question.

Mr. WILSON: We have done our best to get the wherewithal to construct a proper scheme so as to get the water down as quickly as possible. When the Board was first constituted we had only one 24-inch pipe

line from Mount Crosby, whereas now a 48-inch pipe line constructed of Mephan Ferguson's steel pipes has been built. We hope to have sufficient pipe lines to prevent any shortage of water at Christmas time.

The leader of the Opposition made some comment on the mines regulations being applied to the sewerage work. Anyone who has any knowledge of the use of explosives for blasting purposes will admit that where such work is carried out the Mines Regulations Act should apply. The law was so amended as to permit of sewer construction being brought under that Act. That involved higher rates of pay to some men, but it had to be done for safety's sake.

Mr. MOORE: Overlapping of control.

Mr. WILSON: Explosives were necessary in carrying out the work in the main portion of the town when driving through rock, but lower down the work was done in mud, consequently no blasting was necessary. It was a very difficult thing to construct the drives in soft material 60 feet from the surface, and, when we got as far as Pinkenba, we thought it advisable to lift the sewer to a higher level near Luggage Point. The men were agitating to be brought under the provisions of the Mines Regulations Act, and the danger was there which made it absolutely necessary to give some protection, and so the men's claims could not be refused.

Some mention has been made about the change of policy adopted by the Board. That has been responsible for one of the great defects in the functioning of the Board. I do not want to be personal in any way, but I want hon. members to have some idea of the result of that change of policy. Quite a lot has been published in connection with the work done at Laidlaw parade and other work both under day labour and contract, but that work was done since the change of policy by the Board. We did not have the same amount of scamping when the work was carried out by day labour.

Mr. MAXWELL: Was not the work at Newmarket carried out by day labour?

Mr. WILSON: I admit that. The policy of the Board was changed and the contract system was adopted in preference to day labour by a Board consisting of two Labour members as against six others, and it was after that the scamping commenced.

Mr. KERR: Ah!

Mr. WILSON: I was there and I ought to know. Up to that time the Laidlaw parade job and the Newmarket work had not been commenced.

Mr. KERR: Are you in a position to say that all the other work was well done? Have you had the main sewers examined?

Mr. WILSON: We have had men down in the main sewer, and I am sure that a good job was made in that connection, notwithstanding that those who are opposed to us politically tried to draw a red-herring across the track by saying it was not. When the Board decided by six members as against two Labour members to change their policy, they hung up quite a lot of work. We had quite a lot of work in progress under the day-labour system. It was necessary to build a weir at Mount Crosby, and it was absolutely necessary to construct filters at Holt's Hill to provide pure water for the community. The Board hung up those works simply because they wanted them done by

Mr. Wilson.]

contract and desired to call tenders for the work. After the work had been held up for some considerable time and it was pointed out by the engineer and the Labour members that the Board had taken up a ridiculous attitude, the other members agreed to allow the work to be completed under the day-labour system. I am only pointing out that directly the friends of the hon. members opposite secured the election of six of their members against two members of the Labour party on the Board they installed the contract system, and from that time on the scamping work round about Brisbane has taken place. I have no time for scamped work. I do not care whether it is done by day labour or contract. The men are paid a good daily wage and work under conditions which are better, I suppose, than those obtaining in any other place in Australia.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KERR: Were the resignations of those officers accepted by the Board?

Mr. WILSON: We all know very well that the work at Laidlaw parade was absolutely disgraceful. Some of the men informed the official of the Australian Workers' Union of it, and that body in turn communicated with the Acting Premier, who in turn communicated with the Board. When that communication came before the Board I moved that the engineer for sewerage be instructed forthwith to hold an inquiry into the matter and report to the Board. He did so. Some of our opponents on the Board—they are only opponents in the sense of being opposed to our policy—thought that the scamped work had been deliberately done. I want to give that an emphatic denial. We had nothing to do with it. It was on my motion that the nature of the work was exposed. The scamped work at Laidlaw parade was revealed to be worse than on any other section.

Mr. KELSO: Did those men who were called upon to resign do so?

Mr. WILSON: Which men?

Mr. KELSO: The Secretary for Public Works read a motion carried by the Board calling upon the officers connected with that work to resign.

Mr. WILSON: The Secretary for Public Works read the resolutions which were carried by the Board after the report of Mr. Harris was considered.

Mr. KERR: It has been publicly stated that, as a result of that inquiry, no action has been taken by the Board. Do you now say action has been taken?

Mr. WILSON: Yes. Did not the Secretary for Public Works read a motion that was passed by the Board calling upon those connected with the work to resign?

Mr. KERR: I am glad to hear that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You would not have moved your motion if you had had that information.

Mr. KERR: Why should not I have done so?

Mr. GLEDSON: He has had it prepared for a month.

Mr. WILSON: The Board was absolutely disgusted with the whole of the revelations, not only from the point of view of the work of the contractor, but also with respect to the work carried out by day labour.

Mr. MAXWELL: Hear, hear!

[*Mr. Wilson.*]

Mr. WILSON: But it was revealed that the work carried out by day labour was not so badly scamped as that undertaken by the contractor. I am not attempting to take the part of the men concerned, as I assisted to deal with them just as I assisted to deal with the contractor's men.

Mr. KELSO: There were faults on both sides.

Mr. WILSON: I have no time for the man who does not do his work conscientiously because he happens to be working underground where he cannot be seen.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The public have to be protected.

Mr. WILSON: I am glad that the hon. member for Enoggera brought this matter forward, if for no other reason than that it has cleared the air, and will tend to dispel from the minds of the people certain impressions that have got abroad. I believe that, if the hon. member for Enoggera gave his candid opinion, he would admit that good work has been done by the Board in giving the people a pure water supply.

Mr. KERR: I did not deal with the water supply at all.

Mr. WILSON: Water supply and sewerage is all under the one control. I was pleased in a way to hear the remarks of the hon. member and the history of the Board which he gave. No one can deny the fact that the Board on its initiation was composed almost wholly of Nationalist members. The local authorities met to appoint the first Board, and they selected eight Nationalists. They took sides from the very day the Board was appointed.

Mr. KERR: Politics should never enter into an undertaking of this nature.

Mr. WILSON: I know that some of the representatives signed the platforms of both parties.

Mr. KELSO: That is an admission that the system is bad.

Mr. WILSON: The friends of hon. members opposite have dominated the Board for more than half its existence, and until this year the work of the Board was carried out with a majority of their members on the Board.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Enoggera upon having introduced a question of very wide importance. The remarks of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley have justified the attitude taken up by the hon. member for Enoggera. The hon. member gave the House some interesting information. I am not going to discuss this question from a political point of view.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You never do that?

Mr. MAXWELL: No, I am not like the hon. gentleman. I am of opinion that the Board is wrongly constituted. I want to say right at the outset that under existing conditions politics have no right to enter into it. The Secretary for Public Works in the course of the explicit explanation which he gave dwelt at some length on the report that was presented by Mr. Oliver, and he attempted to heap a certain amount of odium on the hon. member for Enoggera for the manner in which he referred to the Commissioner who conducted that inquiry. The hon. gentleman stressed the qualifications of

the Commissioner, and thought it was out of keeping for any hon. member occupying a responsible position in this House to criticise his actions and work.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I did not do that; you misunderstood me.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. gentleman attempted to ridicule the hon. member for Enoggera.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I protested against him imputing improper motives to an engineer of the standing of Mr. Oliver.

Mr. MAXWELL: I did not take that view of the hon. gentleman's remarks.

Mr. KERR: I did not impute motives.

Mr. MAXWELL: I want to know why the Minister is not prepared to accept the report of Mr. Oliver. I believe that Mr. Oliver was a man who was fully qualified to investigate the sewerage system, otherwise he would not have been appointed to his position. If that is the case, why does the Minister not listen to the advice given by him?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am not the Board.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Secretary for Public Works is the head of a spending department which has to say that certain things in connection with the Board are "up to the knocker."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He only scrutinises the plans and specifications.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. member for Enoggera was perfectly justified in bringing forward this question. On page 26 of Mr. Oliver's report it is stated—

"As there has certainly been a lack of candour on the part of the Board in the past as far as taking the people into its counsels is concerned, I make a suggestion which might be followed with advantage by the Board and prove a benefit to the public. Hitherto the members of the Board have been in the habit of resolving themselves into a "Committee of the Whole" to discuss matters of urgent public importance. The people have not been taken into the confidence of the Board sufficiently to enable them to understand the nature of the business so transacted. The president, according to reports, has at times supplied the Press with the result of such "Star Chamber" deliberations, and has told them that so many feet of sewers were constructed, and so much loan money applied for, but it would appear from the exhibits tendered in evidence that no comparisons were forthcoming to enable the rate-payers to judge if the Board were keeping the expenditure within the bounds originally anticipated."

Despite that advice from the Commissioner, to-day we are in exactly the same position that we cannot get any information from this Board. We have been told by the Secretary for Public Works and the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that the cost has been increased owing to the war. Those hon. members did not go far enough. The unfortunate war has been blamed for a great many things, and it has been a very nice proposition for a Government such as the one in power to lean upon.

On page 25 of this same report, we read—

"Mr. Manchester advanced various reasons for the increased costs to which the Board was subjected, the principal of which, perhaps, were the lessening of the energy of the labour unit, and the divided controls. To those two factors I personally attribute most of the excess expenditure myself. Mr. Manchester also adds the following factors as being responsible for the increasing overhead costs:—

Wages of employees increased by the Arbitration Court from time to time, with retrospective application."

In that connection let me say that hon. members opposite have stressed the point that certain contractors threw up their contracts. Why? Simply because of the retrospectivity of the award.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Oh, no.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. gentleman may say what he likes, but those were the reasons advanced by the contractors.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They had to give some reason.

Mr. MAXWELL: They had to give some reason! I have been quoting Mr. Manchester's remarks! To continue—

"Shorter hours worked by the men.

Diminution of output as compared with similar hours worked before the war.

Compulsory payment for holidays

Outbreak of war dislocating all industry.

Increasing cost of materials.

'Go slow' policy.

Strikes.

Excavation difficulties in treacherous ground.

Shutting down of works for want of funds.

Contractors throwing up their contracts and Board having to complete same.

Delay of plant and material.

Legislation.—Making the sewers mines under the Mines Regulations Act, whereby mine managers had to be placed in charge, as well as the superintending officers of the Board, two men thereby doing one man's work. Shift bosses also had to be appointed to take charge of miners.

Multiplicity of departments dealing with Board.

High rates of pay to air-lock workers, reaching to £1 8s. per shift of 4 hours per man."

And the public—the poor unfortunate rate-payers and citizens—have to pay for all this. Irrespective of what this work is going to cost, those concerned are going to touch the pockets of the man with the 16-perch allotment, and he will have to pay even a greater proportion than the wealthy man.

Another point regarding the estimates for the work needs attention. We are informed that there was a considerable difference in the estimates because of the war. Mr. Manchester made the statement that they had sufficient money to complete a certain proportion of the work. Mr. Oliver says on page 24 of this report—

"As the original estimate for sewer-

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ing these sections was £332,000 it will be seen that at the end of last year there was an excess of expenditure amounting to £544,572, exclusive of capitalised interest. The Audit Inspector gives the capitalised interest at that date as £99,669 7s. 3d.

"Mr. Manchester, in his evidence, claims that the Board should be given credit for having effected various savings through altering the original scheme. He states that the Meeandah deviation (39 to 53) was adopted to save 16½ chains of sewer line, and as at that time the sewers were costing £44 per foot, the 16½ chains would represent a saving of £44,270.

"Against this, Mr. Ross states that the Meeandah deviation was originally expected to cost £70,000, but at the end of last year it had cost £165,147, with 2,605 feet of sewer still to complete. As loans totalling £257,600 had been obtained from the Treasury to complete this deviation, it is more than likely this sum will be absorbed before the work is finished."

Mr. WILSON: What are you reading from?

Mr. MAXWELL: From Mr. Oliver's report. I shall read a little further, for the benefit of the hon. member.

Mr. WILSON: All right, so long as you read the complimentary remarks made by Mr. Oliver in favour of the Board. At present you are choosing the 10 per cent. that is uncomplimentary as against 90 per cent. that is complimentary in his remarks.

Mr. MAXWELL: Never since I have been on the floor of the House have I had any desire to misrepresent or mislead. I know how ridiculous a person can be made to look who attempts to do that. I do not mean to say that the members of the Board have not done their best, but I say that undoubtedly their best has not been very much. I believe the members of the Board to be honourable men. I have been associated with some of them in other matters, and I know how honest they are in other activities. That only brings me back to the fact that we are on wrong lines in connection with this Board. What would it mean if the Government adopted a policy of having an elective board to control the Department of Railways, the Treasury Department, and Lands Department? To carry the policy out to a logical conclusion that should be done. I say unhesitatingly that the proper course to have adopted in this connection was to appoint three Commissioners to carry out this work. It has been said that the local authorities should control the work. I believe they should. To me one ray of sunshine is that under the City of Brisbane Bill the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board will come under the control of the local authorities. Then it will not be to a certain extent elective, where certain political organisations—it does not matter which side they are on—may pick individuals who are popular and place them in these positions, whether they are capable or not. We should have experts paid to do the work. I say "experts" advisedly. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley says he does not believe in experts. Would the hon. member recommend the discharge of the President of the Board and of other experts, and leave it to the laymen on the Board to carry out the work associated with the

Board's activities? I think one of the good things that will be brought about by the City of Brisbane Bill will be that the experts will have greater latitude to perform their duties.

Mr. WILSON: The whole State should be run by experts, according to your argument.

Mr. MAXWELL: I am not saying that. I recognise that there are certain functions that the Government must control. With that object Governments and local authorities are brought into existence. I do think that we have arrived at a point when we should review the whole position. Political influence should not govern these big things. We should not have men compelled to carry out a policy suitable to a political coterie no matter how much they may be disliked by intelligent representatives. The mind of this coterie is made up. One might just as well put one or two men in a position to carry on the government of the country.

Mr. Oliver says that he has always been of the opinion that day-labour is more expensive than contract work, and that day-labour is not as satisfactory as contract work. Coming from a man like that who is imported to advise the Board, one would naturally think that the Board would have taken some notice of his advice.

[12.30 p.m.]

But what was done? They practically paid no attention to Mr. Oliver's report, and the whole of the money spent was practically wasted. During the stress of unemployment the Board had some difficulty in regard to their finances. It was somewhat difficult for them to carry on, and notices were given to some of the men that they would have to be discharged, and I have a vivid recollection of the Board receiving a deputation and one of the men having the impudence to say that it was not the function of the Unemployed Committee to find the money—that was the duty of the Board. Things have reached a very pitiable stage when we get such deputations approaching the Board; but that is what our political ideals have reached to-day. When a Board is elected on lines such as that, it is only natural to expect that organisations will bind themselves together in order to see that they get a proper deal. On page 21 of his report Mr. Oliver says—

"Some of the work was carried out by contract and part by day labour. Personally I prefer the contract system as the cheaper, and contract work probably causes less trouble."

I want to emphasise that the hon. member for Enoggera is to be congratulated on bringing this matter forward, because there is a great amount of dissatisfaction amongst the public, who have to pay for what they are not getting. The whole basis of the rating is absolutely wrong. It is only a fair proposition that the consumer should pay for what he uses. What is the position? A great many individuals who have not got a meter installed have to pay for what they do not use. That is a condition of affairs that should not be allowed to obtain, and surely with the amount of intelligence we have on the Board it should be possible to devise some means whereby the system can be altered so that consumers will only be charged for what they use. In the interests of the

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public a general clearing up is necessary. Speakers on the other side have not said one word against the attitude taken up by the hon. member for Enoggera. They have said that he got his information from a certain source, which he denies; but it is very evident that it is accurate.

Mr. WILSON: That is a question.

Mr. MAXWELL: The information given by the hon. member has not been denied. The Minister has told us that he does not want to interfere with the policy of the Board. I have a recollection of the Premier interfering with me when I was Mayor of Brisbane. He wanted me to hold over certain work pending the election of a new council, even though the old council had decided that the work was to be done by contract.

Mr. WILSON: On the eve of an election they let a contract for thousands of pounds worth of concreting.

Mr. MAXWELL: Certainly they did. The people elected them to do it, and they were perfectly justified in doing it, and they got good results from it. It is all very well for one Minister to say that he does not want to interfere with local government bodies and for another Minister to interfere. I hope good will result from this debate because the people outside are fed up with the length of time it is taking to make the house connections, and they are fed up with the amount they have to pay, and from which they are getting no result.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. KERR: I should like to take the opportunity of replying to one or two of the matters referred to in this debate. First of all, I would like to mention that the Secretary for Public Works, in his speech this morning, showed that he knows practically nothing in regard to the workings of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. There has been a lot of scamping so far as he is concerned. He has not shown the knowledge of the working of the Board that he should have. I regret that sincerely, because the Board owe the Government nearly £2,000,000, and it is the duty of the Minister to understand his department, and he must have a certain amount of jurisdiction over that department.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are always complaining about Government interference.

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman is getting away from the question altogether. The Minister, in discussing this very important matter, uttered a lot of platitudes, and did not deal with the important question at all. I have to thank the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, who is a member of the Board, for giving to the House full information on this very important question—information which the Minister did not see fit to give.

The Minister stated that no indication was given by me as to how the Act should be amended. I spoke frequently in regard to the franchise, and I said that a Commission of experts was required to conduct the affairs of the Board. The Minister is very dense if he did not draw that conclusion, as I definitely stated it in words. I hope he will consider, before he responds again, what is before the House, and not treat us to a number of platitudes which, after all is said

and done, have nothing to do with the question. It has been stated in this debate that I have not gone over the whole of the ground. It was a question of dealing with the various matters as concisely as possible in the time allowed, and I venture to say that the hon. member for Fortitude Valley will agree that I have been perfectly justified in raising this important matter this morning.

It has been stated that I got my information from certain sources. I again want emphatically to deny that. No member of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, and no member of the Government, has supplied me with one item of information. I have studied closely the reports of the Royal Commission and the evidence taken recently in regard to defective work, and I have studied the various statements of the Board published in the Press. I particularly dealt with the financial position of the Board and what it means to the ratepayers and I venture to say that I have forcibly brought under the notice of the Government that something is necessary to improve matters. The Minister said that he had no intention of interfering with the management of the Board; but the Government did not mind interfering or mind a loss of dignity when they wanted to raise a parrot cry to fight the Water Board elections earlier in the year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Don't you think their interference was justified at that time?

Mr. KERR: I did think it was justified, and I think so still. But if the Minister says he is not justified in interfering with the Board, why did he interfere at that time in order to get an election cry? It should be the function of the Government to interfere with the Board when things are not going right, and the Minister is not justified in saying that he would not interfere. The Government are providing the money, and have provided plans and specifications.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They do not provide plans and specifications.

Mr. KERR: They provide a certain number of plans and specifications.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No.

Mr. KERR: They have an inspector on this work.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No—not for the last three years.

Mr. KERR: All right. I still persist in saying that, if matters in connection with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board—which are carried out under certain legislation passed by Parliament, but are in a sense under the administration of the Secretary for Public Works—are not going right, the Minister should take action. I hope that he will take the necessary action. That is one reason for my motion this morning. I am sorry the Minister stated that he would not take action.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No. You are trying to distort what I said.

Mr. KERR: I am not trying to distort what the hon. gentleman said. I took particular note of what he said.

The hon. gentleman said that I had criticised professional men, but I do not admit that. My statement was that I thought every professional man on the Board was conscientious and was giving his very best. I took no exception whatever to the personnel of the Board, but I said that such a personnel,

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by reason of the popular vote, cannot give the same return to the people who are paying for the scheme as an expert commission appointed by the Government would do. That is my contention in regard to that matter.

I am very glad indeed that the Board are taking some action in regard to the findings of the recent Commission of Inquiry. The public have been in the dark too long as to what is happening. I understand from the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that definite action has been taken in that regard.

I have particularly dealt with the financial part of this undertaking. We have not yet had a statement as to when it is likely to be completed, but I hope that after to-day the Board will be galvanised into action and that the public will know more of what is going on.

Question (*Mr. Kerr's motion*) put and negatived.

BABINDA SUGAR WORKS BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to Authorise the Transfer of the Babinda Sugar Works from the Corporation of the Treasurer to a Company or Association and for other consequential purposes.”

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I would like some information with regard to this Bill. I understand that there is power under the Sugar Works Act to transfer undertakings such as this to a company or association.

The TREASURER: It would be transferred automatically at the end of the twenty-one-year period.

Mr. MOORE: I assume that it is not proposed to sell to a company outside the farmers who are supplying the mill.

The TREASURER: I did not know that the hon. member wanted information at this stage, otherwise I would have given it.

Mr. MOORE: I want to know what the Bill is for, as I understand that full power to transfer already is given under the Sugar Works Acts.

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): Full power is being taken under the Bill with regard to the Babinda Sugar works area. A good many of the farms are subject to agreement between the growers who form the new company and the Treasurer, and the agreement has to be ratified by Parliament. That is the real reason why the Bill is introduced. We can go more fully into the matter at a later stage.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) presented the Bill, and moved—

“That the Bill be now read a first time.”

Question put and passed.

The second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

[*Mr. Kerr.*

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE INCOME TAXES AGREEMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to Ratify and Confirm an Agreement made between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Queensland relating to the Assessment and Collection of Commonwealth Income Tax and State Income Tax by One Agency, and for other incidental purposes.”

The Bill shows exactly what the resolution sets out. I will give more information at a later stage.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) presented the Bill, and moved—

“That the Bill be now read a first time.”

Question put and passed.

The second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*): The Bill of which I am now moving the second reading is to amend the Act which I had the honour to introduce in this House in 1921, and which has been favourably commented on in other parts of the world. The protection of native animals and birds, according to our experience of the last few years, should not be relaxed in any way, and the power to enforce a close season for them will still obtain, and the provisions for the control of trappers and those who deal in skins and in birds will be tightened up. The power granted in 1921 will be supplemented by new provisions dealing with animal and bird life generally. To show the importance of some of our native animals, if only from a commercial point of view, I would like to quote some figures comparing the value of the opossum and native bear skins with the value of the gold yield of Queensland over a term of years. I think that the result will be startling to hon. members—

APPROXIMATE NUMBER AND VALUE OF SKINS PRODUCED SINCE 1917, COMPARED WITH THE VALUE OF THE GOLD YIELD.

Year.	Skins.	Opossums.		
		Value per Skin	Total Value.	Gold Yield.
1917	416,000	s. d.	£	£
1918	433,138	5 0	104,000	761,639
1919	2,250,000	6 0	129,940	567,271
1920	3,000,000	5 0	550,000	514,103
*1921	Nil	5 0	750,000	489,462
1922	Nil	Nil	Nil	171,504
1922	1,131,442	5 0	282,860	342,300
1923	1,200,000	5 0	200,000	376,883

* Close season.

Bears.

Last open season, 1919.

Number killed, 1,000,000.

Value of skins, 63s. 6d. per dozen (highest price).

Total value, approximately £250,000.

Hon. members will see from that table that the value of the opossum skins, due to the high prices which have been obtained, has approached very nearly to the value of the gold yield on the average of the last few years, and in some years has exceeded it. The average value during the six years—excluding 1921, which was a close season—was approximately £300,000. We propose to take a royalty of so much per skin, which I do not think unreasonable, particularly in view of the fact that the State is charged with the duty of protecting our native animals and birds. The royalty in Western Australia has been fixed at 1s. 6d. a skin on opossums. On that basis we should have a revenue of about £60,000 from the opossum skin industry, which is not unreasonable in view of the fact that the protection of these animals is in the common interest, and in view of the figures which I have just quoted. Having due regard to the necessity for the preservation of native bears and opossums, and native animals and birds generally, and to the necessity for seeing that the industry is properly controlled and reasonably limited, I do not think it is unreasonable that we should take a revenue of approximately £60,000 or £70,000 in royalty, as is proposed to be done by regulation.

Mr. MORGAN: What do you suggest the skins are worth?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I suggest that, as the skins are worth 5s., it is a reasonable thing for the State to take 1s. in royalty, but the matter can be dealt with from time to time by regulation. It is only fair that if trappers get a higher price than that they should pay a higher royalty, and that if they get less the royalty should be reduced accordingly, so that those engaged in the industry may be able to get a fair return for their work.

The figures that I have furnished showing the value of the skins of bears and opossums as compared with the value of the gold output during the last few years should not only interest the House and the people of Queensland but should be some justification for this Bill. I think the people have some

reason to complain about the industry being neglected. It is an industry that really belongs to the people, and although the Bill, amongst other things, makes it quite clear that the native animals of the State belong to the people of the State, I do not think there is any doubt in the minds of any one regarding that question already. The native animals belong to the people in just the same way as the timber and the minerals belong to the people, and they cannot be sold without permission. For that reason it appears to me that there is every justification for putting this industry on a proper basis for the people of the State so that they may get their share of the benefits of the industry. There is no intention of imposing royalties that will embarrass those engaged in the industry or cause the bona fide trappers to work for less than a reasonable return. The Bill declares emphatically that the native

animals belong to the State. There is nothing new about the principle of charging royalties so far as native animals are concerned. In Western Australia there is a royalty of 1s. 6d. per skin for opossum skins, which is fixed either by regulation or Act of Parliament. That is a very high royalty, and if it was adopted in Queensland the people of the State would benefit to the extent of about £90,000 or £100,000 during the most prolific years. The amount of the royalty will be fixed from time to time by regulation. In New Zealand they have adopted the principle of charging royalties in connection with native animals. Victoria has a Bill ready—I understand it has been ready for some years—which discloses the fact that the authorities there are in favour of the royalty system. The same thing applies in South Australia.

Mr. MORGAN: There is no such need for it in Victoria.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: As the hon. member who comes from Victoria has interjected, there is not much justification for it there now, because there are not many native animals in that State, but in Western Australia and Queensland we still have a large number of opossums. In my opinion native bears are becoming very limited in most districts, although I was surprised to find that during the last bear season, in 1919, there was the record number of 1,000,000 skins taken, showing that there was no scarcity in some parts of the State. I want to repeat again that there is no intention on the part of the Government to relax on what is their obvious duty of protecting the native fauna of this State, and in doing that there seems to be some justification for the State protecting what is obviously its own, especially in these days of monetary stringency, not only in Queensland but in other parts of the world. The Bill provides that the money collected from royalties shall be paid into a trust fund so that it may be used in protecting and developing the industry. Many things can be done in the way of protecting animals. It will be necessary to appoint a small staff to see that the Act is properly administered, and the money for the payment of such staff will be taken out of the royalties collected.

Although we hardly know that there is a fur trade in this State yet, the fur trade of other countries is a very important one, and one which yields a very large revenue. In Russia, the Far East, Canada, and North America, it is an important trade. That country was really "opened up"—to use a phrase often used by politicians—or "exploited" first of all by the fur trade. The native animals were the first source of revenue, and enabled that vast territory to be opened up and settlement to follow. There is no reason why we in Queensland should not develop a fur trade if our native animals are properly protected and the principle of the close season properly observed—as it will be, I hope. We all know that, although close seasons are proclaimed, through lack of proper inspection people do take the animals in some parts of the State even during the breeding seasons. We want to put a stop to that, and the collection of royalties will enable officers to be appointed to see that the native animals are properly protected in the proper seasons to enable them to breed. The animals whose furs are

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chiefly sought after, and are most valuable in other parts of the world, are the weasel, the bear, the Arctic fox, the seal, the mole, the lynx, the musk rat, and rabbits, in addition to our native animals, chief of which are the opossum and the native bear. We may not be able to develop the fur industry in this State to the extent it has been developed in America and Europe, but there is no reason why the treating and manufacture of furs should not be encouraged in Australia too. We are lax in the development of our secondary industries, and in the sending of our raw materials overseas. If the industry can be developed, skins will not only be worth 5s. a piece, but a great deal more. It goes without saying that just as our good Australian butter is sold overseas as Danish butter—the people who buy our skins treat them and sell the furs as the product of Russia or some other country which has a better reputation for furs than we have.

Mr. MORGAN: Have you any record to show the number of opossum skins in Queensland at the present time?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. MORGAN: I understand that many thousand dozens of skins have not been sent away because there is no market for them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I understand that there is a very large quantity, but unfortunately at the present moment we have no means of finding that out. We have power under the Bill to keep ourselves better informed as to the number of skins taken. The figures that I have quoted do not indicate the total number of opossums slain, because a large number are illegally killed and are never obtained at all, while, as the hon. member for Murilla interjected, a large number are held back with the idea of getting better prices. The numbers I have quoted are on the conservative side. The dyeing and dressing of furs is a secret trade. It is a very profitable one, too, in some parts of the world. I hope that, when the industry is placed on a proper footing, we shall be able to establish a trade in dressing the skins in Australia, and will be able to send the finished article overseas for sale. The skins are used for quite a number of purposes, such as dress and hats.

The fur trade is quite an old one. It was established many years ago in Asia. It was only the very wealthy people who could afford to buy the best furs. The same thing applies to-day. Fabulous prices are paid for furs which were in the first instance obtained from the trapper for a comparatively small amount. Under the present system opossum snarers apply for and pay for a permit.

The amount collected, at 5s. apiece, reached a total of £1,668 in 1923, so that the number of trappers operating must have been in the vicinity of 6,600. Many of those people were following up trapping for a living. While the power to issue permits rests at present with clerks of petty sessions, such officials can refuse a permit. That is very seldom done, and when it is done the person affected may appeal to the Minister. The Minister uses his own common sense regarding the granting of permits. One condition I laid down previously—and I am

sure hon. members on both sides will agree with my decision—was that permits should not be granted to people in permanent employment. The hon. member for Leichhardt has given me a great deal of assistance in this matter—in fact I think the hon. member can be credited as the father of this Bill—because ever since he entered this Parliament he has urged upon the Government and myself the necessity for legislation to place the native animal skin industry on a sound footing. The hon. member has pointed out time after time that there are many people who follow up the trapping of opossums and native bears, and who make it their permanent industry. When the skins became valuable we found that some people even employed by the Government were getting permits and using their spare time to compete with the trappers. I then issued instructions that no man in permanent employment should receive a permit. That was in order to give preference to the men following up the game and who understood it. There is a lot to be learnt in regard to opossum snaring.

The 1921 Act contains quite a number of provisions for the protection of our native animals. The passing of the present amending Bill will give us sufficient revenue to administer the 1921 Act in the way it should be administered.

I do not intend to make a long speech, but I want to say a word or two about the Bill itself. Before doing so I may say that probably the most debatable aspect will be the granting of permits and the fear on the part of some hon. members as to their effect on the stockowners and the setting up of a Board to grant permits. It will certainly be the most democratic way of doing it. Bona fide holders of permits will have a vote to elect one member of the Board and the owners of various holdings affected to elect another. The Government will appoint a chairman.

Mr. MOORE: Will that be the composition of the Board?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, in each district. That is not set out in the Bill and will require to be dealt with by regulation, but that is what I have in mind. The Board will be composed of three men, one elected by the snarers, one by those whose property is affected, and one by the Government.

Mr. MORGAN: How many Boards will there be?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: One in each district. I do not know how many districts there will be. I cannot say how many clerks of petty sessions are authorised to issue permits at present, but we shall endeavour to meet the requirements of the people by establishing sufficient Boards.

Naturally the chairman will be an officer of the department. It might be thought advisable to elect an officer of the Lands Department because he would be familiar with the holdings and would see that the lessees who pay the rent—and, after all, they are the people who must receive the first consideration—will not be unduly embarrassed by any unscrupulous person who might get a permit. Every practical person in this State knows that, if an opossum snarer cares to abuse his privileges, he can do irreparable damage to cattle, sheep, and other stock at certain times of the year. When granting

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these permits the idea will be to grant them under the conditions that the holders must not abuse them. The man who has to pay the rent and stop on the land should have the first consideration. At the same time the native animals belong to the State, and must be protected at certain seasons of the year. Therefore, the idea will be to set up Boards which will exercise common sense and see that anyone who abuses his permit will have that permit cancelled. The power given to make regulations for the issue of permits also provides for the cancellation of such permits under certain circumstances.

Mr. TAYLOR: Will the lessees themselves be allowed to snare?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The Board could do so. The permits will only apply to areas of over 2,560 acres. The idea is to exclude all agricultural farm holdings and freeholds of less than that area. The maximum area that can be applied for under the Land Act as an agricultural farm holding is 2,560 acres, and there are very few such holdings of that size. Most of them are much smaller.

Mr. TAYLOR: They are all to be exempted?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They will be exempted. The number of holdings that may be affected by the granting of permits under this legislation, according to the figures furnished by the Lands Department to my office, is—

Pastoral holdings	...	...	1,973
Grazing selections	...	...	7,944
Occupation licences (only tenancy)	...	...	3,111
Total	...	...	13,028

That does not include freeholds. I have not been able to get the number of freeholds that will be affected by the Bill. The object of the Bill is to make it clear that wild animals and birds are the property of the people, and to provide power to collect a royalty to be fixed by regulation, the said royalty to be paid into a trust fund. The regulations will apply to the holdings I have mentioned, and the Bill will bring the law in this respect into line, to some extent, with the Act dealing with noxious animals. At the present time no one can enter on a holding to snare opossums without the permission of the holder, but any person may go upon a holding for the purpose of destroying dingoes and other noxious animals, because they are pests. I have explained already the personnel of the boards, and I can assure the House that the necessary safeguards will be taken to protect the owners of property who pay the rents, and the Bill, when it becomes law, will be administered in such a way as to ensure the native animals being protected in the proper seasons of the year, to ensure the protection of the scalpers who are engaged in the industry—who will be called "trappers" under this Bill—and also to ensure to the public of Queensland their share of the profits in what should be one of the most prosperous industries in the State in days to come. I have much pleasure in moving—

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

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): As far as I read this Bill, it is being introduced first of all to obtain revenue, and, secondly, to put a stop to the practice that has been in vogue

for some considerable time of reserving certain areas for certain trappers engaged in the industry. It is a wonder to me that the Government, seeing that they are going to obtain revenue from the destruction of wild birds and animals of this State, have not thought fit to ascertain what revenue can be obtained from a tax in connection with the fishing industry, because it appears to me that there is no difference between a man who is engaged in snaring and netting fish in the sea and the man who is engaged in snaring, netting, and trapping opossums or birds in the scrubs of this State. I cannot understand why the Minister has allowed the fish to escape taxation, unless it is because he is holding that in reserve for future taxation. It appears to me that at the present moment the only thing that we can claim to be free is the air we breathe, and possibly before long the Government will be placing a tax on that and compelling us to pay for it. The air belongs to the people, so eventually we may have to pay taxation in that particular direction also.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Minister has shown us that the value of the skins of opossums trapped during several years past reached quite large proportions, yet, when you come to analyse the figures, it does not mean a great deal. The Minister has shown us that in 1923 there were 1,200,000 opossum skins obtained with a value of 5s. I think he has over-estimated the value, because from my experience, gained in connection with different firms operating overseas and purchasing a number of skins, the value of the 1923 catch would not be worth more than 4s. each. However, that is only by the way. The Minister has informed us that 6,600 trappers took out licenses in 1923. When you divide that into £300,000—the value as estimated by the Minister of the skins obtained—it only means that each trapper obtained £45 for his season's catch. That is a very small amount. But, notwithstanding that fact, the Government are going to take from the people who are engaged in the industry £60,000 by way of taxation. I am personally acquainted with a large number of those who are engaged in this work, and a great many of them are not fitted for any other class of work. They have reached a fairly good age, and a great number are cripples, or in some other way, owing to health reasons, are not fitted to undertake hard work, such as ringbarking, fencing, or other manual labour. These men engage in the business of snaring during a certain part of the year, some of them expecting to get sufficient money during the season to enable them to live for the rest of the year. Of course a great number of them do not succeed in doing that, but there are some who have localities reserved for this particular purpose. They are acquainted with the lessees of the land, and, owing to the fact that they are men who can be thoroughly trusted, while snaring on the country, to protect the interest of the lessee, by poisoning the dingoes, foxes, and to get rid of the wallabies, kangaroos, emus, and other pests that overrun the land, these men have these areas reserved for them to trap upon.

Mr. DUNSTAN: Is there any charge made?

Mr. MORGAN: In some cases charges may be made, but in others they are not made. The highest charge I have heard of was in the case of one owner who obtained

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one-third of the skins which were trapped on his holding, but that is only one instance, and whether that is true or not I do not know. In some cases a certain amount is charged, and in other cases men are allowed to trap free on condition that while snaring they will look after the interests of the lessee with respect to the stock which may be upon the land, and will also undertake to lay baits for the destruction of dingoes, and also engage at certain times in the trapping of wallabies and kangaroos which are so destructive to the grass.

Why that system should be interfered with I do not know. I feel sure that it will not meet with the approval of the great majority of the men engaged in the industry. Unfortunately in the past the Government have made the opossum and the bear a political toy to play with. (Government laughter.) It is no use saying one thing and meaning another. During the war period, when there was work for everybody and we were sending our best men overseas to fight, thus causing vacancies in all walks of life for those who desired work, the Government opened the industry and kept it open, and huge sums of money were made as a result of the exorbitant prices paid for skins during that period. It was not only the cripples, men in ill health, or the aged who joined in this trade, but people left their businesses and left others in charge in order to follow the occupation of snaring bears and opossums. I have known a publican to obtain leave of absence for six days in order to join the snarers during the season, leaving his wife in charge of the hotel. I have known storekeepers to leave their businesses in charge of relations and go out to engage in this industry. That goes to show that the industry was prostituted during the period because of the value the skins possessed. In 1923, when Queensland was not blessed with a good season and plenty of work for all, the Secretary for Agriculture declared that the opossum and bear seasons would not be opened, and he made out a very good case for taking that course of action. He pointed out that during the previous five or six years millions of opossums and bears had been slaughtered, and that if the same rate of destruction was continued, the animals would become extinct, and, in order to preserve the industry, he was not going to assent to the season being opened, and his action was applauded by everybody in the State, with the exception, perhaps, of a few who make it their annual practice to engage in the industry, and whom we might term professional snarers. The Premier, when conducting the election campaign, was asked, more particularly in my electorate, "Are you going to open the opossum season this year?" and he declared that it was not the intention of the Government to do so; yet three weeks before the election, on account of the pressure that was brought to bear on them, the Government announced that the season would be open. That was done because in the electorates represented by Government members where the trapper or the snarer was of considerable importance the trappers and the snarers had threatened to vote in a body against the socialistic candidate if the opossum season was not opened, and it was deemed necessary to open the season so as to avoid the defeat of certain hon. members.

The SPEAKER: Order!

[*Mr. Morgan.*]

Mr. MORGAN: One clause of the Bill provides that the animals shall be the property of the people, and that is why I am stating that, notwithstanding the good case made out by the Secretary for Agriculture, some pressure must have been brought to bear—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not pressure—arguments.

Mr. MORGAN: Owing to those arguments the Secretary for Agriculture, notwithstanding the information at his disposal—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you not know that the opening of the opossum season on the eve of an election would not get any candidate any more votes? The trappers would not have a vote.

Mr. MORGAN: That is not so. The large majority take very good care to see that they record their votes, and they do record their votes, as was clearly shown by the elections.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman cannot continue on those lines.

Mr. MORGAN: There is a clause in the Bill which states—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman will be in order in discussing the principles of the Bill, but he will not be in order in discussing the Bill in detail.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr. MORGAN: I would like to know from the Minister if he is agreeable to the Bill being amended so as to make the Board responsible for the opening or closing of the seasons, instead of leaving it to the Minister who for the time being is in charge of the Department of Agriculture? It is wrong, no matter what Government is in power, to make the slaughter of opossums or bears dependent on the political support which may be given to the Government in that district. If the Minister will agree to that suggestion it will take a great responsibility off his shoulders. A conference of Boards should be held to decide when the seasons shall open and close.

Mr. FOLEY: They can advise.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not believe in this advising the Government, because the Government can do just what they like, no matter what the advice tendered is. If the Government are going to place the industry under the control of a Board, the responsibility of opening or closing a season should devolve on that Board. The State should be divided into zones. Certain portions of the State should be opened for one portion of the year and other portions kept closed. An opossum scarcely exists to-day in that part of Queensland south and west of a line running from Brisbane to Charleville. I am doubtful also whether a couple of dozen bears would be found in that huge territory. They have become extinct because closer settlement has taken place there to a greater degree than in Central and Northern Queensland. As settlement increases, the native fauna—the kangaroo, wallaby, opossum, and bear—gradually cease to exist. The large amount of ring-barking that has and is taking place removes shelter and food for our native animals. The poisoning of prickly-pear has also resulted in the destruction of many thousands and perhaps millions of opossums and bears. If the south-western portion of

the State were closed for a period of five or six years it might permit the opossums and bears gradually to breed up again. In Central Queensland large numbers—and the best opossums—are obtained. I do not know a great deal about the native animals in the northern part of our State, or whether the skins, owing to the climatic conditions, are of any great value; but there are large numbers of opossums in the unsettled portions of that part of the State. The figures quoted by the Minister show that the opossums are gradually ceasing to exist, because, while the number obtained in 1917 totalled 416,000, the number in 1919 increasing to 2,250,000, the number in 1920 to 3,000,000, the number in 1923 decreased to 1,200,000. That is a very large decrease. I should like to know from the Minister whether it is his intention to allow the Boards—the Bill certainly gives them the power—to obtain a royalty from the skins or pelts of various native animals that are a pest to the landowner. I refer to the rabbit, wallaby, kangaroo, dingo, and the fox. At Yelarbon in my electorate we possess the only rabbit factory in Queensland. If the Government impose a royalty on the skins of rabbits destroyed, it would most likely mean the closure or removal of that factory from the Queensland side to the New South Wales side of the border.

We all know the rabbit is a pest, and several thousand rabbits are dealt with each day at the Yelarbon factory, and it would be necessary for the Government to station a man continually at that factory for the purpose of branding skins, because this Bill provides that the skins shall be branded by the collector. That man would be engaged every day of the week and would need a salary of at least £250 a year. That charge would have to be placed on that factory. If the Government are going to make a charge of that sort, that factory will have to remove from Queensland territory into New South Wales. I would like an assurance from the Secretary for Agriculture—in fact I intend to move an amendment when the Bill reaches the Committee stage—that the Board shall have no power to place a tax on any skins of such native animals as I have mentioned. It would be a mistake to levy on those animals that are doing injury to the pastoral and farming industries of this State. We know that money is collected by the various dingo boards to give bonuses to those engaged in the destruction of the pests I have mentioned, and it would be a wrong thing to appoint a Board and allow that Board to collect a royalty on the skins of those animals.

I notice that the furs of all wild animals are to become the property of the State. I would like to know from the Secretary for Agriculture whether that will apply to wild horses, buffaloes, and the wild cattle that we have in the different parts of Queensland?

Mr. KERR: Brumbies.

Mr. MORGAN: Yes, brumbies. Will the Board have power under this Bill to collect royalty from those people who are destroying those animals for each skin that is produced? If so, I think we should make it clear in the Bill that it will not apply to the wild animals I have quoted.

I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that this Bill, like all other Bills, leaves too much to regulation. We should decide in this Chamber what the royalty is to be. Other than an intimation from the Minister, there is nothing to show that it is his intention to charge a royalty of 1s. a skin on opossum skins. The hon. gentleman has not mentioned whether it is his intention to charge a royalty for the skins of other native animals. I certainly think we should specify by schedule the royalty to be paid, and also the different animals to which the royalty shall apply.

I do not think it is right to enable a Board to issue permits to persons to go upon freehold property for the purpose of trapping opossums and bears. There are some people who do not look upon the opossum or the bear as a pest, and they will not allow anybody to go on their property for the purpose of trapping these animals. They do not trap them themselves, and they endeavour to preserve them against the ruthless destruction of the trapper.

Although the owner of a property may have been preserving the opossums and bears on his property for a number of years, under this Bill a trapper may get a permit to go upon that property and destroy the opossums and bears, and the owner of the property will have no power to prevent that being done. That is one provision in the Bill that requires amending. Take also the owners of cattle properties in the central portion of the State. We know what hardships they are suffering at the present time. In 1923 a large number of these men obtained sufficient revenue from opossum skins to pay their rents and their taxation to the Government. The cattle industry was down and out, and these men were forced to trap on their own country, and the revenue they obtained from the skins was sufficient in some cases to meet their liabilities for that year. While some of these men may be able to get permits to trap on their own country, the Board may decide to allow total strangers to go to those areas for the purpose of trapping, and these strangers may not be careful to look after the interests of the lessees of the land.

Mr. FOLEY: The Marsupial Boards do that now.

Mr. MORGAN: The Marsupial Boards do it now where the lessee is failing to destroy marsupials. Wallabies, kangaroo rats, and dingoes—which are included in marsupials—are looked upon as pests, and, if the lessee is not doing his duty in killing these pests but is allowing them to breed on his property to overrun his neighbour's property, then the Board has power, and justly so, to enter that property and destroy those pests. No one can object to that. But opossums and bears are not pests, and some of the lessees will not allow these animals to be destroyed on their areas. It is a good thing that there are some men big enough to afford sanctuary to these animals. I would also like to draw the attention of the Minister to the danger of allowing trappers to go on to a property where cattle are grazing. Notwithstanding the fact that we have an Act which prohibits the use of cyanide, there is still a large number of trappers—not professional trappers—who make use of this poison. These men are

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only engaged in the industry occasionally. They put down cyanide baits, and a large proportion of the opossums so destroyed are never found.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Is that true?

Mr. MORGAN: That is a fact.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: I thought they were not supposed to use cyanide.

Mr. MORGAN: We have law forbidding the use of cyanide; but it is a well-known fact that cyanide is still being used. It is not used by the professional trapper, because he recognises that for every opossum he obtains by this means two escape into hollow trees and he does not get them at all.

Mr. FOLEY: Only a "mug" trapper will use cyanide to-day.

Mr. MORGAN: That is so, but certain men who are not skilful in setting snares are skilful in setting cyanide baits, and they are skilful enough to go out in the morning and collect the dead opossums under the trees. That class of man gets a permit just the same as the skilful professional trapper. Unfortunately that class of man still is engaged in the industry obtaining opossums by the use of cyanide, and not only is cyanide destructive to the opossums, but it also destroys cattle. Graziers have been out and have discovered beasts lying dead here and there, generally during the opossum season or immediately after, and they have come to the conclusion that these animals have been destroyed by picking up a cyanide bait. That is one of the reasons why the lessee does not allow every Tom, Dick, and Harry to go upon his property. If he knows the men, it is different. There may be men who have been employed by him for many years and who have grown old in his service, and who cannot perform the ordinary manual work on the station, and they are given the right to trap on particular areas. Under this Bill we are taking from these men the right or privilege which they have possessed for many years. When the season opens these men may discover, when they go to the places where they have been able to go to snare opossums or bears for the last ten or twelve years, knowing that they were welcome to do so, that permits have been given to other individuals to snare opossums there. I certainly think the Bill is not doing the right thing in giving the Board the power to allow anyone to go upon the land, and that is one of my objections to the Bill.

Another objection I have to the Bill is that I do not think the industry can stand the burden which the Minister intends to put upon it by imposing the taxation he proposes upon those who are engaged in the industry. You are not going to get the revenue from those who can afford to buy an opossum skin rug or a native bear fur, but from the worker engaged in the industry, because he will have to pay the revenue direct to the Government for snaring opossums or bears. This is an industry which very few care to engage in. I know I would not like to be a trapper under any consideration. It would be one of the last classes of work I would turn my hand to. These men are up early in the morning, and do not get to bed till late at night. They do not work merely eight hours, but from fourteen to sixteen hours a day during the season, owing to the fact that the season is so short, and they

want to earn as much as they can. If we are going to take from these men 12s. for every dozen opossums that they snare, we are going to take from them money they need to keep their wives and families during the time of the close season. This is a seasonal industry, and not one which can be engaged in for twelve months of the year. Any taxation imposed under this Bill will come out of the pockets of those who are engaged in snaring and trapping opossums and bears.

I am pleased that the Minister has made it clear—although the Bill does not say so—that more than one Board will be appointed. Many Boards may be appointed in the different districts in which snaring and trapping are engaged in. I would like at a later stage, when the Bill gets into Committee, to give the Boards greater powers than it is proposed to give them at the present time.

I also think that it will be necessary to have a clause in the Bill which will enable carcases of birds and animals to be kept in cold storage. It would be wrong to prevent the carcases of rabbits or any other animals or the carcases of birds which are edible from being placed in cold storage during the open season so that they can be consumed during the close season.

I want to make it clear that I do not object to anything the Government may do to prevent the opossum and the bear from becoming extinct. I think the industry should be protected. The Minister in opening the 1923 season—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not open it before the elections. You were wrong about that.

Mr. MORGAN: The announcement was made before the election.

Mr. PETERSON: A week before the elections.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. MORGAN: I am almost certain.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have already told the hon. gentleman that he cannot continue on those lines.

Mr. MORGAN: I think I am correct.

The PREMIER: I received a number of deputations, and I declined to open the season.

Mr. MORGAN: I have already mentioned that.

The PREMIER: The season was not opened till 1st June.

Mr. MORGAN: A public announcement was made before the elections that the season would be opened.

Mr. FOLEY: That is wrong.

Mr. MORGAN: I think I shall be able before the Bill goes through the Committee stage to prove that I am correct. While I do not object to the Minister doing all he possibly can to preserve the industry, I think the Government should open the season during times of depression and drought when ordinary work is not available in country areas, and thus give those living in the country areas an opportunity of making a living. That is most important from their point of view. It is all very well for some people to treat the matter lightly, but they do not know the conditions under which

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these men live, and they do not know that for many years these men have no other source of revenue than that obtained by trapping. Most of them become professionals in the industry. If these men, during periods of depression and bad times when work is scarce, are going to be prevented from making a living, they will be placed in a very cruel position. The Government did wrong in opening the season when there was work for all classes of the community. It has been stated that only those who are unable to engage in hard manual labour should be given a permit, and I believe that the Minister gave instructions to that effect in 1923. The returned soldiers at their annual gathering in Brisbane recently passed a resolution to the effect that the industry for some years should be preserved for returned soldiers only, because, while they were away overseas fighting for Australia, a great number of others had full advantage of the opossum and bear season, and were able to make good money during that period. I am not going to say that I altogether support those views, but I certainly believe that permits should first be issued to those soldiers who returned injured and were unable to earn a living in other avenues of employment. Those men should, perhaps, get preference, because they did a good deal while another section of the community remained at home. There are others deserving of the same consideration. I refer to those who were unable to go to the war—men who were too old and those who would have gone if they had been physically fit. These men should be placed on the same footing as the returned soldiers, and not be debarred when the opportunity arises from engaging in the trapping and snaring of the opossum and bear. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I intend to move certain amendments, and I hope that the Minister will recognise that any amendment moved from this side of the House will not be of a party nature. Hon. members on this side do not desire to make this Bill a party one. Any amendment that I shall move will be for the purpose of improving the Bill, for the purpose of giving protection to the opossum and bear, and of getting rid as soon as possible of the rabbit, kangaroo, and dingo, which have been the cause of so much destruction in the State. I would also like to know from the Minister definitely—as it will be an important matter to those engaged in the destruction of rabbits in my district—whether he proposes to charge a royalty for rabbits.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is not my intention to do so at the present time.

Mr. MORGAN: I hope that the Minister will accept an amendment to make it clear that no royalty will be placed on the skins of the rabbit, dingo, fox, and wallaby.

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): I am pleased that this Bill has been introduced, and I feel sure that most of the trappers throughout Queensland, and most of the people who have taken notice of this industry and of how it has been treated in the past, will also welcome its introduction. The Minister emphasised the importance of the industry when he compared the comparative values realised for skins from 1917 to 1923, and compared that value with the value of the gold production in Queensland. I was quite surprised to learn that the value of the furs collected in certain years during that period exceeded the gold production.

The fears of the hon. member for Murilla in regard to the main points of this measure are not justified. I claim that its most important points are that it is introduced for the object of protecting the bona fide trapper on the one hand, and on the other of seeing that the State secures some revenue from the industry so that it can adequately protect and preserve it. The system of royalties on fur skins is not uncommon in Australia and other countries. As a matter of fact, in some of the other States of Australia a royalty is imposed on the skins of animals which have been declared to be pests.

Mr. MORGAN: This Bill includes them all, and can therefore provide for that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no intention to do that.

Mr. FOLEY: Some time ago I asked the Secretary for Agriculture to supply me with particulars of the amount of revenue collected in other States on the skins of opossums and other marsupials. The hon. gentleman supplied the information that was received from the Secretary of Agriculture in Melbourne, to the effect that no royalty was imposed in Victoria, but, when protected animals were destroyed under a permit, 50 per cent. of the proceeds from the skins sold is collected by the Government. In Adelaide no royalties are charged, but the officers of the Department of Agriculture there are of opinion that a royalty should be charged.

In Tasmania, during the open season of last year £20,000 was collected in royalties. A royalty of 9d. a skin was also charged on kangaroo skins, 4d. on wallabies, and 3d. each on the three different species of opossums caught in that island.

[3 p.m.]

Mr. PETERSON: Those animals have superior fur in Tasmania.

Mr. FOLEY: I understand that there is a species of opossum in some parts of Tasmania which is superior as a fur-bearing animal to the opossum caught in Queensland.

In Western Australia opossum skins realise to the State a royalty of 1s. 6d. Grey kangaroo skins, taken south of a line following the railway from Dongarra to Mingenev and thence to Guthra, over $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. 1s., from 12 oz. to that weight 9d. Under 12 oz. 3s.

Grey kangaroos, in the Northern district	... ..	2d.
Walleroo	... ..	1d.
Red kangaroo	... ..	2d.
Bush kangaroo	... ..	2d.
Others	... ..	$\frac{1}{2}$ d.

There is an illustration that the imposition of a royalty is not a new thing to Australia. I might mention that, unless the Government extract a royalty from those who take part in killing or trapping the fur-bearing animals of the State, they cannot be expected to pay any great attention to the proper protection and preservation of the industry.

I refer hon. members to Canada, where the fur industry is under the control of an advisory board. This has been so since away back in the "eighties." I shall quote from the "Canadian Year Book" for 1922-23. On conservation, it has this to say—

"The conservation of the wild life of Canada has been made a special object

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of Government policy through the organization, in 1916, of the Advisory Board on Wild Life Protection, to co-ordinate the efforts of various departments and branches of the Dominion Government in matters relating to the conservation of the wild life resources of Canada. The North-west Game Act and the Migratory Birds Convention Act are the most important subjects to which the attention of the Board is specially directed and upon which it makes recommendations. In addition, the Board investigates and studies all problems relating to the protection and better utilisation of all fur-bearing animals, 'big game' mammals, and to bird life, whether game birds, insectivorous birds, or other. The Board serves entirely without remuneration and in the seven years of its existence it has incurred no expenditure.

"In all provinces and territories of the Dominion regulations governing the taking of fur-bearing animals are in force, and most kinds are protected during certain seasons of the year. In cases where special protection is necessary to avoid extermination of the species, the killing of the animals is prohibited for a period of years. Licenses are required to trade or traffic in furs and monthly and annual returns are made by the traders to the provincial authorities. Some of the provinces also impose a royalty on furs and require that all pelts must be stamped by a game guardian or other provincial officer."

We are really only following the method adopted by Canada and other countries which have seen fit to protect this most important industry. The hon. member for Murilla took exception to the establishment of boards, but in this regard also I think we can safely follow the example of Canada. In discussing with the Secretary for Agriculture the opening of the opossum season I find that on the last two occasions he had to depend for his information as to whether it was advisable to close the season or otherwise on the particulars forwarded by stock inspectors, members of the Police Force, and other public servants. That was the only course he could adopt. Unless a policeman or other member of the public service is a member of a board paying particular attention to the fur industry it is almost impossible for him to give accurate information. The information given to the Minister regarding the opening of the season was to the effect either that the opossums were plentiful or that they were nearly extinct. The majority of them were to the effect that the opossum was gradually becoming extinct in most parts of the State.

In reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Murilla to the effect that we used the opossum industry for political purposes, I may mention that I was one of those most concerned in the opening of the season on the last occasion, because of the distress and unemployment then existing in the Spring-sure and Clermont districts. The only sound argument I could put to the Minister, and the argument which I think influenced him most, was that there was no occasion for him to fear, if he opened the season, that the trapper would trap in those areas where the opossum was almost extinct. No trapper would go to those areas because the returns

would not be sufficient. The season was opened on 1st June, 1923, and lasted till 31st July, 1923, and the elections were held on 12th May, and, if the hon. member for Murilla had information as to the opening of the season before the elections, then he had more information than I had, because I did not obtain the information until the very last moment, when it was wired by me to the trappers at Clermont and Springsure. The object of the Minister in withholding that information was to prevent unscrupulous persons packing up and getting on the trapping grounds before the season opened.

It is essential that something should be done towards having proper boards established with proper representation of persons who have a knowledge of the industry, so that the Minister can get proper advice as to whether it is essential to open the season, and as to whether it is necessary to have a close season in any portion of the State.

Another point in the Bill is the right of any person to enter any holding over 2,560 acres. The reason this was recommended to the Minister was because of the fact that we have found an evil existing, not only in the trapping districts in my electorate but in those in many other parts of the State, where managers of stations and selections were in the habit of demanding from those to whom they gave permission to enter the holding a royalty or a price per week for the right to trap on the holding. We find that everywhere we go trappers are complaining of this, and have asked for protection from the Government and the right to enter holdings. After all, we are doing no more than what is being done in the case of a timber-getter going on to a timber reserve, paying his royalty, and being permitted, per medium of his timber license, to cut timber, provided he complies with certain conditions laid down under the State Forests and National Parks Act. The same remark applies to a gold miner. A gold miner, by obtaining a miner's right, can enter certain lands and prospect, provided he complies with the regulations prescribed under the Mining Act. A scalper shooting marsupials and supplying their skins to the market has to get permission under the Marsupials Destruction Act from a Marsupial Board, representative of all parties, before he can get a permit to enter on a run, and he has to comply with certain by-laws laid down by the Board, or else his permit will be cancelled.

I would impress upon the Minister that, when he is issuing regulations which the trappers will have to comply with, he should be careful not to overburden the trappers, as has been the case in connection with some of the Marsupial Boards in various parts of the State. Owing to complaints from kangaroo shooters in my electorate, I have had occasion from time to time to make application through the Minister for the cancellation of certain regulations which had been passed by the Marsupial Board. By handling the matter judiciously through the Minister many of those regulations were modified by the Board. One man who brought the matter very forcibly under my notice forwarded me a clipping from a newspaper with a description of a camel team loaded with sheets of iron travelling in a certain part of the State. He pointed out that in order to comply with the regulations

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of the South Leichhardt Marsupial and Dingo Board a scalper would really require to have a camel team or something like it to carry the kit—the timber and iron, etc.—which was required. I hope that when the regulations are framed no such handicap will be imposed on the trappers, and that at the same time provision will be made to ensure that the selectors and station owners shall have adequate protection against abuse by any trapper who receives a permit.

Another reason why the trapper should have the right to enter a holding by permission of the Board, and that all permits should be granted by the Board, is because of the fact that in many parts of the State, even at the present time, many station holders and selectors of big holdings adopt a system of dummyping in connection with the destruction of marsupials. They arrange for a few employees who are working for them to make applications to the Dingo or Marsupial Board for permits. The permits are granted, but very few marsupials are destroyed on those particular holdings. As a result, a bona fide scalper or shooter who desires to go on the run is told, when he makes application to the Marsupial Board for a permit, that sufficient shooters already have been allowed permits for that particular holding.

That is quite a common thing in many parts of the State, and some regulations will have to be framed so that station-holders will be prevented from applying to the Board for permits for chosen employees, for blacks, for half-castes, etc., as they have done in the past. I feel sure that such a regulation will place no disability upon the selector, but will place the trapper in a more independent position, and thus obviate the necessity for his having to go to a station-holder, and bow and scrape before he can get permission to go trapping on the run. In appointing someone to see that this Bill is effectively administered—I take it that it will be necessary to appoint some one as a chief guardian or a chief ranger—the Minister should not select some clerk from his office or some clerk recommended by the Public Service Commissioner. He should appoint a man who has a thorough knowledge of the fur business—both buying and selling—and one who has some knowledge of bushcraft, so that he will not be at a loss when he visits certain parts of the State.

There is another aspect that I would like to deal with, and I hope I shall not be transgressing, Mr. Speaker, if I discuss the marketing side of this business. The possibilities are very great if handled judiciously, and I would like to mention incidentally that I am continuously in receipt of requests from trappers and shooters in my electorate, to urge the Government to do something in connection with the marketing of furs and skins. It is suggested that they should do something on the lines of what they have done in connection with the sapphire industry.

Mr. MORGAN: It might turn out like the marketing of the precious stones.

Mr. FOLEY: That has turned out fairly satisfactory up to date, and it is hoped that, when the organisation is properly established, things will be much better. The Government will obtain sufficient royalty from this industry to allow of the Minister sending a representative to America, London, and various parts of Europe to see if it is not

possible to establish agents who will be able to finance the business in those parts of the world. To me the thing appears feasible enough, especially when you take into consideration what has been done in connection with the marketing of other furs in other parts of the world. The various fur-bearing animals of Canada include the badger, bear, beaver, coyote, ermine, fisher, all kinds of fox—red, silver, blue, white—lynx, marten, sable, mink, muskrat, otter, rabbit, raccoon, skunk, three kinds of squirrel, wild cat, wolf, wolverine, caribou, deer, elk, moose, panther, civet cat, and house cat.

That is a large variety of fur-bearing animals, and the sale of those skins meant to Canada no less a sum than 17,438,000 dollars in the year 1921-22. That is quite a considerable amount. I take from those figures that Canada must have organisations established in various parts of the world where fur-bearing skins are of value. If we could get into touch with those markets and send a man with a knowledge of the business to make the necessary arrangements, the industry in Queensland might be placed on the same prosperous footing. Hon. members recently listened to Mr. Henry Cohen lecturing on the question of marketing our produce. He emphasised right through his address the necessity of organisation, and we could do great things with the revenue secured from this industry if we worked along those lines. I could use as an illustration the trip taken by Mr. Knowles to London to establish a market for our sapphire industry. It took me some time to convince the Government of the necessity of sending a man with a knowledge of the gem business to England. Eventually the Government agreed, and Mr. Knowles was selected to visit England. He had practically not landed in England when he made satisfactory arrangements, which the Minister had found impossible to conclude either by letter or cable. We could do the same thing in regard to the fur industry.

Mr. PETERSON: What is the Agent-General doing that he cannot do that?

Mr. FOLEY: The Agent-General might be capable of making inquiries, but I find from experience that if a man with knowledge of the business travels and interviews the firms interested and investigates the possibilities of the markets, much better results can be achieved.

I have very little more to add except to say that the Government have taken the right step in introducing this Bill. The result will be that in the near future the opossum and bear industry will be of much more importance than it is at the present time. The industry, as it has been policed up to the present, has not been protected in the true meaning of that word. On my last visit to my electorate deputations of scalpers and shooters in the Clermont district called upon me and urged me to use my influence to have the bear season opened this year. After a conference with the parties I found out confidentially that many of the men seated around the table had something like fifty dozen skins stored ready to launch on the market as soon as the season opened. That condition of affairs also exists at Springsure at the other end of my electorate. I have been informed by trappers that various selectors and others in the district have their barns full of bear skins. They have

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preserved the skins by treating them with arsenic and naphthaline so that moths and insects would not affect them, and it is their intention to launch those skins on the market as soon as the season opens. That goes to illustrate that the Government have not been in a position in the past to police and protect the industry. There has been no such thing as a close season. The close season has been declared legally, but trappers, selectors, blacks, and station hands have been shooting and killing bears and storing their skins in the hope that the bear season would be opened.

Quite apart from the fact that under this measure we shall have the necessary revenue and power to establish the necessary machinery to protect the industry properly, I think a great deal can be done along the lines of building up the industry and making the opossum particularly more numerous than it is at present.

I shall make reference to the fur farming that is going on in various parts of the world. I am not suggesting for one moment that the Secretary for Agriculture should arrange to start opossum or bear farms in parts of Queensland, but I do suggest that with the royalties we shall get from this industry it will be possible to set aside sanctuaries—places favourable for breeding under conditions where all the natural resources are favourable for the breeding of these animals. In districts where the animals are extinct at present we can make sanctuaries and bring animals from other portions of the State. Those sanctuaries should be in force for a term of years. I shall give an illustration of what is being done in Canada along these lines. There they go in very extensively for breeding various kinds of animals, as will be seen from the following figures:—

<i>Fur farms.</i>		1922.
Prince Edward Island	435	
Nova Scotia	121	
New Brunswick	86	
Quebec	156	
Ontario	128	
Manitoba	19	
Saskatchewan	9	
Alberta	26	
British Columbia	30	
Yukon Territory	16	
Total	1,026	

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: They do nothing else but breed these animals.

Mr. FOLEY: That is so—various kinds of animals. I shall enumerate them—

Silver fox, patch fox, red fox, blue fox, white fox, mink, marten, fisher, raccoon, skunk, opossum, lynx, bear, brown beaver, white beaver, musk rat, Karakul sheep.

I am just using this to emphasise what can be done here now that we are in a position to gain some revenue from this industry, and to show what we may do with the revenue to build up a fur industry and make it more important than it is at present.

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

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

The House adjourned at 3.23 p.m.

[*Mr. Foley.*