

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 1924

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

QUESTIONS.

USE BY PRICKLY-PEAR COMMISSIONER OF OFFICERS OF DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS WITHOUT REFERENCE TO UNDER SECRETARY.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*), for Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*), asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“ 1. Is it a fact that the Lands Department has authorised the Prickly-pear Commissioners, within the scope of their operations, to use the services of officers of the Lands Department without reference to the Under Secretary ?

“ 2. If so, does not he consider this to be subversive of good discipline in the department ?”

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*), for the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*), replied—

“ 1. Yes.

“ 2. No. The Minister expects to get efficient service from the officers of the department, and is determined to prevent the building up of two organisations when one can do the work. The Lands Department and Prickly-pear Commission must work in unison in all administrative matters.”

NECESSITY FOR LEGISLATION FOR CONTROL OF PRIVATE DETECTIVES.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*) asked the Home Secretary—

“ 1. In view of recent disclosures regarding the practices of persons described as private detectives, is it not time that legislation was introduced with the purpose of controlling those pursuing this calling ?

“ 2. Has his attention been drawn to the remarks of the Chief Justice in the case of Leslie versus Leslie, wherein he urged the necessity of some supervision in this connection ?”

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

“ 1. The matter is under consideration.

“ 2. No.”

DATA IN RE RAILWAYS APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

“ What is the designation, mileage, estimated cost, and amount spent to date of each railway approved by Parliament, classified under the following headings:—
(a) Construction not yet started; (b) started and construction progressing; (c) started and work discontinued ?”

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

“ The information is being prepared ”

GRAZING AREAS SUITABLE FOR SHEEP OPENED FOR SELECTION IN 1923-24.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

"1. How many grazing areas suitable for sheep, all tenures, and over 1,000 acres, were thrown open for selection in 1923-24?

"2. What is the total number of applicants for these areas?"

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Finders*), for the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*), replied—

"1. When land is opened for selection, it is not designated to be open for any particular form of pastoral or farming industry. The use to which land selected is put is a matter for the tenants.

"2. To undertake to secure particulars and numbers of holdings taken up and utilised for sheep farming would, apart from ascertaining the number of applicants, involve a tremendous amount of labour."

PAPER.

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

Report of the Manager, State Advances Corporation (Workers' Dwellings Branch), for the year ended 30th June, 1924.

COTTON INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

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

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the Cotton Industry Act of 1923 in certain particulars."

Question put and passed.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF THE PRIMARY PRODUCERS' ORGANISATION ACT ON COMMODITY PRODUCTION BASIS.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I beg to move—

"That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived for an amendment being made in the Primary Producers' Organisation Act, on the following or similar lines:—

1. That each distinct branch of agricultural or pastoral production have its separate organisation, with power to raise levies on the product or products coming within its scope.

2. That the levies raised by these branch organisations be employed solely in connection with the commodity or commodities produced by those it represents and for their benefit, with the exception of such sum that these branch organisations shall mutually agree are necessary for the

maintenance of a Central Council, upon which all of them shall be represented.

3. That this Central Council shall be formed of a delegate or delegates from each branch organisation for the purpose of conferring and taking action upon such matters as concern two or more branches of agriculture or pastoral production, but not as regards questions in which only one branch of agricultural or pastoral production is concerned, each of which shall be left in the charge of its own branch organisation.

4. That the present system of Local Producers' Associations be retained, but where the producers of more than one commodity are included in the association's membership, those interested in each commodity or grouped commodities only shall vote for the election of representatives on branch organisations controlling such commodity or commodities."

We must all agree that no more important subject could be brought before Parliament than matters concerning the primary production of this State. Queensland must for many years to come depend for success on its primary industries. Mr. W. J. Bryan, when contesting the presidency of the United States, remarked that if the city and country were both prosperous all was well, but if the country was not prosperous and became stagnated the grass would soon grow in the streets of the city. If that was the position in regard to the United States, how much more is it the position in Queensland to-day? I do not wish in any way to minimise the efforts of those who have been concerned in the Primary Producers' Organisations as they stand at present, but the knowledge is being forced on us day after day that these organisations are not performing the functions that they should perform. If I had the time I could quote report after report of Local Producers' Associations, all of which denote a certain amount of dissatisfaction with those bodies as they exist to-day. I notice that the Director of the Council of Agriculture, Mr. Macgregor, is now urging a scheme for remodelling the organisations. I do not wish to introduce a party aspect to this question, but it is only right that I should point out that it is a matter which particularly affects the members of the party I belong to. They all represent country electorates, and from the very initiation of the Country party, organisation and stabilisation have been leading planks in its platform, and action to which I shall refer later on has been taken by the party from time to time in that direction. Only to-day a leading article appears in one of our daily newspapers headed "Tragedy of the Land." On reading that article we find that an important personage has drawn attention to the fact that in the district of Miles alone eighty-eight families have left the land. It is also estimated that 75 per cent. of the boys in one country school are going to the cities. The result is that congestions prevail in our cities, and the question arises, "What is the cause?" I think it is the duty of Parliament to ascertain the cause. Various factors bear on the question of why city life is more attractive to our young people than country life. For one thing the work and anxieties of country parents have a

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bearing on the lives of their children. Natural causes constitute another drawback to country life, and this is largely a question out of our reach. Most certainly natural disadvantages may be minimised and dealt with to a certain extent, and a man going on the land is quite prepared to meet and cope with those difficulties. Then, when the seasons are bountiful and good crops are plentiful, another misfortune overtakes the man on the land. Through the benefits he derives from nature he is confronted with glutted markets, and he finds that the prices he expected to receive for his products do not prevail. Proper commodity organisation would be able to deal with this difficulty.

If we want to make country life attractive, we must ensure that the man engaged in primary agricultural production shall receive a return that will compare with that received by city workers for their labour. If that can be done, the objection that prevails among members of our community against country life will largely disappear. Once we assure those concerned that the work put in by the man on the land will receive a commensurate reward the exodus from the country to the city will be greatly minimised.

It must be obvious that the only means by which we can achieve that object is by organisation, and that organisation must be in the direction of successful co-operation, which is the golden key to agricultural prosperity. Successful co-operation has been practised to a great extent in other countries, for instance, in Denmark, which was a barren country 100 years ago, and is now one of the richest countries in the world so far as agriculture is concerned. The same remark applies to Belgium. That success was brought about by organisation, but organisation on commodity lines. But, if organisation is going to be successful, it must be along right lines; and it seems to me—and I think I am voicing the opinion of the farmers of this country—that the agricultural organisation at present obtaining in Queensland is on the wrong lines.

The essentials of the proposed scheme—it is not mine solely, for many others besides myself have been concerned in its formulation—is that we should have the organisation of agriculture on a commodity basis. It is obvious to any practical man that to get people interested in these matters we must show them that levies made on them are for their own benefit, and that they are going to control the expenditure of those levies. One of the difficulties under the present scheme is that all classes of producers are merged together. Local Producers' Associations include in their ranks maize-growers, dairymen, and perhaps cane-growers, all of whom have, in detail at any rate, separate interests. They then appoint representatives to a District Council, which in turn elects a representative to the Council of Agriculture. Then that Council, formed of the representatives of these diversified interests, proceeds to allot committees to deal with the various industries. That principle is wrong. The practice should be for the representatives of each industry to act by themselves in the election of their own commodity organisation to deal especially with that commodity. They would still have power, under the conditions laid down under the resolution, to appoint a central council to deal with matters that affect agriculture as a whole. Under this proposed scheme

the farmers engaged in the various branches of agriculture will be brought together, but the representatives of each commodity will appoint their own body to deal with matters appertaining wholly and solely to their own affairs. Those who are acquainted with the conditions under which the different industries are working at present will realise the necessity for an organisation on these lines. It has been brought home to the Director of the Council of Agriculture, Mr. Macgregor, that something of the kind is required. I have a little pamphlet here entitled "That Agricultural Organisation Scheme," which contains a report by Mr. Macgregor. Right through you will find little paragraphs which indicate the weakness of the present scheme. On page 3 he speaks of "Co-operative Marketing." Then he speaks again of "Stabilisation of Dairy Products" and the "Distribution of Dairy Products," all bearing out my contention that, if you want to benefit agriculturists, one of the first things you have to do is to bring about the stabilisation of prices; and you can only do that by organisation on the right lines. On page 7 I find this very pregnant utterance—

"One big job is being tackled at a time, but no more, irrespective of what the critics say."

Every branch of agriculture has its big job. In the present organisation the representatives from all branches of agriculture are congregated together, and a lot of time is wasted in discussing projects that only affect a limited number of the representatives at that organisation, and it is very apt to resolve itself into an academic body and do very little practical work, with the result that useful work remains undone. Under the scheme suggested in my resolution, each industry will have its own organisation, each organisation will deal with its own product, the big jobs will be going on simultaneously, and no time will be lost in coming to a decision on any particular matter. Then, as I have already pointed out in connection with big matters that affect the whole of the agriculturists, the resolution provides for the appointment of a Central Council to deal only with those objects that concern all, but each branch will retain full control of the commodity or commodities that come under its own aegis. That is the difference in principle involved in these two schemes.

I think it only right to point out that this party is composed of practical men. I am not quoting these utterances with any idea of securing a party advantage; at the same time I think it only fair to point out that these difficulties were foreseen from the very commencement when this scheme was laid before Parliament. For instance, the hon. member for Burnett, as reported in "Hansard" for 1922, page 269, speaking on the second reading of the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill, said—

"The scheme which is advocated with no small degree of success by the Country party is the development of sectional interests, so that those in an industry shall control the industry in which they are interested. That is the best control. It is no good for a maize farmer to try to control the butter interests, and it is no good constituting a board of men and saying to them, 'You are to control the butter industry,' when they might be fruit,

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maize, cotton, or timber men, or pig-raisers. If the Minister will accept an amendment which will be of the greatest advantage, I would suggest that he should kindly consider sectional interests, and try and bring them together more for the management of their various sections of agriculture, so that the maize people throughout Queensland can meet as maize people, and they can have their district council or their supreme council to deal with maize interests, the same as the butter people now have under their co-operative management and their co-operative associations."

Again, the hon. member for Nanango is reported, on page 345, to have said—

"I am endeavouring to show that the producers of this State require to be careful in connection with this matter, and I would suggest to the Secretary for Agriculture that the sectional organisations in existence at the present time should be taken in as organisations in connection with this scheme. My reason for suggesting that is because, after all, when you bring the maizegrowers, the sugargrowers, the dairymen, and other sections of the agricultural industry together you find that their interests are not identical."

On the other hand, where the interests of the growers are not identical, my scheme provides for organisation on those points. Again, at the Committee stage of the Bill, the hon. member for Burnett (page 481) said—

"The best results within an industry can be got by bringing together those who are interested in that industry. You will not get people interested in cotton-growing or maizegrowing to look after the interests of wheatgrowers in the same way as the wheatgrowers would look after their own interests."

I mention this to show that, though we supported the scheme, we pointed out that it would be better if it were carried out on the lines that are now being forced home on the Director of the Council of Agriculture and on the Minister by the Local Producers' Associations, which are the very foundation of the organisation. At the beginning of this year a meeting of our party was held at which a draft scheme was brought forward by Mr. Bebbington, the former member for Drayton. The proceedings are reported at length in the "Daily Mail" of 29th February last. Mr. Bebbington is no longer in this Chamber, but the farmers of Queensland lost a most efficient advocate of their interests when he went out of Parliament. I give him great credit for the manner in which he is still interesting himself in matters connected with farming, and devoting his practical knowledge on the subject to the welfare of the farmers. The resolutions passed at the meeting are somewhat lengthy, and as my time is limited, I ask permission to have them embodied in "Hansard."

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

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SWAYNE: The following is the report—

"ORGANISATION ACT.

"IMPROVING ITS WORKING.

"Decision of Country party.

"A discussion as to the means of

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improving the working of the Agricultural Organisation Act took place at the Country party meeting yesterday, and the following suggestions from a draft scheme, made by Cambooya farmers and brought forward by Mr. Bebbington, were adopted:—

(1.) To allow each primary industry to be created into a co-operative corporation for assistance in production, and the marketing of the products of that industry. That each industry shall have an elected council elected by the suppliers of raw material in such industry, each supplier to have one vote. That legislative powers of trading, banking, mortgaging, and levying be given to each industrial council, to be used in that industry, and that only. That no other council have power to levy on the product of that industry, and thus create one power of levying to each industry. All moneys received to be used in the interests of that particular industry.

Roll of Producers.

(2.) That an industrial electoral roll be created for each industry, containing all the names of growers or producers of raw material, each elector to have one vote. Where one person is engaged in more than one primary industry, he shall be entitled to be on the voters' roll for each such industry to which he contributes funds by levy.

(3.) Each council to have the power to levy on all raw or manufactured produce for moneys expended in that industry, which may be collected from the sugar-mills, butter factories, or receiving depôts of such raw materials, or in the least expensive manner the council may decide. Local industrial councils or local producers' associations will be established at any local centre, as at present. The central council to pay reasonable secretarial expenses of the local producers' associations or local industrial council, who shall transact all local business as they think fit. A members' roll to be kept, with separate industries in sections. Thus, questions affecting each industry may be referred to that section, and the secretarial expenses debited to each industry pro rata of membership.

Agricultural Council.

A National Agricultural Council to be formed from the executive of each elected industrial council, with power to elect their own president, who may summon any portion or all members to a meeting at any time. The duties of such council to be purely advisory to the Government.

Before any levies are collected for the support of the present scheme or Council of Agriculture, a ballot to be taken of all primary producers to decide whether they will remain under the present scheme, subject to levies by the Council of Agriculture and district councils on the same persons, each council spending such money as they think fit; or will they prefer to abolish personal levies by creating separate industrial councils, who shall levy on the raw or manufactured material pro rata for the council

expens^s. to be spent on that industry only. That such council have power to act as bankers and traders to the industry, as the growers or producers in that industry may decide."

Then on the 1st March we find this reported—

"It has been resolved by the Council of Agriculture to organise on an industrial instead of a district basis."

I find that on the 4th of this month a deputation, consisting of Messrs. B. H. Corser, W. J. Vowles, E. H. C. Clayton, W. Deacon, J. B. Edwards, and E. Costello, M.M.L.A., representing the Country party, waited upon the Premier and asked for an amendment of the Primary Producers' Organisation Act. They stressed the point that more useful work would be done by people who were primarily interested in the question. They would be likely to do better work if organised on a commodity basis than if they were mixed up with a larger body which has no direct interest in the separate industries. To show what possibilities of good work in this direction lie in the sectional organisation of the producers on a commodity basis, I need only quote the organisations in the industry in which I am engaged—the United Cane Growers' Association and the Australian Sugar Producers' Association—both unsubsidised by the State in any way.

Mr. CORSER: They would not disband their sectional organisations.

Mr. SWAYNE: As the hon. member for Burnett says, they would not disband their own organisations. They are quite prepared to join the Primary Producers' Organisations and also retain their own organisations, and I think we could not have any better testimony to their value than that fact. Local Producers' Organisations themselves have expressed opinions in this direction, and only two or three days ago the Birkdale Association passed a resolution, to be found in the "Daily Mail" of 16th September, to the following effect:—

"That the various industries should be controlled on a commodity basis."

This is only one out of many similar ones.

In the "Daily Mail" of 4th September, 1924, I find an interesting expression of opinion in a letter which I quote, not because I associate myself with those opinions—I do not—but to show the feeling that prevails:—

"For two years the farmers have had opportunities and backing, both politically and financially, beyond anything they had ever hoped for; yet not one farmer has received the slightest benefit. Beyond a few elaborate and ill-considered schemes—some of them so elaborate that they killed themselves—the Council of Agriculture's activities have consisted of a cheese display, a few deputations to have freights reduced, a for-and-against attitude on the question of the maize pool, advocacy of wireless on every farm, and an introduction of five tons of Delaware potatoes."

Such correspondence indicates that all is not well, and the reason is, as I have stated, that the principle on which we are organising is on wrong lines. I have also a description of the attitude taken up by the

Local Producers' Association at Cambooya and a description of the system which they favour in that district. I also want to quote from a circular which has been issued by Mr. T. A. Powell, the President of the United Cane Growers' Association, and a gentleman who has been a member of the Council of Agriculture since it started, and whose *bonâ fides* cannot be doubted, and who therefore has had unrivalled opportunities of gauging the results accruing from the organisation and action of that body. Mr. Powell commences:—

"The Director of the Agricultural Council has issued a memo. asking for suggestions for reorganisation."

Hon. members will see that the Director of the Council of Agriculture himself has recognised that it is possibly desirable to reorganise, and he has asked the various units of the organisation to reply to him on the matter. This is what Mr. Powell says in his circular:—

"The Agricultural Council is most commendable, but the Council is so organised that no one section of agriculture can manage its own affairs with success. I would advise every branch of the Agricultural Council to pass motions asking for reorganisation on the following basis:—"

And then he goes on to indicate four principles of reorganisation, the first of which is—

"Organising by commodity."

It is most satisfactory to find that a gentleman who is associated with the Council of Agriculture is in favour of organisation on somewhat the same lines as are indicated by my resolution.

I return to the statement of the Director of the Council of Agriculture, contained in the "Daily Mail" of the 6th September, 1924. It says—

"The following statement was made to-day by Mr. Macgregor, Director of the Queensland Producers' Association."

And then the paper reports Mr. Macgregor as going on to say that the Council of Agriculture which retired in June last passed a resolution approving of the principle of my resolution, and then he outlines five alternative schemes of dealing with the matter, practically every one of which provides for organisation on a commodity basis. I think the Secretary for Agriculture had something to say on this question on another matter, and, although I should not be in order in quoting his remarks on a question already before the House, I think I heard him say that an amendment of the Primary Producers' Organisation Act is not required.

I cannot help thinking that the Minister said that on the spur of the moment before he had given any consideration to it. On all sides it is agreed that an amendment of the Act is absolutely necessary. Section 3 of the Act provides—

"(2) The Association shall consist of—

- (a) The Council of Agriculture; and
- (b) The District Councils of Agriculture; and
- (c) The Local Producers' Associations.

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The Act in the very beginning allows no room for organisation on an industry basis. If the Minister thinks that the present Act will enable the farmers and those concerned to carry out that scheme which they desire, he is very much mistaken. Section 7 of the Act provides—

“For the purposes of this Act, the Governor in Council may . . . constitute not less than 15 areas. . . .”

Districts—not industries! If we are going to proceed on the lines that are now generally supported, it is obvious that the whole Act will have to go into the melting pot. It is quite possible [10.30 a.m.] that certain areas may be cut out, enlarged, or made smaller in extent, and so on, but the Act definitely states that there shall be “not less than 15 areas.” It may be found unnecessary to have fifteen areas when the scheme is conducted on a commodity basis. I specifically state that the present Local Producers' Associations are to be retained, because they are the very foundation of the movement. I know that some difficulty may arise in some districts where the Local Producers' Associations comprise members engaged in various branches of agriculture, such as canegrowers, dairymen, etc., but I am suggesting a remedy to overcome that difficulty. The Act does not provide for the collecting of funds to provide for the successful marketing of produce at home and abroad, and I consider that to be the crux of the whole position. Some action is certainly required to bring about the successful marketing of our produce. Although certain lines have been adopted by the organisations, I still think that in the successful marketing of our products lies the first step towards ensuring the prosperity of the farmers in Queensland. I would urge that many other desirable objects of less importance should be kept in the background for a time, and that those engaged in primary producing industries concentrate their attention, and do their utmost to enable those concerned to obtain the full return for their products. They should concentrate so as to see that their products are sold at the best time and in the best places. In that way will the standard of the agriculturists in Queensland be improved. I am not a lawyer, but it seems to me that the present Act does not provide the facilities that are required to attain the object which is acknowledged on all sides to be desirable, and therefore an amendment of the Act is necessary. The circular letter of the United Cane Growers' Association points out that it is the commodity basis that that body works on. I have referred to the success that has attended agricultural efforts in countries such as Denmark and Belgium, and it will be found that in those instances those directly concerned in the industry are the ones who have worked out their own salvation.

I do not wish to labour this question, as I feel sure that on account of its importance other hon. members would like to speak. I have the right of replying to any objections later on, and, bearing that in mind, I shall now resume my seat and leave the matter to the House to deal with this most important question.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I have pleasure in seconding the motion. I look upon the organisation of the various industries on such a basis as the hon. member for Mirani has been advocating as a most important ques-

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tion. The Secretary for Agriculture and the Director of the Council of Agriculture also recognise the absolute necessity of a change in the method of organisation. One fact that rather surprises me is that it appears from the statements of the Minister and the Director to be a question with them of who thought of it first. What does it matter who thought of it first? We have to get the organisation of the farmers on a basis which will enable them to get the best use out of their organisation and to get justice, which will tend to keep up their enthusiasm. No one can say that at the present moment, except in isolated instances, Local Producers' Associations are enthusiastic, or that the attendances at their meetings are good. I know any number of branches that are branches in name only. When the organiser went around farmers registered as members at the initial meeting to protect themselves in case levies were to be made, and for the purpose of carrying out projects which they might deem advisable to protect their interests. After the farmers were enrolled into the organisation on that understanding, an amendment of the Act was brought in. A large number of the branches have never met except at the initial meeting, and a large number do not take any interest in the organisation, because they say that the interests are too diverse. The consequence is they have degenerated into small progress associations. Their time is taken up in discussing very small local matters and in passing resolutions asking the shire councils to remove stumps from the roads and so on. Local Producers' Associations were not brought into being for that object, although I admit it is one item, although a small one, which assists the people living in the district. The main object of the organisation was to better the conditions of the farmers and bring forward schemes which would enable them to get better prices for their commodities and to organise markets for the sale of those commodities. Any schemes that have been promulgated by Local Producers' Associations have received but scanty consideration from the Council of Agriculture. Local Producers' Associations are instead merely supposed to consider the schemes and rules brought forward by the Council. I say “supposed,” because, if they disapprove of them and send back their suggestions, in many cases those suggestions are thrust on one side, and we are told that the Council will bring forward the schemes again and again until the Local Producers' Associations accept them.

That principle is not one that is going to make for the success of the various agricultural sections of the community. We should get the organisations on to a basis whereby there is a community interest, whereby there will not be any overlapping of levies, and whereby a greater interest will be taken in the various branches of agriculture than is the case at present.

Finance is one of the greatest difficulties we have to face in the agricultural industry. As I stated the other day it was recognised that one of the most important measures that the Council of Agriculture dealt with was the amalgamation of the Agricultural Bank, the Co-operative Agricultural Production and Advances to Farmers Act, and other Acts into the Agricultural Bank Act. This was to enable our farmers to get advances from the State up to £1,700. The Bill was passed last year, but it was not

gazetted until this month, and the limitation to advances was only £500. The difficulty has always been for the farmer to secure sufficient finance to develop his property in the way it should be developed; and this has been accentuated lately by tax-free Government loans at 6 per cent. The difficulty has become practically insuperable. Many farmers have had to pay 9 per cent. and 10 per cent. interest, and any man who has any knowledge of the land knows that it is an impossibility for a farmer to develop land on which he has to pay such a high rate.

There are effective methods by which a system of finance may be inaugurated on the credit of the various industries, if they are established on a commodity basis and registered as co-operative organisations. The combined produce of an industry would enable credit to be secured by the Board, and a system of small levies could be established, and a system of rural credits or finance could be instituted by which farmers would be able to carry on in a way they are not at present able to carry on.

Take an organisation such as the Wheat Board. The Wheat Board should have power to trade and power to act as banker and to mortgage. It has power to purchase property, but who are the owners of the property? The Wheat Board may be voted out of existence at any period when a vote is taken. They have purchased property at the present time by making levies on the produce of the farmer whose produce is handled. The Board has mortgages over the produce of the farmers to enable it to guarantee interest and redemption on the various wheat sheds. If a farmer has levies exacted on his produce, it is taken from the money coming to him. Unlike levies on ordinary individuals, the levy upon the farmer is taken at its source. With most individuals having an income, wages comes first and expenditure on the family is supposed to come second. In this case the Council of Agriculture's levies are a first charge upon the farmer's returns. The Council makes sure of getting the requisite amount of funds to carry on an organisation which certainly has not been conducted cheaply. When levies are made by an organisation like the Wheat Board for the construction of sheds, for paying redemption on the sheds constructed, or for purchasing property, according to the amount of the levy, each individual farmer who has been levied on up to 20s. should receive a share. Under the present conditions wheat sheds have a sinking fund which is provided at the rate of £1 19s. 1d. per cent. per annum. In about 25 years the amount will be paid off, but the farmers at that time will not own the sheds, which will still belong to the Government. That position is not a fair one. The producers of wheat vary from year to year—they are not always the same—and, if anyone has a levy taken from his property he should certainly receive a return for that levy in the shape of shares. By that means he would be a part owner of a shed at the end of 20 or 25 years. It should not belong to the Government, and the Wheat Board may not be in existence then. The Council also requires legislative power to trade in the purchase of bags and twine.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are doing that now.

Mr. MOORE: They are doing it to a very limited extent. I do not know that they have power to do it, but they are doing it on the credit of the farmer, and the farmer has nothing to show for it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They can get the power any time they ask for it.

Mr. MOORE: That is just the principle I want to put forward. The time is ripe when that power should be given to them. It is unfair for an organisation to levy on the produce of a farmer, and the farmer to receive no return for it except through his purchases. If he is a shareholder, he should receive shares to the value of the levies placed on his produce. He is called upon to pay these levies, and has nothing to show for what he has paid if he ceases to be a wheatgrower.

We find overlapping constantly taking place under the present system of organisation. Take the cheese industry as an instance. We have a Cheese Manufacturers' Association which was a very efficient organisation and was the organisation on which the cheese industry depended before the Local Producers' Associations were established, and on which it still depends. Even after the Local Producers' Associations were established and the Council of Agriculture became an accomplished fact, there was no suggestion to do away with the Cheese Manufacturers' Association. It was recognised that it was necessary to have that body to look after that particular industry. There is a desire among the producers in that industry to keep the association going because they recognise that it is of benefit to themselves. The Cheese Manufacturers' Association has to levy on the producers of milk for the benefit of the producers in the cheese industry. Then you have the Cheese Pool Board levying on the same producers for the same purpose. Then you have the Council of Agriculture levying on the same people for the same purpose. Now we are going to have a Stabilisation Board levying on the same people for the same purpose, and then on top of that an Agricultural Dairy Board levying on the same people also. That will be five levies on one set of people for the one purpose, which means overlapping and useless expense that must be detrimental to the industry.

You have exactly the same thing happening in the sugar industry. You have an organisation levying on each sugar-cane grower to combat pests, then you have an organisation levying on the individual suppliers for the effective carrying on of the industry, and you have the Council of Agriculture levying on the same people.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: How many levies do you pay to shire councils?

Mr. MOORE: The different shire rates are not collected for the same purpose. The council levies for services rendered and those services are for the benefit of the individual. You do not have four or five people levying for the same purpose. We certainly do have an outside organisation levying on the same people for the same purpose, which, to my mind, is not altogether an advantage. I refer to the Main Roads Board; but, as it does its work through the shire councils in the collection of rates, it is not so very objectionable. The Minister must admit that, when you have five sets of people levying on the same class of producers for the same

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object, it is not a proper thing. The commodity boards that it is proposed to create, or whatever you like to call them, should have an opportunity of making the one levy on the individual to be used in the furtherance of that industry only.

It should not be left to other sections of the industry to impose levies. You cannot get the enthusiasm and attendance of members when they do not get the direct financial or individual benefit they expect from the organisation of their industries on a proper basis. If we legislated to give the various industries power to organise on a commodity basis and power to trade and make levies, they would have an opportunity of indenting material and articles which are necessary in cheese and butter factories, and a considerable saving would be effected. If levies were made for the purpose of financing the operations of these organisations, the growers who contribute in the shape of levies on their raw products could receive shares in proportion to the amount of the levies made upon them. That is the only fair way in which these people should be asked to contribute. It is most unfair to have various organisations levying on the same individuals, without those individuals having anything to show for it. If we look at the various returns of the cheese and butter factories at the end of the year, we shall see the enormous number of stamps which have to be used by the producers, and the number of deductions which have to be made. Some better method of organisation would be of advantage to the industry and the individual. All these undertakings would be more effectively supported and more economically conducted, and would assist the producers to a greater extent, if they were organised on a basis which is recognised to be essential—that is, that each commodity produced by the farmer should be organised on a separate basis. You would then get the people interested in the production of the commodity to attend meetings and put forward suggestions for the benefit of the industry, and the whole system of production and marketing would be more likely to be effectively co-ordinated than it is under the present system. The individual who is engaged in a specific industry does not object to be levied on if he sees he is going to get a benefit from the levy. If he receives shares in accordance with the amount of money which is levied, he has something to show for it, and those shares will be a marketable commodity that he can get rid of if he goes out of the business in the future. To my mind that is the only fair basis on which growers should be asked to contribute. The system of levying by all sorts of organisations renders the expense of organisation ever so much heavier than it would be if on a commodity basis. Most of the commodity organisation could be done simply by registration at the various factories. It would be perfectly easy, for instance, to register the various maize-growers on a commodity basis in conjunction with the central organisation of a Maize Board. The various producers could be registered on a commodity basis in special books kept for the purpose, and, if a matter of vital moment to the particular industry required a vote to be taken, it would be a very simple thing to give the people an opportunity of voting, because they would all be registered under the different head-

ings. It is also essential that the organisation should be on the basis of commodities because a levy for any particular commodity would only be made on the producers in connection with that commodity. Under the present system there is a great deal of dissatisfaction, which is likely to cause many members to absent themselves from the meetings. Dissatisfaction is felt by a large number of growers owing to the numerous levies which are collected and the overlapping which occurs.

There has been a certain amount of discussion on the methods suggested by the Council of Agriculture. Some have met with approval and others have been turned down, but I think that, if the growers had been organised on the basis of industry alone, there would have been no need to ask for the opinions of the Local Producers' Associations on the various proposals which have been ruled out up to the present time.

I suppose it will be said that, if organisation on a commodity basis is adopted, there will probably be no need for the District Councils. I do not think there would be any great loss in doing without the District Councils, provided you have the industry organised on a commodity basis, with a board elected by the producers of each commodity to control their branch of the industry. The District Councils are not a vital part of the organisation, and, if they went out of existence, I do not think we would be likely to jeopardise the success of the organisation. On the basis on which the organisation is carried out to-day, the abolition of District Councils might have a deleterious effect on the organisation, but on the basis which we recommend I do not think it would be necessary.

In the sugar industry, for instance, under its organisation on an industrial basis, there is no need felt for a District Council. Every cane-grower and every sugar-mill is directly represented on the body controlling that industry, and that system has worked satisfactorily. I have been a member of the Cheese Manufacturers' Association from its inception, and the endeavour has always been to meet producers as far as possible, keeping the one end in view on the production of a better article, a cheaper method of handling, and a more efficient system of marketing. The idea was not to establish a system of actual control, but a system by which prices were regulated to such an extent that the interests of the people who were producers in the industry were preserved. That has been the aim of that association, and, had it not been for its activities, I do not think that the industry would have been one-tenth the size and prosperity it is to-day. It is only through the efforts of the association to stabilise the market and regulate conditions and prevent the undercutting and underselling which previously existed that the industry has been enabled to grow to its present dimensions. The same thing can continue and should continue, but I am perfectly satisfied that, if the Queensland Cheese Manufacturers' Association had commenced to impose levies on its members to keep other bodies going, there would have been dissatisfaction and grumbling such as exist to-day in other organisations.

I do not think it is necessary to labour the question, but I want to point out that it is not of such vital importance to consider whether the Minister or Mr. Macgregor made

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a mistake in the beginning, or whether the organisation could have been run more economically if it had been started on the basis of commodities or on the system on which it has been commenced. I think that it would be far more effective if the alteration were made, and it is no reflection on Mr. Macgregor to say that because mistakes have been made they should be removed.

I am speaking from the experience I have gained. I was a member of a Local Producers' Association, and I was chairman of that branch until I thought it was necessary for me to relinquish that position. At the very beginning I found that more effective work could be done and better attendance at the meetings would be secured if we had those engaged in the various industries coming together and discussing the difficulties applicable to their own particular industries rather than have an organisation

[11 a.m.] tion on a district basis or an organisation that was too large to be controlled by a District Council, and where such an organisation really became a farce rather than serve any useful purpose because of the different agricultural occupations that were conducted in that district. I do not think that even the Minister is satisfied that the Local Producers' Associations have achieved what he hoped they would when they were commenced. In my own district, except in a few isolated instances, meetings either lapse or the members are not called together. Many of them have not met since their first meeting. There are a few enthusiasts who endeavour to keep the thing going, but they are of the opinion that, if they were organised on the basis we suggest and each industry was levied on for the benefit of that particular industry, without having to carry the burden of other industries—which causes overlapping in nine cases out of ten—they would secure a great deal better attendance, a great deal more enthusiasm, and a great deal more benefit. Considering the enormous amount of money that is being spent, the present benefit is almost negligible. It is possible that in time benefits may accrue from the present system of organisation, but what the farmer wants—I think the Minister will recognise this—is not to have to wait too long for the benefits that have been promised to him. He wants to see some value for the levies that are made on his produce.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Queensland was a desert for fifty years before this scheme was started.

Mr. MOORE: Queensland was not a desert before the organisation of the farmers commenced. Some of the industries were organised. The sugar industry was efficiently organised before there was any Council of Agriculture.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No one has ever questioned that.

Mr. MOORE: The cheese industry was partly organised, the wheat industry was partly organised, and many other industries were partly organised; and it does not say that, merely because the Council of Agriculture has been brought into existence, the farmers are in a better position to-day than they were before. The previous organisations were expanding along the lines that we considered most effective at that time. The farmers were attracted by the wonderful

picture that was painted by the Premier at Laidley when he pointed out what serfs the farmers were, and how the Government were going to lift them to the pinnacle of affluence and ease.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Premier did not say that.

Mr. MOORE: He painted a most beautiful picture to the farmer, and the farmer naturally thought that, if he could secure that, he would take it; but he is beginning to realise that there are better, more effective, and more economical methods of organisation. The farmer wants to see such methods introduced as will enable the levies to return to him a greater benefit in a shorter time, and greater enthusiasm amongst members of the various organisations than is the case to-day. Anyone reading the "Producer" would be inclined to think that no organisation had been done in Queensland until Mr. Macgregor came to Queensland. Before he came here there was very effective and very efficient organisation in some of the industries of Queensland, and, because the various producers remember that and want to continue on those lines, there is no occasion to regard them as hopeless idiots who had no opportunity of bettering their position before, and say that it is only through the advent of the present organisation and a high-salaried officer that they are going to be placed in a better position. They were gradually evolving that position for themselves. They may have been assisted to a certain extent by the present organisation, but they could have been assisted a great deal more if the initial mistake of organising on a district basis instead of on an industry basis had been recognised sooner. Personally, I am pleased to see that the mistake has been recognised. Right from the very beginning it was suggested by people of experience—I claim to have had a good deal of experience in the farming industry—that the lines we suggest to-day were the only effective means of carrying out this work. The people who contribute levies to the various boards and organisations on an industry basis should receive something to show that they are deriving some benefit for the money they are placing there. It is absolutely wrong to collect levies from producers and put that money into property in which the producers who contribute have no say, right or interest. Every member of the community who places his savings—compulsory savings in this instance—into the purchase of property should receive a share certificate to show what amount of money he has invested in that particular property or industry. According to the present methods of organisation and the present method adopted by the various pools, levies may be used for the purchase of property, and no provision is made for the issue of share certificates to the persons who contribute that money. That surely must be recognised to be wrong. We want to use the combined credit in an industry for the financing of a crop so that it can be held over during a period of glut and thus ensure a more continuous and effective market. We want the farmers to be in a position to construct sheds for the proper storing of the commodity they have to handle, and that they shall be able to carry out work through their levies and through their own finance. We want to see them placed in a position to

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secure through their levies and operations of their boards a sufficient amount of money for trading in the various industries, and we also want to see that the money collected by way of levies from those industries, and by way of profits made out of those industries, is used in the interest of those who are engaged in that particular industry, and that they will receive shares so that they will be able to show something for what they have contributed. Possibly in twenty years a good deal of property will be held by the various boards, and, if we go on as we are going at present, the farmers will be in the position of continuing to pay interest and redemption on something they have already paid for by levies on their produce. That is a wrong principle, and we want to get away from that as soon as we possibly can. I do not intend to speak at any further length, but I trust the Minister, at the earliest possible opportunity, will see that what he regards as a necessity, and which can be secured, and is asked for, will be made possible. I hope that he will see that the various industries will be organised on the basis that is suggested by this motion, rather than continue the haphazard manner adopted by the various organisations to-day of levying on the same set of people for the same purpose, and thus creating unnecessary expense and dissatisfaction.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): First of all I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Mirani upon moving this motion. It is certainly time that the attention of the Government, and particularly the Secretary for Agriculture, was drawn to this all-important question. The Government have spent in the vicinity of £60,000 from the revenue of the State to achieve organisation among the primary producers, but on reviewing the position to-day one must realise that they have not achieved very much. The hon. member for Mirani has seen a way out whereby some return will be secured for this money, and particularly some return for the farmer who is chiefly concerned in this matter.

The hon. member for Mirani has based his motion on the fact that sectional organisation is essential for the success of the primary producer in Queensland. That is the basis of the whole of the hon. member's contention. That is nothing new to this House. When the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill was going through in 1922 every opportunity was taken by the Opposition to point out to the Minister that the only successful way of organising the industry was by separating the industries on a commodity basis. The hon. member for Fassifern pointed out at the time his experiences in California. To achieve success there each industry, such as the fruit industry, was even divided into several sections. Success has been achieved there in marketing the citrus fruits, and even that section was sectionalised. Every business to-day has to be sectionalised and each section has to be managed separately. We can see—and we might as well face the question—that the Government are against sectionalising industries.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not at all.

Mr. KERR: Then the hon. gentleman will be in favour of the motion. What is the objective of the Labour-Socialist party?

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It is to establish one big labour union, and the same principle was attempted by the Government in regard to the Primary Producers' Organisation Act.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: One big union for the farmers.

Mr. KERR: The Secretary for Agriculture, in introducing the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill, said that he believed in combining the farmers in one solid body.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. KERR: Hon. members on this side of the House have for many years told the Minister that one solid body among the primary producers would not achieve the success he desired. There is only one way to achieve that success, and that is by the Government accepting this motion. The hon. member for Mirani has provided that each industry shall have its own organisation, and that the power to make levies which are made by law without a referendum of those concerned shall be given to a particular organisation, and that organisation only must exercise that power. There is a demand all over the world to-day to get away from Government control. Notwithstanding all that has been said, the Local Producers' Associations, the District Councils, and Council of Agriculture are to-day looked upon as Government concerns, and the Government have taken every care that those comprised in these organisations shall look upon them as Government concerns. They have fostered that idea throughout Queensland. That is one of the reasons why the Local Producers' Associations have not got the interest to-day that they should have in the organisation. I have in my electorate quite a number of Local Producers' Associations. Some of them are composed of capable and efficient men who have the industry at heart. The Local Producers' Associations are composed of all sorts of producers—poultry farmers, market gardeners, and dairymen.

Mr. WARREN: And lengthsmen.

At 11.15 a.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Pollock, *Gregory*) relieved the Speaker in the chair.

Mr. KERR: They all meet together and have little real business to discuss when they do meet. They have developed into progress associations subsidised by the Government. I want to see some better system of organisation than that. The only method to better the system is to bring those men who have interests in common around the table and allow them to discuss their industry. That is the only way that the problems of any industry will be solved. There is a Local Producers' Association in my electorate at a place called "The Gap." We have there a number of men engaged in the dairying industry and others who supply eggs to the market. Those are absolutely distinct industries. One section has no interest in the business of the other. This fact causes discontent. When business in relation to the egg industry arises the other section says, "This is nothing to do with the dairying industry. The question has only to do with the poultry industry." If those men come along again the Local Producers' Association is very fortunate. It is the duty of

hon. members to look into these questions. The one clarion cry of to-day is efficiency; but efficiency can never be obtained while men with conflicting interests are called upon to adjudicate on any particular matter. It will be said that the Council of Agriculture have standing committees to deal with these matters. That may be so, and I am not opposed to those standing committees. I want the Council of Agriculture and the Primary Producers' Associations to be successful, but two years have elapsed since this House passed the Act creating those bodies, and success has not come about yet. We must look into the reason for their non-success and try to remedy it. My belief is that the motion provides the necessary remedy. These standing committees are trying to do excellent work, and I hope they will reap success from their endeavours; but I cannot for the life of me see how the mixed organisations, quite apart from those committees, are going to achieve anything. In 1923 I asked the Secretary for Agriculture the following question, which appears in "Hansard" at page 214 for that year:—

"Will the Government consider the advisableness of consulting with the Council of Agriculture in regard to the amending of the Primary Producers' Organisation Act to make better provision for growers to be organised to conform to the Primary Products Pools Act?"

Even at that stage, after visiting and closely watching the business that came before the Local Producers' Association, I could not help coming to the conclusion that something was required to overcome the difficulty of organising by their system of pools. I cannot separate the legislation respecting pools from the Primary Producers' Associations. They have to go hand in hand. What happened in my electorate when steps were taken to form an egg pool? A meeting of egg producers was first called. Apart from the money spent in the organisation the poultry farmers met their own expenses. They held a meeting and decided to ask for a ballot. All this work was carried out apart from the organisation provided under the Act. If the poultry men at that stage had been organised in their own section, money and many tedious months' work would have been saved. A new organisation altogether had to be constituted to handle this industry. The State are concerned in this matter, because £60,000 has been spent out of consolidated revenue in organising the farmers, but at the very moment these people wanted to utilise the organisation they could not do so, and the Government had to go outside the Act and create a new organisation altogether.

That was the position that eventuated there. Unless this amendment of the hon. member for Mirani is agreed to, the same position will exist again. Take the Peanut Pool, the Wheat Pool—all those pools have to be organised absolutely apart from the Primary Producers' Organisation Act. If we had the agricultural industry organised into the one solid body that is adjudged to be necessary by the present Government, we could not achieve the success which it is hoped will follow. I hope the Government will not carry their industrial legislation to the farm. Farming is not possible under such circumstances. It may be all right to have one big union in theory, but it is difficult to achieve in practice.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: There is one big union of produce merchants.

Mr. KERR: I do not know that there is.

Mr. CARTER: You ought to know.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Go to Roma street markets and you will see that there is.

Mr. KERR: What I see at Roma street is merchants purchasing chaff, corn, and fodder, and bidding one against the other.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Friendly competition, eh?

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman imagines he sees something; what it is I do not know.

Mr. CLAYTON: Those private merchants pay more than the State for their produce.

Mr. KERR: The State Produce Agency is evidently in the combine; but that is apart from the question I am dealing with. The Government ask for one big union of farmers, and I say that through such a union we cannot give the farmer the success and efficiency he seeks.

If you have a basis where a certain section of men have to organise with another section representing an entirely different branch of this industry, you will find that those sections will not whole-heartedly work together. Each man is concerned about his own section, and rightly so. They will not co-ordinate as a whole unless you bring together members concerned with similar sections of farming activity. You must have intense separate organisation. It is just like running a department of a big general store. You have one counter dealing with a certain thing, and that counter deals solely with that commodity and develops the sale of that article. We should do the same with our primary organisations. If you are going to mix sugar-men with pig-raisers, you will not achieve the stabilisation and success that it is desired. Such a system results in confusion and we do not know where we are.

A good deal can be said in regard to fixing prices, but I would be out of bounds this morning in arguing on that point. Where pools are concerned they must be co-ordinated under the Primary Producers' Organisation Act. The question I raised in 1923 should have the very serious consideration of the Government. I shall quote again from "Hansard" of 1923, page 285. I quote the remarks of Mr. Bell, the hon. member for Fassifern, who gave a very interesting address on his experiences. The hon. member is a man who has had vast personal experience in regard to primary industry. He says—

"I want to show that in organising these industries it will be impossible to organise the pastoral industry in common with the other primary products in Queensland, because those engaged in those industries know most about them, and should be the most capable of managing their own affairs. The same thing applies to the sugar-growers and to the dairy farmers. In the dairying industry there are many men who have given their lives to the organisation of the dairying industry. They have built it up by co-operation, and, if this Bill goes through as it is, all those organisations will be more or less wiped out. If the Government were sincere they should have taken the existing grazing

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and dairying organisations and built up from them. Why have a huge expensive machine to do a lot of work that has already been done?"

If this one big union idea is persisted in, all the work that has been done, as the hon. member pointed out, will be wiped out. I shall put it this way: If you have a co-operative company—and we have many successful co-operative companies in Queensland which have only been built up by a sectional organisation, apart from the Government altogether, for instance, a bacon or cheese factory—the men engaged in those industries meet together and bring into being a co-operative spirit. I venture to say they have been successful in a large number of instances. To take those men out of their organisation and try to interest them, after all their years of work and labour in formulating co-operative companies, and putting them into some other industry will only make them lose interest. We must look at the human element, and the only incentive to give to a man dealing in primary production is to allow him to deal only with his own particular primary production. That man has no time to study phases of primary production. He has to concentrate on his own section, and it is a mistake to ask him to interest himself in another section. A general all-round benefit must automatically result.

To be successful a scheme of this sort must have the enthusiasm and interest of those behind it. The Government are going to wipe that out with their present methods. If you take a moulder from one craft organisation and put him with a school teacher from another craft organisation and ask them to sit together round a table and discuss their conditions, you are not going to get interest from either. But, if you take a number of school teachers and put them together in conference, then you secure intense interest. The same thing applies to every industry and calling in the State. You must confine co-operation to sections if you wish interest to be aroused and maintained. One of the outstanding failures of the Primary Producers' Organisation Act was the lack of this enthusiasm and interest.

After what has been said this morning I do not think it is possible to secure effective action unless through the methods advocated by the hon. member for Mirani. I hope the Minister will go into the question seriously. Hon. members opposite appear to think that the cultivation of the various crops and other things mentioned in the "A.B.C. of Queensland Statistics" only came into being when Labour came into power, but they will find that this interesting little book or a similar one was issued for years before the Labour party had anything to do with the matter. The hon. gentleman will realise the necessity for such action.

We are attempting to improve the statistics that may be found in this little work and to give the farmer an opportunity of retaining the full reward for his labour. Perhaps we have made a slogan of the term, "Full reward for his labour," and I think it is a good slogan. We must develop our rural industries on a scientific basis, and the best way to do that is to get those concerned in any one industry together. We should not mix the man in the citrus industry with the man who is pig-raising and expect them to agree on a scientific basis. We must get men from similar industries together and

interest them in their Local Producers' Associations. Then you will have an opportunity of bringing about some scientific research and of securing better methods to advance our rural industries.

We talk a good deal in connection with the Primary Producers' Organisation Act in regard to the encouragement of co-operative societies. I have Local Producers' Associations in my electorate, and, if I wanted to bring about a co-operative society, I would get those concerned together and say: "Gentlemen, we will form a co-operative society." They would say, "All right. What is it for?" If I said, "It is for pulping eggs," what does the dairyman care a rap about a co-operative society for pulping eggs? He has no chance of coming in as a member, because, if he does, [11.30 a.m.] the egg producers will immediately say, "This is not your business. Get out!" But if you have all the poultrymen there, and if you put up a proposition to them for pulping eggs and exporting the pulp, naturally you will get all these poultrymen to take an intelligent interest in the co-operative concern. If the proposal suggested by the hon. member for Mirani is adopted, there will be a chance of the co-operative societies in Queensland developing into something more than they are to-day. It is no use talking about co-operation unless we are prepared to get down to the basis of co-operation, that is, to get the men concerned in a particular industry to organise in that industry. Take the pig industry, the egg industry, or the butter industry. If you start a co-operative society in the pig-raising industry, you will get all the pig-raisers into that society, but a maize-grower or someone else is not permitted to join. Even members of the Local Producers' Association would not be allowed to be in a co-operative society of someone else's production.

The motion moved by the hon. member for Mirani is one of the most important motions ever introduced into this Parliament so far as production is concerned, as it will assist the farmer to reap the full reward of his labour, and so bring into effect that slogan of ours, The poultry industry is worth about £8,000,000 a year to the Commonwealth to-day. It has assumed an independent position, and I think the value of the poultry industry in Queensland is about £500,000 a year. I have a number of poultry farmers in my electorate, and they are producing a good deal of that money, and ultimately they are going to be very successful. I want to see these men get better treatment, which they will get if they are allowed to organise as a distinct entity. I want to see these men organised as a distinct entity and co-operate in the establishment of various side industries to deal with the by-products of the poultry industry. I want to see them co-operate in the buying and selling, which will never come about unless they have a distinct organisation. The milk producers are in exactly the same position.

In conclusion I want to ask the Minister to go into this question very fully. In my opinion there should be separate organisations in connection with sheep, cattle, horses, pigs, etc. I do not want to do away with the Council of Agriculture or the Standing Committees. I realise that in any organisation scheme you must have one

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central authority. There must be some connecting link somewhere. It is useless to have organisations out in the country if you have not got a central head. Many hon. members opposite have been union organisers, and they know how difficult it is in the country to get meetings. We have had great difficulty in getting meetings of the Local Producers' Associations in the outside districts for the simple reason that the members do not know what to talk about when they meet. Two or three members may meet in a hall, but they have nothing to discuss, probably hardly any minutes, because they have not been kept up to date as to what is being done. If you have a separate organisation for each industry, the members will read up and become fully acquainted with matters concerning their own industry, and, when they meet, they will know that they will have an opportunity of explaining their ideas. It is exactly the same in connection with craft unions. Take the Printers' Union. Would they agree to sink their identity? Never on your life! As separate organisations have been successful in connection with crafts, so will they prove successful in the agricultural industry. This organisation scheme was not the original idea of the Government, and they should have taken the advice given by the hon. member for Fassifern and others who have had experience in other parts of the world, and not have put this country to the expense of £60,000 or £70,000 from which the farmers have reaped no benefit. The only solution is to adopt the scheme suggested by the hon. member for Mirani who has done good service to the State in bringing forward this motion.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): It is a matter of great regret that the present organisation should have proved such a failure. It is not worth while going into the question of who is to blame. The fact remains that it has proved a failure. It is only a farce to say that the Local Producers' Associations consist of so many members, because actually there are very few members in any of the Local Producers' Associations. The greater proportion of the members are men who have simply put their names down on a form and have taken no further interest. In a great many places—not everywhere—no interest at all is taken in the Local Producers' Association or the District Council of Agriculture, or in the Council of Agriculture. We have to reform it somehow. I agree with the hon. member for Mirani that the only possible way to bring about an organisation that will do any effective work is to have a business organisation. The only good the farmer has got yet has been from the business organisations that he has built up himself. Very little help has come to him from any Government. The present Government are no better in that respect than any other Government. If anything, they are a little worse. From the factories and co-operative societies we have received some little benefit. There has been a proposal put forward by the Council of Agriculture for a reorganisation. I have gone over it, and it does not seem to provide for anything better than we have at present. It is rather difficult to understand exactly just what the Council means. The most favoured method is that put forward by the Council of Agriculture on 5th September, which is called the "No. 3 method." This is really a modification of the present

system. It provides for the retention of the District Councils and for the retention of the elected members of the present Council of Agriculture. You have to cut out anything that is unnecessary and simplify the business as much as possible. What we want is that the butter industry shall be controlled by representatives elected by the industry. They do not want any other control. The same thing applies to every other industry. If we have a Central Council of Agriculture, it is quite enough for these organisations to elect their members from the factories themselves. It is not necessary to have District Councils in between. We know that the members of these District Councils have worked very hard and have tried to justify their existence. Some of them are very much in earnest, but there has not been any effective result from the link between the Council of Agriculture and the Local Producers' Associations. The Local Producers' Associations can deal with small local matters much more effectively than the District Council. I am not going to labour this question too much, because time is limited and there are plenty of other speakers who want to express their views.

The leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that farmers are asked to put their money into concerns which eventually do not become their own property, but which may fall back to the Government.

The position in regard to the wheat industry was very well put by the leader of the Opposition, and it is not necessary for me to go into it. If we put our money into a concern we ought to get a share in it. We like to be owners of what we pay for; that is the rule of ordinary life. There is nothing which will appeal more to the farmer in any co-operative proposal than to tell him that the undertaking will be his own when he has paid for it—that he has a share in the undertaking and can realise his share when he goes out of the venture. If we are to do anything for the farmer, it must be something that will return him more money than he is getting now. It is not a bit of use talking of organisation which simply means additional expense without any benefit. We want to do something solid for the farmer, and we shall only be able to do it by means of a system such as is proposed in the motion of the hon. member for Mirani.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): I am quite in accord with the hon. member for Mirani in bringing this notice before the House, because it is essential in the interests of the primary producers that a motion of this sort should be brought forward. We have advocated for some time the necessity of sectional organisation. It will have been noticed in the Press recently that a deputation waited on the Premier, in the absence of the Secretary for Agriculture, and advocated that sectional organisation should be brought about. The Premier saw that we had a just claim in that direction, and I think he was quite in accord with the views expressed by the hon. member for Burnett, who introduced the deputation. It is nothing new for hon. members on this side to advocate sectional organisation. We realise that through not having commodity organisation the Local Producers' Associations are not doing the effective work which we would expect. The hon. member for Nanango,

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speaking in 1922, when the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill was before the House, said—

"I am endeavouring to show that the producers of this State require to be careful in connection with this matter, and I would suggest to the Secretary for Agriculture that the sectional organisations in existence at the present time should be taken in as organisations in connection with this scheme. My reason for suggesting that is because, after all, when you bring the maize-growers, the sugar-growers, the dairymen and other sections of the agricultural industry together you find that their interests are not identical."

I quite agree with those remarks. The hon. member for Nanango was interested in co-operation amongst the farmers long before he entered this House. We want to extend sectional organisation to the primary producers, as it will be more effective than the organisation which they have at the present time. Industrial workers in the city have their own separate and distinct organisations or unions, and it is only right that provision should be made to enable farmers to organise in a similar way. I am a member of the Local Producers' Association in my electorate, and I attend the meetings. We have dairymen, fruitgrowers, canegrowers, and persons engaged in various kinds of primary production attending the meetings, but the interest shown in the discussions is not as keen as if a body of canegrowers were discussing the sugar industry, or a body of dairymen discussing the dairying industry.

Mr. W. COOPER: You have farmers who go in for mixed farming—they grow sugar and also produce butter.

Mr. CLAYTON: They would be interested in both matters and could belong to both sections. You would find that the work would be very effective in that regard. I am not going to shut any man out from joining a Local Producers' Association if he is a producer, because he is engaged in more than one industry. I am surprised at the hon. member thinking that I would advocate such a thing.

Mr. W. COOPER: I do not think that you would, but I am just drawing your attention to the matter.

Mr. CLAYTON: In some parts of Queensland where we have a Local Producers' Association the dairymen are not very sympathetic towards the sugar producers. I remember speaking on one occasion in my electorate. I said that I was going to dwell for a few moments on the sugar industry, and a dairy man interjected, "Tell us how we can get cheap sugar. We have been paying quite enough for sugar for a considerable time." That is the sort of feeling which exists. If we could follow on the lines of the United Cane Growers' Association or the Australian Sugar Producers' Association, which are sectional organisations and have done very effective work, I think that success would be assured. I trust that the Minister, as head of the Council of Agriculture, will see that something is done on the lines indicated by the hon. member for Mirani. I think that the Council of Agriculture realise the necessity for something like this being done after the experience of the last two and a-half years. We are not getting the beneficial results which we looked for from the organisation. Although it has done some good

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work, we still want to improve matters and secure for the producers a better return for their labour. A levy has been struck, and I say rightly so. When I was speaking on this subject in 1922, I said we would not have successful organisation among farmers unless we had some form of compulsion. A form of compulsion has now been applied to raise funds for the organisation. But when we extract a levy from a section of producers the money should be placed to the credit of those producers and spent in that particular industry. That would be a step in the right direction. The sugar-growers have been contributing through the United Cane Growers' Association by way of levy to a fund, which was of great assistance to the sugar producers when they had to organise a campaign in the Southern States to get justice for the sugar industry. We shall find that we shall also have to fight the antagonism of the Southern States in connection with the banana industry. If we had a fund controlled by the banana and fruit sections—we have a sort of sectional control now—that fund could be used very wisely to combat the antagonism which may operate in the Southern States against the industry.

When you attend meetings and find a lack of interest on the part of the primary producer, you must seek for a reason, and I think that the one I have suggested goes a long way towards explaining the very small attendances at Local Producers' Association meetings. I know that in my electorate in cases where there may be a membership of thirty or forty there are only seven or eight regular attendants who carry the whole of the responsibility, and if it were not for the levy imposed upon them, I do not think the others would take much interest at all in the organisation. Their attitude would be, "If you can do anything for us, we will accept it." Seeing that they are all brought into the organisation actively by the levy, they take a greater interest than otherwise; but they would take a far greater interest in it if they were organised in such a way that they could meet and discuss the particular industries in which they are engaged. I have had experience in that direction. Take the District Council which meets at Biggenden. On it are five or six dairymen and one representative of the sugar industry. The latter has not attended meetings on several occasions, and I asked him why. He said, "What is the good of my going up there? We talk dairying all day, and, when the sugar business comes on later in the meeting, people want to catch their trains and we do not get the consideration we deserve." I suggest that if Local Producers' Associations were formed in each industry and they formed their District Councils and through the District Councils go to a Central Council or the Council of Agriculture—if you wish—we would find that those members who were elected as delegates to the head of the organisation would have the necessary backing and would know what they were talking about. I trust that the Minister will view the matters which the hon. member for Mirani has brought forward in a light so favourable that benefit will result to the primary producer.

Another matter which we have to tackle—and it can be tackled successfully by persons engaged in the dairying industry, for instance—is the marketing of our products. Indeed, the main point is the marketing question.

It is all very well for us to ask the primary producers to produce more than they do. Given good climatic conditions, production can be very effectively increased, but, if we want successful marketing, we need to eliminate so far as possible the cost entailed in distribution between production and consumption. If we can establish co-operative associations which will do that, we shall enormously benefit the primary producer. We have a loose form of co-operation in a sectional way—because it deals only with the pig-raising industry—in the Murarrie bacon factory. There we have pig-raisers getting together to establish a factory. It has benefited them enormously, and in the last four years no dividends have been paid to “dry” shareholders, but £20,000 has been distributed in bonuses to the suppliers. That is the form of co-operation which we on this side advocate, and I think that the Government should give a co-operative society of that description every assistance and encouragement. From that instance we find that where there is sectional organisation the producers get all the benefits, except a small margin, of course, between production and consumption.

It is interesting to note that recently the Federal Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce, has taken steps to do something for the primary producers in the dairying industry. I know that the stabilisation of butter prices was brought forward by the Council of Agriculture at the instance of the dairymen, and has been before the Prime Minister for a considerable time, and it is pleasing to note that he is moving in the direction indicated so far as the Commonwealth Constitution will allow him to go. I have heard quite recently that in the near future Mr. Massy Greene and Mr. Macgregor will tour certain parts of Queensland to place the proposals before the dairymen. This is a step in the right direction, because the dairyman is not getting anything near what he should get for his product. A stabilisation of the prices of our dairy products for export will be very beneficial to the producers. I also note that Mr. Bruce, having had a large surplus this year of somewhere about £6,000,000, has decided to devote some to the assistance of primary production. That is very encouraging, and it would be still more encouraging if this Government could produce a surplus of a substantial nature and spend a considerable amount of it on a similar object.

As to the Primary Producers' Organisation itself, I should like to read an extract from “The Advocate,” which I think hon. members opposite look upon as their organ. In the issue of the 10th of May last, under the heading, “Who controls?” that paper says—

“The Agricultural Council, since it is financed by the Government, must be subject to some extent to governmental control. In the exercise of that control, Labour policy, surely, is not to be overlooked; and Labour policy is, that the Government shall assist farm workers in having their wages and conditions regulated.”

Nothing is said about assisting the primary producer, and I think the balance of the power on the other side would go towards assisting the men employed by the primary producer and not the primary producer him-

self. I think we have had experience of that in the past, and so surely as night follows day I think it will be found that, if these dairy boards are constituted and we fix the price of butter on the cost of production, we shall have an agitation amongst members on the other side to place the question before the Commissioner of Prices with the object of reducing the price of butter to the consumer, not caring whether it is going to be a payable figure for the producer or not.

I would like again to congratulate the hon. member for Mirani upon having brought this motion forward. We all owe a debt of thanks to him for the way in which he looks after the primary producer generally. Only the other day he moved the adjournment of the House to discuss a matter of public importance about the sugar industry, and I trust that other hon. members who follow me will support him in his motion.

[12 noon]

Mr. EDWARDS (*Yamango*): There is nothing new from the Country party's point of view in this motion. Ever since the Council of Agriculture has been in existence we have endeavoured to induce the Minister to adopt such a suggestion, and the Minister cannot now claim that the Opposition or the Country party are coming forward with something that has been discussed in other quarters.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There is nothing new whatever about the proposal.

Mr. EDWARDS: I am pleased that the Minister agrees with my statement. When the Primary Producers' Organisation Act was going through the House we used our best endeavour to get the Minister to embody in the Act the suggestion that is being put forward again by the hon. member for Mirani. On one occasion I placed before the Minister the question of obtaining direct representation for the maizegrowers in Southern Queensland on the Council of Agriculture. This was required by a large section of the maizegrowers in Southern Queensland, and two gentlemen were recommended as their district representatives, but the Minister, as Chairman of the Council of Agriculture, stated that they could not be accepted as direct representatives of the maizegrowers, and that he was capable of acting as the representative of the maizegrowers of Queensland. That proves two things. It first of all proves that the Minister was not sincere in his endeavour to extend direct representation to the different industries concerned in this organisation, and, secondly, that in his capacity as Chairman of the Council of Agriculture, he is prepared to use all the political power he possibly can. I hope the hon. gentleman has now reached the stage when he deems it advisable to give every possible assistance to the different industries so that they may organise along proper co-operative lines. That is the only way of keeping the organisation intact, and allowing it to live and develop as it should be developed in Queensland. There is much work for the Council of Agriculture to do in the way of adopting true co-operative principles, such as establishing co-operative distributing companies that have been established with such success in New Zealand, Denmark, and other parts of the world. It is the function of an organisation of this

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kind to establish markets for the various commodities, and it is the duty of those smaller organising bodies, controlled by the main body, to develop along such lines as will benefit their particular industry; but it is also necessary that they should have direct representation on the supreme controlling body.

Any person in Queensland who stated that he was able to represent every industry within the State would be considered a fool, but that is just exactly what is taking place to-day. Such a thing is ridiculous and stupid. No man can possibly be an expert in every industry in the State. The dairying industry, the wheat industry, and many other important industries are big enough to need the best possible brains within the industries to develop those industries along the right lines. I believe that the dairying industry would have been in a much better position to-day if the dairymen had been allowed to continue their old association instead of being swallowed up by the present scheme. They should have been allowed to carry on along the lines which they had previously adopted. I have every consideration and every respect for a practical man like Mr. Plunkett, who has made a life-long study of the dairying industry, and has endeavoured to develop it in the interests of those concerned. I am satisfied that, had the members of the old association been left alone, the dairying industry would have been in a very much more prosperous position than it is to-day. But Mr. Plunkett, who has given so much of his life to the dairying industry, would not for a moment say that he is an expert in every other agricultural industry. The development of each industry is a matter for those who have given their time to such industries, and who are keenly interested in their development. It is for them to see that the industries are developed along the right lines, both from the point of view of organisation and from the point of view of marketing. It should be the function of the main body to lay the foundation for the establishment of markets. The smaller organisations have to organise so that they can produce their commodities at the lowest possible cost and be in a position to hand them over for sale in the markets found for them by the main organising body.

We are in a ridiculous position concerning the handling of our produce as between the producer and the consumer. A few years ago the State Produce Agency was ushered in with a great flourish of trumpets and was hailed as the saviour of the primary producers of this State. What position do we find it in to-day? It is practically in the position of a second-class proprietary concern. If we are going to assist it with the taxpayers' money, then it is only natural that we should look for some benefits from it in the way of marketing; but it has proved itself an utter failure, notwithstanding the amount of assistance that has been given it. Let me show how it has been spooned so that it might keep its head above water. Only last year, when the drought was at its worst and the dairymen of this State were purchasing cotton seed as fodder for their starving stock, they had to purchase such seed through the State Produce Agency. It has been stated that the seed cost £5 per ton. Whether you went to the British Australian Cotton Growers' Association or the Department of Agriculture that same price was

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charged; and it did not matter whether you went to one place or the other, you eventually had to obtain the seed through the State Produce Agency, which collected another 10s. per ton for selling that seed to the unfortunate farmer whose stock was starving. I understand that it is definitely laid down that, if public institutions require produce, they must obtain it from the State Produce Agency. That is entirely wrong, not only from a business point of view, but from a taxpayer's point of view, or any other point of view it is looked at. It is an attempt to keep business for the State Produce Agency which could be obtained for it if it were conducted on strict business lines. The Secretary for Agriculture and the Council for Agriculture would do well to consider the question of closing the doors of the State Produce Agency. It could be merged into what is known in New Zealand, Victoria, and many other places as a co-operative distributing company, and I hope that the Council of Agriculture will see that this is brought about. I do not say that the State Produce Agency should be taken over by the producers on payment of a lump sum for the goodwill, because I do not think the goodwill is worth anything. These things that are hitting one against the other do not react in the interests of the producers. I take it that the hon. member for Mirani is imbued with the idea that it is possible by one general organisation to lay the foundation stone of a rural distributing company which would not only assist the producers of the State to obtain more than they do at present for their products, but also eliminate waste between the producer and consumer and so allow the consumer to receive great benefits.

Mr. SWAYNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS: I hope that the Minister will give this matter careful consideration. It is unfortunate that politics creep into all these organisations and into the business of the State. The official mouthpiece of the Council of Agriculture could do a large amount of good in the interests of the producers, but what do we find? In nine cases out of ten this paper is either boosting up the Minister for something he has done, or the Premier, or someone in connection with the Labour movement in Queensland. I do not say that the paper is political, but doubts are created when one sees such articles as this written to the farmers of Queensland—

"Gentlemen, be upstanding. Charge your glasses and drink to the health of the Hon. W. N. Gillies!"

(Opposition laughter.)

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS: The Minister will, nevertheless, rise in his place and say this is not politics. What better propaganda could be placed before any community than boosting a man under those conditions? Such a dose has been put before the farmers of Queensland that they cannot be got to be upstanding at all. The Minister has not done that much for the primary producers that they should be upstanding and drink his health.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order! The hon. member is not dealing with the motion.

Mr. EDWARDS: I am just coming to it. I hope that, when the Minister is giving consideration to the motion, no petty party spirit will be introduced. The second part of the motion appears to me to be just and reasonable. It does not seem to be fair, as the leader of the Opposition pointed out, that levies should be imposed on the producers from one source, and then other levies be imposed from another source. The load of levies and taxation is weighing very heavily on the producers until it is becoming unbearable. That is largely responsible for driving the people from the country districts into the large centres of population in search of better conditions. These are serious questions, and I hope that the Minister will not view them lightly. I hope that the present organisation will be made better than it is to-day so that the primary producers will be able to develop their organisations, not only from the point of view of handling and obtaining the best returns from their produce, but so that they will be able to reach the consumer with little expense and a minimum of loss.

At 12.18 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. SWAYNE: Is the Minister not game to speak?

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): The most important matter in the organisation of the producer is to get 100 per cent. of co-operation. It would be idle to say that 100 per cent. of co-operation has been obtained in the dairying industry, which is only organised to the extent of about 85 per cent. The object of this organisation scheme is to obtain a full percentage of co-operation. It is impossible to believe that we shall revert to the old methods of distribution, but any scheme to be effective must be capable of producing results. Neither the Minister, the Council for Agriculture, nor anyone else will contend that effective results have been obtained up to the present. As I said in a previous debate, the only hope we have of achieving that end is to have a basis of organisation which will bring results that have so far not been obtained. I cannot conceive—and the producers want to get this right into their heads—how it is possible for an organisation on the existing lines to be of any service whatever to them. Industrial organisation is on the basis of the different crafts. It would be absurd for the carpenters and printers to be organised together. No one would attempt to bring them together, yet under the present Primary Producers' Organisation Act the sugar-growers and the pineapple producers are combined in the one organisation. The absurdity of that is realised when it is remembered that sugar is the chief necessity of the pineapple grower in order that he may compete on the overseas market. That is the most important thing so far as that industry is concerned. Therefore they must be the natural enemy of the sugar-growers. When I say the natural enemy I do not wish to say that they are at enmity with each other, but they want the sugar as cheaply as possible to preserve their fruit. If any agreement were arrived at for the stabilisation of the fruit industry, it would only be an act of generosity on the part of the sugar people, and not because they cared for the advancement of the other industry. The banana-growers

do not care a rap about the sugar-growers, but merely want to get sugar at a cheap rate. Throughout the different organisations there must be similar trouble. All dairying and all that pertains to dairying must be organised under the one head. Fruit-growers, while they must have separate sections, must be organised under the one head. Sugar-growers, to be effective, must be organised under one head.

If we fail to observe this we have overlapping and that entails excessive expense. I do not care what scheme comes into operation, if it is going to receive from the producer a larger proportion of capital than he is putting into the industry, it is going to fail. The hon. member for Mirani has gone into this matter thoroughly, and to a big extent the producers must be indebted to him for the very thoughtful way he has put it before the House. We must remember that, when the scheme of organisation was first suggested by the Premier, the fruit-growers were absolutely well off. A very complete organisation had taken place, but had not reached the very highest possible level. All thoughtful men taking part in that organisation must admit that there was need for a certain amount of compulsion. We know that all schemes that are worthy of consideration need some form of compulsion. We sadly recognise that so far as industrial organisation is concerned, we know that white-anting and black-legging and all that sort of thing takes place, and I do not know any class of people among whom this is more evident than the farmers. The reason is that they have not the facilities for coming in contact with each other, as have other classes of people. Take dairying. If some big movement were taking place to organise dairying and the system was a voluntary one and the co-operative society at Roma did not approve of it—they would not be in touch with the scheme to the extent they should be—they would detrimentally effect the grand organisation. When the depression occurred two years ago in the dairying industry, and when they had practically formed a voluntary pool, we found that one big district was undermining the scheme to a great extent and that the scheme was being crippled. We must come down to this—that, whatever organisation takes place, there must be some form of compulsion.

Another thing that we must recognise is that any scheme on which we are spending time, money, and energy must be representative of the people. So far as the present scheme of organisation of primary producers is concerned the Local Producers' Associations are supported by all classes of people. I am one who took considerable interest in the organisation of Local Producers' Associations. In my district we found that to get quorums at meetings we had to receive into our ranks all classes.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. WARREN: That was absolutely essential. Not only farmers, but lengthsmen and workers on the roads are taking part in the Local Producers' Associations in my electorate at present. If they are not successful, it is because of the lack of interest that is brought about through the inclusion of all branches of industry in one organisation. They are not even as interesting as our

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progress meetings were. I am not blaming the organisation altogether for this. I am going to blame the farmers as well as the organisation. The organisation did not give that incentive to organise which should exist. In any number of districts meetings have lapsed because no one is interested. That points to the conclusion that it is absolutely essential that something should be done now, and that something must be done on the lines advocated by the hon. member for Mirani, so that the primary producers—not because they are in a particularly bad way at present—may organise, and that the organisation shall exist for all time. Then when we are exporting butter we shall not be under the thumb of exporters or agents, but we shall be controlling our exports ourselves. The only way for that to be done is for these co-operative factories or associations to have one voice. We know perfectly well that until we are 100 per cent. organised it is hopeless for us to think that we are going to have any weight on the London market. When we are 100 per cent. organised we can speak with the voice of the producers of Australia and say what is going to happen. Until this is done all the schemes of Mr. Bruce, the Prime Minister of Australia, and everybody else, are not going to be effective, I do not care what they may be. They may give a bonus for every pound of butter, but that is only going to stave off the evil hour. We have to be organised like the Labour movement to-day. I give the Labour movement great credit for its organisation. It is that organisation and not this Government that is ruling Queensland to-day. If we had that organisation, we need not necessarily crush the consumer, but we are going to say, "Pay us a fair price and a living wage, the same as the labour people of to-day are paid."

That is all we ask for and all we are fighting for. We are asking for a scheme which is not theoretical, but something which is practical and capable of being carried out. The method that is being proposed is exactly the method that was proposed two years ago. When the fruitgrowers were organised they found it necessary to organise each section separately—pineapple growers, citrus growers and so on, each under its own head, and working through separate channels.

That was found essential by the people who were the best organised in Queensland at that time. The only danger to their organisation was the lack of compulsion. It shows conclusively that organisation is necessary to bring about better conditions. We have only asked for better conditions. We have not asked for anything grand so far as the farmer is concerned. No doubt the farmer will always be the under-dog. I do not think we are going to bring about the millennium for the farmer. We are only asking for something to [12.30 p.m.] better his conditions. We are asking for this organisation so that the farmer, instead of being the victim, will be allowed to come into his own. He will then be a better asset to the State and he will be happier right through. I do not for a moment say that the Council of Agriculture and these organisers have not done their very best under the circumstances. I know that some members of that body have gone out of their way to do all they possibly can to better the conditions of the farmers,

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but their power to do good work is limited under present conditions. They have not been able to do what they wanted to do, and, unless we can point to something being done, we run the risk of losing the organisations that we have got. If we are going to lose the bit of punch that we have got, we shall go back to a worse condition than ever we were in before. Any thinking person who has studied the problem of producing must support this resolution, which is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. I have very much pleasure in endorsing the remarks of hon. members on this side and in giving all the support I possibly can to this movement.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Pacham*): The hon. member for Mirani who moved this motion, interjected just before the last speaker commenced, that I was not game to say anything. It is not a question of a lack of courage. Very little need be said, because in the speeches which have been delivered, there seems to be a general recognition that it is a question, as the leader of the Opposition said, of who will get in first. The hon. member for Nanango said there was nothing new about the proposal. I agree with the hon. member. There is nothing new proposed in the speeches, and it is a pity that members of the Opposition, who talk so much about setting an example, should not endeavour to sink party politics. The Premier in his first speech, when launching the scheme, said that politics could not be kept out of it but that party politics should be. Party politics should be kept out of this movement because it is a movement for the benefit of the whole of the State. Anything that affects the farmers must naturally benefit the whole community, because we are an agricultural community dependent on the wealth produced from the soil for the maintenance of all human life. It is passing strange that quite a number of members on the other side have admitted that they have taken an active part in the organisation, yet they complain bitterly about myself, as Secretary for Agriculture, and as the link between the Government and the Council of Agriculture—which is the Farmers' Parliament—being an interested party. At the same time they admitted that they have been actively associated with the organisation—more power to them. I am only sorry that they did not take a bigger interest and a more honest interest in the bringing about of this organisation. The hon. member for Mirani, like every other hon. member of this House, has a perfect right, on private members' day, to exercise his rights under the Standing Orders. I think there is no member in this House that has exercised those rights and privileges to a greater extent than the hon. member. At one time it was tramways to rural districts. Another time it was the great sugar industry, and now it is a question—rather belated—of suggesting amendments to legislation now on the statute-book—brought in by this party—for the organisation of the farmers. As I said yesterday, the Primary Producers' Organisation Act, which I was responsible for bringing into this House, provides for all that the hon. member wishes. It has a broad enough charter to enable everything to be done. It was anticipated at the time that sectional organisation, or organisation on a commodity basis, would be neces-

sary. The hon. member is always endeavouring to use the axe on anything that the Labour Government have brought in. I remember the late Mr. P. J. McDermott—a gentleman for whom I had the very highest regard, and who was a very keen observer of human nature—in discussing with me certain members of this House—I was Acting Premier at the time—said that he first met the hon. member for Mirani some thirty years ago and that he was carrying an axe, and, he said, "He has been carrying an axe ever since." I said, "What do you mean—an axe for the Labour party? It is not the kind of axe I used when I was on the spring-board chopping down trees. It is not a good Collin's axe or a good Kelly's axe, but a blackfellow's tomahawk, and it will not do very much harm so far as the people are concerned." The hon. member very carefully revises his speeches and has them published in the Mackay "Mercury," which is very good to him, and many people living in that electorate have said to me from time to time, "Mirani is the only dark spot on the fair escutcheon of North Queensland, but we will give the old chap another chance. See what he said in Parliament, in regard to the organisation of farmers! See what he said about sugar! He is a great champion of this district, and we will give him another try." I do not blame the hon. member for working the parish pump. Any country member who does not work the parish pump judiciously is not doing his duty to his party, and he may not remain very long in the House.

Mr. EDWARDS interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No one suggested that the hon. member had brains. He certainly has a voice, and that voice annoys me at times and I wish he would be kind enough to keep quiet.

Mr. EDWARDS: You interject enough when we are speaking.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I will give him one or two on the solar plexus before I sit down—using that term in a political sense. When I was down in Victoria I found they had a "Grievances Day" in the Victorian Parliament, and the present Premier invited myself and a Minister from New South Wales to come and take a seat. They did not seat us behind the Speaker's chair, as we do here. They were more generous, and brought us right into the Chamber and sat us down almost in front of the Speaker to listen to members working the parish pump on what is called "Grievances Day." We have the same thing here on "Private Members' " day. There is no doubt members did work the parish pump. One hon. member, who had been in Parliament a long time, spoke about the scenery and the wonderful potentialities of his district, and complained that they were not being developed. I do not know what we would do without that word "potentialities." I suppose when his party was in power he kept very quiet. However, it is the privilege of the Opposition to criticise and claim credit wherever they possibly can. I am not concerned about that. What I am concerned about is to make a success of this organisation.

Let me come to the question before the Chamber, which is a proposal to amend the Act to allow the Council of Agriculture

to function, or for the farmers to function on a commodity basis. I repeat again that the Act contemplated that; that the Premier pointed it out in his Laidley speech; and that I pointed it out when introducing the Bill in Parliament and in other speeches. I have said several times that the first step was to organise the farmers of Queensland. The workers themselves could do nothing with regard to legislation—with regard to political action, or with regard to getting an Arbitration Act on the statute-book until they became organised. They did not deserve to. The same thing applies to the farmers in some degree. When it is remembered that the total farming or rural population of Queensland only represents 16.84 per cent. of the population, and that the industrial population represents 12.72 per cent.—showing that the farmers represent a little over 16 per cent. of the total population of this State—surely no one can argue that the farmers of this State should not first of all be organised into one solid body with the Council of Agriculture—which is the Farmers' Parliament—to speak with one voice on behalf of the whole of the industries.

Mr. KELSO: One big union.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: One big union. The hon. member for Enoggera says that it is impossible to get the farmers into one big union. It is a bad thing if the farmers, when they only represent 16 per cent. of the people of this State, cannot organise themselves into one big union. Representing 16 per cent. of the people only they have a poor chance of otherwise putting forward their own case. There are many things that are common to all the farmers. That is the reason why the Labour Government recognised that the first step was to organise them into one solid national organisation, and then to allow them to function and organise their industry on a commodity basis. We recognised that before we started to organise the farmers at all by giving the wheat-growers the wheat pool, and sugar-growers their sugar pool with the co-operation of the Federal Government, without which it was not possible, and last session giving the fruitgrowers a special Act to allow them to market their fruit on a commodity basis. With all this talk that you cannot get farmers into one big union, it appears to me to be a policy of "Divide and conquer." We know that all through the ages it has been the policy to keep farmers separate and not allow them to come together and organise for their own benefit. That has been a great advantage to political parties, who at election times are able to go round and tell them they are the farmers' friends and get them to vote for them. The farmers should be organised into one solid body and be able to speak—not with a Queensland voice but an Australian voice. Here again is the inconsistency of the party opposite. When I was introducing a Bill to organise the farmers they said, "It is no use organising the Queensland farmers; you must organise the Australian farmers."

Mr. KELSO: They do not vote Labour, anyhow.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hon. members opposite waited for the Government to take action; they could not decide what the first step was, but they were—

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like the scientist who endeavoured to find out whether the egg or the chicken came first. The criticism levelled against this party when we started to encourage cotton-growing was that we had no right to encourage the farmers to grow cotton without providing ginneries. If we had established ginneries first, it would have been said that we should have organised cotton-growing before starting ginneries. They are not consistent by any means in their attitude with regard to this important question. The Government were wise in starting and organising the farmers first. Whether the nineteen representatives who are supposed to be the cream of the farming community who have been sitting at the table of the Council of Agriculture during the last two years have made the most of their opportunities is a matter upon which there may be some difference of opinion; but, if they have not made the best of their opportunities, it is a very sad reflection on the farming community, which has been financed by the Government to the extent of £60,000 to enable them to organise. That is the first step—for the farmers to organise and become one solid national organisation. The next step is that all the various products shall be marketed on a commodity basis. There is nothing new about that; in fact, it was anticipated, because the present Act provides for it, and there is no necessity for any amendment of the existing legislation. The Act provides for that, and it is already provided in that charter for produce to be marketed on a commodity basis.

The hon. member for Enoggera said he was quite satisfied that the man on the land could not be organised into one big union or organisation. Various speakers who have got up have certainly not paid farmers a great compliment. Of course I know there is a great deal of truth in the statement that the fruitgrower does not care a hang for the sugar-grower, and the sugar-grower does not care anything for the dairy farmer. But, if that spirit is allowed to obtain, it is a case of "God help the farmers!" If the farmers are not able to rise above that petty provincial spirit—that, because a man is a sugar-grower he has no concern for a dairy farmer, or because he happens to be a dairy farmer he has nothing in common with a sugar-grower—if that is the spirit that is to be encouraged and put forward by members of Parliament, it will be very bad for the farmers. The farmers say that they have many things in common; that it is necessary for them to be organised in one organisation; first of all, for the purpose of putting their general claims before the Parliaments of the States and Commonwealth, and then to organise for marketing purposes on a commodity basis. To show that there is nothing new about this, I am going to set out the conditions of the various schemes which have been submitted during the last few months. These schemes for reorganisation of the Council of Agriculture and the District Councils have been before the Council of Agriculture on more than one occasion.

Mr. CLAYTON: I suppose you admit that it is necessary.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If I did not think it was necessary, should I have taken the steps which I have taken?

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Why would the Council of Agriculture have put forward the various schemes of reorganisation? There is nothing new about it. Last session I took the first step by passing a Bill enabling the fruitgrowers to market their fruit on a commodity basis. That was a special measure. There were special reasons why it could not be done in the ordinary way under the existing machinery. It was a drastic measure, I admit, but it has been fairly successful, notwithstanding the steps taken to white-wash it by different interested parties, some of whom are to be found in this House—middlemen who are alarmed that, if the farmers become organised and undertake the marketing of their own products, their living will be gone. They are making handsome profits out of the farmers, and naturally they will do everything possible to prevent the successful consummation of this scheme.

A small spirit has been engendered during the debate to the effect that the fruitgrower should not regard the sugar-grower as his friend. I am satisfied that, had that spirit not existed, we would not have had the difficulties we have experienced during recent years to get a fair deal for the sugar producer. The proper spirit would be for the sugar-grower to assist in passing the legislation for the fruitgrower, and to say, "Come into our organisation; we will help you to get a fair prices board to deal with the jam manufacturers who are exploiting you, the same as the sugar millers exploited us. Come into our organisation, and we will assist you, because we expect you to get a reasonable price for your fruit." In the same way, the more the fruitgrowers get the better will it be for the butter producers. They are all inter-dependent and concerned with the well-being of each other. This petty spirit which is shown by saying that the dairy farmers get tired of sitting round the table and listening to the fruitgrowers' complaints, I have seen evidence of, myself; but I have endeavoured to overcome that spirit by pointing out on every possible occasion that the farmers of Queensland must be organised in one solid body, and must work together and recognise the rights and the good points of each other. This spirit reminds me of a verse I read about 1911, which appeared in the Sydney "Bulletin," dealing with the "State Righter"—

"I have seen you rise up at a banquet,

A pitiful sight to see,

Your great white weskit bulging,

With tucker and loyalty.

Of the great and glorious Empire,

I have heard you yammering hard,

And watched you drop with a sickening

flop

To the rights of our backyard."

(Laughter.) So it is with the Opposition. They talk in one breath about organisation of the farmer of Australia, and in the next breath they get up in this Chamber and say that the farmers cannot be organised in one body, because the fruitgrower does not care a hang for the dairy farmer, or the dairy farmer does not care a hang about the maize-grower, and so on. That is a libel on the farmers of Queensland. The farmers should rise above that spirit and recognise that if they are to get a fair deal, they will have to organise in one united body.

Let me again point out that there is no occasion for the motion of the hon. member

for Mirani, because, from my knowledge of the Primary Producers' Organisation Act, there is no need to amend the Act at all. A couple of days ago I gave the dates on which action was definitely taken by the Council of Agriculture in this matter, and they appeared in "Hansard." If necessary, they can be repeated. They show that the first step taken was on the 28th of February this year, when a proposal was submitted by the Director of the Council of Agriculture.

Mr. SWAYNE: Our party moved four days before that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am saying that that was the first definite move by the Council itself towards reorganisation.

Mr. CLAYTON: The hon. member for Nanango advocated it in 1922.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The graph which I hold in my hand, issued by the Council of Agriculture, indicates how the Council can be organised on both a commodity basis and a local basis and a standing committee representing every section of the agricultural industry can be associated with the Council of Agriculture in an advisory capacity. I agree with the hon. member on the other side—I think the leader of the Opposition, with whom I think I agreed by way of interjection—that, in my opinion, there need be no occasion for the indefinite continuance of the District Councils. I think that, when the proper organisation on a commodity basis exists and every branch of agriculture has its own marketing body, there will be no need to continue the expense of maintaining the District Councils. I think that the money spent by the Council of Agriculture and the District Councils generally has been spent in a very lavish way. Too much money has been spent for the results achieved, and the Federal interests will have to come in in the near future if the thing is to be a success. The representatives of the farmers sitting at the table of the Council of Agriculture are in a majority, and, if there has been extravagance and any waste of money, they must take their share of responsibility. They know how hard it is to earn money, and they know that in course of time the Government will cease to find the money and they will have to find it themselves; and it is for them to set the example of economy and see that the money is properly spent.

I just want to submit briefly, if I have the time, the various schemes put forward by the Director of the Council of Agriculture. The third scheme is the scheme which has been sent to the District Council for their final definite approval. (Opposition interruption.) Of course, if hon. members opposite do not want to hear, they need not listen, but the people in the country wish to understand what the position is. The scheme favoured by the Council of Agriculture has been submitted to the District Councils for their consideration. They can, if they wish, send it on to the Local Producers' Association, and in course of time it is expected to be dealt with and returned in time for decision at the November meeting of the Council of Agriculture. The five schemes submitted were as follow:—

"Method No. 1.

"Substitution for District Councils of

sectional authorities representative of industries on the commodity basis, by—

- (a) The recognition of elected producers' boards administering affairs in an organised industry as the recognised authority in that section.
- (b) Election of an Advisory Board by producers in the case of an unorganised industry.
- (c) Constitution of the Council of Agriculture by the nomination of representatives from Marketing Boards and Advisory Boards."

"Method No. 2.

"Institution of the sectional or commodity basis instead of the district basis through elimination of District Councils and making of provision for the sectional system by—

- (a) In the case of an organised industry the setting up of an Advisory Board, half the members of which would be elected direct by the producers in that organised industry and the remaining half by nomination of the Board which the producers in that section elect to control their marketing.
- (b) In the case of an unorganised industry, election direct by the producers in that industry of all the members of an Advisory Board.
- (c) The Council of Agriculture to be constituted by the nomination of representatives of the Advisory Boards.'

The following scheme (3) is the scheme favoured by the Council of Agriculture and has been sent to the various District Councils, and will be finally dealt with, I hope, at the November meeting of the council:—

"Method No. 3.

"A combination of the district and commodity basis of organisation by the retention of nineteen District Councils as at present, but with provision for the sectional principle either under Method No. 1 or No. 2."

"Method No. 4.

"Same as Method No. 3, but with provision either for a reduction in the number of District Councils or for a reduction in the number of members of existing District Councils."

"Method No. 5.

"Adherence to the district basis without extension of the commodity principle by retaining District Councils and the Council of Agriculture as at present."

Those briefly are the schemes, and here is the graph setting out what the scheme really means and how it will operate, if effect is given to it by the Council of Agriculture, as I hope.

Mr. CLAYTON: Why do you not put it in "Hansard?"

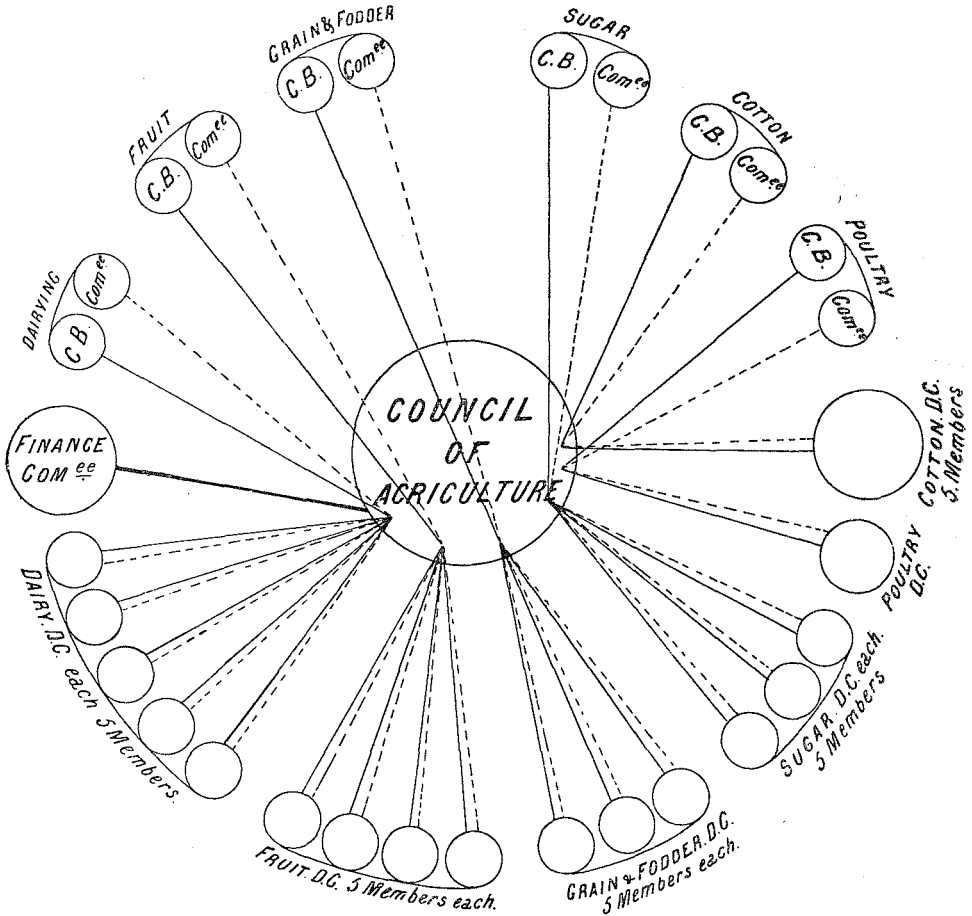
The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I think it should be printed in "Hansard." It is a very fine idea. I do not know whether a graph like that can be reproduced in "Hansard," but, if so, I would like permission for that purpose, because it will enable the farmers—and a small section of the farmers read "Hansard"—to see in advance what is proposed.

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The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the graph be reproduced in "Hansard?"

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I thank hon. members. Of course, it can be reduced in size, but it will help to explain what I have outlined to the House.



NOTES.

- C.B.—Commodity Board or Marketing Body.
- Committee.—Standing Committee of the Council of Agriculture.
- Cotton D.C.—The whole of Queensland to be regarded as the Cotton Committee.
- Poultry D.C.—The whole of Queensland to be regarded as the Poultry Committee.

It does not necessarily follow that the personnel of Standing Committees and Commodity Boards shall be the same, but both bodies will be elected by the District Councils.

In conclusion, I would just like to express the hope that the leader of the Opposition really meant what he said. He said it really resolved itself into a question of who advocated this scheme first.

Mr. VOWLES: He did not. He said it did not matter who advocated it first.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not a bit concerned about that or the reason for it, but, as an old farmer myself and knowing something of the pioneering

and hardship and suffering of the man on the land, I am concerned at anything which is said inside this Chamber or outside of it—anything that is done or anything that is written—that is likely to injure or tend to interfere with the success of this great scheme. I am satisfied that the other States will follow our example—and there is an indication that they will—and that in course of time we shall have an Australian-wide organisation whereby the farmers of Australia will be able to talk upon matters

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of common interest, and whereby also the various industries can be organised on a sectional basis for marketing purposes, because we know that in the marketing of the product we cannot expect the dairy farmer to really understand all about the marketing of pineapples or of strawberries. We do, however, expect him to recognise his brother farmers' claims. We recognise that it is only by the organisation of the whole of the farming community of this great Commonwealth that farmers can expect to be heard in the councils of the State and the Commonwealth. Too long have they been separate, and too long have they been divided by political factions and disagreement. (Opposition interruption.) The time is fast arriving when the other States should follow the example of Queensland.

Mr. EDWARDS: Sit down and let us have a vote!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope that, when that time comes, the farming community will be organised throughout the Commonwealth, and will be placed on a sound footing.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question (Mr. Swayne's motion) put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 18.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Logan
" Bell	" Maxwell
" Clayton	" Morgan
" Corser	" Nott
" Deacon	" Roberts
" Edwards	" Sizer
" Kelso	" Swayne
" Kerr	" Vowles
" King	" Warren

Tellers: Mr. Clayton and Mr. Peacock.

NOES, 32.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Hartley
" Brennan	" Hynes
" Bruce	" Jones
" Bulcock	" Kirwan
" Collins	" Land
" Conroy	" Larcombe
" Cooper, F. A.	" Lloyd
" Cooper, W.	" Mullan
" Dash	" Pollock
" Dunstan	" Riordan
" Farrell	" Ryan
" Foley	" Smith
" Gilday	" Stopford
" Gillies	" Theodore
" Gledson	" Winstanley
" Hanson	" Wright

Tellers: Mr. Farrell and Mr. Wright.

AYES.	PAIR.	NOES.
Mr. Appel		Mr. Wilson

Resolved in the negative.

[2 p.m.]

CITY OF SOUTH BRISBANE IMPROVEMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

HON. M. J. KIRWAN, (Brisbane): I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to authorise the Council of the City of South Brisbane to take property for the purpose of enlarging, extending, and widening roads, and otherwise improving the said city, and for other purposes; and for dealing with property so taken, and for other purposes."

I might briefly explain for the information of members of the Committee that the Bill will give powers to the City of South Brisbane similar to those which are at present exercised by the Brisbane City Council in the matter of resuming property for street-widening purposes. Hon. members are doubtless aware that the South Brisbane City Council are at present engaged in city improvements, primarily in the direction of concreting Stanley and Melbourne streets. They are anxious to take advantage of the opportunity to widen the streets where it is considered necessary, but they find that their present powers are somewhat restricted. They have therefore asked the Government to extend to them the same powers as are enjoyed by the Council of the City of Brisbane. The urgency of the measure is probably due to the fact that the contract for concreting the streets, which was let by the previous Council, has now commenced. The powers are necessary so that the resumptions can be undertaken and carried into effect to enable the streets to be widened at the same time as they are being concreted. The Bill does not interfere in any way with the question of compensation. That will be determined on the ordinary principles which govern transactions of this kind.

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.

HON. M. J. KIRWAN (Brisbane) 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.

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

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

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

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to make better provision for the instruction of Blind, Deaf, and Dumb Children in Queensland."

The Bill does not require very much consideration. The State already demands that normal children shall be educated up to a standard that will fit them for the battle of life; but those who require education most are children who are blind, deaf and dumb, and who are at the mercy of their parents as to whether they shall receive any education at all. For such afflicted children we have a splendid educational institution in Queensland—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: The Blind, Deaf and Dumb Mission have been striving for years by conciliatory methods to try and get parents to bring their children to that institution. They have failed in some cases, and the object of this Bill is to endeavour to force the parents in such cases to give their children an opportunity of

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acquiring the necessary education to fit them for the battle of life.

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 HOME SECRETARY 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.

SOUTH BRISBANE-KYOGLE-GRAFTON RAILWAY AGREEMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*): The purpose of this Bill is to ratify an agreement arrived at between the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of Queensland and New South Wales, respecting the construction of the Grafton-Kyogle-South Brisbane Railway. It had its genesis in certain resolutions passed at the Premiers' Conference in 1920, when it was decided to appoint a committee of experts to report on the unification of the railway gauges throughout Australia. Experts were duly appointed, and the questions submitted to them included the following—

- (1) Which gauge should be adopted as the standard gauge of the Commonwealth;
- (2) Cost of unifying the gauges;
- (3) Order in which the work should be carried out;
- (4) Other considerations incidental thereto.

The Royal Commission duly reported to the Federal Government in September, 1921, and the report was considered by the Premiers' Conference which was held in November of the same year, when it was resolved, *inter alia*—

“That the adoption of a uniform gauge is, in the opinion of this Conference, essential to the development and safety of the Commonwealth.

“That the Commission's recommendation of a 4 feet 8½ inch gauge is accepted.”

The Commission's recommendations included the following—

“(a) Action be taken to secure a gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches on a railway line from Brisbane to Fremantle;

“(b) That all railway lines of 5 feet 3 inch gauge now owned by the said States be converted to the standard gauge.”

The estimated cost of carrying out that work was £21,600,000, including provision for rolling-stock. The Commission also estimated that it would cost £57,000,000 to carry out the following work:—

“(a) Convert to the standard gauge all the railway lines of 5 feet 3 inch gauge and 3 feet 6 inch gauge now owned by the said five States;

“(b) To make alignments and deviations for the purpose of providing a better main line between Brisbane and Fremantle;

“(c) Adjustments of rolling-stock.”

It will be generally agreed to-day that the policy of the Federal Government and of the State Governments should be one of concentration upon unifying the gauge of the main line between Brisbane and Perth. The proposals contained in the £57,000,000 estimate, to my mind, are not within the realm of immediate possibilities.

Mr. TAYLOR: Who were the Commissioners? Who was the Australian representative?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Their names are contained in the Report of the Royal Commission which was presented to the Federal Government. There was at least one expert brought from overseas. The report will give the information.

An agreement has not been reached amongst the various States concerned as to the unification of the railway gauges throughout Australia, so the initiative has been taken by the Commonwealth Government, the Queensland Government, and the New South Wales Government, and that is the real point of the agreement and the real point of the motion which I am now discussing.

Without robbing any other persons of credit for what they have done in connection with this national work, I wish to pay a tribute to our Premier who has worked so strenuously for this scheme, which means so much to Australia, and so much to Queensland in particular. As far back as 22nd July last, the “Daily Telegraph” stated—

“Mr. Theodore is to be commended for a statesmanlike attitude on the proposed agreement between the Commonwealth and the States for one railway gauge on trunk lines. As for the new line to link up Brisbane with Sydney, by way of the North Coast District in New South Wales, on the middle gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches, no one objects, but, on the contrary, everyone approves.”

It mentioned in particular the section which is the subject of the motion before the House.

The particulars of the work which the agreement embraces are as follows:—

- (a) Construction of a railway of standard gauge between Kyogle in New South Wales and South Brisbane in Queensland so as to connect Sydney and South Brisbane by means of a railway of standard gauge;
- (b) The making and relaying of the existing railway between Kyogle and Grafton in New South Wales so as to bring that railway up to an approved standard;
- (c) Adjustment of rolling-stock—

The estimated cost of that work is £3,500,000, and the cost is to be allocated as follows:—One-fifth to be borne by the Commonwealth Government, and four-fifths by the five mainland States; but until Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia come into the scheme the Commonwealth Government will bear their contributions in addition to its own contribution. Queensland's share was

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estimated at £410,000. The four-fifths cost has to be borne by the five mainland States on a per capita basis. When the Commission reported in 1921 that estimate was as mentioned, but there will be some slight adjustment of that, but the estimate is substantially correct.

The value of the work to be carried out in Queensland is estimated at £1,848,000. The length to be constructed in Queensland is 70 miles; in New South Wales 27 miles; and the relaying and grading between Kyogle and Grafton 85 miles, or a total of 182 miles.

The financing of the scheme is important. The Commonwealth Government have agreed to find the whole of the money in the first instance. That is the important point I want to emphasise. That money is available for the purpose of carrying out the work under this agreement, and will not be available for any other purpose, so that this proposal does not in the slightest degree affect the internal policy of the Government of Queensland.

The repayment to the Commonwealth is particularised in the agreement. Money that is made available by the Commonwealth Government, other than loan money, is repayable on a date to be fixed by the Treasurers of the Commonwealth, New South Wales, and Queensland respectively. If the money is advanced from loan, it is repayable on the date the Commonwealth loan matures. A sinking fund is provided of 10s. per £100 or part thereof. The interest on the sinking fund will accumulate and will be portion of the reimbursement money which will be payable to the Commonwealth. The rate of interest will be as follows:—

On money advanced otherwise than from a loan, the nominal rate of interest payable by the Commonwealth in respect of the last preceding loan raised by the Commonwealth.

If from a loan, the rate of interest payable by the Commonwealth in respect of such loan as prescribed in clauses 10 and 12.

The allocation of revenue will be on the following basis:—

Working expenses will be a first charge. Excess of revenue over working expenses will be applied in the following order:—

Payment to the Commonwealth of interest on money provided by Commonwealth as the quota of Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia.

Payment to the Commonwealth of interest on the balance of the money provided by the Commonwealth for New South Wales and Queensland.

Any further excess will be paid to New South Wales and Queensland in proportions to be mutually determined. Provided, however, that, if the excess of revenue is not sufficient to pay the whole of the working expenses and the interest due to the Commonwealth for its contribution for Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia, and the interest due by Queensland and New South Wales, then Queensland and New South Wales will pay the interest on the loan advanced by the Commonwealth to Queensland and New South Wales in the manner provided by clause 10 of the agreement.

The management of the railway under this scheme will be vested in a Railway Council, which will comprise the Commissioner for

Railways for the Commonwealth, the Chief Commissioner for Railways for New South Wales and the Commissioner for Railways for Queensland. No matter shall be decided by the Council unless each member is present either personally or by his duly appointed deputy. The powers of the Council and their duties are specified in the agreement.

Now I would like to say a few words about the advantage of this proposal and the justification for it. The work is of national importance, and is necessary for the safety and development of the Commonwealth, but, apart from that aspect, it is a first-rate proposition for Queensland, and I want for a moment to view the question from the Queensland viewpoint

I want to emphasise the fact that the scheme will increase the wealth production of the State. A new province will practically be annexed to Queensland by this agreement. The rich Northern Rivers country of New South Wales will be made available to Queensland markets and Queensland ports. In effect, it will add to Queensland the rich Kyogle district, where there is a very great wealth of timber. I was a member of the Royal Commission on Public Works which in 1916, under my colleague the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, recommended the construction of the line from South Brisbane to Kyogle, and I can speak from personal experience of the immense timber wealth between South Brisbane and Kyogle, which one witness estimated at 500,000,000 superficial feet. Allowing for the fact that that amount has been reduced, the balance is still large. There are enormous areas of timbers in great variety between Brisbane and Kyogle, which will be made available to the Queensland people by this railway. It was estimated in 1916 that the value of the timber alone would be greater than the whole cost of this scheme.

There is very little Crown land which will be opened up by this railway on the Queensland side. Most of it is freehold or in process of alienation, but hon. members know the richness of this district, its ample rainfall, and its never-failing streams. In 1916 the Royal Commission estimated that the district between South Brisbane and the border was capable of supporting three times the population it was then carrying. Much of the land may be put under cultivation, and the result would be increased production and prosperity.

[2.30 p.m.]

Another argument in favour of the line is the saving of time and in distance on the journey between Brisbane and Sydney. At the present time the distance between Brisbane and Sydney by rail is 715 miles, and when the railway is constructed via Kyogle the distance will be 608 miles, or a saving of 117 miles. At the present time the schedule time of the Brisbane mail train between Brisbane and Sydney is twenty-seven hours twenty minutes, and that will be reduced to twenty-two hours, effecting a saving of five hours twenty minutes. The reduction of the distance by over 100 miles and the saving of over five hours in time between the two capitals is an important consideration, and will mean a great deal to trade, commerce, and industry in the two States. That is a substantial justification for the proposal from the viewpoint of Queensland and New South Wales.

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At the present time, owing to the break of gauge, border transportation is very costly, and imposes a penalty upon producers, and the business community generally of Queensland and New South Wales. The difficulties of transportation are great, and the advantages that will accrue from through communication on a uniform gauge will be substantial. I know that from a railway viewpoint the difficulties of border transportation are increasing and are becoming very expensive. I know that rolling-stock which could be conveniently and profitably used in other parts of Queensland is detained at the border. That is very undesirable, and means a great economic loss. On the adoption of this agreement and the consummation of the work that it involves serious detention of rolling-stock will be avoided, and the heavy expense in that regard incurred by the Railway Department will be reduced.

Again, from the viewpoint of the fruit industry there will be an enormous gain.

Mr. MOORE: By fruit coming up or going down?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Queensland sends an enormous quantity of fruit yearly to New South Wales. The farmers and settlers endorse this proposal, and have on more than one occasion discussed the necessity for it.

Mr. MOORE: Did the people of New South Wales endorse it because they desired to send their fruit up here?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We send an enormous amount of fruit to New South Wales.

Mr. TAYLOR: You will still have to tranship at South Brisbane instead of at Wallangarra.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not only a matter of railway cost. The farmers' representatives have pointed out that, when a perishable product like fruit is sent South, it is sometimes delayed and damaged, and its value is greatly reduced. All that can be reduced by the quick, direct, and satisfactory service that will be available to the Queensland fruit producers.

Mr. TAYLOR: You will still have to tranship the fruit from the North Coast district?

The PREMIER: Yes, at South Brisbane.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will not be so expensive as at Wallangarra.

In times of drought there will be a substantial advantage to Queensland, New South Wales, and the whole of the Commonwealth. The advantage will be very great to the State in the transportation of starving stock and fodder when certain parts of the Commonwealth are not so seriously affected as other parts. No mean advantage will be gained in that direction.

Ultimately there will be a uniform gauge from Brisbane to Perth, and the flow of traffic then will be more convenient and satisfactory and less costly than at present. The case for a uniform gauge has gone beyond the point of argument. It is necessary—as the agreement sets out—in the interests of safety and development of the Commonwealth. A few days ago the Brisbane "Courier" mentioned that one of tragedies of the Australian railway system was that the respective States adopted differ-

ent gauges. It was a great error, and this is one of the first Bills—it is a very important one—to remedy that unfortunate weakness in our railway system.

The history of the agitation for a uniform railway gauge dates back many years. I recollect reading that in 1883 the late Mr. Eddy, who was then Chief Commissioner for Railways in New South Wales, recommended to the then Premier, the late Sir Henry Parkes, the desirability and urgency of a uniform railway gauge system in Australia. Mr. Eddy apparently had great foresight and prophetic vision when he made that recommendation. Various conferences have sat from time to time since that date to deal with this important question; but it was not until 1920 that practical steps were taken to give definite shape to the proposal which has materialised in this agreement.

I had the pleasure and honour of representing the Queensland Government at a conference at Canberra last year. The conference was composed of representatives of the Governments of the Commonwealth, New South Wales, and this State. Many aspects of the problem were discussed at that conference, and many misunderstandings removed. The conference certainly paved the way to the agreement which has now fortunately been reached. Queensland has a grand opportunity of discharging a national duty in agreeing to this Bill. It is a duty which combines with it the additional advantage of being a splendid deal for the State—a deal which will help to solve a good many pressing and important problems that Queensland has to face. I have much pleasure in moving—

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

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I am not going to oppose this railway; but the arguments which were put forward by the Minister in introducing the Bill were lamentable. He did not put forward the main argument for the construction of the line. When the Public Works Commission considered the construction of this railway in 1916 they took a very voluminous amount of evidence and asked all sorts of questions of people who had no expert knowledge, and published it in their report.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Do you believe in experts now?

Mr. MOORE: I would expect that, when questions as to the strategic value of the line were to be asked, the Commission would go to those who were able to give an opinion, and not to dairy farmers who lived on the coast.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is what we did. We went to the Defence authorities and got the information.

Mr. MOORE: If the hon. gentleman consults the report, he will see that a John Patrick Moran, a dairy farmer residing at Veresdale, supported the line for strategic reasons. I consider that the only person whose opinion on such an important point was of value would be such a one as Major-General Hoad, who stated on page 8 of the report of the Commission—

"The present New South Wales railways disclose a strategical weakness owing to the lack of inter-communication. Taking into consideration the existing lines and lines under construction or

[*Hon. J. Larcombe.*]

authorised, . . . it will be seen that railway communication from northern New South Wales and Queensland with southern and western New South Wales and with Victoria and South Australia is dependent upon retaining a rail connection between Sydney and Newcastle, which section of the line would be liable to attack and interruption. It is therefore of great importance to provide alternate connections through districts more remote from possible attack, and also further connections between States for the expeditious movement of troops."

Major-General Hoad, when asked his opinion as to the route from Murwillumbah to Tweed Heads, gave his opinion in favour of South Brisbane-Kyogle-Grafton line because it would be further from the coast. The whole of his evidence went to show that he disapproved of this line from a strategic point of view, and that he recognised the danger further down the coast at Coff's Harbour and the Hawkesbury Bridge.

There is only one individual mentioned in the report to whose opinion the Commission attached importance, because it coincided with their desires, as will be seen from this quotation from the preliminary report—

"The expert evidence placed before your Commission, including that of Brigadier-General Lee, Commandant of the First Military District, was decidedly favourable to the Kyogle-Beaudesert Railway as a connection between the two States. This officer stated that he regarded the connections as very important, his evidence discounting that of other witnesses who declared that the North Coast Line would have no strategic value owing to its vulnerability from the sea through hugging the coast at such points as Taree, Coff's Harbour, and other places."

Brigadier-General Lee was not at all enthusiastic in his evidence as to the military importance of this line, but he said that it was better than the other proposal through Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads. Naturally, if this line is further away from the coast it is the better line from the strategic point of view. This is put down in the report as an effective reply as to the strategic value of the line. There is no question that, if we want a strategic line, money could be better expended in connecting up one of the links between the South Burnett and the Downs, when we could get further away from the coast, as recommended by various authorities in Australia.

I am not going to say this line will not be of immense value from a trade point of view. It will be worth a lot from a market point of view. I do not think it will make a great difference from the State of Queensland's point of view as applied to settlers, because settlers in the district to be traversed by this railway are already well served by the Beaudesert railway and other lines coming in from that locality. From the point of view of the State being in direct communication with the Northern Rivers District of New South Wales—which is undoubtedly a wonderfully fertile district—we shall secure considerable benefit, and a lot of traffic should be brought to Brisbane. Also, as the Minister stated, it is an advantage that we are getting such extensive help from the Commonwealth Government.

Through Commonwealth assistance we are securing a benefit to Queensland that would not otherwise be offering. As the Minister said, the greatest advantage to Queensland at the present time is that the Commonwealth Government are finding the money right away, and this will find employment for a large number of men. If we are going to pass over an opportunity like this, when the Commonwealth Government are giving such assistance, we should be very ill-advised. There is no harm in the Queensland Government accepting and ratifying the agreement that has been made. There is no doubt in my mind from that point of view; but from the point of view of usefulness to Queensland—not to a small section—to Brisbane and the South-Eastern portion of Queensland—but from the point of view of receiving value for expenditure—the money could be better expended in linking up lines in several other districts in preference to the one that has been chosen.

All through this Commission the evidence given was not so much that Queensland would be able to get rid of its produce in the South, but that a market would be opened in Queensland for the Southern folk to send their produce and fruit here. That may cause a great deal of difficulty now that we have our fruit-marketing organisation to deal with Queensland products. This competition from New South Wales—admittedly a large fruit-growing country—will not be under the control of our fruit-marketing commission. All the evidence appears to me to favour the fact that Brisbane will be a suitable centre for their produce rather than that the Southern market is to be brought nearer for our convenience. We have one witness who was asked whether he thought the line would be of benefit to the local farmers, and whether he thought a railway from Murwillumbah to Tweed Heads would increase the carrying capacity of the land. He said he did not think it would do that, but that it would increase the population of the district. He said—

"As it is we are a long way from the Sydney market. This province is settled by the small man who grows fruit, and, if this line were built, we would be in touch with a big market and it would pay us to go in for growing strawberries."

That is not going to make much difference in the earning capacity of the railway.

The Minister did not give us any information as to what was the estimated earning capacity of the line—what possibility there was from an expert railway point of view of its paying interest on cost of construction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is most difficult to estimate, but the Railway Commissioner's estimate is that the line will pay working expenses.

Mr. MOORE: I cannot make out from the agreement, and I would like to know, if it only pays working expenses, whether Queensland and New South Wales will be liable for the interest on the whole of the cost of construction or only for their share?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Only for their share.

Mr. MOORE: The Commonwealth Government will pay the interest on the other four-fifths?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, if it is not available from surplus revenue.

Mr. Moore.]

Mr. MOORE: If a profit is made, it will go towards paying the interest on the share of those States that have not come in?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is one of the provisions of the agreement.

Mr. MOORE: If it does not pay, we are only liable for our share of the whole amount?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. MOORE: Mr. Kirby, who was examined at Murwillumbah, was asked—

“The question of defence is one that has been discussed in connection with these proposals; what is your opinion on the relative merits of the two lines from a defence point of view? This is the first war in the history of Australia that we have had any interest in, and we have been established over 100 years. I think that the question of the construction of a small section of railway of 20 miles in length from Murwillumbah to Tweed Heads is hardly one that should be taken into consideration so far as the strategic railway is concerned. Of course, it would be subject to attack the same as the rest of the coastal railway. But the possibility of the Australian coast being attacked is so remote that it is going rather far to look for an excuse for not constructing one bit of railway. I am surprised that that is advanced to the railway going through this district.”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Don't you think the Federal Government the proper authority to decide that point?

Mr. MOORE: One of the main points has always been to have a strategic line of defence that will not be too close to the coast.

The PREMIER: That is a consideration for the Federal Government.

Mr. MOORE: I should say it is one of the things we should consider.

The PREMIER: That is a consideration for the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government brought it before the Premiers' Conference.

Mr. MOORE: The Commonwealth Government brought it before the Premiers' Conference because it was more economical to get a through line that way. The other one would have been too costly.

The PREMIER: At the two Premiers' Conferences where this was under discussion every factor was considered.

Mr. MOORE: I am afraid I cannot agree with the conclusion arrived at by the Federal Government if they consider this a good strategic line from the point of view of defence.

It was also argued in favour of this line that transshipment would be done away with. Transshipping will be done away with at Wallangarra, but most of our fruit comes from the North Coast, and that fruit will have to be transhipped from Roma Street to South Brisbane. You will have just as much handling and just as much knocking about, and there will be no lessening of the cost. I do not know whether the rolling-stock is to be provided by the New South Wales Government or not.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is the intention of the Queensland Commissioner so to arrange with the New South Wales department, if possible.

[Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE: And we will bear our proportion of the cost?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. MOORE: I presumed that would be the way it would be done. In my opinion, we are getting a remarkably good deal if the line is warranted, and it is only warranted from the point of view of bringing a large amount of trade from the Northern Rivers of New South Wales into Queensland. It is not going to be such an immense advantage to this State from other points of view. There are many other lines which could be built if money was available, which would be of far greater advantage to this State than this line.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: It will be no use for stock.

Mr. MOORE: It will be no use for carrying stock in time of drought. There are very few cattle and sheep that would travel down by this line into New South Wales owing to tick restrictions, and certainly very few would come from New South Wales into Queensland if they were subject to the tick regulations before they got back again. We can dismiss that from consideration. It will be an advantage to Brisbane and surrounding districts from the large amount of trade which should come from the Northern Rivers of New South Wales into Brisbane. Seeing that the cost is going to be cheaper than we could get the railway under any other conditions by getting it through the Commonwealth Government, it is a good deal for the State. It is only those conditions that warrant it.

We do not really know whether the estimate of cost will be exceeded or not, as railway estimates, as a rule, are unreliable. I might mention the linking up of other railways which would be of infinitely greater value to the State than this; but from the point of view of the small amount of money required in proportion to the value of the line, the only thing we can do is to ratify the agreement, and trust that the estimate as to the line being payable, the benefits which will accrue to the South-eastern part of Queensland from the connection, and the increased advantage from visitors who are likely to travel up North to Cairns, will compensate us for the money which is being spent.

Mr. BELL (*Faseifern*): This is a railway which affects a part of my electorate. I am pleased that the agreement has been completed, because this project is part of the unification of gauge system, which I think is a very excellent thing for Australia generally. I do not know that the Railway Department of Queensland is going to derive much benefit from a revenue point of view by this connection. We only have 70 miles of railway to construct. I understand the first charge against revenue is the working expenses, and the second charge the payment of interest to the Commonwealth Government. I do not think that the Railway Department can look forward for some years to any increased revenue from the building of this line; but there is a bigger aspect to consider. The line will be a considerable advantage to many of the primary producers in Southern Queensland in providing facilities for the transmission of perishable products, such as fruit and chilled meat. Last year, if provision had been made, Queensland could have

supplied large quantities of chilled meat from the works here to the Sydney and Melbourne markets, and the producer would have reaped a very considerable advantage. I think the line will be a great advantage to the trade and commerce of Brisbane and Southern Queensland. At the present time the commerce of the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales flows to Sydney, which is a larger centre, but we can ultimately expect a large quantity of that produce to find its way to the Brisbane market.

I want to draw the attention of the Government to an important matter affected by the building of this line. It will run through a very large portion of the country served by the Beaudesert tramway, and I think that the Government ought to take into consideration the question of how the authority which controls that tramline will be affected. Their revenue will be seriously interfered with as time goes on, because it is only natural to suppose that a good deal of the traffic which now passes over their line will go straight through to South Brisbane. I think that some relief or some compensation should be given to the Shire Council who control the tramline for the way in which they will suffer in that respect, or otherwise a very heavy burden will be thrown on their shoulders. On looking at the map—which, by the way, is not a very good one—hon. members will see that for some miles this line runs parallel to the Beaudesert tramline. I am sorry that it was not possible to bring this line through the township of Beaudesert—a very important centre—since it would have been a very great help to the whole district if the line could have been taken through it; but I understand that the engineers in charge of the survey were of opinion that it was impossible because certain areas round the township are subject to flood, and, as this is a permanent line, it should be high above flood level. However, hon. members will notice that the line is only 4 miles out, and it crosses the Beaudesert tramway about a mile and a-half from Rathdowney. We can hardly expect that a narrow gauge tramline will attract passengers to Brisbane from that part of the State, and as time goes on, naturally, it will affect the revenue of the tramway, which has been a very useful utility. I therefore think that, if the Government granted some compensation, they would be only acting fairly towards the people of the district. This tramway has done a great service in opening up the district beyond Beaudesert. The 32 miles of tramline is worth, approximately, £100,000 with rolling-stock, and the Shire Council have always run it economically and paid their way.

It is true, as the Minister said, that this new line will carry many millions of feet of timber, since it will run through the ranges where the timber is, and altogether the effect on the Beaudesert tramway will be very considerable. I hope the Government will recognise that a very great injustice will be done to the tramway area, and I hope that the Minister will go into the matter and give some indication of what the Government are prepared to do in the matter of compensation.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): On the point raised by the leader of the Opposition with regard to the strategical aspect of this proposition, I think

it will be recognised that the Commonwealth would not have been likely to agree to the proposal unless that aspect had been considered. One of the essential factors of this scheme is its strategical aspect, and on that it was necessary to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion before it could be finally dealt with. At the Premiers' Conference in 1920 it was decided to appoint a Royal Commission of Inquiry into railway gauges. Two railway engineering experts were brought to Australia, one from America and the other from England, and the chairman was an Australian, Mr. Garvin. The Commission investigated every aspect of the question submitted to them by the Commonwealth Government. The points which they were to investigate were set out in the terms of reference to the Commission.

[3 p.m.]

The Royal Commission made very exhaustive inquiries, and a very exhaustive report covering every point, especially with regard to location, what was necessary in regard to engineering changes to bring about a uniform gauge, the apportionment of cost, the standard of gauge to be adopted, and many other important items bearing on this very important question. At the instance of the Commonwealth Government this matter was subsequently referred to a Premiers' Conference and fully discussed there. Later it was referred to a subsequent Premiers' Conference, and again fully discussed. The strategical aspect of the question was not overlooked. The Premiers' Conference was not asked to pass any opinion on that, as the Commonwealth Government, and the State Premiers too, concluded that that was a matter for the Commonwealth itself to pass judgment upon. I cannot say offhand what evidence the Commonwealth or Defence authorities placed before the Royal Commission or what expert opinion was placed before the Commission in regard to the defence aspect, but I have no doubt that it was fully attended to. The Commonwealth Government would not be enthusiastic on behalf of this scheme unless they believed that the strategic aspect was fully covered.

There is one other point that I think ought to be mentioned in justice to the whole question of the uniform gauge, and that is that this is necessarily only the first step towards a uniform gauge in Australia. We must not think that Queensland is getting a wonderfully good bargain out of it, and that we are adopting it simply because we are getting a good bargain. We have entered wholeheartedly into the question of contributing towards a solution of the uniform gauge problem, and Queensland was one of the few States at the Premiers' Conference which were willing to adopt the whole scheme. The expenditure of £21,000,000 is for what is known as the "No. 1 section," which represents the cost of converting the trunk lines connecting the various capital cities. Queensland was quite prepared to share in the burden of that scheme, recognising that, whatever the initial cost may be, it has to be done some day, and the cost will be greater later on than the initial cost now. Queensland was quite prepared to come into the whole scheme, but difficulties arose because of the attitude taken by the Victorian Government and later by the South Australian Government. They were the two States which practically frustrated the carrying into operation the decision of the

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Royal Commission. The Commonwealth Government, being unable to get the five mainland States to agree to the No. 1 section, involving an expenditure of £21,000,000, asked Queensland and New South Wales if they would enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth to build this first step towards that section, intending subsequently to make similar arrangements, if it is practicable, with West Australia, and get them to agree to their section of it, and subsequently with South Australia and Victoria when they are more amenable to listen to this proposition. If those States ultimately come in, hon. members must realise that Queensland will have an additional burden placed upon her shoulders without any additional work being done in this State. We are taking on this agreement with our eyes open in that direction. The true cost to Queensland of the larger conversion of the trunk railway line scheme costing £21,000,000 will be about £2,600,000. That is set out in the particulars of the cost of the scheme.

Mr. HARTLEY: Will that cover the whole of the Queensland railways?

The PREMIER: No. That is for the No. 1 section, involving expenditure of £21,000,000. The conversion of the whole of the Australian railway system to the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge was estimated by the Royal Commission to cost £57,000,000.

Mr. KELSO: The No. 1 section stops at South Brisbane?

The PREMIER: Yes. The No. 1 section applies only to trunk lines.

Mr. CORSER: A very sensible proposition.

The PREMIER: It is not only sensible, but it is the most practical one. Notwithstanding the enormous gain that we are getting in certain ways, I think that the conversion of all the railways in Queensland to 4 feet 8½ inches is unnecessary at the present time. I say that, notwithstanding the gain that we may get through that expenditure of money. I do not think the whole scheme would be warranted immediately. That is why the Royal Commission, recognising that point of view, recommended the splitting up of the proposition into several successive sections by which it could be undertaken by stages. They recommended that No. 1 section could be commenced, then allowed to rest for a number of years; then another successive stage could be taken, and, if necessary, again allowed to rest, until the whole scheme was completed. They considered that preferable to setting aside the whole scheme. The first section of the scheme is the only one that was given any serious consideration—that is the scheme for converting all the trunk lines between the capitals to the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge.

Mr. HARTLEY: No 1 section would be from Wallangarra to Brisbane?

The PREMIER: No.—No. 1 section under this proposal will be from South Brisbane around to Perth, making and converting the gauge all the way around to 4 feet 8½ inches. That would mean converting the 5 feet 3 inch gauge in Victoria and South Australia to the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge. The actual cost of the work of construction is not anything like £21,000,000, but a certain amount has to be provided for a probable increased expenditure in the future when the work is again undertaken. We are going into the scheme with our eyes

open. We are committing ourselves with our eyes open to further obligations than the £410,000 which is involved in this agreement when the other States come in and express their willingness to go on with the larger scheme of linking up the trunk lines. Our obligations then will be higher than the amount just mentioned, but, in any event, are estimated not to exceed £2,600,000 or £2,800,000.

Mr. KELSO: That is the cost of the 70 miles of railway to the border?

The PREMIER: No, the cost of the whole scheme.

Mr. KERR: £2,535,000.

The PREMIER: I thank the hon. member for the information. That would be the apportionment of the expenditure to Queensland. Only about 70 miles of railway under the proposal are in Queensland. The other is an Australian problem. The cost of those 70 miles will be about £1,848,000. If the individual States attempt to sift the advantages or disadvantages of this conversion, some will find it to their advantage and others to their disadvantage, but we have to deal with the problem as an Australian problem. From that point of view, the Government have been impressed with the necessity of co-operating with the Commonwealth and getting the scheme carried through.

It is right that we should not stress the advantages to be secured as the result of the first step which is being covered in the Bill now before the House. The advantages from the first work to be done under the unification scheme will fall to New South Wales and Queensland. Queensland will possibly get an enormous volume of trade from the Northern Rivers of New South Wales; but that is not the prime consideration to Queensland, and we would be taking a selfish attitude if we allowed it to go forth that that was the reason prompting us to bring forward this scheme. The object is not to filch a little trade from New South Wales to Queensland. The prime reason for the Bill is to support the unification of gauge system—not necessarily from a strategic point of view so much as from an economic point of view—the securing of proper facilities for the handling and transportation of our produce and trade. That is a question that has to be faced sooner or later, and the longer it is delayed the more millions it will cost. Some thirty years ago it was estimated at the Premiers' Conference that the cost of unifying the gauges would be from £12,000,000 to £14,000,000. The cost is now estimated at £57,000,000, and, if a further delay of twenty years is made, no one can say what the cost will be. No one can deny that ultimately the work will have to be done. That is recognised throughout Australia, at any rate wherever the trunk lines are running throughout the Commonwealth.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I am very glad that the Premier has spoken on this Bill, as he undoubtedly has cleared the atmosphere. We were given to understand that the proposal would cost somewhere in the vicinity of £410,000, but the Premier has been good enough to explain to the House that this is only an initial payment.

I have taken out the figures in regard to the whole scheme, and I take it from the Premier's speech that we have to consider

the whole scheme from a national and Australian point of view. It works out that the Queensland Government will pay for the cost of this 4 feet 8½ inch gauge £2,535,868, and the Commonwealth £507,175. It means that Queensland is spending just a little over £2,500,000, and the work that is to be carried out in this State amounts to £1,848,000. We are fairly well off, because the quota that New South Wales has to pay is over £7,000,000, and the work that has to be done only amounts to £657,000. I cannot understand why Victoria has not seized this opportunity with both hands for the reason that the work they are going to get done for them amounts to over £8,000,000, and all they are asked to pay is in the vicinity of £4,939,347.

I read with a good deal of pleasure the minutes of the Premiers' Conference and all that passed on the matter. One finds that conferences were held right back to 1897—Railway Commissions, War Councils, and other conferences—and they all considered that this broad-gauge railway was a very urgent necessity. However, we have got away from the original intention of the broad-gauge scheme, and now we have a scheme simply to link up the capitals of Australia. Until a few years ago the problem of uniformity of gauge was viewed from the point of view of linking up the hinterland and from a general defence point of view. To-day the broad-gauge question has simply narrowed itself down to linking up the capitals of the various States.

The PREMIER: That is not an ordinary broad gauge.

Mr. KERR: It is 4 feet 8½ inch—a very ordinary gauge. We find that we are going to spend ultimately, not £410,000 but £2,535,868, and we have every right to look for the reason and necessity of this scheme. Undoubtedly year after year, up to the years 1914, 1915, and 1916, the idea was that we should have a strategic railway from Brisbane to Port Augusta.

The PREMIER: The strategic railway from Brisbane to Port Augusta was quite a different proposition.

Mr. KERR: It was mooted in regard to the defence problem. We have departed from what was in view by the early commissions, conferences, and the War Council, and now we are merely linking up the capitals. It means that we are going to have two distinct sets of rails within 100 miles of the coast of New South Wales and Queensland. We already have one set of rails leading from Brisbane to Newcastle and then to Sydney, at an average of approximately 80 miles from the coast. Between that line and the coast we are going to build a uniform gauge railway at a distance ranging from 20 to 30 miles from the coast. I cannot see much justification for building a new track in Queensland or in New South Wales as proposed. The Secretary for Railways gave some of the reasons for this Bill, the first of which was to facilitate interstate trade.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The first was the safety and development of the Commonwealth.

Mr. KERR: I want to talk about that more than I desire to talk about facilitating interstate trade. I listened very carefully to the Secretary for Railways, and, from what I can make out, the uniform gauge railway is going to be a separate entity. It is going to be run by Commissioners, and

the revenue will be paid into a separate fund for the time being, and the whole of the States will pay running expenses and interest, and, if there is any revenue left over, it will be apportioned among the States. I venture to say that, when that uniform railway is established, there will not be very much left over after running expenses and interest are paid. While that is so, we must recollect that we are going to lose all the interstate traffic on our present system from Wallangarra to Brisbane. Part of that line from Brisbane to Ipswich is pretty well a paying concern now. If we are going to spend a couple of million pounds within the next three or four years on the construction of a railway to Kyogle that is going to absorb all the revenue we are getting at the present time from Wallangarra to Brisbane; the result will be that our railways will lose many more thousands of pounds per year. There is no compensating factor for the expenditure of that money. Not only will the proposed line run parallel to the present system, but it is not going to develop the State or any other State. If it were going to develop the State, I cannot understand Sir George Fuller being ready to spend £7,000,000 and only get work costing less than a million pounds. He must have something up his sleeve. I do not know that any extra trade is going to come to Brisbane in that regard. Travellers go from this city to the Northern Rivers seeking trade, and all the firms in Brisbane to-day know that it is nearly impossible for Brisbane merchants to get any more trade there. I am looking for a justification for this line. It was intended at one time to run a line from Perth to Port Augusta and from Port Augusta to connect with the 4 feet 8½ inch line in New South Wales and have a direct line to Goondiwindi and thence to Brisbane. If it was intended to build that only for strategic reasons and for the purpose of opening up the hinterland, then that is the best possible route to-day. I cannot see any justification for constructing another railway running parallel to the present line and then say it is needed for defence reasons. The proposed railway will run right into Newcastle, which is right on the coast. From the reports that I have seen and from what I have read of the views of the War Council on this matter, the proposed railway will not serve the purpose of defence. The Premier has got out of it by saying that the Premiers' Conference was only concerned with the connecting up of the States' capitals from an Australian point of view. He said they were not concerned with a defence railway—that that was a Commonwealth matter, and that they should have made the necessary provision.

The PREMIER: I said it was their business, and that they attended to it.

Mr. KERR: All we have to go on is the report of the Royal Commission, and that is not very definite on the point. One of the reasons given for the Bill is that it will provide for defence of Australia, and another reason is that it will increase development. If it is for development, it is more or less a farce so far as we are concerned. We have a railway line to Tweed Heads, and there is a line on the other side of the border. Where will the extra development come in? It would have been much better to bring about development by constructing

light railways in district which need assistance. We have not got facilities for interstate traffic on the North Coast. I think the railway station at South Brisbane alone will cost £150,000, and resumptions of land will run into thousands of pounds. We have to provide a new bridge. It is premature to expend the money required for this line, especially when our finances are in such a condition as they are to-day. When the Bill was first discussed it was not intended to open the country up as is now being asserted. It was intended to connect up portions of Northern New South Wales with the seaboard there. The expenditure is certainly not justified at this stage. One of the reports says that the line is intended to give reasonable and direct communication between the hinterland and the natural seaport, and it is also stated that it is for the purpose of facilitating the transport of wheat, wool, and live stock—those being the principal lines. What has happened to bring into being such a scheme as this merely to connect the capitals, which are already connected? No one can tell me that a railway passenger into New South Wales is caused any discomfort at the border. He can get his lunch at Wallangarra, and, when finished, merely takes his seat in another train. There is no discomfort. The transport charges at Wallangarra run into something like £20,000 a year, but it is better to pay transhipment charges on goods and merchandise than to spend the sum of £2,535,000, which will be a burden for many years to come, and will rob us of a certain amount of revenue that we are already receiving from the present line.

No one will say that something in regard to a uniform gauge is not required. We have got the uniform gauge from Fremantle and Perth to Port Augusta, and I would like to see a direct North-South line from Port Darwin to Port Augusta built on that gauge.

Mr. COLLINS: Why didn't your friends in the Federal Parliament do it?

Mr. KERR: I am not responsible for my friends in that connection.

The PREMIER: Did you say a direct North-South line?

Mr. KERR: I do not hesitate to say that. We naturally would desire such a line to come eastwards, and as Queenslanders would get behind such a scheme. There is a great difficulty in getting over the Northern Territory, as we have seen lately. I would like to see a line from Port Augusta through Charlotte Waters, Alice Springs, and Daly Waters up to Port Darwin. This is, in my opinion, something necessary. A uniform gauge line would meet every requirement and provide for the defence of Australia.

The PREMIER: The "South Australian Register" will give you a great "boost" tomorrow.

Mr. KERR: I do not know anything about that. I do not worry a bit about "boost."

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must confine his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. KERR: I have studied the Bill and read the various reports for a number of years back, and I find there has been a distinct departure from what has been advocated for the last fifteen or twenty years. Instead of giving us a railway for defence and development, we are only getting a railway for better facilities between Brisbane and New South Wales. I can see the long

coast line of New South Wales unprotected by gunboats and the uniform gauge railway at the mercy of an invading fleet.

One seaplane would shatter the line, and that would be the end of the uniform gauge. We have already a set of rails running down South as far as Newcastle parallel to this proposed line and about 50 miles away. I cannot see any sweet reasonableness in asking New South Wales to foot a bill of £7,000,000 and Queensland to foot a bill of £2,500,000 for that reason alone. If we had something substantial which would meet the very important point I have mentioned—the strategic value and the value from a developmental point of view—I say that we should take it with both hands; but as a uniform gauge proposal, as the Bill stands, I cannot say that I am in favour of it. I am not going so far as to say that I would vote against it, because the Prime Minister has put forward the scheme and the Premiers of the States have agreed to it, and undoubtedly they must have given a good deal of consideration to it. The Bill itself is to ratify an agreement which has been come to. I recognise that a uniform railway gauge is necessary for Australia, but I am sorry that this scheme is not better than it is. It is impossible for a layman to explain what he suggests in regard to defence, and it is not my intention to offer any opinion in that regard, but I sincerely regret that we are called upon to spend so much money without any real compensating result.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): Whether Queensland is going to gain on the whole out of this proposal or whether it is the most opportune time for it I cannot say, but I certainly intend to support the Bill, because I think that it embodies something which should have been carried out many years ago. We have been building railways in Australia of varying gauges, and the time has come when we must look at the matter from a big Australian standpoint. Whether the time is fitting or not is another matter, though it does not look to me as if the cost of construction of railways is going to be any less for many years to come. In fact, everything seems to be pointing in the opposite direction, and to indicate that costs are not going to recede in any way. There is no doubt that the existing railway to Wallangarra will suffer as a result of this proposal, because at present the Queensland railways receive a certain amount of revenue from interstate passenger traffic. That will be very considerably reduced, because at present the line to Wallangarra is about a 220-mile run, and we are going to have a 70-mile run to the border, and, although we shall still do a considerable business on the Wallangarra line, the passenger traffic will be cut right out and we are not going to have anything to compensate us. Nevertheless, I think the move is a wise one, and, if we do not accept this very excellent offer, it may not be repeated for many years. Some years ago an offer of a railway was made, I think by Sir John Forrest, but it was turned down by the then Queensland Government. No doubt they thought that it was a very right thing to do, but to build that line now would cost a considerable amount more.

I would like some information from the Minister as to the payment of interest. Of course, I do not expect this section of the line to pay, but supposing it did pay interest

[*Mr. Kerr.*

on the cost of construction I assume the Commonwealth would take its share and the State of New South Wales and the State of Queensland would take their shares, and any surplus would go to the Commonwealth and not to the States, because the Commonwealth is responsible for the money and the States are not.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: After the interest and working expenses and other charges are paid, if there is any balance it will be divided between New South Wales and Queensland.

[3.30 p.m.]

Mr. TAYLOR: Say for argument's sake that there was a deficiency of £250,000 in interest on the first year's working of this railway and the proportion of the Commonwealth, New South Wales, and Queensland is £120,000, is the deficiency of £130,000 to be found by the Commonwealth and the two States who have entered into the agreement, or it is going to be found by the Commonwealth and charged up against the States that have not come into the scheme?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The only deficiency that Queensland will be responsible for will be the deficiency in interest on her own quota, if any.

Mr. TAYLOR: Who is going to pay the deficiency in interest after the Commonwealth and two States concerned have paid their quotas? Is the Commonwealth going to bear the deficiency that should have been borne by the other States if they had come into the scheme?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, if it is not available from surplus revenue. That is the Solicitor-General's interpretation of clause 12.

Mr. TAYLOR: The agreement entered into by the Queensland Government is one that should have our support. Whether the railway be of strategic value or not I do not know—there are a great many opinions on that. I only hope that it will not be necessary to rely on its strategic value. From things that are happening in the world to-day, I am hopeful that it will not be necessary to consider so much the strategic value of our railways in defence matters; but we certainly have to be prepared in every possible direction to defend ourselves, and to see that our railways are of strategic value. I intend to support the Bill because I consider it is well worth the support of all Queenslanders, notwithstanding that some of the other States have decided in their wisdom not to come into the agreement. I cannot understand the Victorian Government not coming into the agreement. The Premier of New South Wales has taken a very generous view of the matter, and is prepared to recommend that a contribution should be made in order that a big national undertaking, as this undertaking is, shall be carried into effect.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (Warwick): No one can righteously oppose connecting the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales with the Queensland railway system, nor indeed the improvement of the trunk line to Brisbane. It is really a great matter and an Australian matter. However one might feel from other points of view, he must realise that a national work is being carried out. I, for one, do not, and cannot, see how any Government could reasonably turn down such an offer as this. I regret

very much that the Secretary for Railways did not extend himself a bit more than he did in the direction of showing the pros and cons in connection with this proposal. This line is going to be a wonderful advantage to Brisbane, and will bring about a good deal of trade between Brisbane and the Northern Rivers, but I feel sure that the Minister must at some time or other have made calculations as to the loss the State is likely to sustain in consequence of the construction of this line. The traffic—not only passenger traffic, but general goods traffic—between Wallangarra and Brisbane is very considerable, and has been on the increase for a great number of years, and naturally the Southern and Western Railways have been made to render the returns that they do render on account of the increased traffic that passes over the border.

That was a loss not mentioned by the Minister, but no hon. member dare oppose the Bill. The Minister would have been justified in stating that Queensland must suffer a very considerable loss arising out of the fact that she will not enjoy the railway freights and fares over some 230 miles of railway as against which she will only have a share of 75 miles. As one of the previous speakers pointed out, there are also other advantages which will be lost. Still, it is a Queensland matter. It is unfortunate that the original idea was not carried out. The question of defence should have been left out of this Bill. There is no defence in it.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Defence is all nonsense.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: If it was being constructed from a defence point of view it should have come down through Goondiwindi to Warwick and then the Via Recta railway from Warwick should have been constructed. It is unseemly to introduce this Bill and let it go forth to the country that it is going to answer defence purposes. It is going to do nothing of the kind. The real object of the defence experts was to get a railway removed from the coast in order that in time of war, they could convey troops and munitions free from enemy molestation. Apart from that, in the interests of the State, the Government should have given consideration to unifying the gauge from Wallangarra to Brisbane by the Via Recta railway. That would have saved a distance of 50 miles on the present railgauge. That consideration has not been given. I believe, though, that the conservation of our western trade will ultimately demand that this extra line between Brisbane and Warwick shall be constructed. I do not take up this attitude to block this line.

There is one thing in connection with this proposal which to my mind is not quite clear. I understand that we are committed to a scheme involving £21,000,000, and that the share of this State is £2,535,000. I imagine that in the meanwhile our contribution is only £410,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is so.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: If the line only returns working expenses, that means an extra commitment in interest at the rate now ruling of £25,000 per year. But the interest charge will be made up by the advantages which will be gained in other directions, unless you put side by side with that the loss which is going to be sustained as the result of what I have already pointed

Mr. G. P. Barnes.]

out. Whilst I would have rejoiced to find that the ideas which I have already presented to the House were accepted, there is no reason why those ideas should be delayed much longer.

I am attempting to find out at what date the interest charge on the £2,535,863 will be paid.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Interest will only be payable as the Commonwealth Government advance money.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I understand we shall have to pay £2,535,868 for these 75 miles of railway, and the interest is going to be very high.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have to pay interest only on the amount advanced from time to time.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is a huge amount to pay for some 75 miles of railway. I question whether we are justified this afternoon in committing the country to such an expenditure, no matter what we think the advantages are going to be to Queensland. The expenditure of £410,000 is a splendid thing—no one can deny that—but it is only a drop in the bucket, but I think it is a huge blunder to commit Queensland to an item of such magnitude for a simple connecting link of 75 miles of railway. I do not think the Secretary for Railways has attempted to explain that. If we are to honour the agreement—and if we enter into it it will be honoured—there is no question that the contribution of this State is altogether excessive compared with what is to be forthcoming from the scheme.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I regret that I cannot join in the universal feeling of acclaim and elation connected with the acceptance of this agreement by the House to-day. While I look upon the Brisbane-Kyogle-Grafton Railway as something in the nature of an experiment that will please those people who talk so glibly about the necessity of a universal broad-gauge railway throughout Queensland, I am ready to accept the scheme.

I must confess that the Premier gave me a bit of a shock when he stated that this was a preliminary to the total adoption of a uniform broad-gauge system in Queensland. It means that the first section is going to cost the State £21,000,000 odd.

The PREMIER: Oh, no. That is the cost to the Commonwealth.

Mr. HARTLEY: I thought that was to be the cost to the State.

The PREMIER: No. The cost to the State will be £2,535,868.

Mr. HARTLEY: And what is going to be our proportion of the cost out of £57,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We do not bind ourselves by this agreement to adopt that larger scheme.

Mr. HARTLEY: If we accept this agreement to what do we bind ourselves?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Only to £410,000 at present; £2,530,000, inclusive, at some later date. That is my view.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is a little more reassuring. On the other hand, even admitting that it is only going to cost us a little over £2,500,000, it is not going to be to the advantage of this State. Queensland has

built up a railway system of her own—admittedly a narrow gauge system, but a system that has suited the needs of the country from a geographical point of view. The broad gauges of New South Wales and Victoria could not have been built so expeditiously, and they certainly would have been a long way more expensive than our narrow gauge system. It is because we have a narrow gauge that we have a record mileage of railway in this State. If we are going to convert our narrow gauge system into the standard gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches, then we should start now and stop all present construction. It is stupid to go on building railways that we know in ten, fifteen, or twenty years we shall have to take up and convert to the standard gauge, or else run a duplicate system, which will be most confusing. Queensland has been improving her railway system for years; she has been increasing her train loads; she has been increasing her wagon loads; and she has been reducing the cost per train mile until she has as perfect a system as any in Australia. I do not see why we want to adopt the New South Wales gauge when at the present time our engine mileage is less costly than it is in New South Wales, even though they have a 4 feet 8½ inch gauge in that State. The Commissioner for Railways in his report for 1922 gives the cost per engine mile in Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales. The figures are—

	Per Engine mile.	
	s.	d.
Queensland	3	5½
New South Wales	4	0½
Victoria	3	9½

That means that we are carrying an engine load 4d. per mile cheaper than the cost in Victoria, and 7½d. per mile cheaper than the cost in New South Wales. What is wrong with a system like that? Simply for the convenience of a few through passengers and a real shibboleth as to defence we are going to run the State into a big expenditure. The defence plea is really out of date now with aeroplanes and with the long range guns of the naval forces. If we want to build a railway where it would be of some use for defence purposes, we should build it some 400 miles or 500 miles inland.

The PREMIER: It would never come to a port at all.

Mr. HARTLEY: Aeroplanes could interfere with railway communication, but not to half the extent that warships could if the railways were built within half a mile of the coast. The result of making these 70 miles of railway into Queensland will be to duplicate right along the whole route, and the further you come into Queensland the more you are going to duplicate it. We are going to resume new areas of land for a new station. We cannot run a broad gauge line into the station we have now. I am very doubtful whether the experts have taken all these things into consideration.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have.

Mr. HARTLEY: We shall not have gained anything if we run a broad gauge line across the border into South Brisbane, because we shall have to tranship everything there, and special facilities will have to be provided for it. We could have the same transhipping facilities at Wallangarra. The hon. member for Warwick pointed out that we are practically going to make the section

[*Mr. G. P. Barnes.*]

from Toowoomba to Wallangarra a non-paying section of line. We are going to rob it of its ordinary interstate traffic, and it will become a non-paying section. Who is going to be responsible for the upkeep and repair of rolling-stock? Is that going to be done in Queensland or by the Commonwealth?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That will be part of the working expenses.

Mr. HARTLEY: The repairs and maintenance of rolling-stock?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There will be a depôt at South Brisbane.

Mr. HARTLEY: There is duplication again. I suppose it will not be long before we shall want the terminus of this broad gauge line shifted from South Brisbane to this side of the river, and another bridge will have to be built. The further I go into the matter the greater I can see the expenditure and confusion are going to be. There will be a duplication of engines and of the machinery required to repair them, and also in other ways.

I hope that this agreement will not be gone on with, but if it is, it will be the first and the last step in this uniform gauge of which we hear so much.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I think that the State Parliament should look at a matter of this description from a national point of view. If we look only at the small details mentioned by the hon. member for Fitzroy, we shall not get anywhere. I agree with the general principles of the Bill, the necessity for which should never have arisen. The Premiers' Conference was wise in deciding to tackle the question as soon as possible, because, as the Premier said, the longer the matter is delayed the greater will be the expense. While I agree with the principle of the Bill, I should like to second what the hon. member for Warwick said when he pointed out that the Secretary for Railways should give us a little more detailed information. Why was the Tweed Heads line not extended? The agreement says that there are two reasons why this line should be built—namely, to facilitate interstate trade and commerce, and to assist in defence matters. Personally, I think that the claim that it will assist in defence is all moonshine. We could have taken the line just as well round by Tweed Heads. After all, a line is only as strong as its weakest link, and, when the line gets further South, we come to Newcastle, which is right on the sea coast. If it is going to be possible to cut a national railway at any point like that, the whole system is going to be disorganised, that is, if it is necessary to use it as a defence line at all.

The hon. member for Warwick made a very good point by saying that the Via Recta should be completed, if the Premier claims that the main reason for this line is to assist in defence. Certainly the people of Warwick and other districts have a very great claim to the completion of that line, and I really do not see any compensating advantage in railway revenue to be gained by a line direct to Kyogle, because, after all, the biggest traffic will be the goods traffic and we shall still have goods traffic coming to Brisbane from the West, whereas our passenger traffic to the South will return us less, because the border will be brought nearer.

However, there is another fact to be con-

sidered, even looking at it from a selfish point of view. This railway will practically add a new territory to Queensland. The Northern Rivers have been dying to get this communication, and all the tremendous traffic from that district will in future come to Brisbane. Surely that will help Queensland, because we have at present no communication with that area except by water. At the same time I think it would be in the interests of the people, quite apart from the strategic value of this line, to know why those representing Queensland prefer this to the Beaudesert or Tweed River route. On the other hand, I must say that this line will certainly be of great advantage to Queensland. We have here quite close to the border the wonderful Lamington Plateau of about 30,000 acres vested in the possession of the people for ever. I remember that before Mr. Meston died he was talking to some of us one day, and said he was absolutely astonished at the beautiful views to be obtained from the Lamington Plateau, which he said were equal to some of those on the celebrated Blue Mountains. By this line that great national reserve is to be made accessible to the people not only of Brisbane but also of the Northern Rivers, and it is reasonable to suppose that a tremendous tourist traffic will develop which will certainly help the railway materially.

I do not want to take up the time of the House unnecessarily. One has only to look at the map to see the advantage which the railway offers in the shortening of distance between the two capitals, and, even though the line might be subject to be destroyed by aeroplane, at the same time, when there is a tremendous congestion of traffic in troops, munitions, and material which have to be hurried from one point to another, a reduction of 100 miles in the distance between Sydney and Brisbane is a very material factor.

So far as the cost is concerned, we have to remember that we cannot have our cake and eat it too. If we are taking part in a great national undertaking, we must not count up the cost and say that Queensland is getting only 70 miles of railway for £2,500,000, and that that is not a good business deal. We must take a broader view. I presume that this scheme for the unification of railway gauges does not stop at Brisbane, and that in time to come, if the scheme is prosecuted, we shall have it extended right to Northern Queensland. The whole idea is to have practically a defence line. Australia may be subject to an attack by an enemy, and it is necessary to be able to shift troops as rapidly as possible if war comes.

Mr. COLLINS: War! War!

Mr. KELSO: We might have the Japanese coming here and, if we attempt to blow them out of the water—as the Secretary for Public Instruction threatened—they will probably attempt to blow us out of the land. (Laughter.) Notwithstanding that the hon. member for Fitzroy discountenances the proposal to have a standard gauge, and despite his advocacy of the 3 feet 6 inch gauge, and notwithstanding the fact that Queensland has twice the mileage of railways of New South Wales at the same capital cost, I contend that you have to look [4 p.m.] at this matter from a broader viewpoint in the interests of Australia—not of to-day, or ten or fifteen years ahead, but fifty years ahead.

Mr. Kelso.]

It is deplorable that there are different gauges in the different States of Australia. If those responsible for those railways in the early days could only have seen what we see now, I am perfectly certain there would have been only one gauge in Australia, whether it be 5 feet 3 inches or 4 feet 8½ inches. If they were only alive to see the annoyance that is caused even in times of peace and the trouble and expense to people in transhipping and the expense that will be incurred in undoing what they have done, they would not have constructed railways of different gauges.

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): I intend to support the Bill, but I desire to inform hon. members that this scheme does not possess all the advantages that some would lead us to believe. Undoubtedly it is a line that is to be built in the interests of trade, commerce, and defence, and in some respects it will be favourable from those points of view, but this line will react to the detriment of Queensland unless some alteration is made by the Government in the matter of taxation.

I will endeavour to show how the construction of this line is going to react on the wage earner. Whilst it is true that we are getting a new territory added to Queensland—

Mr. WARREN: Are we? That is questionable.

Mr. FRY: In the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, it is also true that New South Wales is getting another port—a port from which she can ship her butter and cheese overseas.

Mr. WRIGHT: That will benefit Queensland.

Mr. FRY: New South Wales will get an extra port—a deep sea port—from which she can ship her primary products. Alongside that New South Wales will have a short, quick route from her factories to the stores of Queensland, and we have to consider what effect that is going to have upon the factories that now exist in Queensland. Are the factories to be shut up by the competition of New South Wales, or is it the intention of the Government to revise the taxation that is now levied on industry, with the object of assisting the industries of Queensland to develop and enter into competition with New South Wales on an equal footing?

Mr. HARTLEY: Do you say you are in favour of the line?

Mr. FRY: Yes.

Mr. HARELEY: You are talking against it.

Mr. FRY: I am not. I am showing the disadvantages to this State, and how they can be rectified by the Government. If the Government were to cease spending a lot of money in an extravagant way, as they are doing now, and set to work in a businesslike way, they could counteract it. By doing as I suggest they could allow the factories in Queensland greater opportunities to compete against those in New South Wales. We shall have another piece of territory added to Queensland, and the line will provide a quick route for the export of our primary products to the South. Queensland's fruits and primary products will arrive in Sydney five hours sooner than at present and be in better condition. Whilst the advantages are on our side so far as

primary products are concerned, we are at a disadvantage with respect to our secondary industries. The Government must devote their attention to our secondary industries and the effect this line will have on the workers in those industries. It is the duty of the Government to pay attention to this aspect of the proposal and make provision for encouraging our secondary industries so that we can manufacture our own raw products and export the surplus. It is quite obvious that under existing circumstances New South Wales has no objection to agreeing to pay £7,000,000 and allowing Queensland to get off with a payment of £2,535,000. That is quite understandable, viewed from the standpoint that I have looked at it, because New South Wales has more to gain than Queensland, though I hope it will be found that it has not. With the great expanse of fertile lands and mining areas that we have in this State, we should be able to set up factories where the raw material is produced, and we should manufacture it into the finished article and then be in a position to compete with New South Wales on equal, if not better terms. We could thus make our exports from Queensland greater than our imports from New South Wales. Undoubtedly the port of Brisbane will gain considerable benefit by way of harbour dues, etc., and Brisbane, as a city, will gain an advantage—that is, if our factories are protected and encouraged. We are not going to quarrel with the opinion of the defence experts, but it is necessary to consider the construction of a line from the north of Australia to Queensland in conjunction with this line.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. FRY: This line may be all right from a defence point of view, but it must be borne in mind that every railway line is just as advantageous to the attacker as to the defender if he should manage to secure a footing. It is an indirect argument on the part of the Labour Government in favour of an Australian navy—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not applying himself to the consideration of the Bill before the House.

Mr. FRY: I am dealing with a line that, it is said, is constructed for defence purposes, and is therefore connected with the defence problems of our country.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must obey my call to order, otherwise I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. FRY: I am asked to deal with a line that is for defence purposes, and I thought I had a right to remark on the advantages and disadvantages of that line to the State. If I cast my vote in favour of spending a certain amount of money to build a military line for defence purposes, I should say why I cast that vote. Every line built for defence is just as advantageous to the attacker, if he happens to effect a landing, as it is to the defender when in possession of it. That is well known. Unless there is some protection for such lines from attacks from sea and air they are rather at a disadvantage.

It is my intention to support this proposal, but I recognise its disadvantages as well as its advantages. There must be some action on the part of the Government to make provision whereby our local industries will be enabled to compete successfully against

[*Mr. Kelso.*

Southern industries, and to keep men working in those industries where they are at present employed.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoong*): I remember that during the campaign for federation a great amount of capital was made out of the linking up of the Northern Rivers of New South Wales with Queensland. It was pointed out at that time that, if the people of Queensland and the other States would accept federation, one of the principal gains to be made by Queensland would be the linking up of the Northern Rivers of New South Wales with Queensland. There is no good disguising the fact that there is a certain amount of selfishness in all of us. We know a great amount of benefit is likely to accrue from the construction of this connecting link. For a great number of years Queensland has wanted this linking up, and we know now that New South Wales is prepared to spend a great amount of money on it, and that the Commonwealth is behind the scheme. Under the circumstances I fail to see how it is possible for the experts on the floor of the House to find fault with the construction of such a line as this. All one has to do is to read the reports of the Royal Commission on Public Works in 1916. The present Secretary for Agriculture was chairman of that Commission, and you yourself, Mr. Speaker, were a member. Dealing with the benefits that might accrue to Queensland from the linking up of the Northern portion of New South Wales we read—

“It will at once be recognised that the paramount consideration to Queensland in the construction of this railway is that of interstate trade and interstate traffic, particularly trade, the possibilities of which are almost limitless between Brisbane and that vast fertile well-developed province known as the ‘Northern Rivers of New South Wales.’”

That is one thing, and my friend, the hon. member for Enoggera, stressed the point of the likelihood of a great amount of money having to be expended in the erection of a railway station at South Brisbane and in the erection of a bridge over the Brisbane River. Such expenditure will do a great deal in developing such a State as ours, and it will do a great deal to advance the best interests of Queensland.

There is another viewpoint that to me is a most important one—that is the national standpoint. This is what the same report of the Royal Commission on Public Works says on that—

“The national importance of connecting the two capitals with a direct and first-class railway system was at once recognised by your Commission. The commercial growth of this great Commonwealth demands such a system, and the present disastrous war brings home to us all the urgent need of railways suitable for the speedy transportation of troops and munitions of war.”

Mr. COLLINS: War again!

Mr. MAXWELL: We have been told that this connecting link between the Northern Rivers District of New South Wales and Queensland is going to cost a tremendous amount of money. One of my friends gave me the information that it was likely to cost £35,000 per mile, and the longer we postpone this the greater is going to be the cost. When you have the Commonwealth

getting behind the States in a scheme such as this, you may rest assured that it is going to assist in the development of the State, and I think we would be ill-advised to postpone the matter any longer. The opportunity is given to us to-day to agree to it. I am glad to be associated with a scheme such as this for the advancement of this State, and I am quite satisfied that the Parliament of Queensland is doing a right thing in accepting it.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): To my mind there has been nothing advanced to justify the expenditure of this money. The arguments that I have heard in this Chamber would convince me that there was no justification for this railway, as no mention has been made of the real justification for it. To my mind the real justification for the proposed railway is in connection with the transport of perishable goods. We send a considerable amount of perishable goods to Sydney, and the method of handling them at Wallangarra is a big handicap.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They will still have to be handled if this railway is built.

Mr. WARREN: They will only have to be handled once in this case, whereas they are now handled twice, and under very poor conditions. Had the Railway Department provided proper facilities for the handling of perishable goods at Wallangarra, there would have been less justification for this railway. We expect in the near future to send chilled meat to the South. That is another justification for the proposed railway, because the chilling works could be constructed at the terminus of the railway and the perishable goods loaded without any loss.

The idea of any layman talking about this railway being advisable for military purposes is absolutely absurd. We hope that it will be many generations before it will be necessary to use our railways for that purpose. Nobody can say that war has been done away with—though enlightenment will ultimately do away with it—but at the same time one glance at the plan submitted to us will show that this railway will be of no earthly use for defence purposes. Nor do I think any serious thinking man will say that the railway will develop commerce between the States.

The difference in mileage is not worth considering for one moment. I do not say there will not be less mileage, which will be of some advantage; but it is not a sufficient factor. So long as we are short of money and cannot do the things we want, I think it is unjustifiable to incur this expenditure. The hon. member who just resumed his seat said that we shall not be able to build this railway cheaper in the future than we can now. I say that we will never get a dearer time than the present, either in regard to labour or the cost of material. It is absurd to say that we shall ever reach a dearer time than the present, because it now costs more for the construction of all works than ever before in Queensland. It is mere nonsense to say that this line can be built for less now than it would cost in fifty years, and that it is a solution of the difficulty in regard to the uniform gauge. If the Minister could show us that it is a solution of the problem of the uniform gauge I would have no complaint to make, but he has not done so. It has been proved conclusively that the line is not a good proposition.

Mr. Warren.]

The hon. gentleman said that we were going to add a province to Queensland, but that is absurd. It is very questionable to anyone who has been through the Northern Rivers District of New South Wales whether we shall ever have any more trade from those districts than we have at the present time. The people over the border are New South Wales people, and they will tell you so; and the problem as to whether they are going to send their products to Queensland is one which only the future will solve. I have very little hope that we are going to get a great deal out of this line. If it was a commercial proposition, I would not offer any objection to it; but I can see that the little value it will have will not compensate us for the great expense we are going to incur. I do not wish to be a Jeremiah altogether, but I think from Warwick downwards you are going to cripple our main artery of communication.

Mr. COLLINS: You have told us that the territory would support millions of people. The Public Works Commission has spoken highly of it.

Mr. WARREN: I do not know what the Public Works Commission has said, but the members of the Commission are ordinary members of Parliament and not railway experts. I do not cast any reflection on those gentlemen—I expect them to put a railway in my electorate—but, although that evidence was collected by them, I do not think it can be said that they can give an expert opinion. Their opinion is entitled to some weight, but I do not think it is the only thing that this Chamber should take into consideration. I believe that great damage will be done by the construction of this line, inasmuch as the existing main line will not have sufficient goods and passengers running over it to keep it going. I have had considerable experience in connection with the fruitgrowers, and I cannot conceive the line at Wallangarra being over-burdened with traffic. At the present time I do not think it is anything like a payable proposition, but, if you take 80 per cent. of that traffic away, what is the position going to be? This is an important point. Is that line going to be cut completely out? If there is any military value to be gained, that line must be of greater value for moving troops, munitions, etc., and material than a line running along the coast.

If you are going to take all that traffic from that line, and put it on to a new line which is not going to pay interest, you are embarking on something which is not a good proposition. I do not think it is a good proposition. The interest on this new line is going to be a burden to the State, and generally I do not think the proposition is worth supporting.

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

COMMITTEE.

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

Clause 1—“*Short title*”—agreed to.

Clause 2—“*Ratification of South Brisbane-Kyogle-Grafton Railway Agreement*”—

Mr. BELL (*Fassifern*): I would like to ask the Secretary for Railways whether he is prepared to consider the question of paying some compensation to the Beaudesert Shire Council for the loss that is likely to ensue on the Beaudesert tramway when this

[Mr. Warren.

line is built. I think the Minister must recognise that the revenue of the tramway will be very considerably affected, as I pointed out on the second reading of this measure, by the opening of this line and a heavy burden will be thrown on the shoulders of the council, and I would like to ask him whether he is prepared to consider their claims.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*): There is no power in this Bill to enable the Government to pay any compensation to the Beaudesert Shire Council; but, when the line is built, if it robs the tramway of trade, no Government could seriously refuse to consider a claim for compensation. That is the only information I can give the hon. member now. The question really does not arise at present, but, if it should arise in the future, it will be carefully considered.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Schedule—“*South Brisbane-Kyogle-Grafton Railway Agreement*”—

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): There is just one point on which I would like some information from the Minister. On page 4 of the Schedule it is provided that the Commonwealth shall bear one-fifth of the total cost and that the other four-fifths shall be borne by the five States concerned on a per capita basis. On page 7 it is provided that—

“Of the money provided by the Commonwealth as aforesaid—(a) Four-fifths (hereinafter called the quota of the States) shall be deemed to be provided on behalf of the said five States collectively.”

Seeing that the Commonwealth is providing all the loan money, I would like to ask the Minister whether Queensland will pay interest on the whole of the money lent to this State to enable it to build its portion of the line—£1,848,000—or whether Queensland will pay interest only on its per capita share.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Only on the per capita basis.

Mr. KERR: Only on the £410,000, irrespective of the fact that £1,848,000 will be spent on the work?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is so.

Schedule agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

[4.30 p.m.]

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

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

CITY OF BRISBANE BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*) (who was greeted with cheers) said: In introducing this Bill I quite recognise that all sections of public opinion regard the measure as a very important one.

A close analysis of the criticism and comment, favourable or otherwise, discloses the fact that there is really no logical argument against the main principle of the measure. That is to say, no argument has been adduced against the logical conclusion that Brisbane would progress, and naturally

reflect the progress she made herself on the rest of the State, by a closer unity of governing bodies in a local sense within the area determined. Perhaps it would be as well if I briefly recount the history of the present measure, together with the measures that were previously introduced. In 1915, the then leader of the Opposition—the late Hon. T. J. Ryan—in his policy speech at Barcaldine declared that the Labour party, if elected, would espouse a policy of enlarged powers to local governing bodies. The Government have fulfilled that declaration as far as is practicable, inasmuch as during the reign of this Government no new local authority has been formed, and fifteen local authorities that then existed have been merged into other local authorities, and the following cities have been vested with greater powers which enable them to deal with bigger problems than they were previously capable of dealing with—Rockhampton, Townsville, Ipswich, Bundaberg, and Toowoomba. Those changes were made by administrative acts, and the only city of importance that remained—the Queen city of Queensland—was the city of Brisbane, in which case legislative enactment was necessary to give effect to the policy. This is the third occasion on which a Greater Brisbane Bill has been introduced into this Chamber. The first measure was introduced in 1917 by the then Home Secretary, the Hon. John Huxham, and was a very voluminous document—500 pages, I believe.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was a book.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was the first attempt to give effect to very big principles.

Mr. FRY: I suppose the Government made it big in the beginning so that they could impress us.

The HOME SECRETARY: The metropolitan men were rather big, and they wanted wider powers, and they took the scissors and paste pot, and took those powers from other Acts.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: We have gone from complexity to simplicity this time.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes. That Bill served its purpose. It created a certain amount of discussion. Last year a second Bill was introduced by the present Secretary for Public Instruction, the Hon. F. T. Brennan. That Bill was much less in volume than the first, but contained what we as a Government regarded as a basis from which this House and the interested local authorities, as well as the Press might start to build something of a permanent nature—something that we might present with every confidence of having it passed. That Bill served its purpose. It resulted in laying down a proper basis from which we could argue out the various conflicting principles necessary before finally determining what was the proper thing to serve our purpose. As a result of the introduction of that measure, local authority conferences, experts and supposed experts in local government, as well as the public Press, have lent very valuable and valueless assistance, so that from the conglomeration of the various expressions we were able to extract sufficient material to enable us to compile the measure that I am presenting to Parliament this afternoon.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: No one can claim to bring forward a perfect measure, but I do claim for this measure that it is

simple, easily understandable, and that it makes, as far as possible, the true advanced step necessary in the direction of added local authority reform and power.

Briefly described, the Bill is a charter of local government to the City of Brisbane. The area of the city is declared. The constitution of the governing authority is defined, with machinery for its election. The powers of the city, which are to be taken by ordinance, are full and unfettered, the usual constitutional powers of veto and repeal only being reserved. Certain powers with regard to borrowing and the enlargement of the city are also reserved.

The transition plan provides for the election of the Council in February next, but it will not exercise administrative functions until 1st October, 1925, its powers being limited to organising functions, appointment of officers, and making of ordinances. On and from 1st October, 1925, the existing local authorities, Victoria Bridge Board, and Joint Boards constituted under the Local Authorities Acts, including the Electricity Board and Bridge Boards, will be abolished. No date is, however, fixed for taking over water and sewerage, tramways, fire brigades, and cemeteries, but simple provisions have been provided for the taking over of these functions at a date to be fixed by Order in Council.

I have carefully considered that statement so that I could place before the House clearly and in a brief and condensed form the actual powers and objectives contained in the measure. The objective of the Bill is to secure unity in the government of the City of Brisbane. That objective can only be achieved by unity of area, unity of power, unity of functions, and unity of finance. I mention these things because it will be from that basis that I shall later argue the justification for the passage of this measure.

Although the Bill as at present framed contains fifty clauses, there are only five cardinal principles, and I purpose this afternoon to deal with each of those principles.

First is the area. The area constitutes one of the greatest of the contentious matters in the whole Bill. After carefully considering the arguments used in local authority conferences, by the Press, and by the various authorities that have taken an interest in the measure; I find some confusion in the conclusions arrived at. Almost every authority agrees that, if we are to accomplish the objective of the Bill, the area must be one to benefit the community throughout the area involved; but there seems to be a division of opinion as to whether the method of absorption should be by the direct method proposed in the measure, or whether it should be by a gradual process. I am going to try to show hon. members to-day that the logical course is to adopt the speedy method of embracing the whole area, as we intend to do.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: In following the arguments levelled against the measure that was previously before the House, I find that in almost every case where the area was objected to—although it was freely admitted that the area should ultimately be the area of a Greater Brisbane—it was felt that a 5-mile area should be sufficient upon which to make a start. But no matter who the authority was who made that statement,

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no one has advanced any clear, concrete, practical, or logical scheme of where the 5-mile radius should begin and where it should end.

Mr. KERR: Not necessarily a 5-mile radius.

The HOME SECRETARY: Well, a 5-mile area. I have attached a map to the Bill. I also had a map prepared showing a limited area approximating the 5-mile radius. I want hon. members to follow the brown line on the map, which represents the 5-mile area. I feel certain the hon. member for Enoggera will lose his levity when I tell him that I have departed from any systematic scheme of embracing Enoggera, because I knew the Enoggera area is the worst treated in the whole of Brisbane. It would be logically impossible to omit Enoggera from any scheme of a Greater Brisbane for the simple reason advanced by the hon. member for Enoggera the other day when he showed how the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board Act inflicted a certain injustice on that area by exempting from raising the whole of the water reserve of the City of Brisbane as well as the large area held as a reserve for defence purposes. It is obvious, therefore, that no scheme with a 5-mile radius can be brought forward that would divide the particular shire I refer to.

I want to show what it would mean if we were to adopt the 5-mile radius as shown by the brown line on the map. The rateable value of the whole area outlined in the Greater Brisbane scheme is £16,000,000. The area within the 5-mile radius had a rateable value of £14,413,000, leaving to the area outside the brown line a rateable value of £1,609,000.

Now, let us take the area of Greater Brisbane as shown by the blue line on the map. That area is approximately 385 square miles. Within the 5-mile radius, which has a rateable value of £14,413,000, there is an area of 80 square miles, and outside that radius there is an area of 305 square miles which has a rateable value of £1,609,000. I want to impress upon the House that one of the functions of any local government body that aspires to become a greater body such as the Greater Brisbane Council should be to provide that the arterial roads leading to the main centres of commerce shall be well and properly maintained. Yet we find—this is an argument against starting with the 5-mile radius—that within the 5-mile radius there are only 75 miles of main roads, although the rateable value of property within that radius amounts to £14,413,000. Outside that radius there are 140 miles of main roads to be maintained. That is one of the reasons why I say there can be no division of the area if you aspire to reach your objective. It would be like a rich squire in his own homestead with poor relations hanging on to his skirts outside.

There is a further argument against any division of the area, which will be found by scaling the map. What would be the problem that would confront us in adjusting the scattered area—the poorly valued area—that would be left with no community of interest at all except with the main centre of commerce? I have already referred to the position of Enoggera. Let me now take the Shire of Moggill. That shire has a rateable value of £78,000, and it has two arterial roads running through it which are necessary for the building up of the greater city. The

shire has not been in a financial position to maintain those two main roads, and the Main Roads Board has been negotiating with the council to keep them in a state of repair.

The two main roads are the Moggill-Ipswich road and the Brookfield road. In the Enoggera shire there are 11,000 acres of land of low rateable value. The shire contains the main road communication between Brisbane and one of the future lungs of the city—Mount Glorious—a very costly road to maintain. These are the problems that confront us when we seriously consider the future effects of a division of the Greater Brisbane area.

Let me give another argument. In the brown line 5-mile radius Sandgate and Pinkenba would be excluded. Does any hon. member honestly believe that we can aspire to a greater city area without first recognising that it is absolutely essential for the well-being of our city that we at least have a deep-water port, and that we further should have lungs to our city, so that our jaded and tired workers may have speedy and cheap access to the recreation which they can obtain from the approach to the sea?

An OPPOSITION MEMBER interjected.

The HOME SECRETARY: Never mind about that. The hon. member's vision is limited to dividends. He does not visualise the time when Brisbane's population will have reached a point when we can expect municipal activities to provide for the welfare of the whole of the community in the matter of transit whether by road, tram, or water.

Mr. KELSO: What about the railway?

The HOME SECRETARY: You have one of the cheapest railway fares to Sandgate that it is possible to give, and one of the worst roads existent in any part of the Commonwealth.

Let us consider the position of portions of the shire of Toombul—Pinkenba, and other areas. Where would the hon. member place the centre of government in regard to that? Would he place it in Sandgate? There are no means of communication between the two, and there cannot possibly be any community of interest at all?

Let us take further arguments against the area. If the Greater Brisbane area and the Greater Brisbane Bill are to be worthy of the trouble, worry, and research that has been given to the matter by various Ministers, public officers, and local authority men, we must aspire to something bigger than the ordinary local authority. What would be the position of a Greater Brisbane which was confined in its area to a 5-mile radius, while the whole of the outside residential areas were allowed to be divided and subdivided, without the city having any say in that most important matter?

Then let us consider the need of a town planning provision, which is essential if we are going to make Brisbane the "City Beautiful" that we aspire to make it.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: And to avoid the mistakes of the past.

The HOME SECRETARY: Let us realise the need of a pure milk supply, and the need of overcoming the various defects and subdivisions which exist in our midst to-day,

[Hon. J. Stopford.]

where several authorities, each striving for the same objective, take different roads to reach it.

Now let me show hon. members what a division of the area would mean. I am speaking along these lines to-day to anticipate possible objections that may come quite honestly from those who have not, perhaps, had the time to consider the whole question. An alteration of the area would mean the retention of joint authorities for many public utilities—water and sewerage boards, tramway trusts, fire brigade boards, cemetery trusts, and all of them would have to be maintained. A separate authority would require to be established for dealing with public health. I anticipate that, when Greater Brisbane becomes an accomplished fact, if the proper men are elected—men with a vision big enough to understand their functions—they will realise that they should no longer loaf on the Government, as they have been doing.

Mr. MAXWELL: You have no right to say that.

The HOME SECRETARY: I shall prove it. Consider a population in the metropolitan area of 250,000 persons having no permanent medical officer or sanitary engineer, so that, when plague strikes them, they must have a Joint Health Board forced upon them to bring them to a sense of their responsibility.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Government bungled over the influenza epidemic, and you know it.

The HOME SECRETARY: The local authorities were compelled to take it over, and the members of the Joint Health Board had charged three guineas a meeting.

Mr. MAXWELL: You asked the local authorities to take it over.

The HOME SECRETARY: The Home Secretary of the day was forced to compel the local authorities to take it over. The hon. member says that they have the machinery for protecting the health of the community.

Mr. MAXWELL: I say that the Home Secretary of the time asked the local authorities to take over the control of the influenza epidemic.

The HOME SECRETARY: He did not.

Mr. KING: The local authorities have medical officers.

The HOME SECRETARY: Part-time medical officers, whose duty it was to wait until the outbreak occurred and then tell the local authorities that there was gross carelessness; but it was not the function of a part-time medical officer to go round and investigate and prevent the outbreak.

Let me proceed. Separate authorities would have to be created for every service undertaken. Suppose Greater Brisbane were to embark on a pure milk scheme, a sanitary scheme, or a ferry scheme. They could not do so because the area would be divided, without first creating another authority to add to all the authorities we have to-day.

Take the Victoria Bridge. At the present time the Home Department is conferring with the authorities on the question of traffic congestion. We have to recognise that we have one bridge as the outlet for our traffic across the river, and the problem

is one that can only be solved by adding to the means of communication across the river. What is the result? The result is that no portion of Brisbane has been so badly treated as South Brisbane. South Brisbane to-day carries a heavy load of taxation for the reason that the bridge is the vomiting point of a congested area. Brisbane vomits all its traffic across the only bridge, and tears up the South Brisbane roads and streets to reach places like Kangaroo Point. Limitation of the area would postpone the purpose of the scheme indefinitely. I think I have now given hon. members sufficient argument on the question of area.

[5 p.m.]

I desire now to deal very briefly with the constitution provided under the Bill. The Bill provides that the council shall be composed of a mayor and twenty aldermen elected for the electoral wards corresponding to the present parliamentary electoral districts under the Elections Act. The elections are to be held in February. This arrangement will enable the December State electoral roll to be used, and thus save the expense of the compilation of a separate roll. Extraordinary vacancies must be filled by election. There is one aspect of that upon which I desire to touch here, because I believe it is the only real point of criticism that has been levelled against the Bill, and that is, that under the Bill we propose to pay £400 per annum to the men whose services we enlist to carry out the responsible task of giving effect to this Bill. The mayor will receive £1,000 per annum and whatever allowances the council may from time to time determine. The mayor will have only those powers which are conferred upon him by the council. That is a very necessary precaution. We do not know who the mayor might be. We do not want a Brisbane Mussolini.

Mr. MAXWELL: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: We want the man who takes his seat in the chair for three years to hold that seat with the confidence of the men who sit around the table with him. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. KERR: Is the hon. gentleman referring to Mr. Barry. (Laughter.)

The HOME SECRETARY: No; I had in mind the hon. member for Toowong. (Laughter.)

Mr. KELSO: Will he carry the title of Lord Mayor?

The HOME SECRETARY: No. I come now to a most important point in the Bill. On that point the present measure differs considerably from the one previously before the House. The powers under the old Bill were very limited; as a matter of fact, there were no powers given in the previous Bill at all. When I read the measure introduced last year I was surprised to find that we were really conferring less power upon the Greater Brisbane Council than is enjoyed by the present local authorities. Under this measure the council will initiate powers by ordinance, which are to be submitted to the Governor in Council, and, if approved by the Governor in Council, become law. Under the previous Bill the Greater City of Brisbane would only have had the power that was conferred on it by the Governor in Council from time to time.

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Mr. KING: There was too much "Governor in Council" about it.

The HOME SECRETARY: There was too much "Governor in Council." I said at the start that that Bill was really the basis upon which this House and the local authorities could argue. When it was introduced last session it was known that it would not become law during that session. The Local Authorities' Conference naturally asked for fuller powers, the object being to give councils the fullest authority to provide for the local government of the area of the city, and for that reason the powers that are to be conferred are couched in the simplest language and in the broadest terms.

The powers are general and express, and the generality of the general powers is not limited by the express powers. Powers are to be taken by ordinance, which are to be subject to the approval of the Governor in Council in the first place, and may be rejected by Parliament in the second place. These reservations include the constitutional power of veto, and, in addition, the usual power of repeal has been reserved.

Pending the making of ordinances by the Council defining its powers and duties, it is necessary to ensure that its authority shall be at least as effective as that of the present councils and shires for which it is substituted. Therefore, it is provided that the council shall have all the powers and authorities, and be subject to all the duties and obligations of a local authority under any statute, including the Local Authorities Act and the Health Acts, but in order not unduly to restrict the council in its operations by this provision, power is reserved for the council by ordinance to alter these Acts.

Mr. KING: That means that the council will be governed by the Local Authorities Act by the issue of ordinances?

The HOME SECRETARY: By ordinances approved of by the Governor in Council.

Mr. MAXWELL: Will those ordinances be on the table of the House for fourteen days when Parliament is in session?

The HOME SECRETARY: No. The council will carry on just the same. In recess the Governor in Council will deal with it in the same manner that he deals with any regulation that is now issued.

Mr. KING: It might be a dangerous ordinance.

The HOME SECRETARY: In that case the Governor in Council will have to share the responsibility with the council. The House might pass an Act and leave to me, as Home Secretary, the right to issue regulations under it. I submit those regulations to the Governor in Council and, if the House is in recess, we carry on until Parliament meets again. So far as I can see, no one will be hurt by that power. It is a power that the Governor in Council would not abuse. They have the same power in other circumstances. They have never abused it, because the Governor in Council has to face practically the same franchise as the men who are elected to the council.

I want to deal in the little time at my disposal with a very important alteration in the existing Bill as compared with the previous Bill on the question of finance. The present Bill gives the usual power to rate on the unimproved value of land, to impose

fees, charges, fares, rents, and dues by ordinance. The council will have power to borrow from the Treasurer, or to raise money by the sale of bonds or inscribed stock. The power to borrow is to be subject to the approval of the Governor in Council.

Existing loans to the Treasurer are to be consolidated into two forty-year loans of 4 per cent. and 5½ per cent. respectively, as from 1st July, 1925. The total outstanding loan indebtedness to the Treasurer at the 30th June last was £545,766. As the total outstanding indebtedness to the Treasurer at 31st December, 1918, was less than £150,000, it will be seen that the greater part of the loan indebtedness to the Treasurer comprises new loans. Practically the whole of the indebtedness to the Treasurer is owing by local authorities other than the Cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, which have borrowed by the sale of debentures. Consolidation of the loans in the manner provided by the Bill will reduce the annual charge by a sum approximating £20,000. Debentures cannot, of course, be interfered with, but an added security has been given to them by the Government guarantee.

All benefited areas are to be repealed, and all existing loans and future loans are to become a common charge against the whole city. Consolidation and pooling of loans and the levying of a single rate will reduce the finance of the city to simplicity. That is very necessary.

Mr. KING: Why not give power to operate on any assets, apart altogether from ordinary revenue?

The HOME SECRETARY: That is a matter I shall consider later. I want to make this clear, because to my mind it constitutes one of the greatest, if not the greatest, alteration between the existing and the past measure. Under the old proposal power was taken to consolidate the loans then existing between the various councils and the Treasurer, but there was this defect, that it proposed that loans for benefited areas then existing were to continue to be a charge on those areas, but all future loans were to become a common charge on the whole area.

Let us analyse what that means. When that Bill was introduced there was something like 163 different loan rates existing over the whole area, and it was proposed that all those benefited areas should continue, but that future loans should be pooled. What that means will be gathered from a table I have had compiled, and which I ask leave to have inserted in "Hansard" in order that I may not weary hon. members with the long by description that would otherwise be necessary. Under the old proposal 163 different rate notices were necessary. That number has been reduced to 132, due to the fact that some local authorities had since pooled their finances. The thing that constitutes the weakness of the old proposal is to be found in areas like Windsor and Hamilton, which have borrowed money and improved their areas by putting in efficient drainage and have made the expenditure necessary for the comfort, the welfare, and good government of the areas. We must compare them with Kedron, Moggill, and other centres which have been unable to develop the areas or to improve the conditions of drainage and sanitation which are so necessary for the development of the general health of the community.

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Under the old Bill, Hamilton, Windsor, and other places would be compelled still to carry their old heavy loan rates and at the same time share in the future burden of developing the growing districts of Kedron, Moggill, Yeerongpilly, etc. My table has explanatory notes attached to it so that hon. mem-

bers will be able to follow the whole table setting forth the different authorities.

Mr. MOORE: Have you put in the dates of the loans to the various councils?

The HOME SECRETARY: No; the Assistant Minister gave that information in the tables he quoted last year.

TABLE.

Local Authority.	Loan Rates, 1923.	Average Loan Rate.		Total Rates for 1924.	Average Rate.	Total Effective Rate, 1924.
		Without Consolidation.	Consolidated.			
Brisbane	d. 1'6	d. 1'06	d. 1'65	d. 7½	d. 8½	d. 7½
South Brisbane	2'1	1'96	1'65	11½	8½	11½
Hamilton	2'6	1'96	1'65	11	8½	8½
Ithaca	1'2	1'96	1'65	10½	8½	8
Sandgate	2'6	1'96	1'65	11	8½	8
Toowong	2'0	1'96	1'65	10½	8½	8
Windsor	3'7	1'96	1'65	11½d. to 1s. 4½d.	8½	8½d. to 1s.
Wynnum	4'0	1'96	1'65	8d. to 1s. 0½d.	8½	6d. to 1s.
Balmoral	2'6	1'96	1'65	1s. 0½d. to 1s. 3d.	8½	9½d. to 1½d.
Belmont	5'1	1'96	1'65	1s. 4d.	8½	1s.
Coorparoo	3'8	1'96	1'65	10d.	8½	7½d.
Enoggera	1'9	1'96	1'65	7½d. to 1½d.	8½	5 7½d. to 8½d.
Kedron	0'8	1'96	1'65	5½d. to 7½d.	8½	2½d. to 5½d.
Moggill	0'2	1'96	1'65	6d.	8½	4½d.
Sherwood	0'01	1'96	1'65	8½d. to 10d.	8½	6½d. to 7½d.
Stephens	2'2	1'96	1'65	8d. to 1s.	8½	6d. to 9d.
Tar'nga	0'03	1'96	1'65	10d.	8½	7½d.
Tingalpa .. .. .	..	1'96	1'65	..	8½	3½d.
Toombul	1'9	1'96	1'65	4½d. to 1s. 1½d.	8½	2½d. to 10d.
Yeerongpilly .. .. .	..	1'96	1'65	7d. to 10d.	8½	5½d. to 7½d.

Explanatory Notes on Construction of Table.

(1) "Loan rates" for 1923 (column 1) was calculated by taking the total amount of interest and redemption payable in respect of loans, other than loans for electric light, wharves, etc., in respect of which moneys are derived other than by rate, but where such moneys were insufficient to pay interest and redemption in full, the amount required to be provided out of rates has been included. The rate was calculated on the total rateable value, as if the loans were a charge against the whole area, disregarding wards, divisions, and benefited areas. In illustration, the total loan payments required an average rate over the whole town of Windsor of 3.7d. in the £1, whereas special loan rates, numbering nine, varied from 1½d. to 7¼d. in 1923, and varying from 1¼d. to 9½d. this year.

(2) "Average loan rates" (in column 2) is the rate which would have been required to have been levied in 1923, assuming that the Greater Brisbane existed, and the loans were pooled and made a common charge to provide the total amount paid in respect of the annual charges on loans. The difference between the two is the approximate difference in the rate required which would have resulted from consolidation of Treasury loans.

(3) "Total rates" (in column 3) is the total of all rates for 1924, excluding cleansing charges. The variations are due to wards, benefited areas, etc.

(4) "Average rate" (in column 4) is the average rate which would have been required to be levied over the whole of the Greater Brisbane area to produce the total amount raised by all rates levied in 1923, exclusive of cleansing charges.

(5) "Effective rate" (in column 5) is the rate which it is estimated would have been required if valuations had been on the same basis. Values approximate true values in the Cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, but in the outside areas they do not. In order to make up for the discrepancy in values, the rate base, in all cases, except in the case of the Cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, been reduced by 25 per cent.

The explanatory notes will show how the figures have been compiled, and I want hon. members to understand clearly the total effective rate has in all cases, except in case of the Cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, been reduced by 25 per cent. because we contend there is not a true valuation in those areas. I want hon. members to note further that in assessing what may be deemed to be rural land within these areas they must understand that the Bill contains a provision whereby a reduced rate must be struck by the Greater Brisbane Council for lands of that description.

Mr. KELSEY: Can the voters veto a loan?

The HOME SECRETARY: No. To show that pooling has been something that has occupied the attention of the various councils I would like to quote from something that I have taken out so that we may

approach this matter with a full knowledge of the true position.

"The attached table gives a list of the rates levied in the several areas in metropolitan Brisbane.

"There are only three undivided areas—namely, Town of Hamilton, Town of Sandgate, and Shire of Belmont.

"Wards and divisions and benefited areas are financial units.

"The policy has always aimed at removing wards and divisions and benefited areas, particularly in city and town areas.

"The City of Brisbane is divided into seven wards, but, notwithstanding, the City Council has for years levied only one rate for all purposes (except cleansing) and had, some years ago, to contest an action in the court taken by the Landowners' Association—that

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is, the big city interests. Having failed in the court, an attempt was made to get a previous Government to interfere. Here was a clear case of the wealthy part attempting to be segregated from the poorer parts. All loans were thus pooled, and have remained pooled since. If the City Council had not taken this action, there probably would have been fifty separate rates in the city.

"Other local authorities have since followed the example of the City of Brisbane, including the City of South Brisbane, the Town of Hamilton, and the Shire of Coorparoo, and the Shire of Stephens has this year reduced the number of its rates from twenty-two to four.

"The case of the two adjoining towns of Hamilton and Windsor may be cited as showing the position which exists. The Town of Hamilton is 3 square miles and Windsor 4 square miles. The former is undivided; the latter is divided into four wards, with benefited areas for different works. In the Town of Hamilton one rate is levied; in the Town of Windsor thirteen separate rates are levied.

"Also the adjoining Shires of Coorparoo and Stephens is another illustration. Both are divided into three divisions. The Coorparoo Shire Council has always made its loans a common charge against the whole of its area, while the Stephens Shire Council followed a policy of benefited areas. One rate suffices in the Shire of Coorparoo, while for the year 1913 there were twenty-two separate rates in the Shire of Stephens. I find that they wiped out the benefited areas in Division 1, and thereby consolidated the loans in that division, which enabled the Council this year to levy one rate instead of twelve rates. The present Secretary for Public Lands, when Home Secretary, had, however, previously agreed to the proposal at the request of the council.

"Except in two cases, there are no cities or towns outside Brisbane divided into wards, and several of them have pooled their finances. Wards in the Cities of Ipswich and Bundaberg were abolished only this year for the express purpose of pooling the finances."

The leader of the Opposition just now asked what was the date of these loans. For the benefit of the hon. member I might inform him that the total loan indebtedness of the area to the 30th June last was £545,766. To show what consolidation really means, I would mention that in 1918 the total indebtedness was £150,000, showing that most of the loans are of recent origin.

Mr. MOORE: You refer to Government loans?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes. By the consolidation of the loans these areas will save £20,000 annually. Holders of debentures issued by the Brisbane and South Brisbane Councils have been anxious to know whether their assets have been depreciated, and I wish to point out that these debentures will be guaranteed by the Government.

If a Greater Brisbane is to be effective and we are to reach the objective we aspire to reach, the passage of this Bill is really a question of urgency.

The problem is daily becoming more acute. We have to consider the questions of health, traffic, better roads, outlets for our increasing population, streets, and seaside and

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mountain resorts, and, so that hon. members may understand that the measure is not destined to be a measure merely for to-day, but that it is a measure upon which we may build for the future requirements of the city, I want to quote the increase in the population of Brisbane at different periods within a 10-mile radius—

BRISBANE—(10 MILE RADIUS).
Census Population.

Year.	Population.	Inter-censal Increase—Numerical.	Ten Years per cent. Increase.	Annual per cent. Increase.
1891 ..	101,554	—	—	—
1901 ..	119,428	17,874	17·6	1·7
1911 ..	139,480	20,052	16·8	1·6
1921 ..	209,168	69,688	50·0	5·0

Average annual increase over whole period
1891-1921 = 3·5 per cent.

I will now give figures showing how the population of Sydney and Brisbane respectively has increased in the periods stated—

Year.	POPULATION.	
	Sydney.	Brisbane.
1910	631,600	141,242
1921	£97,640	209,699
1923	1,000,000	..
1924 .. .. .	..	235,000

The growth of population is something we can reasonably expect to continue in an increasing degree in Brisbane, and if it continues to increase at the average annual rate of 5 per cent., as in the last census period, the population in 1950 will exceed 800,000, and lands now used for rural purposes will have passed to business and residential areas. Twenty-five years is a short period to look ahead.

The Bill provides for holding the elections in February next, but the Council will not become operative in a general sense till 1st October, 1925. We consider that during that period local bodies will have ample work to occupy their time.

The Bill has been carefully considered, and it has been drafted upon simple and understandable lines. Our responsibility as a Parliament is to give to the people a sound basis upon which they may erect a superstructure, which will stand as a monument to the work of this Parliament and to the aldermen who will be responsible for the working of the scheme. I beg to move—

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

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): 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 5.25 p.m.