

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 1924

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TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER, 1924.

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

QUESTIONS.

ALLEGED OUTBREAK OF PNEUMONIC INFLUENZA, LADY CHELMSFORD HOSPITAL, BUNDABERG.

Mr. CARTER (*Port Curtis*) asked the hon. member for Bundaberg—

“With reference to his statement in this House on the 4th instant, when, speaking of the Lady Chelmsford Maternity Hospital, Bundaberg, he said, ‘There was a serious outbreak in the hospital, but the complaint was introduced by a patient who was admitted, and one lady died,’ and his subsequent explanation that the outbreak was one of pneumonic influenza—

1. Will he furnish the date of the outbreak?

2. The name of the patient who, suffering from pneumonic influenza, was admitted into a maternity hospital?

3. The name of the lady who died during the said outbreak?”

Mr. BARBER (*Bundaberg*) replied—

“1, 2, and 3. In reply to the hon. member’s questions, I would refer him—

(a) To the reports submitted by the City Council’s health officer (Dr. Thompson, Bundaberg), and supported by Drs. Reid and Schmidt, who, with Dr. Thompson, are associated with the Lady Chelmsford Hospital medical staff. The reports state that since 1915 over 3,000 women have been inmates of the hospital, during which period twenty-one (21) deaths have occurred from various causes, or a percentage of 6 per 1,000.

(b) To the statutory declaration taken by the local police magistrate, Mr. O’Brien, from Mr. Cormack, husband of the deceased woman, Mrs. Cormack, on the circumstances of whose death the member for Port Curtis has based his allegations, and in which said declaration Mr. Cormack denies making any statement which warranted such allegations being made by Mr. Carter.

(c) To the certificate tendered by Dr. Cameron, Brisbane, who performed the operation, in which Dr. Cameron certifies to the causes of the woman’s death, which causes did not warrant Mr. Carter making such charges.

(d) To the statement made by the nurses previously associated with the Lady Chelmsford Hospital, in which statement the said nurses deny having made any allegations against the hospital management on which Mr. Carter could base the charges made by him against either the medical staff or the matron and nursing staff of the institution.”

ADMINISTRATION OF BUNDABERG GENERAL HOSPITAL.

Mr. KING (*Logan*) asked the Home Secretary—

“In reference to the administration of the Bundaberg General Hospital—

1. Is it a fact that dissatisfied relatives are causing patients to be taken out of the general hospital and transferring them to a private hospital?

2. Is it a fact that sick persons recommended by their medical advisers to enter the general hospital are refusing to do so; and, if so, why?

3. Is there any serious internal friction between the management and the staff?

4. Is it a fact that efforts are being made to get rid of the matron without cause, and that practically the whole of the nursing staff are supporting the matron?

5. Has the nursing staff asked the Home Secretary for a public inquiry; and, if so, with what result?

6. Is the matron, through her solicitors, demanding an apology from the president of the committee for alleged insulting behaviour?

7. Have honorary doctors recently resigned; and, if so, for what reason?

8. Is there a falling off in the revenue and the average number of patients?

9. Does he consider that the state of affairs at this hospital at the present time is unsatisfactory to all concerned; and, if so, what action is he taking in the matter?

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

“1 I have no information.

“2. See reply to No. 1.

“3. The management is in control. If there is serious friction the management should remove it.

“4. I am not aware of it.

“5. Yes; and it was refused.

“6. I am not aware of it.

“7. I understand so, but the doctors have not informed me of their reason.

“8. No information of falling off in revenue or in the average number of patients has been brought under my notice.

“9. Without full information I am unable to answer the question, but, if the position is as the questions suggest, steps will be taken to bring Bundaberg and district under the Hospitals Act of 1923.”

APPLICATIONS FROM TOOWOOMBA BAND TO RUN LOTTERIES.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*) asked the Attorney-General—

“1. Has the Toowoomba Band made applications from time to time to the Justice Department to run lotteries, and were the requests granted by the department?

“2. If so, how many such lotteries have been run by them?

“3. Are they running one now?

“4. What were the dates of application and of approval?

" 5. What were the objects for which the lotteries were run?"

" 6. How much money has been raised by them in the several lotteries?"

" 7. How is the money raised being distributed?"

" 8. Has he any knowledge as to the financial position of the band?"

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*) replied—

" 1. Ycs.

" 2. Since 1st April, 1923, two have been granted.

" 3. No.

" 4. An application, dated 10th April, 1923, was granted on 16th April, 1923, and an application, dated 3rd August, 1923, was granted on 29th November, 1923.

" 5. The application granted on 16th April, 1923, was in aid of the Toowoomba Band Carnival funds, and that granted on 29th November, 1923, was in aid of the Toowoomba Municipal Band and Trades Hall.

" 6. No information is available as to what amount was raised by the art union granted on 16th April, 1923. The divided profits in connection with that granted on 29th November, 1923, amounted to £4,568 18s. 2d.

" 7. No information is available as to how the money has been distributed.

" 8. No.

" (Note.—These permits were granted before new regulations came into force.)"

STATEMENT IN "POLICE JOURNAL" IN RE CONSTABLE REGULATING TRAFFIC IN QUEEN STREET.

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

" Will he lay upon the table of the House the papers dealing with the charge made against a Minister of the Crown by the 'Queensland Police Union Journal' of 25th August, that he had publicly abused a constable whilst on duty in Queen street, and also threatened his removal to Thargomindah?"

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

" No. No useful purpose would be served by doing so. The hon. member may peruse them at the Home Office."

STATEMENT IN "POLICE JOURNAL" ALLEGING DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF CITIZENS OF BUNDEBERG.

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

" 1. Has his attention been drawn to a statement made by the 'Queensland Police Union Journal' of 23rd September, on p. 17, in an article entitled 'Without fear or favour,' where a charge is made that differential treatment has been meted out to citizens of Bundaberg?"

" 2. Will he inquire into the accuracy or otherwise of these statements, and place the facts before the House?"

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

" 1. No.

" 2. No."

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Taxes on the operations of the Land Tax Act during the year 1923-24.

Regulation 47 of the Regulations made under the Primary Products Pools Acts, 1922 to 1923.

Regulation 12 of the Levy Regulations made under the Primary Producers' Organisation Acts, 1922 to 1923.

Third Annual Report of the Main Roads Board for the year ended 30th June, 1924.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—FOURTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

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

DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Question stated—"That £17,415 be granted for 'Chief Office'"—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): Hon. members will notice from the Under Secretary's report for this year that there has been a distinct improvement in the mineral output of this State, and also in the gold output. The value of the mineral output for the year was £1,823,899, an increase over the figures of the previous year of £140,919. Unfortunately for the State and for Australia generally the copper market remains in a depressed condition, with very little hope of revival. In my opinion it is not possible—and this is borne out by experts not only in the Department of Mines but generally—to treat copper profitably in Australia under the present conditions—although we have some very high-grade ore—for the reason that the world's market price, which Australia does not control, is far too low. Under the conditions of producing copper here as compared with similar conditions in other countries there is very little hope of the industry reviving at the present time. The price of copper will have to reach £80 a ton before the copper mines at Cloncurry, Chillagoe, and other places in the State can be worked to produce copper profitably. The reason for that is that the methods of treatment in this State are not so nearly up to date as in America. In America under the leaching process and the up-to-date treatment of copper generally, copper can be produced at £42 and less per ton, so that, with that country controlling the price of copper in London and overseas generally, it will not be possible to treat copper ore in Queensland profitably under our obsolete method of treatment. We must be more up to date in our methods all round.

Lead prices have improved, and the present price is £33 per ton. No doubt there is a future before lead and spelter, in which some of the world's best authorities predict a shortage in the future. Australia sends to London 64 per cent. of the lead used in Great Britain, and the future for lead mining in the Commonwealth should therefore be particularly bright.

The tin market has also improved this year. It improved from £180 in January to £235 in December, and the present price is about

£230 or £235, the highest point reached being £257 per ton. There has therefore been an improvement generally in all base metals with the exception of copper.

The gold output for the year was £376,883, an increase of £34,583 over the production of 1922. My remarks in regard to the production of copper also apply to the production of gold. It is not a matter of further gold discoveries in Queensland so much as a matter of treatment. If we had more up-to-date methods of saving gold and treating our already discovered ore bodies, gold production would be increased. I do not say that it is not right to encourage prospecting, or that we would not welcome another Mount Morgan, Gympie, or Charters Towers, all of which came to the assistance of this State during periods of depression.

It is a fact—and I think there are hon. members on both sides of the Chamber who will bear me out—that we have gold lodes, ore bodies, and reefs in Queensland which would be payable if our treatment was more up to date and the mines generally were conducted on more up-to-date methods.

The chief feature of the report of the Under Secretary for Mines is to the effect that production has increased. I am very pleased to see that, and I hope that during the present financial year there will also be an increase in the production of the most important and most necessary metals. Special importance is attached to the discussion of this vote by reason of the fact that the mining industry is one of the most important industries in Australia, and particularly one of the most important industries in this State. Further, it is an essential industry. It is essential for the reason that, if large secondary industries are to be firmly established and expanded and if they are to prosper, a good deal of attention must be paid to mining development. In the process of that development we shall always have periods of depression; we shall always have our ups and downs and our difficulties.

We shall have difficulties in production and difficulties in marketing by reason of the fact that we in Australia are handicapped on account of our great distance from the world's market. We shall have difficulties because of the fact that we have so few people to utilise our production and to utilise the capabilities of the State so far as base metals are concerned.

These are the difficulties confronting Australia from the mining point of view. It devolves upon us to face these difficulties in no mean carping spirit and in no jocular way, but rather with courage and a healthy optimism, recognising that there is always a grave element of risk associated with the mining industry, and recognising, too, that the mining industry is mostly speculative. I use the word "speculative" in the broad sense. The mining industry is mostly speculative because of its uncertainty, and because of the fact that we cannot see one pick's point ahead of us under ground.

We should also realise in discussing this mining vote that, if Australia is to become a great country and a great nation, there are three factors which go to make a nation great. Those three great factors are all associated with the mining industry—coal, iron, and oil. We realise that coal is king—the father of all industries—and Queensland is very richly endowed by nature with regard

to coal—more so than any other State in the Commonwealth. At the back door of every important seaport we have deposits of coal. At the back door of Brisbane we have the Ipswich coalfields, 25 miles from Brisbane; at the back door of Maryborough and Bundaberg we have the Howard and Burrum coalfields; at the back door of Gladstone and Rockhampton we have Baralaba, Styx River, and Blair Athol; at the back door of Mackay we have the Styx River also; at the back door of Bowen we have the wonderful Bowen coalfields; at the back door of Cairns we have the Mount Mulligan coalfield. Coal is a valuable asset to the State, and it is worthy of notice that these coalfields are within the immediate vicinity of our ports, and in the future they will be a large factor in the proper development of our State.

We have our State coalmines which I have mentioned—Baralaba, Bowen, and Styx River—and there has been some criticism regarding these mines. Hon. members opposite have somewhat ridiculed the idea of the Government controlling State coalmines. If there is one enterprise more than another, especially in the mining industry, that the State should control, it is coalmines, and I hope that we shall never have a Government in power that will get rid of the valuable assets that we have secured for the State in these coalmines.

HON. W. H. BARNES: You got rid of the Warra State coalmine in the West.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: We got rid of Warra. Of course, Warra was not very successful, as the hon. member knows. I do not believe in working a water mine as a coalmine. It is a debatable point whether the Government should carry on a policy of State enterprise in connection with coalmines or whether they should derive the revenue, which rightly belongs to the State, by way of royalties, as will be done in connection with oil, if oil is discovered in Queensland. We have a valuable asset in our State coalmines, and it has taken the Mines Department some time to secure these areas and test them by a system of boring. We have had to suffer the criticisms of hon. members opposite particularly because in the initial stages there was a slight loss, although indirectly the State derived a large benefit from these mines. I hope hon. members will never agree to forfeit the mines that have been secured for the State, particularly as I have been largely responsible for the development of some of these mines. The following table, which gives the output for the year ended 30th June, 1924 of these mines, will be of interest to hon. members:—

—	Baralaba.	Bowen.	Styx No. 2.
Number of working days during year ended 30th June, 1924	244	239	262
Total output same period	Tons. cwt. 40,200 0	Tons. cwt. 74,866 13	Tons. cwt. 30,353 0
Average daily output	164 15	317 8	115 17
Supplies to railways	16,872 11	46,550 19	23,235 18
Private buyers	21,653 6	27,539 15	5,291 13

The total output of the three mines was 145,419 tons.

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The supply of this great commodity has not only been beneficial to the State in that it has meant a great saving to the Railway Department, particularly in the North of Queensland, but the supply of this coal has been of great benefit to those engaged in industries in that part of the State. We have supplied sugar-mills and other small industries with North Queensland coal at a price very nearly 50 per cent. less in some cases than it cost previously.

If these coalmines had been left to private enterprise I am very sure the people in the North would not be getting the coal at the same price. The Government, in their wisdom, deemed it a wise policy to supply coal to the industries in the North at a reasonable price to give them an opportunity of making a profit.

There is a very small profit shown in the State coalmines. I can probably anticipate what hon. members opposite will say. I will admit the losses and also admit the profits. The Bowen State coalmine shows a profit of £338 11s. 4d. so far this year. The profit last year was £5,056 15s. 10d., the accumulated profit being £5,095 7s. 2d. Baralaba last year showed a loss of £4,886 14s. 8d.—I have not got the final figures. Styx River showed a loss also. But we have reached the turning point so far as Baralaba is concerned. Up to the 30th June—the end of the last financial year—that mine showed a loss of £4,400. We had to engage in costly developmental work. We had to put in a tunnel which was costly, so that we could more economically mine the coal, but we reached the turning point on 31st May last. According to the balance-sheets, and after deducting royalty, depreciation and interest on the capital expended—as one should do in a balance-sheet—the position at Baralaba is shown to be—

BARALABA STATE COALMINE.

Selling Price, 14s. 9d.

Fortnight Ended.	Cost per Ton		Credit Balance.	
	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	£	<i>s. d.</i>
31st May	13	1½	202	1 10
14th June	13	5½	150	4 5
30th June	12	10½	274	9 8
12th July	14	0½	88	11 3
26th July	14	0½	67	15 3
9th August	13	0½	218	6 10
23rd August	13	1	201	4 7
6th September	13	6	157	8 6

Altogether that shows a profit since 31st May of £1,360 2s. 4d. I want to point out that, although we showed a loss at the end of the financial year, as stated in the Auditor-General's report, we have reached the turning point which all mines must reach. We have done considerable developmental work, and the mine is now on a splendid basis, although the selling price is as low as 14s. 9d. per ton of coal at the pit's mouth.

As against that loss also we have to consider the fact that we have saved many thousands of pounds to the Railway Department by giving them much cheaper coal than they were getting in the past.

[*Hon. A. J. Jones.*]

[10.30 a.m.]

I have here a statement showing the capital invested in the State coalmines—

	£	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Baralaba	28,133	19	4
Styx River, No. 2	29,769	10	4
Styx River, No. 3	46,051	4	7
Bowen	76,182	0	2
	£180,136	14	5

Mr. COLLINS: Is the profit you have quoted on the Bowen coalmine the profit after paying interest and redemption on that capital cost?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes, and after paying a royalty to the Mines Department. In order to put the State mines on the same footing as private mines, we put the State mines on the same footing as private mines in that respect, so that there can be no argument on that point. According to figures supplied me by my colleague, the Secretary for Railways, the saving to the Railway Department as a result of using State coal amounted last year to £44,260, or 24.51 per cent. of the total capital invested. That practically means a 24 per cent. profit.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Yet the railways do not come anywhere near paying.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Before the opening of the State coalmine the price of coal at Bowen was more than double what it is to-day. The selling price is only 14s. for the small coal, and 16s. at the pit's mouth and 18s. at Bowen for clean coal. Previously I think the cost of coal was something like £3 or £4 a ton. I know at the Townsville wharf it formerly cost £2 5s. a ton, and now we can put it on the Townsville wharf at £1 2s. 11d. Similarly, at the Styx River coalmine we have been instrumental in giving to the sugar-mills in the Mackay district, to the Railway Department, and other Government departments, and to all industries fuel much more cheaply than they were getting previously. We could easily make that mine show a profit by charging a higher price for the coal—it was quite simple—but Cabinet did not decide to do so. As a matter of fact, I would probably rather have had a greater price for the valuable Styx River coal than some of my colleagues, because it is a valuable coal, and, if we charged industries and the Railway Department and other users a fair and reasonable price, they would still be receiving an advantage. I have here a memorandum from the Marine Department to the Under Secretary of the Treasury which will give point to my argument—

“Brisbane, 3rd August, 1923.

“Memorandum,—

“I beg to inform you that recently the supplies of coal at Mackay ran short, and in order to keep the ‘Relief’ going, about 14 tons were ordered from the Styx River coalmine. The quality of the coal is very favourably reported on by the engineer of the vessel, who states that it compares favourably with any coal he has used in the same boiler, which has chiefly been Newcastle. A comparison equally favourable is the price paid. The average cost of Newcastle coal was £3 3s. per ton, whereas the price of that from Styx River is £1 per ton at the mine, plus 10s. 9d. railage, or a total of £1 10s. 9d. per ton.

"The average annual consumption by the 'Relief' is 100 tons, so that by the use of Styx River coal a saving of £161 5s. will be effected."

Hon. members will see from that memorandum that on every 100 tons of coal the department uses there is a saving of over £161 as compared with the price paid previously.

We admit that we have had difficulties—difficulties inseparable from coalmining.

We knew that we could not get coal of the quality necessary to establish a trade while we were developing the undisturbed area of that field. We had proved the existence of that undisturbed area by the putting down of twenty-three bores, which is a very costly undertaking, and we worked what was known geologically to be a disturbed area. We did that deliberately, knowing that we were not going to produce coal at the price that we were going to sell it at. We did not go into the matter with our eyes shut. The coal from the Styx River mine is very useful for industries, and very useful as a gas producer, and when mixed with Baralaba coal, a very excellent coal for railway purposes. We knew that by working the disturbed area we would not be able to establish a trade, and we only took out 35 per cent. of the coal in that particular area. We intend to take out as much coal as we possibly can get from the disturbed area, and in the future we hope to take it out at a much cheaper cost than when the mine was first developed and worked. There will be such a huge quantity that we hope to work it economically and reduce the cost of production, and then declare that particular area of no further use, and continue on the large area which we have proved to be an undisturbed area, and of which we have great hopes of being a magnificent field. This hope is based on what has been proved by the system of diamond-drill boring over an area of about 5½ square miles. We have the assured asset in the valuable coal of the Styx River, which is adjacent to the port of Rockhampton. The cost of production of the State coal, especially at Baralaba and Bowen, is fairly low, and we hope, under the altered system at Bowen, to reduce the cost of production there. I agreed to some extent with the hon. member for Leichhardt, when he stated that we must reduce the cost of production if we desire to establish an oversea trade; but I do not agree that we shall have to reduce the cost of production by one-third in order to obtain that trade. Every sensible man agrees that we should strive to reduce the cost of production, and we are striving very hard to do that now; but it is unfair to make a comparison between State mines and private mines. It is unfair to make a comparison between different coals, as members like the hon. member for Ipswich and others who understand the coalmining industry and know the various uses of coal will agree. The coal used on the railways might not be very good gas-producing coal, and we have to look at each coal from the point of view of its use. I must defend the quality of the coal from the State mines. We supplied the Australian Navy with a quantity of coal, not for use for war purposes, but for cruising purposes, and I have a report from the naval authorities in favour of our coal. I am hoping that we shall be able to supply them with coal again, but I hope that it will never be neces-

sary to supply them with coal for war purposes. The report is very lengthy, and I shall not weary hon. members by reading it.

Mr. BRAND: The Government would supply the Australian Navy with coal for war purposes?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am hoping that it will never be necessary to do that, and that we shall continue to live at peace with other nations. I am not going to revive that question, as it has been debated at length in this Chamber. I have this very favourable report from the Australian Navy, to whom we have supplied several lots of coal. The largest quantity was 2,500 tons. We were very anxious to fulfil that order, and on my recommendation the Cabinet decided that the coal would be supplied in order to test the Styx River coal and build up a trade. We supplied that order to the Australian Navy deliberately at a loss—because we had to bring the coal down to Brisbane—to get the advertisement and make the quality of our coal known throughout Australia. It is a good thing to send shipments of coal overseas to countries that want coal, because it will be an advertisement of our coal resources. If we send overseas a good quality of coal such as is found at Styx River, Bowen, Baralaba, and the coal of Queensland generally, we shall find a favourable market, and it will be found that the coal will compare favourably with the product of other countries, with the exception of the anthracitic coal of South Wales.

I must defend the quality of the coal mined at the State mine. A practical test made on our railways showed that the coal used per mile was .15 lb. Baralaba, .15 lb. Styx River, and .19 lb. Blair Athol, on the basis of 100 tons of Baralaba and Styx River coal, which are equal to 125 tons of Blair Athol coal. Therefore it will be seen that 100 tons of Baralaba and Styx River State coal mixed would produce the same result as 125 tons of Blair Athol coal. At the same time I want to say in fairness to the Blair Athol company that that coal is a very useful coal and a very good steaming railway coal. It has its uses. It is produced from a very large seam—the largest in the State—and no doubt is a very valuable asset to the State. These are facts which cannot be contradicted. The cost of Baralaba coal to the Railway Department at Rockhampton, including a freight of ½d. per ton per mile is 18s. 10d. per ton. One hon. member opposite said that the cost of production of this coal was 18s. 10d. per ton. He probably had read that statement in the "Peak Downs Telegram" or some other newspaper.

Mr. MAXWELL: It says in the report that the cost of production was 18s. 9d. per ton.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The cost to the Railway Department at Rockhampton was 18s. 10d. per ton. The cost of the Styx River coal at Rockhampton was 23s. 6d. per ton, and the cost of Blair Athol coal delivered at Rockhampton was 25s. 7d.

Mr. CLAYTON: 3s. 1d. per ton is not the ordinary freight on our railways for coal?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said "including a freight of ½d. per ton." The hon. member said that the cost delivered at Rockhampton was 18s. 10d., and the cost at the pit head 15s. 9d., leaving 3s. 1d. per ton for railage. It is a good thing to have

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a special rate for coal to encourage the shipping and overseas trade.

Mr. DEACON: Has Baralaba got a special rate?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No; the hon. gentleman knows that I dealt with that question previously. Burrum coal has a special rate. As a matter of fact, at one time the State coalmines were rather handicapped because Blair Athol coal had a special rate to Mount Morgan. The State coalmine at Baralaba is a big supplier of Mount Morgan. The general manager of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company, Mr. Boyd, does not hesitate to say that he takes 100 tons of coal per day from the State coalmine at Baralaba. If hon. members opposite were carrying on an industry in which coal was essential and they could purchase coal at one farthing a ton cheaper from the State than from private enterprise, they would take State coal. They would sacrifice all their principles and deal with that form of State socialism if they could get cheaper coal by so doing. I cannot see why they continue their opposition to State coalmines, especially in view of the figures I have given.

I think I have given ample information regarding the State coalmines. I shall say a word or two regarding the gem industry. At one time the Government entered into a scheme, with no other desire than to help the gem producers on the field. We entered into an agreement with the firm of Roubin Brothers, overseas, by which Roubin Brothers were to find the money, do the grading on the field under Government supervision, and undertake to sell the gems overseas. I admit that the scheme was not very attractive for the miners because the miners got the actual price paid by the firm on the field and did not get any dividends. As I was Secretary for Mines at the time, I realised that the prices paid were not sufficiently high. We altered the scheme, and the Government undertook to market the sapphires for the producers. There is really only one sapphire field in Australia. By proclamation we took over the whole of the output of blue sapphires, leaving the miner free to sell his fancy sapphires and other gems as he desired. The Government advance a certain price per ounce to the miner on the field. We market the gems overseas, and, if there is a profit, we distribute that profit among the miners. In the first place we take the risk of realising the original price paid to the miner on the field. We have three grades which we accept, "A" and "B" first blue; "C" grade; and second. The highest price paid to the miner under the Roubin Brothers' scheme was £9 7s. per ounce.

Mr. FOLEY: The highest average price.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is so. We advance to the miner—

	Per ounce.
	£ s. d.
On "A" and "B" first blue	9 10 0
On "C" grade first blue	4 17 6
On second grade	... 0 8 0

Latterly this last price has been increased to 10s. per ounce. We have sold a considerable quantity overseas recently, realising £16 5s. 6d., less 5 per cent. cost of agency for the finest grade, and the net price we paid was £14 12s. 11d. On "C" grade we netted.

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£8 14s. 4d. and paid £4 17s. 6d. On the second blues we secured an average of £1 15s. an ounce.

Mr. CLAYTON: Do you consider that the miners are getting the best possible value for their gems overseas?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes; they get what the department secures, less agency charges.

Mr. CLAYTON: I have information from the other side that the Government could do a good deal better for the miners than they are doing.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I can assure the hon. member that his information is incorrect.

Mr. CLAYTON: It came from a very reliable source.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I would like to know the source.

Mr. CLAYTON: I will give it to you privately.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We appointed a good Australian, Mr. Knowles, of the firm of Knowles Brothers, Queen street, which has a very high reputation, and whose character is beyond question.

Mr. MAXWELL: He is a good man.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He has done wonderful service for the Department of Mines as the appointed grader, and wonderful service for the miners who are engaged in this industry. A more able, conscientious, and reliable man than Mr. Norman Knowles it would be difficult to find.

Mr. MOORE: Have you been able to make any distribution yet?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We are not able to make a very large distribution at the present time. When the field was in a depressed condition, on the suggestion of the hon. member for Leichhardt we entered into a relief scheme. The miners did not want food. All they wanted was a price for their product which they could not sell, and we entered into a relief scheme under which we gave the miners so much per annum. The price realised for the sale of 512 oz. 13 dwts. under the relief scheme was £3,521 13s. 3d. We still have over 962 oz. unsold, of an estimated value of £3,083 18s. 6d. That is a low estimate. The expenses of selling amounted to £371 13s. 5d., and we show an approximate profit of £594 14s. We are distributing only a portion of that profit, amounting to £244 14s. 10d. Under that scheme we are paying a first dividend of 10.4d. That is the first dividend under the gem scheme. That is going forward at once. It is rather a complicated scheme, and one of the difficulties that we had to overcome was the difference in the grading on the field and the grading by our grader at home, who is really an expert. We have had to overcome this difficulty, and we have made an arrangement with the firm of Trefus Brothers in London to act as our sole agents. As there is a monopoly in Australia of blue sapphires by proclamation, the only way to stabilise prices and get the best price overseas was to create a monopoly over there. The only other field of any note in Australia is in New South Wales. We have created a monopoly, as was done by South Africa in the case of diamonds. I am hoping that the scheme will develop and be profitable, and we may go a step further. I am not promising it on behalf of the Government, but

according to my investigations, if we went a step further and established agents for selling the stones, not in the rough stage but rather in the manufactured or cut stage, the price would improve. To do that we would have to control the market, as we have done in the case of blue sapphires. I must admit that our legal expenses in organising and controlling this scheme up to date have been pretty high, but we are giving to the miners the full result of the sales less the actual cost of marketing. In organising and initiating a scheme like that, the expenses are naturally high, but we are now curtailing our expenses, and I believe we shall be able to market the gems at a much lower cost than they were marketed under the private competitive system. I am satisfied that the gem scheme of the Government has been fairly successful, and that it will continue to be successful.

I must make reference to the mining display at the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. The Government were good enough to appoint me as chairman of the British Empire exhibit in Queensland, and I saw a good deal of the Queensland exhibits in the Australian pavilion. Despite any discouraging reports we may have read in the Press—despite the remarks of the hon. member for Oxley—the display of the Queensland mining industry exhibits was an exceedingly good advertisement for Australia, and one of which any Australian who visited Wembley might reasonably feel proud. I do not say that we did not make mistakes. We all make mistakes, and he who never makes a mistake never achieves anything; and if we were doing it over again, we would probably be guided by the mistakes we made here and at Wembley. Politically, we are not like hon. members opposite, who never can and never do make a mistake.

The hon. member for Oxley made some adverse criticism with regard to the mining exhibits. We tried to make the Exhibition an all-Australian matter, and the best mineral exhibits we could obtain from Australia were shown. The identity of the States was preserved by proper labelling, the mines and the names of those in charge being given. If a man fancied a particular class of ore, he would be given a sample for the purpose of verification, and would get all the information as to which locality in Australia it came from. As the result of the mineral exhibit there I had very many inquiries for information regarding ore obtainable in Queensland at certain mines. I had many requisitions on the subject, some by letter and some by persons calling on me. Every week now we get inquiries for information regarding minerals which have been shown at Wembley. I firmly believe that the display of minerals there will be the means of some capital being invested to develop some of our mines, particularly in North Queensland. I would like to read the following extract from the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" of 15th July last with regard to the Australian pavilion at Wembley:—

"Commenting on the display, the 'South African Mining and Engineering Journal' writes:—'The Australian pavilion is specially attractive. The tableaux of Australian industry are wonderfully engaging. Mining in the Commonwealth is represented by a wonderful show of minerals, and a

tableau depicting an Australian gold-mine, which is splendidly done. And the "Aussies" do not forget to let you know that they are IT! They have great arresting placards and maps everywhere. One such placard informs one that the annual production of Australian minerals has a value of slightly under £20,000,000 sterling. They are proud of it. Our (the South African) output is two and a-half times as great, but we seem to be ashamed of this achievement. The Canadian pavilion is perhaps a trifle more sombre and dignified, but hardly so bright and alluring as the Australian.'"

That is an unbiased opinion.

Mr. MAXWELL: It is a very good advertisement.

[11 a.m.]

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The "Mining Journal" in London, summed up Queensland's contribution to Australia's mineral display in the following words, which have been reprinted in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal":—

"Queensland has no separate section at the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, but she has contributed largely, not only in cash but by numerous exhibits, and spared no possible effort to make the Australian Pavilion one of the finest displays which we have been permitted to view. . . . It is a State that offers many attractions, possesses one of the healthiest climates in the world, and to the intending settler and to the capitalist the opportunities it holds out are second to none in the world."

Visitors to the Exhibition agreed that our exhibit was a great feature of the Wembley Exhibition—I think it was better than other Australian exhibits—but I cannot discuss that question on this vote, although, should there be an opportunity later on, I shall do so. I think we are all sufficiently broad-minded to be pleased at showing what Australia in general and Queensland in particular can do.

During this debate the hon. member for Windsor made some reference to a statement by the general manager of the Chillagoe State Smelters and Mines with reference to the contract system in copper production. I do not intend to pass over the question. The hon. member endeavoured to show to the Committee that this form of mining was introduced by the general manager, that as a method employed in the State mines it is something new, and that it is a breach of Labour policy. I want to say that, so far as I am concerned, I am not an advocate of it at all.

Mr. MAXWELL: It is a matter of policy.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: My position has always been perfectly clear. We have our opinion and hon. members on the other side have theirs. I do not hide my views from my constituents, and I intend to express my individual opinions concerning this or any other Australian industries.

Mr. CORSER interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Only politicians like the hon. member seek this cheap form of popularity and pander to the electors. I do not want to get any cheap popularity by hiding my individual opinion on any matter that will benefit a big

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Australian policy and help to develop our industries. I never was an advocate of the system the hon. member for Windsor mentioned. I believe that it is inconsistent with the higher ideals of the Labour movement and—I go further than the hon. member—it is not consistent with the objective or the platform of the party. We do not say that a man should get less or more than he produces—both things are wrong—but in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred he gets less than he produces.

Mr. CORSER: Why did you introduce it?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am not going to be drawn off the track by the hon. member. His party never stood for increased wages or for high wages or salaries in any way. Under the wages system I do not think it is possible for the worker to get the full result of his labour or a fair share in what he produces. The wages system is largely responsible for industrial upheavals, and strikes and lock-outs—one is as bad as the other—with their consequent misery and suffering.

Mr. CORSER: They have tried that system in Russia.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Government have created the Arbitration Court and wages boards to deal with the conditions of the industrialists, but still there are strikes, and always will be strikes until we evolve from the wages system to a truer system of co-operation which will secure for each man employed in an industry the share to which he is entitled, and which is a just share of the wealth that he produces.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. gentleman to connect his remarks with the vote.

Mr. CORSER: That is not the Government's policy at Mount Isa.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I intend to connect my remarks in this way: The Under Secretary's report sets out that the General Manager of the Chillagoe Smelters advocates the contract system for mining, and I am trying to prove that the hon. member for Windsor was not correct in his assertion when he said that the establishment of the system that I advocate would constitute a breach of the high ideals of the Labour party, or words to that effect.

Mr. TAYLOR: I did not say anything of the kind.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If we are not going to allow the contract system in mining, why should the shearers be allowed to shear sheep on contract?

Mr. TAYLOR: The Government evidently are not allowing the contract system in mining or the Under Secretary would not have said what he did.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They have the contract system at Mount Morgan.

Mr. TAYLOR: Not at Chillagoe.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am not advocating any speeding up or hurrying up system of contract mining, but I believe that another system could be evolved whereby the wage-earner would get a better reward for his labour, and would have a greater incentive to work.

Mr. LOGAN: What is that system?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If we are not allowed to alter the system of work-

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ing in connection with metalliferous mining, why is the shearer paid so much per hundred for shearing sheep, and why is the canecutter paid so much per ton for cutting cane, and why is a hewing rate fixed—this is the universal system for mining for coal—for men engaged in the coalmine? If it is right to allow those engaged in coalmining to work under a hewing rate of so much per ton, there is nothing wrong in altering the system in metalliferous mining, and allowing those miners to get more for their work than they get under the wages system.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. gentleman is arguing against his own policy.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am not. I am arguing in favour of securing for the workers better results than they can possibly hope to get under the wages system.

Mr. KELSO: Some of the other Ministers say that there should be nothing else but day labour.

Mr. MAXWELL: "Produce for use, and not for profit!"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Notwithstanding what hon. members opposite may say, we ought to strive to obtain a reduction in the cost of production in all our Australian industries; but I advocate a reduction in the cost of production in ways quite different from those suggested by hon. members opposite. I believe that we can reduce the cost of production by the elimination of waste, by the instalment of up-to-date machinery, and by having a central control as against a divided control. I believe we could reduce the cost of production by giving continuity of employment, by having better methods of distribution and transportation, and by altering the wages system, thereby obtaining more efficient labour. I believe that, if Australian industries—not alone the mining industry—are to prosper, they can only prosper under a system of true co-operation, which will give efficient labour. I believe that the wages system does not lend itself in that direction. It is only under a truer system of co-operation that those engaged in industry will be able to obtain their right and share of the wealth produced.

Mr. TAYLOR: You might have a co-operative system where the workers were starving.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have always endeavoured to encourage the investment of money in industry. I am one who believes that, if a man invests his money in the mining industry or any other industry, he should have an opportunity of obtaining the full reward for the money he has invested. But the labourer is worthy of his hire also. (Hear, hear!) Hon. gentlemen opposite in advocating a reduction in the cost of production have only one remedy to offer, and that is reducing the wages of the wage-earner.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No! No!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The only solution they have to offer is to reduce wages.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is not true.

Mr. KERR: That statement is not worthy of you.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Hon. members opposite in dealing with such problems begin and end with the wage-earner. Mr. Goddard, in his report, made a recommendation in regard to the alteration of the policy in vogue at Chillagoe, and

the Government have accepted his recommendation. That recommendation is to have a seasonal campaign for smelting. During the year a difficulty was experienced in getting sufficient ore to keep the different units of the Chillagoe works in continued operation. Now continuity of operations considerably reduces overhead charges. In the past year the works were held up for ore supplies, and the smelting plant, while they were thus held up, had to carry the full overhead charges. Mr. Goddard has recommended, and the Government have adopted, the recommendation of a campaign of smelting, fitting in with the sugar cutting and crushing season. Under this scheme smelting operations will be continued at Chillagoe for six or seven months of the year. Ore supplies will be accumulated, and when smelting commences, the various units of the works will be worked at full capacity. I regret very much that smelting operations cannot be carried on for twelve months in the year.

Mr. RIORDAN: Will miners supplying ore to Chillagoe have to wait until smelting has commenced before receiving their cheques, or will they be paid by assay?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Suppliers of ore will not have to wait for their cheques. They will be paid by assay.

Mr. COLLINS: Was there a loss or profit on Chillagoe in the last twelve months? I cannot find that information in the report.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Chillagoe showed a loss on the operations for the year.

Mr. CORSER: That is why the information is not in the report.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Although the report of the Auditor-General is not yet out, if the hon. gentleman had been in the Chamber, he would have known that I quoted the profits and losses on every State mine. This year we show a profit on the arsenic mine. We have an accumulated profit on the arsenic mine, which has been so much condemned by hon. members opposite. It has done a wonderful amount of good in producing arsenic to eradicate pests. However, the Chillagoe works showed a loss on the working costs of about £57,000. That does not include the interest on the capital.

Mr. CORSER: Do you say that the worker got the full reward for his industry there?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Chillagoe works, owing to the fact that they are over-capitalised, have to find interest to the amount of £46,000 per annum, and the works are handicapped by that fact. The accumulated loss, after taking into consideration the payment of interest and loss on working expenses, amounted to £103,000.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Chillagoe railway is not over-capitalised.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am dealing with the Chillagoe works. I am advocating, if it is at all possible, a continuity of operations, which will tend to keep the overhead charges down considerably.

Mr. KELSO: You have not lost hope over Chillagoe yet?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Indeed, I have not lost hope. I am always hopeful.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You do not demonstrate that hope very strongly.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think I have been fair enough to-day in dealing with the mining industry. No doubt hon. members opposite consider I am a kind of radiant optimist—an unhealthy optimist. That subject is one which has been worn threadbare in the Tory Press of Brisbane. During the period of my administration more money has been repaid to the Department of Mines by the miners who secured money under the prospecting vote, the deep-sinking vote, and the machinery vote than has been the case under any previous Administration.

Mr. TAYLOR: And more has been spent, too.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: My administration proves that I investigate the soundness of a proposition, and that I was never optimistic enough to sink £24,000 in a wild-cat scheme at Croydon, merely to put down a shaft. Immediately I came into office I saved the Government £7,000 by refusing to advance that money for the wild-cat scheme at Croydon which friends of hon. members opposite started. I have never been sufficiently optimistic to buy coal mines in the Ipswich district for £35,000 when they were offered to me. I turned down that proposition, and the mines were sold the following week for £11,000. I was not sufficiently optimistic to buy another coal mine in Ipswich for the personal advantage of friends of hon. members opposite. No hon. member in this Chamber can point the finger of scorn at me, or place a finger on any action of mine while I have been Secretary for Mines that has been sufficiently optimistic to savour of anything like dishonesty or corruption.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: No one has suggested that.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Hon. members opposite have said that I had no right to make reference overseas to Mount Isa. Did hon. members opposite expect me to go overseas, knowing my own country was one of the best countries in the world, and cry "stinking fish," and say that Mount Isa was no good? I could get my original statement and show that I referred to Mount Isa in more or less glowing terms, and that I said that it warranted a railway. I did not say that the Public Works Commission had authorised a railway.

Mr. ROBERTS: It says so in the "Queensland Mining Journal." (Opposition interjections.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I concluded my statement by saying that unfortunately I never had the opportunity to visit Mount Isa, and that I was expressing the opinions of experts in my department. I consider that was a very fair statement. I had influential men in London asking my advice as to whether they should buy Mount Isa shares at £55 a share. I pointed out that I occupied the position of Secretary for Mines for Queensland, and never advised anybody to enter into a mining speculation. So much for hon. members opposite, who charge me with unhealthy optimism! At the same time I do not want to be pessimistic. I leave it to hon. members opposite to be pessimistic.

Similarly with oilfields. Statements have been published—and hon. members opposite have repeated them in this Chamber—that

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I made certain statements on the oil question. If hon. members will look into the subject, they will find that what I said overseas was that it had yet to be determined whether oil existed at Orallo in commercial quantities. Was not that a sufficient qualification for any prospective intelligent speculator or investor? I do not think there has been very much investment so far as the Lander Oil Company is concerned. Hon. members opposite and some of the Queensland Press expect me to know before we get the report whether there has been a breakdown in the mine. We have no right to pry into the movements of the directors of the company or of the management or staff, but I state definitely that the Petroleum Act and the regulations under that Act are being carried out in their entirety. Regulations have been issued, and during the term my colleague, the Home Secretary, was acting for me we had monthly reports from the Lander Oil Company, as required by the regulations. We have sent geologists—Mr. Ball, one of the Government Geologists, and the State Mining Engineer, Mr. Jackson—on periodical visits to the field, which we have a right to do under the Act. There has been a regrettable happening in connection with the bore, but I have had an opportunity of visiting some of the American oilfields, and I ascertained that happenings of that kind occur there very often. It is to be regretted that such a thing occurred at Orallo, because I honestly believe that oil has been proved in the Roma district. Oil was proved before the Lander Oil Company ever came into existence. Oil was proved in the time of Mr. Cameron, the Geologist, when Professor Steele and Mr. Jackson, the State Mining Engineer, took a small plant to Roma and distilled $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints of petrol from 1,000 cubic feet of the petroliferous gas flowing from the Roma bore. That is not a question of optimism; it is a question of fact; and every oil man that I spoke to on the other side of the world, when he was told that $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints of petrol had been distilled from 1,000 cubic feet of gas said, "Well, you have an oilfield in Roma." The difficulty is in putting a well down in the proper place. Recent developments that I have seen at Orallo prove that there is oil in that district. We have got it in both ways. We have got it by distillation from gas, and we have got it in the crude form—a small percentage came up in the slurry during boring operations. Those are facts. We have yet to determine whether it is there in commercial quantities. They may put down three or four bores before they get down on the dome or anticline and prove that the oil is there in commercial quantities. I have no hesitation in saying that the prospects at Roma and at Orallo are greater than in any other part of Australia. These statements will be borne out by experience. No other part of Australia, so far, has the prospect that we have in the Orallo district and in the Roma district, and I think it is a good thing that we passed an Act last session giving us power to control operations as we are doing at the present time. Already we have issued regulations asking for monthly reports, and yesterday I gave instructions for a new regulation to be prepared asking for a fortnightly report. The Lander Oil Company have notified us that because of the unfortunate happening there they are removing the derrick—they are not abandoning the bore—until they get another tool from America to remove the obstruction or

salvage the valuable tool in the well. They intend to remove the derrick a distance of 200 feet north or 200 feet south, and I think when they restart the public should be kept informed of their operations in accordance with the Act, although I want to qualify that statement by saying that the Lander Oil Company is comprised of a body of gentlemen who are all Australians, and it is all Australian money. In order to conform to the Act, and let the public know as much as it is possible for them to know, we intend to issue new regulations immediately asking for fortnightly reports from the field manager in charge or from the oil geologist or engineer in charge, and we intend to have fortnightly visits to the field by Mr. Jackson or Mr. Ball, the oil geologist. When we get down to the area of the strata in which the prospects are bright, no doubt an officer of the department—presumably their expert engineer—will remain on the job and offer the company every facility possible and also operate as a protection against any mishap occurring there again.

Mr. KERR: They took a long time to tell you about the obstruction in the bore.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is a mere detail. The hon. member must remember that, when an obstruction or happening like that occurs, it is possible that they regard it as a temporary obstruction, which they did in this case, as is shown by the fact that they reported it on 23rd August. They may be a week or two trying to get the obstacle out. They do not trouble much in the oilfields of the world about having an obstruction in the bores. If they cannot get them out, they leave them and go elsewhere. In this case they evidently regarded it as a temporary obstruction, and made an effort to get it out, but they failed. They find it better now to spend a great deal of money in putting down another bore. I think they are doing a great service to Australia by not being led astray by the pessimistic opinions expressed—I am sorry to say even in Brisbane—regarding oil, but are going on endeavouring to prove that there is an oilfield there. We know that the putting down of each well means a cost of some thousands of pounds—probably the next will cost the company at least £10,000. I say they are big Australians, and they deserve a good deal of encouragement for spending their money in a venture at Orallo which will be of great benefit to Australia if it succeeds. One can hardly imagine what it will mean to this State and to Australia generally if an oilfield is discovered in this country. I dealt with that question when I moved the second reading of the Petroleum Bill. It would be one of the biggest things that could happen for the advancement of this country, and it would help the people of Australia very greatly.

I have no more to say at this particular stage. I have taken up a good deal of time on this particular vote, because I believe the importance of the subject warranted me in dealing pretty fully with the mining industry generally.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoong*): As reported in "Hansard" for last year, page 864, I asked the Secretary for Mines a question about the old McIlwraith mining lease at Redcap, and the hon. gentleman [11.30 a.m.] then promised to let me have certain information, but up to the present I have not received it. To refresh

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the hon. gentleman's memory, I shall read the questions which I asked—

"1. Is it a fact that an application was made by an individual for the right to work the old Mellwraith lease at Redcap, but was refused in the warden's court because it was on one of the leases taken over by the Government from the old Chillagoe Company?

"2. Is it also a fact that, notwithstanding this refusal at the warden's court, the same valuable lease was thrown open subsequently?

"3. Will he inform the House in which newspapers or 'Government Gazette' was an advertisement inserted calling attention to the lease being thrown open?

"4. Will he inform the House of the names of the syndicate or parties who have secured the lease? Also, if it is a fact that his department have loaned boiler and machinery from the State mines at Mungana to work it with?

"5. If so, what charges (if any) are being made to the syndicate or parties for the use of the boiler or machinery?"

To which the replies were—

"1. No.

"2. No.

"3. No advertisement in any newspaper or 'Government Gazette.'

"4 and 5. Will make inquiries from State smelters at Chillagoe."

I take it that I am now justified in asking the Minister to give me his reply to the last question.

During his speech the Minister pointed out that it was necessary for the development and prosperity of the State that we should have three great things—coal, iron, and ore. I quite agree with him; but I would like to say that not only should State mining be encouraged, but that a mine such as the Blair Athol mine, which possesses a wonderful seam of coal, should also be encouraged, and that every opportunity should be given to private enterprise to sell its product without any hindrance or harassing handicap on its development, so long as those employed in the mine have a fair opportunity of earning their livelihood. We have heard the Minister quoting the quality of the coal at Baralaba and Styx River as compared with the Blair Athol coal. It has been my privilege to hear speeches made by the hon. member for Leichhardt, in whose electorate the Blair Athol mine is situated, and he has spoken with no uncertain sound as to the quality of its coal. Neither has he on any occasion allowed anybody to misunderstand his position. I would like to stress the suggestion which the hon. member for Oxley once made—and, if there ever was a time for adopting suggestions, it is the present—for the appointment of a Royal Commission on similar lines to the Geddes Commission in England to go into the whole question of State enterprises, including mining, in order to ascertain what is wrong. Now the hon. member for Leichhardt has brought the matter up again, and perhaps a suggestion from a member on the other side may have greater weight with the Minister than one made by a member of the Opposition. I do not pose as one having any knowledge of coal, but I say that from information which I have had placed at my disposal by men who have had experi-

ence of using Blair Athol coal it is well worthy of consideration. I have used this information on a previous occasion, but in order to draw attention to the statements which are made in it, I shall refresh the memory of hon. members.

This is what was said by a man associated with the locomotive engine-drivers—

"Other depôts are being supplied with Baralaba coal, the most unsuitable for locomotive purposes in the whole supply. After a run of 20 miles the tubes are almost completely blocked with 'burrs' and the bars are covered with a solid clinker, a substance resembling molten metal. This completely hinders the draught and the engine will not steam no matter how hard the fireman may work.

"With Baralaba coal the fires have to be cleaned after 20 miles run. Blair Athol will take a train 230 miles before cleaning—with no difficulty in cleaning even after that run and full steam easy to maintain.

"The men who work the engines in the conditions thus caused by this inferior coal and other hindrances are blamed and punished for late running, and charged with wilful delay to gain overtime."

That statement is worthy of every inquiry being made. When you find a practical man comparing the quality of different coal and speaking in that way, then I have yet to learn that the treatment which has been meted out to Blair Athol is altogether fair. I have referred to this matter on a previous occasion in this Chamber, and it seems to me that the Government are out to secure absolute control of Blair Athol without even paying for the mine.

Mr. FOLEY: The Government could do that now if they wished to enforce the working conditions.

Mr. MAXWELL: I do not doubt that. The Minister has given us certain figures in connection with different State coal mines. I do not dispute those figures, as the hon. gentleman is in a better position to obtain them than I am; but at the end of June, when Mr. J. S. Collings, the State organiser for the Australian Labour Party, visited Blair Athol, a protest meeting was held, and the chairman of the meeting, a Mr. Monaghan, had this to say—

"(1) The Government started the Baralaba and the Styx mines when this field was one of the best revenue-producers the Mines Department had in Queensland, in royalty, rent, miners' rights, etc. (2) The Railway Department received a large yearly revenue in freight, the State, through income and other taxes, greatly benefited. Blair Athol coal to the railway was 14s. 9d. at its highest, it is now 10s. 6d. per ton. Styx coal costs the department £1 5s., and Baralaba 14s. 10d. per ton. Overtime caused by using State coal (often causes a delay of four hours between Rockhampton and Emerald) runs into thousands yearly, and the damage to the engines with cost for repairs helps to swell our railway deficit. (3) The Blair Athol mines were then adding yearly to the wealth of Queensland. There was a large body of men with their own comfortable homes and families, receiving constant wages; free from strike or labour troubles of any

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note. Most of these men the Government now employs principally on borrowed money mining some coals, but mostly muck which destroys the engine and necessitates more men and more borrowed money for repairs."

At that meeting they attempted to stimulate a certain amount of interest in the injustice that undoubtedly was being done to a body of men and their wives and families, who were desirous of securing the right of every man—the right to live. There you have the remarks made by two interested individuals who know what they are talking about. In the "Peak Downs Telegram" there is a copy of a letter written by one of the oldest drivers in the railway service on the value of the Blair Athol coal. I am quoting this because of the Minister's remarks about the superior quality of certain State coal as against Blair Athol coal. I am not disputing that fact, but I am submitting evidence that the Committee should be aware of—

"Emerald, 14th July, 1924.

"To the Secretary, Miners' Union,
"Blair Athol.

"Dear Sir,—I have been deputed by our union (the A.F.U.L.E.) to give you some information concerning the quality of the Blair Athol coal as compared with other coal.

"I will commence with giving you my own experience as a fireman twenty years ago. (It may be more.) I was a fireman and we were testing coal from Emerald to Alpha, the usual place in the Central division to make tests, as this is over the Drummond Range, one of the heaviest parts of railroad in Queensland. Well, for a start Bluff coal was the test, absolute failure; Blackwater, ditto; Dawson Valley, same; Tolmie's, awful.

"Now, for your information and the point I wish you to take particular notice of, is the fact that on all those tests, we were supplied with half a tender of Blair Athol coal. This was placed on back part of tender and covered with an old sheet. It was put there in case we were unable to get along with the other coal. When the engine returned to Emerald, all coal was cleaned off the tender and the same process gone through again, Blair Athol coal on the back as before. Now, sir, this was done on every test I made then. It really meant this 'If you cannot get along with the test coal you can rely on the Blair Athol.' I will just give you a few trips I have had. As a fireman I worked the mail train from Emerald to Alpha (106 miles). Goods train Alpha to Jericho and back to Alpha, with a full load (173 miles), without cleaning the fire until putting the engine away at Alpha. And the driver I fired for can bear me out in this. There were not more than four oil drums of dirt, including fire-box, ash-pan, and smoke-box. We were never short of steam on any part of this trip, and ran to time without any trouble.

"This run was made on an A14 engine. They are practically out of service now. As a driver I have repeatedly ran the mail train from Emerald to Longreach, a distance of 262 miles, and my fireman has never had to touch the fire, plenty of steam all the time. Another fact: I

[Mr. Maxwell.

have done the double trip, a distance of 524 miles, on a tender of coal (that would be about 7½ tons) with the mail train. I have had a great deal of experience here and in the Southern division, both as a fireman and a driver, and I can honestly assure you that Blair Athol coal is out on its own for locomotives. In my opinion it is good steaming, easy to clean out, and a great saving to boilers, as the fire can always be kept bright, and an even pressure of steam maintained, therefore it prevents boiler from leaking. I have tried this coal and compared it with other coal on many occasions, and as I have already stated always found it reliable. I forgot to mention the class of engine I had on the 262 and 524 mile run. A P.B. 15. I have also as a driver worked a C16 engine from Emerald to Alpha over the Drummond Range (106 miles) with a full load without touching the fire, and a full head of steam all the time with Blair Athol coal. There is another good point about this Blair Athol coal, it is very quick at lighting up and you hardly ever get a choked fire, and practically smokeless. I may inform you that the locomen in the Central division swear by it. One fireman remarked: 'You don't want to be much of a scholar to fire Blair Athol coal.'

"A driver working the mail (Emerald to Rockhampton), on noticing the large lumps of Blair Athol coal on the tender, said it is the best coal in the world. In my opinion if all Blair Athol coal was used in the Central division, the number of late trains would be reduced greatly, as in my experience a locomotive has to be in pretty bad order if you cannot get steam with your Blair Athol coal.

"For your further information, I have been using Blair Athol coal in my home for the last twelve years, and would not be without it. My average consumption per year is about 4 tons. Some say, 'But it is severe on stoves.' I used a No. 7 Dover for over sixteen years using Blair Athol coal over eight years, and never had to renew any of the fire-box. The reason for putting stove out—senile decay.

"(Signed) S. E. DANIELS,
"President, A.F.U.L.E."

That is a statement of the president of that organisation. I can assure the Committee that he does not hold a brief for the Blair Athol coal excepting that it is a coal of exceptional quality.

Mr. RIORDAN: It is not the best in the world.

Mr. MAXWELL: I do not say that. I would be foolish to say such a thing

There has been some talk about Mount Isa. I remember that last session the then leader of the Opposition gave us to understand—I may be wrong in my assumption, but others understood the same—that the reason for cutting down the leases to 10 acres was to give everybody an opportunity of taking up those leases, and not for the purpose of creating a monopoly. I have certain information this morning that leads me to believe that, instead of the encouragement of smaller speculators at Mount Isa, we now have one of the most gigantic monopolies that it would be possible to get. Hon. members will see that the whole of the portion marked red in this map is in the name of

"Mount Isa, Limited." In that connection let me read a statement to prove my assertion that I was under this impression.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Are you one of the speculators?

Mr. MAXWELL: No, I am not a speculator, and during my term of public life I have not held a share in anything. I have adopted this attitude so that I should not be subject to accusation on that account. I shall read what the hon. member for Burke said in 1923, "Hansard," volume CXLII., page 1766—

"Had the Minister allowed these people on Mount Isa and on the new Cloncurry field to take up big leases, then what has always happened to a finder of a field and the men engaged in the industry would have happened in those fields. Men are prospecting year in and year out. Genuine miners walk from creek to creek, or pack their mining tools up in an effort to find new fields, and as soon as a field is found a mob of 'sharks' rush out in motor-cars, peg it out, and then make application to the Mines Department for exemption and hold it until such time as they can float a company to work the show. The granting of only 10 acres to the prospectors on the Mount Isa and Chillagoe fields will enable the prospectors to get what is due to them. A show of 10 acres will be quite sufficient for them. If the field is a success and mining magnates want the mine, let them buy it from those who have discovered it. Some men have given a lifetime to finding these shows. Those men devote the whole of their life in prospecting in the interest of the State, and under this system they will be able to get something for finding the show."

It is not always that I can coincide with the views of the hon. member for Burke, but I certainly agree with those statements. Hon. members can quite understand my desire to know how, in the face of such statements, the introduction of the 10-acre system is going to abolish monopolies, whereas, according to the map I have shown, it appears as if it has created a monopoly. It seems to me that this Government is a Government that encourages monopolies, judging by the experience we have had.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No company would work a 10-acre lease.

Mr. MAXWELL: The suggestion of the hon. member for Burke was that they could buy the areas. I do not know whether it is the function of the Government to provide the necessary water for these mines or not. From what I can learn the Mount Isa people are buying no water at all for their mines. I understand the Government have sunk one bore for 50 feet without any success, and they are going to sink another 50 feet. It seems to me that, if a company such as that is running mines in its own interests, it is not the duty of the Government to provide it with the necessary water. If there is no local authority in the area, naturally I take it that the Government will see that the necessary water is provided for the people living there.

There is one point that I desire to stress in connection with the inspectors of mines.

When you come to look at the amount of money that is provided on the Estimates for the officials of the department, one can see that it is scarcely sufficient to give them pay equal to that of miners. Men in that sphere of activity are worthy of a certain amount of consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in referring to that matter on this vote.

Mr. MAXWELL: Then I will bring the matter up on the vote for "Mining Fields."

I desire to stress the suggestion made by the hon. member for Oxley. The time has arrived when the Minister should clear up any doubts that may exist in the minds of those whom the hon. gentleman calls the pessimists on this side. The hon. gentleman should clear up any doubts in regard to some of the State mines and other enterprises, and the only way to have it cleared up is by adopting the suggestion made by the hon. member for Oxley, and that is, to appoint a Commission to go thoroughly into the whole matter. If that is done, then possibly for all time people will have to remain silent. I ask for that Commission; I think it is absolutely in the best interests of the State. I am naturally very sorry that some of the mines are working at a very great loss, and, with the Minister, I hope the time will not be very far distant when they will show a profit, if they are to be continued, which I hope they will not be. I was very pleased to hear the Minister's statement in regard to the Baralaba coalmine. I do not think it is necessary to have the assurance of hon. members on this side that we would like to see State coalmines prosperous, but I do say that it is not the function of the Government to trade. Their function is to govern. We are all Australians on this side of the Chamber, and it stands to reason that, when one is making his livelihood in the State, he wants to see the State go ahead. We certainly contend that it is a wonderful State; but you cannot stop people talking about the conditions of affairs obtaining, nor can you stop people from saying things about the speech the hon. gentleman made in London. I am glad to have the assurance given by the Minister for Mines, but at the same time it would be a very good thing if in the next issue of the "Mining Journal" he has a correction of that statement inserted.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am not going to apologise for anything I said.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I cannot understand the attitude taken up by the hon. member for Toowong, especially in regard to his closing remarks, when he said he did not wish to see the State coalmines a failure. This morning I read a speech delivered by his leader, the hon. member for Aubigny, at a certain meeting held yesterday, and also a speech delivered by the hon. member for Windsor. Both these hon. members declared that they were anti-socialists, and, considering that State coalmines are more or less of a socialistic nature, I take it that at the first meeting of their party the hon. member for Toowong will be carpeted by the leader of his party. I am one of those who have always stood for State enterprise, believing that that is the solution of the problem in regard to the future of mankind. I do not think that it would be wise on the part of the Mines

Mr. Collins.]

Department or on the part of the Government to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Oxley that a Commission be appointed to inquire into the management of our State coalmines. Our State coalmines, as compared with private enterprise, are, as it were, only of yesterday. If we were to get commissions appointed to inquire into private enterprise—especially some of the private enterprises that have been running for a number of years—we would be able to prove that they were lamentable failures. I know from my own experience—having worked as a miner—that you cannot start a State coalmine or any other kind of mine to-day and expect it to be a paying proposition to-morrow. You have to wait patiently. It is going to take time, just the same as it took time to build the railway to the Bowen coalfield, and just the same as it took time to develop the Bowen State coalmine. I want to point out, as the Minister stated this morning, that that mine is a paying proposition. I interjected and asked the hon. gentleman whether that was after paying interest and redemption on the £70,000 odd which was spent in the mine, and he said "Yes." That means that a certain amount of interest is paid to the Treasury Department on the loan which was advanced for the establishment of the mine, and, after having paid that interest, it still showed a profit of £338 for the year. That is not a great amount, it is true, in connection with a big output such as that, but, as we all know, it made a profit the year before of a little over £5,000, so, putting the two together, it has shown a fairly good result up to the present time.

At 11.55 a.m.,

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

Mr. COLLINS: I listened very carefully to the Minister's speech. I take it that during his travels abroad, being of an observant turn of mind, he has taken notice of what they are doing in other countries. He pointed out that we would have to get more up-to-date, and I take it that that means that we would have to get more up-to-date machinery. I know that some of the machinery at the Bowen State coalmine is not as up-to-date as it ought to be. I want the Minister to infuse into the Mines Department the same sentiments which he expressed this morning; that is, that we should have more up-to-date machinery in connection with our State coalmines. I have no hesitation in saying that we are behind the privately-owned mines in regard to the screening of coal. I am one of those who believe in the State having all available resources behind it, and the equipment of a State coalmine should certainly be ahead of that of a privately-owned coalmine. When I visited the Bowen coalfield I found that, while there was an up-to-date screening plant at the private mine, we had an obsolete one at our State coalmine, and some of the trade which ought to have belonged to the State coalmine was drifting to the privately-owned mine. Let the truth be told. It is quite true that during the next week or two we shall have in operation an up-to-date screening plant at the State coalmine, but why should the State coalmine drag behind the privately-owned mine?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It always does.

[*Mr. Collins.*

Mr. COLLINS: Not always. If we are going to succeed, we must have the most up-to-date machinery known to man. The State coalmine at Bowen has been fairly successful. We have a privately-owned mine $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant from the State coalmine. I would like to ask the hon. member for Toowoong if that private mine has shown any profit at all? Is it not a fact that they are still making calls in connection with the development of that mine, although they have reached the producing stage? Why should it be said in this Chamber that the State coalmine should show a profit after paying interest and redemption and royalties, the same as the privately-owned mine pays, and that the privately-owned mine, which has been operating practically for the same number of years, up to the present has not been able to show any profit for its shareholders.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Did they not have to wait some time for a railway siding?

Mr. COLLINS: They only had to wait a few months longer than the State coalmine.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That is a disadvantage.

Mr. COLLINS: Yes, to some extent. No one can compare the general equipment of the two mines. It is like comparing a small pigmy with a giant when you compare the two mines in regard to general equipment. But I am pointing out how we should have been ahead of them and have got the trade. When I was at the State coalmine in June, the [12 noon] output was a little over 300 tons a day, whilst that from the privately-owned mine was a little over 200 tons a day. This party can take some credit for having developed that coalfield, which at present is turning out over 500 tons a day from the two mines. That is something of which a North Queenslander can be proud. I am just mentioning these facts in the hope that the Minister will infuse into his department and the men who control the State mines, a determination to use more up-to-date methods in producing coal. It is all very well, as some people do, to blame the men who hew the coal, but sometimes it is just as well to examine the men at headquarters who control the mines to see that those men have up-to-date machinery for the production of coal. It is interesting to find that last year the production of the Bowen State mine, as mentioned by the Minister, was 74,866 tons, placing it right in the front rank of coalmines in the State. The Minister also mentioned that 46,000 tons of the coal were used for railway purposes, so that about 28,000 tons were used for other purposes, of which 14,000 tons were used for bunkering. The bunkering is being done mostly at Townsville, and people may ask why.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COLLINS: One reason is that we have not got the new coal jetty at Bowen completed. We are looking forward to a big export trade, and I ask the Minister that steps be taken by his department—I hope they have already been taken—to make inquiries in the East as to the demand for coal and the suitability of Bowen coal for their requirements. We should not let the private company get ahead of us in this respect.

I want also to point out to the Minister the necessity for storage accommodation. So far no steps have been taken to that end at Bowen. It is no use telling me that we do not need it. We must have it if we are to be successful. If a ship comes in for 10,000 tons of coal, we must not keep it waiting while trains run to and from the coalfield. That might be all very well in its way, but we need storage bins at the wharf; and it is no use telling me that storage bins are not valuable adjuncts to coalmining. I find from the report of Mr. Goddard that bins have been erected already at Mount Mulligan, and, if it is a good thing to erect them at Mount Mulligan—which cannot compare as a coalfield with Bowen—it has a very small seam, but I am not saying anything against it as a coalfield for that reason; it cannot help having a small seam—it is a good thing to have them at Bowen. Mr. Goddard points out in his report that it is a good thing, and effected a saving. If we are to open up a big export trade, and talk not in a few hundreds of tons but in hundreds of thousands of tons, some preparation should be made to deal with this aspect of the question. If steps in this direction are not taken, we shall find that when the jetty is completed, and the boats commence to come in, it will be detrimental to the coal export trade if the ships have to wait any length of time before they can be loaded. I take it that time counts with the big coal boats, which have to employ large numbers of men to enable them to sail between different ports, and it is a question of loading in as short a time as possible.

I want to impress the remarks of Mr. Goddard, not only upon the Secretary for Mines, but upon the Treasurer also. Mr. Goddard, in his report, says—

“The coal bins likewise will be a boon, as when they are full large orders could be readily met with. This unit must also be of great assistance to the Railway Department in the way of liberating a large amount of rolling-stock which is now required under our present system of loading. It will also ensure more constant work at the mine, as during the year under review the mine was idle fourteen days through wagon shortage, and partly idle several other days. The total time lost through wagon shortage was sixteen and a-half days.

“Taking fourteen days at our average daily output of 203,262 tons, we showed a loss of coal at 2,850 tons.”

Now, if it is necessary with a limited output and a limited demand to see that bins are erected at Mount Mulligan, how much more so is it necessary that bins should be erected at the Bowen coalfield, or in Bowen itself, in anticipation of a large export of coal? Surely we are not going to spend from £100,000 to £200,000 in the erection of the Bowen jetty almost entirely for coal export and bunkering purposes unless we are going to make provision for the transit of that coal in an expeditious manner! I am drawing the Minister's attention to this. I have argued this until I am tired of arguing it. I can see what is going to happen if we are not very careful. What I believe is going to happen is that we shall have the jetty completed and boats coming in, and we shall not have sufficient trucks, and there are not sufficient trucks in the

Railway Department at the present time to load the coal as quickly as it should be loaded.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That is exactly what will happen.

Mr. COLLINS: I find it necessary to get up in this Chamber and defend my position as the representative of Bowen. It is time that the Government looked round and did something in this connection.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member ought to move the adjournment of the House on the question.

Mr. COLLINS: I do not want to move the adjournment of the House. I am one of those who, when given an opportunity to deal with the matter on this vote, believe in giving voice to my opinions. Since the commencement of the Bowen State coalmine, 130,415 tons have been produced, whilst at the Bowen Consolidated mine—which is a private mine—the output has been only 24,623 tons, and on that amount of production they have not yet been able to pay a dividend. The report of the department is a very useful document in setting out the mineral production in the State, but there is plenty of room for improvement in regard to our mineral production.

I want to draw the Minister's attention for a moment to Mount Isa, and my remarks can be borne out by the hon. member for Mitchell. When we were at Mount Isa as members of the Public Works Commission, we found complaints amongst the miners in reference to the method of pegging out their leases. They had the one-peg system in many cases, and there were instances where one man put in one peg, and later on another man came along and put in another peg a few yards away, with the result that no one really knew where the leases were. Speaking from my own experience as a miner, I believe in the four-peg system, and men should be compelled to peg out as near as possible their 5 acres or 10 acres, so as to make it clear to the next man the point from which he can commence to peg out. Owing to the faulty system at Mount Isa, there were many men who had pegged out a claim, and when it came to the survey they found they had no holding at all. We want to do away with that system. In connection with the 10-acre blocks, we all know that a gentleman by the name of Corbould, representing a powerful syndicate, came along and bought most of the 10-acre blocks from the miners, with the result that we now have a large area owned by one gigantic company.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The miner gets the benefit under the 10-acre system.

Mr. COLLINS: The miner got the benefit at Mount Isa, as he was able to sell out to Mr. Corbould for a fairly high sum.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He is also a shareholder.

Mr. COLLINS: I have never visited any place in the whole of my life where I have heard so many men talking in thousands as I did when we were at Mount Isa; but that is by the way.

I am one of those who believe that it would be a bad day for Queensland if we had exhausted our mining resources. We have not exhausted our mining resources. (Hear, hear!) There is any amount of room in

Mr. Collins.]

Queensland for the development of those resources. I read only the other day where a new coalfield had been discovered in Yorkshire. England is a country in which mining was supposed to be well developed, but this new coalfield will add hundreds of millions of tons to its coal resources.

No hon. member who, like the hon. member for Burke and myself, has travelled over Queensland to a large extent believes that we have exhausted our mining resources, or that we have made all the discoveries we are going to make in regard to minerals. The Minister should assist genuine prospectors. I know that he does to some extent, but we want him to go a little further and give particular attention to genuine prospectors. I myself recommended to him a genuine prospector who had prospected the country from the back of Cardwell right down to Many Peaks. There are many men of that type in Queensland who are willing to prospect the country, and they should get every assistance possible. Such a work is something higher and better than working for wages, which the Minister referred to this morning. I have a high admiration for the man who possesses that independent spirit which makes him prefer to win a livelihood from nature rather than earn a living by toiling for some other person. He is the ideal man after all, and is a long way ahead of those of us who call ourselves in a sense socialists.

Mr. CLAYTON: In a sense?

Mr. COLLINS: I know it is necessary for mankind in a sense to pass through the socialistic school of thought, but I do not think for one moment that that is the ideal of mankind. But I would be getting away from the vote under discussion if I dealt with that matter. It is the men who have this independent spirit who are more or less the pioneers of this country.

I want to thank the Minister for what he has done in my electorate, particularly for advancing £1,500 to assist in building a battery at Mount Coolon. I am informed by the Mines Department that the battery is expected to be put in operation within the next week or so. It is a type of battery that is new to Queensland, and, if it is going to be the success we are led to believe, it is going to revolutionise the crushing of stone in this State. I am living in hopes that it will be a success, but I have my doubts in regard to many of the new inventions of batteries. I have seen the Huntingdon and other batteries in use, and I have seen many of the mines go back to the old stamper battery.

I was pleased to see by the report that a good crushing had been obtained from the old Normanby goldfield, and I hope that it will be the means of reviving that field. I want to emphasise once more that the Minister should do all he can to assist some of those genuine prospectors.

Regarding what my friend, the hon. member for Burke, said about Lawn Hill, we all know that the Lawn Hill silver field was known long before Mount Isa. I have no doubt that with the present price of silver and with its magnificent lodes—as I have noticed from geological reports from time to time—the Lawn Hill silver field is a field that will have to be reckoned with in the matter of silver and lead production. Of course, as the hon. member for Burke

pointed out, it is 120 miles distant from the ballast ground at Burketown, and carriage is fairly high, and it is handicapped in many directions. That brings me once more to this important question, that, if that part of Queensland is going to be developed, the Commonwealth Government ought to help this State in bringing about that development by the construction of a railway.

There is no need to be disheartened in connection with our State coalmines. They are going to be a success. Private enterprise at Blair Athol did not sell its coal at 10s. 6d. a ton until the advent of the State coalmines. I understand that before the advent of the State coalmines one had to pay 14s. 9d. a ton at the pit's mouth for Blair Athol coal. Now, owing to the competition brought about by the State coalmines as against privately-owned coalmines, Blair Athol naturally seeks to sell at the lowest possible price to secure some of the trade. I understand that a large number of Blair Athol coalminers have been transferred from Blair Athol to the Bowen State coalmines. With the better conditions which ought to be made possible by the State—the State ought to have better conditions than those prevailing under privately-owned mines—it will be perhaps a blessing in disguise for those men who used in years gone by to work at Blair Athol.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): The reason why I urged some little while ago that an inquiry should be held into the general conduct of our State enterprises is because in these times of difficulty—particularly financial difficulty—there is a need to cut off those enterprises which are sucking the life blood of Queensland. There was a time when I presume the Premier—to whom I suppose we can attribute the cessation of the fish enterprises of this State—recognised that the industry was impossible and was losing tremendous sums of money, and that the only wise and proper step to take was to cut it out. That was done. Apparently it is a sore point to refer to in these days, nevertheless those of us who see the menace of State enterprises recognise it was right for the Premier to close down. Therefore, I contend that an inquiry should be held into the conduct of State enterprises generally to find out which of those enterprises is absorbing money out of all proportion to the utility it is creating, with a view to cutting out that particular sponge. I still maintain that is the right thing to do. The hon. member who just resumed his seat has made reference, as naturally he should, to Bowen. To me it is a marvel that the hon. member has been so patient, as apparently he has been, as to allow the whole product of the Bowen coalfield to go to Townsville for some years.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You have not stated which mining enterprise could be cut out.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I shall do so in time. We have asked questions in this Chamber repeatedly as to why steps are not taken to provide facilities for the handling of coal, which is Bowen's by right. That railway, which has cost something like £12,000 a mile to build—one of the most expensive railways that Queensland has ever constructed—can only be made to pay if it is kept continually running, or rather, if goods are continually being carried over it. That can best be done by seeing that the facilities asked for by the hon. member for Bowen are provided with as little delay as possible.

[Mr. Collins.]

At the present time Townsville is reaping the advantage of the development of the Bowen coalfield, which is an injustice to Bowen. When the hon. member for Bowen was comparing the State mine with the Consolidated mine alongside, I was very much amused with one remark he made—"that the Consolidated mine is getting the greater proportion of the private business in North Queensland." It is the railways in North Queensland that keep the State mine going. The private consumer prefers the coal from the Consolidated mine for some reason or other that I am not able to give. If they are turning out 200 tons a day as against 300 tons a day by the State coalmine, and the railways are taking all the coal from the State mine, it is obvious that the private consumer is not troubling the State coalmine for his coal.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Oh, yes he is.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Very little of it, because the figures I have mentioned are given on the authority of the hon. member for Bowen. Those figures prove to a very large extent what I am saying. The hon. member claimed that the Bowen State mine should be equipped with the latest type of machinery, so that economies might be effected in every direction. I wonder what would happen to the hon. member's followers on that particular coalfield if all these labour-saving devices that he suggests were instituted. I make bold to say that it would only be a very short time—perhaps hours—before a strike occurred there, and the men absolutely refused to work the mine until these deprivers of labour were removed. Another point is—I think the Minister will probably agree with this—that you always find that the worker gives a fairer deal to the private employer than he does to the State. One of the biggest arguments against State enterprise is that the employee prefers to work for the private employer as against the State employer. The Government say they are a model employer, and they are this, that, and the other; but you find there are more strikes in connection with State coalmines than in connection with privately-owned mines.

Mr. COLLINS: There has been no strike on the Bowen coalfield so far.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: There may not have been so far, but the hon. member knows there has been quite a lot of trouble there. Although I endorse absolutely the hon. member's contention that labour-saving appliances should be introduced, I do argue that once he does that he is going to find serious trouble awaiting him in regard to that mine.

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you call a belt-conveyancer a labour-saving device?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I know that a belt-conveyancer undoubtedly does save labour.

Mr. GLEDSON: It does nothing of the sort.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Probably the hon. member is arguing from a different viewpoint to mine. All these mechanical appliances for the handling of minerals must be labour-saving devices, and I have seen no argument to disprove that. Another point which the hon. member for Bowen touched on was in support of his contention that State enterprises should be maintained. He compared them to private enterprise, which he says, so far as the Bowen Consolidated

coalmine is concerned, has not paid a dividend. He forgets that the State can effect losses in regard to its enterprises and pass them on to the poor taxpayer, whereas a privately-owned concern simply has to close its doors if it makes serious losses. Therefore, with private enterprise it is a case of the survival of the fittest. Unless they are able to market their product at a price which the consumer will pay, and a price which will permit them to pay for the cost of production, they have simply to close their doors.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You should peruse one of our balance-sheets.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The hon. gentleman has had his say. In that regard the State can pass it on to the taxpayer, whereas private enterprise cannot carry on if it is not able to produce its goods at a reasonable cost.

When the Premier was in London, he addressed certain members of the House of Commons in the Empire Parliamentary Association's rooms—a privilege which was extended practically to every visiting member—and I think it is very wise that every hon. member visiting England should take advantage of that opportunity. I have before me the speech which the Premier made on 12th March, 1924, in which he deals with the activities of the Government in the conduct of Queensland's affairs. In dealing with coal it is rather peculiar that he makes absolutely no reference to the Baralaba and Styx River mines. He deals with the Bowen coalfield and points out that that is the source from which the railways now procure their coal supplies, but he makes no reference whatever to the Baralaba and Styx River mines. In that connection one of the tragedies in regard to mining operations in Queensland, in my humble opinion, is the stifling of the Blair Athol mine. It has been the set programme of the present Government to drive that mine out of existence. I had the privilege of taking home with me to certain coal authorities in England particulars of this mine, with the price at which the coal was available and analyses of the coal, with the object of trying to develop for the Blair Athol Mining Company overseas markets for their wonderful coal. Surprise was expressed on several hands that a seam of that kind, which could be mined at such a low cost by reason of the removal of the overburden, should be starving for lack of support. The only answer one could give was that whilst the present Government were in power, their main object was to bolster up their own activities, and that so long as the Baralaba and Styx mines existed, the Blair Athol mine had no chance of finding a local market, and was looking for an overseas market where buyers bought coal at its intrinsic value, quite regardless of whether it was a State or private production. In my judgment it is a great pity that the enormous wealth which is associated with the Blair Athol mine should be allowed to stagnate as it is doing at the present moment. I hope that some means will be found of keeping that mine of such wonderful value before the public. When one mentioned on the other side of the water the dimensions of the seams at Blair Athol, which are simply extraordinary in their thickness, the mine was looked upon as being one of the world's marvels; yet we are doing nothing with it; we are simply

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stiffing that mine to bolster up our two State mines at Styx River and Baralaba. It was rather enlightening to read the Premier's speech in regard to this mine when addressing this same body of English politicians that I referred to. He was asked this question—

“Mr. WRIGHT: What measures have been taken for the preservation of those surveys?”

“Mr. THEODORE: They are preserved in the Mines Department at Brisbane. The coal measures in Queensland are very extensive. We are only in the initial stages of development of those resources. There are very extensive areas running into hundreds of square miles in various parts of the State. In one case the coal seam is 90 feet thick and reaches within 70 feet of the surface. At present we are engaged in stripping off the overburden in order to work this seam with steam shovels.”

The hon. gentleman was speaking to members of the Empire Parliamentary Association, which included Labour politicians, and trying to show them that the State's activities in mining have been successful; but it is significant that the only coalmine he makes reference to is one run by private enterprise, and one where private enterprise has spent thousands of pounds in stripping off the overburden to make this coal available at a cheaper price. Now that that has been done and the coal can [12.30 p.m.] be produced at a very low price, there is no market for it. I quote those remarks to show that, when the Premier was in other parts of the world, he was prepared to hold up as an example the activities of private enterprise in making that wonderful supply available. We come home to Queensland, and we find that in actual practice the mine is starved for lack of support simply in order to maintain the State mines at Baralaba and Styx River.

Mr. FARRELL: If it is such a good proposition, why is not private enterprise making a success of it?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Simply because Queensland industry has been strangled, and there is no use for coal here except in the activities which the State itself pursues. The State Government, in chasing its shibboleth of socialism, hews and uses the coal quite regardless of the cost of production, and so starves the cheaper and better properties. That is the reply to the hon. member.

I want now to deal briefly with the position regarding Queensland's precious stones as one found it in England. I had the opportunity of examining the situation, and the Minister made available to me all the information which was required so far as he could furnish it, and gave me every assistance in arriving at a conclusion. I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Knowles, and formed quite a high estimate of him and his capabilities. To those who are dependent on the marketing of precious stones for their livelihood—and there are a good many in the electorate of the hon. member for Leichhardt—I wish to say a few words in passing. In the first place, it is rather depressing to note in the report of the Mines Department that the only mineral production in Queensland worth speaking of which made a retrograde step last year was that of precious stones, the output of which was some thousands of

pounds less than in the preceding year. In my judgment it is depressing, because I do not think it need have occurred if the marketing of the stones had been undertaken in a proper manner. Queensland's precious stones seem to be in a category of their own. That is the first fact one has to recognise. The second fact is that London is the jewel market of the world. Although America consumes such a large percentage of the production of precious stones—considerably more than Great Britain—yet America still comes to London, as other countries do, as the market for precious stones. Therefore London is essentially the market that we should cultivate for our Queensland gems. Another fact for consideration is that Queensland gems have peculiar characteristics—which many jewel merchants in London have been slow to recognise. The worst thing that could happen to jewels of that nature is that they should be hawked—and Queensland gems have been hawked from one end of London to the other. That has had the effect of minimising their commercial value, and it is going to take quite an effort on the part of those responsible for their marketing to recover for them the reputation to which they are entitled. Another fact to be remembered is that jewels covering such a wide range need to be very carefully graded before they are offered for sale. There are certain merchants dealing with certain classes of stones, and, if one takes to them a mixed up lot of all kinds and conditions, he prejudices his market with those individuals. But, if one takes to a particular merchant a class of jewel he knows, and graded in an attractive way, one finds him responsive and inclined to make a deal. These points have been forgotten and neglected, and the gem procurer in Queensland has been the sufferer. I sincerely hope that arrangements will be made to improve that position—indeed, I have reason for believing that they have already been made. My advice to the producer of gems—I give it to him for what it may be worth—is to look after the marketing of his own jewels. I am not animated by any personal feeling in saying that. I do not believe in Government marketing of produce in any shape or form. I believe the Government can be of assistance in financing the efforts of the producers themselves, and in that case I believe that the Mines Department can be of assistance to those jewel producers in the difficulties in which they find themselves.

Mr. FOLEY: That is all the department is doing now.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: My suggestion is that the jewel procurers look to the marketing of their own jewels, because they will soon find out the class of jewel for which the best market is obtainable, and will soon get down to the business side of production. It is one thing to produce a thing, but it is another thing to market it. I have frequently argued from this side of the Chamber, whether in connection with cotton, or jewels, or anything else, that it is only by the combination of those two sets of circumstances and interlocking the one with the other that we shall overcome the marketing difficulties which have been so pronounced in reference to Queensland production.

The hon. member for Bowen, in closing his remarks, asked that encouragement be given to the private prospector. We on this side endorse that remark absolutely. We believe

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that Queensland has got just as much mineral wealth underground as we have got out of the ground so far, and probably very much more; and we believe that it can be brought to light only by encouraging the individual pioneering and seeking qualities of the body of men who are known as prospectors. Since the advent of this Government, that prospecting spirit has been largely stifled, because men have found it much easier to live on the fringe of towns and exist upon rations and other sorts of Government relief conditions rather than go out and search for their own livelihood by prospecting. A cat is a very useful domestic animal if it is allowed to go and search for its own food; but once you start to pamper that cat and feed it, it becomes fat, useless, and a menace. It is exactly the same with human nature. Once you begin to pamper a person and let him see that he can earn a livelihood without working for it, you kill that very instinct in the prospecting pioneer which the hon. member for Bowen is so anxious to see cultivated. Personally I welcome his remarks, and it is pleasing to see that the arguments which hon. members on this side have indulged in for the past eight or nine years are now finding fertile soil and bearing fruit in the minds of some hon. members opposite. There is hardly a measure which comes before this Chamber or a vote that comes up for consideration on which we do not find some hon. member opposite getting up and using the remarks and arguments that we have used for many years past; and, although it may not always be the ambition of a politician to remain in opposition, nevertheless we get consolation from the fact that remarks we have made year in and year out, and which experience has proved to be correct, are now finding a place in the minds of some hon. members opposite who are in control of this State's destinies at the present time.

Mr GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): The Mines Department is one of the most important departments that we have in the State, and the mining industry has many times in the history of Queensland been the saviour of the country during periods of drought, when the agricultural and other industries have failed. In dealing with the mining industry we must bear in mind that practically the same conditions with respect to the metal market which affect the industry in Queensland obtain in other parts of the world. Since the conclusion of the war, the bottom has practically dropped out of the metal market and there has been a depression in mining in Queensland, more particularly in North Queensland, where, before the war there was developing one of the richest and most prosperous mining fields in any part of the world.

Any hon. member of this Chamber, or any person out of it, cannot go to North Queensland and see the possibilities of the North so far as mineral development is concerned without being impressed with the fact that the facilities there should make Queensland the mining centre of the world. All that is required to enable Queensland to become a great mining centre is to secure a sufficient return for the minerals that are produced. If we are not getting sufficient return for them, it is no use digging them from the ground.

I was interested with that part of the departmental report dealing with the accidents in our mines, particularly in relation

to our collieries. We certainly have had a very good year, and have been very free from serious accidents. We had two fatal accidents in our coalmines which could not be attributed to matters in connection with the mining of coal. One of the fatal accidents was caused by a truck running away on the surface at a mine in the electorate of the hon. member for Aubigny, and the other occurred in the Ipswich district. It was a surface accident, the man at the pit-head being precipitated over the pit-head and killed. We are told sometimes that we should not say too much about accidents, because we do not know the moment when an accident will take place in any mine. That is true. There is always the danger of an accident taking place in a mine, and the only thing we can do when the number of accidents is down to the minimum is to congratulate the Chief Inspector and his staff on the work they are performing and the state of efficiency that has been secured so far as security from accidents is concerned. I saw only in this week's newspapers a report of the American Bureau of Labour dealing with the mining accidents that have occurred in various countries of the world. We find that there have been quite a number of accidents in America, and that quite a number of lives have been sacrificed in the collieries. The return also showed that a similar state of affairs prevail in Great Britain. Accidents have also taken place in the Southern States. We in Queensland have had quite a number of accidents in our coalmines. The greatest disaster was in the year 1921, as a result of the explosion at Mount Mulligan. The Chief Inspector and his staff therefore should be congratulated on the work done and the endeavour made to make the mines safe as far as they possibly can. I can speak from experience, and I say that each of the officials has done his best in attempting to remove all causes of accidents.

There is another matter I want to speak about, and that is in connection with the Chillagoe mines, which were referred to by the hon. member for Bowen. The report of the general manager is not a very illuminating one. It is one upon which we cannot congratulate ourselves. The Minister, in replying to the hon. member for Bowen, said that the loss on Chillagoe last year amounted to a considerable sum of money—£57,000 on the working expenses, not including £46,000 interest on the capital.

At 12.45 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. GLEDSON: That means, as the hon. gentleman told us, £103,000. That is one of the things of which we shall have to sit up and take notice.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: We cannot continue showing a loss in this direction. If we were showing a loss that could be counter-balanced in some other way, the expenditure would be justified, but if we cannot counter-balance the expenditure and can see no prospect of overcoming it in any way, we must consider whether we are justified in spending over £100,000 a year in keeping Chillagoe alive. If there is a counter-balancing benefit, I would like the Minister to go into the matter and show us what it is.

Hon. members opposite have accused the State coalmines of showing considerable

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losses, and the Minister has gone very fairly into the whole matter and has shown that, while some of the mines show a loss, others show a slight profit. We have a counter-balancing benefit so far as our State coal-mines are concerned, so that the nominal loss shown is really not a loss at all. I shall take the mines seriatim, because there has been a lot said in connection with the work of Baralaba and Styx, which have been compared with Blair Athol. Blair Athol is some 200 miles from any seaport, and 200 miles from the chance of getting a market. To-day the Blair Athol colliery is not being deprived of its trade by the Government. The Government are purchasing coal from the Blair Athol mine and supplying the Railway Department in that district with that coal. That should be made clear. The Blair Athol mine is supplying depôts at Emerald, Alpha, and right out along the Longreach and Clermont and Springsure lines with all the coal that is used by the Railway Department in that district. That coalmine is not supplying the districts of Rockhampton, Mount Morgan, and other places around there, because they are able to use the coal from Baralaba and Styx River more economically than they can use the coal from Blair Athol, taking into consideration freight and all other matters. The Secretary for Mines told us this morning that the Secretary for Railways had informed him that the Department of Railways had saved some £44,000 in connection with the supply of coal. That might be so, but I think that, if we went into the whole of the figures, we would find that we have saved a considerably greater sum.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLEDSON: I shall take from the North, starting with the northern mines, taking Mount Mulligan first. I have the report of the general manager, Mr. Goddard, and from that I find that the cost of producing coal at Mount Mulligan is 32s. 1.01d. per ton and the selling price per ton on railway trucks at Mount Mulligan is 28s. 9.4d. Slack is sold to the Biboohra Meat Company at 25s. a ton and to the Chillagoe State Smelters at 25s. a ton. That brings the average price they receive for the coal to 28s. 9d. a ton, or, as is shown in the report, a loss of approximately 4s. a ton. We want to see whether there really is a loss on that coal. There is a loss if it costs 32s. a ton to produce the coal and they sell it at 28s. 9d. per ton; but what we have to find out is what they would have to pay for coal if the Mount Mulligan mine was not worked. Prior to Mount Mulligan being developed, Southern coal cost from 42s. 3d. to 45s. 9d. a ton landed at Cairns. Then that coal had to be taken by rail to the Chillagoe smelters. Therefore, the opening up of the Mount Mulligan coalmine, has not meant a loss to the State at all. It has actually saved the State of Queensland some thousands of pounds. Last year Mount Mulligan produced 39,329 tons of coal. The cost of producing that coal at 32s. 1d. per ton works out at £63,090 5s. 5d. That is the cost to the State. If they had to buy the same quantity of coal from the South, it would cost, landed at Cairns, at the least £83,082. That shows that the opening of Mount Mulligan has meant a saving to the State of Queensland of £19,992. That is the saving to the Railway Department and other departments. The same thing applies

in other cases. Baralaba coal is being sold to the Railway Department at 14s. 9d. per ton; Styx River at 20s. per ton; Bowen coal, 18s. per ton for the best, 16s. a ton for screened coal, and 14s. a ton for fine coal, while Mount Mulligan screened coal is being sold at 32s. a ton. Previous to the Mount Mulligan mine working, the cost of coal in North Queensland was—

	<i>s. d.</i>
Landed at Bowen Wharf . .	42 3
Landed at Townsville . . .	39 3
Landed at Mackay	56 7
Landed at Cairns	42s. 3d. to 45s. 9d.

We find that the Government have also assisted the Blair Athol Company. The hon. member for Leichhardt, on behalf of the Blair Athol people, approached the Government and asked them to give the Blair Athol Company an order so that they could keep the men working. The Premier went into the matter and gave them an order for 2,000 tons, which was to be sent to Cairns. That coal was landed in Cairns at 52s. a ton for one lot and 52s. 6d. a ton for another lot. The Government had already assisted them to start an export trade, and it cost the Government £2,000 for that experiment to help the Blair Athol people. To-day the Government get no credit for that. All that they get are kicks from Paddy Monaghan, who is a storekeeper up there and who supplies hon. members opposite with ammunition to fight the Government. I want to follow this up and show that the Government have done all they possibly can to help the Blair Athol Company. But what have the Blair Athol Company done for themselves? They got Crown leases and they got out of those leases—out of the Government practically—thousands of pounds. Did they spend it in Queensland? No. They made £33,000 out of that field and put it into a mine in New South Wales and lost every penny of it there. That is the position in connection with this business, and it is just as well that we should know the truth in this matter. It is no use trying to pull our own legs and saying that the Blair Athol coal will make a good export coal. We know that it will not make a good export coal. It is one of the best locomotive coals we can get anywhere in regard to quick-burning and being clean. It makes very little ash, and gives very little trouble in the engine. It is quick-burning and a good coal for locomotive work; but from the point of view of export or calorific value there is a different tale to tell. We have to take the economic value of coal into consideration—that is, the steam power which a pound of coal will produce.

Mr. FOLEY: And the cost of the coal.

Mr. GLEDSON: And the cost of the coal. We have to find out the economic value of the coal. The Styx and Baralaba coals, when mixed with Blair Athol coal, have been proved to save the Railway Department £25,000 in the Rockhampton district alone last year. What is the good of saying that we are trying to close down Blair Athol when we have the economic fact that the Baralaba coal has been a saving to the department? If the department can save a few thousand pounds by using some of the Blair Athol coal, they would be foolish not to do so. But it must be borne in mind that, if you get the coal from Blair Athol, you are not getting it from Baralaba or Styx River.

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if the men are employed on one field, they cannot be employed on the other. It does not make any difference to me where the men are being employed so long as the department is getting the best value from the coal used. The cost of production has been mentioned. We are told that the Styx River coal is costing a most exorbitant sum to produce; but we know that the Styx River coalfield has not been fully developed. The Government have spent a lot of money on its development, and the analysis of the coal proves it to be practically the best coal we have so far even in Queensland. It is our duty to develop the field and see if we can make it profitable to the State. The coal will certainly have an export value if it comes up to expectations.

Mr. MORGAN: Have not the Government been spoon-feeding a lot of the Ipswich coal-mines?

HON. M. J. KIRWAN: No, your Government did that.

Mr. GLEDSON: I do not know what the hon. member for Murilla is talking about. The Government are getting cheaper coal in Queensland for the Railway Department than is being obtained in any other part of the world. That is well known. Cheaper coal is produced in Queensland than in any other part of the world.

Mr. MORGAN: Do you take quality into consideration?

Mr. GLEDSON: I take quality into consideration. If I had time, I would go into the matter of quality. We get some of the best coal in the world at the Aberdare mine in the Ipswich district as well as at Styx River. The Aberdare seam in the Ipswich district is the most economical coal you can get, and it is taken as the standard for coal in Queensland. There are seams being worked in the Ipswich district which do not come up to the Aberdare seam, and a bad name has been got because of coal from those inferior seams being put on the market. That has practically given the whole of the Ipswich coal a bad name, but the Aberdare seam will compare favourably with coal anywhere else in the world. The record shows that the coal from the Aberdare seam is equal to, if not better than, the Newcastle coal.

I have already shown that the Mount Mulligan mine has indirectly saved a large sum of money, and now I want to deal with other State coalmines from the same point of view. Although the Bowen State coalmine has only shown a profit of £338 for the year, we have to remember the saving which has accrued to the State from the opening of that field. From the figures supplied by the

Minister, I find that the output [2 p.m.] has been 133,415 tons, of which the Railway Department took 83,416 of best clean coal at 18s. a ton, which previously at Townsville and Bowen had cost 45s. a ton. That means that the opening of the coalfield at Bowen has saved Queensland an enormous sum on different enterprises, and that the total saving to the Railway Department alone has been no less than £95,928, or nearly £100,000. Can anybody, in the face of those figures, say that these propositions are losing concerns? Then we are told that the Styx River mine is showing a loss—the Minister has told us that. But here again we have to take compensating factors into consideration to see whether, on the whole, there is a loss or not; and I find

that at Mackay every ton of coal before the opening of the railway to that place and the development of the Styx River coalmine cost the Railway Department 56s. 7d. a ton, whereas now the price is 20s., or a saving of 36s. 7d. a ton. In addition to that, we find that the economic value of the Styx River coal is practically 20 per cent. greater than that of the coal which the Railway Department was using previously.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: A loss to the Mines Department, but a profit to the Railway Department.

Mr. GLEDSON: Put that saving to the Railway Department against the loss of the Mines Department and you find the compensating factor. The same thing applies to Baralaba. Not only has the State mine there saved the Railway Department a considerable sum, but it has also effected a saving to the Mount Morgan mine, because it has been able to reduce its fuel cost something like 25 per cent. by using Baralaba coal; so that the Mount Morgan Company is taking practically all the coal it can get from that source.

Something has been said about the Consolidated mine at Bowen. There is room for the Consolidated mine, and we do not object to its being a supplier of coal at all. The more coal that we can get the greater chance we shall have of opening up a market for the sale of that coal overseas. The Bowen Consolidated mine has had difficulties to contend with just the same as the State mine, and at the present time the Consolidated mine is taking coal from the State mine to fill its orders, and is quite prepared to take every pound of coal that the State coalmine can supply in order to fill its orders, which goes to show that the State mine is prepared to assist the Consolidated mine to fill its orders and assist to build up a trade in Bowen. If the Minister is thinking of building bins, I would suggest that he have them built, not at the mine, but at the wharf, where they will be able to release the rolling-stock engaged in this trade at the port of Bowen.

HON. J. G. APPEL (*Albert*): The natural wealth of a country consists of its possibilities from the agricultural standpoint, from the grazing standpoint, and also of its mineral resources.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: And not on its power to borrow?

HON. J. G. APPEL: If a country has not either of the sources of wealth I have mentioned, its powers of borrowing will be very limited indeed. In the first case the wealth is recurring, because you are putting something into the ground, and you are drawing the result from time to time according to the seasons, but in connection with the mineral wealth you are drawing that which you never can replace; so that, as you continue to draw from time to time, the end naturally is in sight, and that wealth eventually will cease to exist. The country, however, having that wealth is bound to do the best it can to utilise it.

Mineral wealth may be divided into two classes, the first consisting of what are termed precious metals—gold, silver, platinum, and precious stones—and the second consisting of the baser metals comprising coal, iron, copper, tin, lead, etc. However valuable the precious metals may

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be, unquestionably the country which is blessed with quantities of baser metals—particularly iron and coal—is in a very much more fortunate position than the country whose wealth in metals consists purely of gold, of which in all countries, however great the deposits may be, the supply is practically limited. It naturally follows that the operations of the Mines Department must be of interest to every member of the community. I am not speaking of this department in sympathy with those engaged purely in speculation, but I refer to those who are concerned in the winning of these metals and in putting them to the best possible available use. No doubt, from one point of view, the mineral wealth of a country assists vastly in advertising that country, and if that country is blessed, as our State is, with agricultural and grazing possibilities, unquestionably it adds to the development of those resources which, as I have already pointed out, are recurring and do not cease to exist.

There is a third factor which has been very fully referred to this morning by the Minister, and that is the possibility of finding oil. We all know that a country which possesses an oil supply has a material advantage over countries where such does not exist. The question as to whether there are supplies of oil in Queensland or not is one which naturally cannot be proved until oil is actually found. According to reports of the Geological Department and of independent and eminent geologists, that source may, and possibly does, exist within the boundaries of the State of Queensland. Unfortunately, in the first instance, we were perhaps too optimistic in connection with this matter, and failed to realise that searching for oil involved a large outlay of capital. If the opportunities are not made available to those who are prepared to spend that capital, then the search for oil will be of such a nature that a long delay indeed may occur before oil supplies are proved within the boundaries of the State. The Minister mentioned the approximate cost of sinking a bore. According to records of what it has cost different companies to search and prospect for oil—and I refer now, for instance, to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company—before oil was proved and a supply struck, the expenditure in prospecting and sinking wells ran into hundreds of thousands of pounds. As a matter of fact, the finding of oil in Persia might be termed a romance. A wealthy man, who at one time was a Queenslander and whose source of wealth was founded in Mount Morgan, was one of a number of others connected with a syndicated company interested in the Persian oil field exploration. He had practically come to the last of his resources, and his available funds and credit were almost exhausted, when oil was discovered. It practically follows that we must not be disheartened at the failure of any particular operation here or there. As the Minister—who gave us a very interesting speech on the question—pointed out, in America the supply of oil may be confined to a very limited area. That is a geological fact. Bores may be made all round this particular reservoir and yet not touch the oil supply. Then oftentimes by chance, according to the history of oil, the discovery is made.

I pointed out to the Minister, when the Petroleum Bill was before the House, that to my mind the prospecting areas are not large enough. Capital requires a return, and

[*Hon. J. G. Appel.*]

without capital it is impossible to test the possibilities of the State for oil. If the State were to spend the whole of the capital necessary before oil is discovered in Queensland, it would lead to a serious embarrassment of even the resources of Queensland, and where private enterprise is willing to spend the necessary capital, opportunity should be given for it to do so, because under the conditions laid down the State is bound to profit in the royalties that must be paid on the oil discovered by the expenditure of that capital. Meanwhile, the very employment that is afforded by the expenditure of that capital is a gain to those residing within our State.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am glad there is someone else in the Chamber who understands the question.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I had the honour of administering the department that is now being administered by the Secretary for Mines, and at that time the department was sending for an improved boring plant from America in connection with the Roma oil bore. The matter was gone into very fully, not only by the geologists of the department—

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They tell me that when you were administering the department that you never met one of the geologists.

HON. J. G. APPEL: If the hon. gentleman who has interjected will take the trouble to read the geological index, he will find that is not so. Of course the hon. gentleman is a bit of a joker.

MR. CLAYTON: He cannot help it.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I had the benefit of the experience of those gentlemen, and the whole history of oil proves the existence in Queensland of all the essentials connected with oil. I have no doubt that the supporters of the Secretary for Mines who at the time the Petroleum Bill was going through thought there should be a limitation of the prospecting area, are now satisfied that unless opportunities are afforded whereby a return may be received, or there is a prospect of a return being received, men with capital are not likely to enter into such speculations. When we consider that the concessions which have been made to companies by the other States are so very much larger than those existing in Queensland, we must realise that, if oil is to be found, greater concessions must be given to those who are prepared to risk their capital in prospecting for that most valuable fluid.

There is one matter I certainly would like to impress upon the Minister, and that is the necessity for encouraging men who are prepared to go out and prospect the different portions of the State. In many instances, especially in the Cape York Peninsula, the possibilities exist in favour of precious minerals being found. That such possibilities exist within the boundaries of Queensland is evident from the example of Mount Isa. Mount Isa is in a comparatively known area, yet for years that valuable body of ore lay there, and I have not the slightest doubt that there are other shows in the district, quite apart from gold, which may be discovered if prospecting is encouraged. It is necessary that the prospector shall be provided with the means to pursue his investigations. During the period when I was Secretary for Mines I found that a very sma

amount of encouragement caused prospectors to become really enthusiastic. Their whole life seems to be bound up in the desire to prospect country and find something, and, so long as they have their outfits and their rations, they are quite prepared to undergo untold hardships in the search for minerals. I urge the Minister, as far as lies in his power, to encourage these prospectors. I think every member of this Committee desires that what we term the smaller man should have every opportunity on the mining field. In connection with free gold, those opportunities can be taken without capital, but, where you have a silver lead proposition such as Mount Isa, we all know that it requires a very large amount of capital to deal with the ore—not alone in the prospecting of it, and not alone in the winning of it, but in converting it into a marketable commodity, especially having in view the distance from the nearest rail head. To-day modern machinery to deal with such a proposition as that costs a very large amount of capital, and, further, the labour conditions also necessitate a large amount of capital, for which there is no return for a very considerable time. When we realise, first of all, the outlay necessary in the erection of machinery and works, then the outlay between the winning of the metal and the return for that metal on the markets of the world, we can see that it involves the outlay of a very large amount of capital. While I confess that I would like to see every opportunity given to what is termed the “scratcher” and the “gouger,” I realise that it is impossible to deal with a proposition such as Mount Isa on those lines. If you are going to have that field worked, not alone for the benefit of the State—of course the State does benefit—but for the benefit of the community generally, you must give consideration to the areas which the department is prepared to grant to men who are prepared to lay out the necessary capital to carry on operations. Consequently I realise that the department is following on proper lines in amalgamating the small areas so as to give the necessary opportunities to companies that are prepared to carry on these operations, provided, as I have already said, that the Department of Mines sees that there is no evasion of the labour conditions. If that is done, the result of that expenditure will be of benefit to the working miners who will be employed.

I trust that the Minister will see that the geological survey is continued. In that respect I pay a tribute to Mr. Dunstan for the work which he has done in connection with geological survey in Queensland. Of course I include with him the assistant geologists who are under his supervision, and who are all excellent men. In Mr. Dunstan we have an enthusiast, and those members of the Committee who take an interest in the geology of Queensland, and who have not met Mr. Dunstan already, will find that a conversation with him is a revelation. In answer to an interjection by the Secretary for Public Instruction I mentioned the geological index prepared by Mr. Dunstan, which is recognised as a standard index amongst mining men. That alone proves the enthusiasm of Mr. Dunstan in his profession. The public cannot sufficiently appreciate the work which is being done by the geological branch of the Mines Department.

I have no doubt that all the regulations dealing with the safety of those engaged in

the mining industry are being carried out in accordance with the mining regulations. That is one of the most important matters in regard to men who are engaged in this perilous and hazardous industry. In many instances the dust inhaled by the miners has a prejudicial effect upon their lungs. I have no doubt that that particular work is being fully and effectively carried out. The fact that we had such a fearful disaster at Mount Mulligan is no evidence that complete inspection is not being made. However complete the inspection and care may be, as in the case of Mount Mulligan, it is possible for such a disaster to happen. It has always been the policy of the Mines Department—a policy which I am glad to say appeals to all permanent officials in the department—that no company or individual operating in the industry shall be permitted to evade the responsibilities which are cast upon them by our mining regulations.

The question of gems was mentioned by the hon. member for Oxley, and I am inclined to agree with the hon. member with reference to the marketing of gems. I have no doubt that the Minister realises that the marketing of gems is not the simple matter which it appears to be on the surface. We have to realise that at one time the blue sapphires had a very large sale, because they were very largely used in the manufacture of clocks. With the abolition of religion in Russia the use of eikons has been abolished, and the large demand which enabled so many of our blue stones to be sold for the benefit of those engaged in that industry no longer exists. Now and then, as we all know, the yellow sapphires are in great demand, and at other times green sapphires; but the blue sapphire probably is the one which, by and large, has the most effective sale and gives the best return to the [2.30 p.m.] miners. I hope that the department will endeavour to do what they can to assist those engaged in the industry.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed to him by the Standing Orders.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Quentou*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat in his opening remarks spoke about the wealth of a country consisting in its great natural agricultural, grazing, and mineral resources. I do not agree with the hon. member that the wealth of any country consists in its fertile plains, its minerals, its public buildings, or its armies or navies. The real wealth of the country consists in the number of its intelligent, educated, and cultivated citizens.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: I forgot to preface my remarks by saying that I was referring to natural wealth.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: We know other countries in the world which have very great natural resources such as those of which the hon. member spoke; yet their citizens have not the intelligence and are not educated to a standard sufficiently high to enable them to know the value of the wealth that is in their country, and therefore it is of no value at all to them. The intelligent, educated men and women of a country are the real wealth of the country, and, unless they know how to develop the natural wealth of the country, those things are really of no use to them. John Ruskin says there is no wealth but life.

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I notice that the vote for the Mines Department this year is £3,082 less than it was last year. In some respects I am sorry to see that there is any diminution in this vote or any diminution in the income from the resources with which it deals. We know that in some aspects of mining, as the Minister has pointed out, there has been a falling off as compared with years gone by, particularly in gold and copper production. I quite admit that the department could have spent a great deal more, probably with profit, if they could have got it, but they have to take what they can get, like everybody else—departments are like individuals, and, if they cannot get what they want, they have to take what they can get and make the best of it; but it is an anomaly that, although there is that decrease of £3,082 in the total vote for the department, there is an increase of about £2,000 in the item for "Chief Office." That is rather strange on the face of it. No doubt, there is an explanation, and perhaps later we shall have from the Minister an explanation as to how it takes £2,000 more to administer the department when the total vote is over £3,000 less.

I agree with the statement of the hon. member who has just resumed his seat in his eulogy of the officers of the department. Personally, I have received the greatest attention, courtesy, and consideration from the Minister and the officers of the department. I do not suppose there is any department which does not find that members of Parliament seem to want more than they should get, but, as a general rule, I have received a good reason for not getting what I ask for, and I have to admit that on practically every occasion my request has received full and due consideration, and where it has been turned down it has been because there was good reason for it.

The department finds itself this year with £2,000 less for prospecting purposes. I have always said, and I am still of the same opinion, that the vote dealing with prospecting should not be reduced, but that we should keep it to a fairly high level for the reason that, so far as I can gather, the money is never given in large sums, and therefore nobody gets a very big pull out of it. As a general rule it is given to people who, while they are getting some assistance from the department, are also doing something for themselves, and are putting in real determined work. I have always been an advocate of helping those who are willing to help themselves, which is a very sound principle. It is infinitely better to give ten men or ten parties of men—the prospecting parties may consist of one, two, three, or four members—£10 each than give £1,000 to one company, for the reason that you have ten chances in one case and only one chance in the other. In quite a number of instances we find that companies have been assisted, perhaps more for the sake of the men employed than the shareholders, and much good work has been done in that direction. I have already stated, and I have no hesitation in saying it again, that the hon. member for Albert, when he was the Minister, gave a subsidy of £500 to a company, which enabled them to develop their mine and employ a large number of men for a period of ten years. The present Minister did the same; but, while the Government gave £1,500 in all to that company, unfortunately

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the stone was not there, and the company were unable to build themselves up on the money at their disposal, and I am sorry to say they have had to close down.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Look at the benefits derived by the subsidy given in Clark's case.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: That was the mine that I had in mind. I am sorry to say they have come to the end of their financial tether. The Minister did his best to keep them going, and it was not through any want of assistance on his part that they had to close down.

There is another company which is now in a good position. The New Ravenswood Company had a terrible struggle, and prior to my looking after their interests the late Mr. O'Sullivan, who was formerly member for Kennedy, obtained assistance for them when they were practically at the end of their financial tether and did not know which way to turn. The company got practically every man about the mine to become a shareholder, and they had to pay in about one-third of their wages to meet the calls. Nothing could have saved the company had the Mines Department not come to their assistance. I was on the ground, and I went down below, and I had the position fully explained to me, and I made a special point of seeing the Minister himself in an endeavour to obtain some assistance for this mine. They were in a rather awkward position, for, while the stone was payable, the overhead expenses were heavy because they had to keep two shafts going and free from water, etc., so that it was impossible to work the mine with less men. They could scarcely meet expenses, consequently, while they were getting pretty rich stone all the time, they could not meet their obligations. The consequence was that they had to turn to the department, and the department helped them first under the Mining Machinery Advances Act, and then advanced them a subsidy on the work they were doing, which helped them to turn the corner, and for the past year or two they have certainly been doing exceptionally fine work.

The report of the company dwells to some extent on what has been done, but this is practically a summary of the position—

"Of the total tonnage raised by this company the remaining 316.7217 tons were sent in the form of crude ore to the Chillagoe works, and the returns show the product to be 2,005.6537 oz. of gold valued at £8,022.6148, 1,792.1927 oz. of silver valued at £224.0242, and 11,824 tons of copper valued at £774.472. Thus the product of the prill ore shipped returned a total gross value of £9,021.111, bringing the total value of the production from the Ravenswood gold mines for the year up to £14,361.3287. These figures show an increase in value for the year under review over that of 1922 of £8,840."

That goes to show that the company, when able to work the mine on a decent scale and employ a large number of men, were able to turn the corner and make the financial success of what was really a losing proposition from a financial point of view for a long time. I do not know whether they have repaid the department the advances made, but the secretary told me recently that the company was in a position to clear off all

liabilities, and to pay a dividend, if they thought it wise, although most of them did not think it was. The company are not going to take any risks, and propose to sink the shaft another 100 feet and continue to drive in the No. 5 level. This shows that had the department not come to the help of that company, the mine would have been closed down, and thirty or forty men, who were kept in employment for four or five years, would have been thrown on the unemployed market, and the value of the work accomplished would have been lost. Quite a number of things have been said about the Mines Department, some to its credit and some to its detriment, but I want to put to its credit those matters in which I think it deserves credit.

It has been already pointed out that quite a number of places in Queensland have not been prospected at all, and that man has scarcely placed foot on them. There are also quite a number of places within easy distance of existing goldfields worthy of a trial. A number of working men have got together and formed a syndicate to try a proposition outside Ravenswood. A number of men have previously tried this proposition and sent the ore to Charters Towers. Previously the cost of haulage to the railway, the railage, and the milling of the ore practically swallowed up most of the proceeds. These men who have formed a syndicate have subscribed their own capital, a fairly substantial amount, and have purchased and erected a battery on the ground. There is an abundance of low-grade ore in sight in the mine, but it seems to me that it is one of those propositions which is well worthy of a trial. These men have put their money into the company, and paid calls amounting to £5 at a time. Naturally, most of them soon found themselves to be at the bottom of their purses, and were inclined to throw up the proposition when the Mines Department came to their assistance. It gave them a helping hand to test the proposition and ascertain whether it was worth expanding, and whether it would be any good to the men themselves and the community. Some hon. members are inclined to be sarcastic about those people who are optimistic. If there had been no optimists in Queensland and in other countries, there would have been no mines. There is something about mining, whatever it may be, that causes a man to acquire an interest in it, although originally he may have had no interest, and that interest is developed and causes him to be prepared to risk his money in mines. No doubt mining people are optimistic, and often their optimism is rewarded. I sincerely hope that the people in the Waniola and Mount Clearview syndicates, who have received assistance from the department, will be rewarded, and also that the department will be rewarded for its enterprise. In addition, I hope the people as a whole will be rewarded through these operations.

There is some complaint at present from mining people in reference to the insurance premium. The Insurance Commissioner has evidently had some difficulty in meeting the demands made upon the Insurance Fund. We realise, of course, that quite a number of people, particularly under the industrial diseases section of the Workers' Compensation Act, are suffering from diseases and receiving compensation whilst the mines in which they had worked are nearly all closed down. Com-

paratively speaking, very few premiums are now being paid, therefore a greater burden falls on those who are at present interested in mining than was heretofore the case. It is stated it costs approximately 6s. a week to cover each employee. That is fairly solid.

Something was said earlier in the debate in connection with the size of the leases at Mount Isa. Anybody knowing anything at all about mining must understand that it would have been an utter impossibility for the Department of Mines to force those people who took up 10-acre leases to work them. In quite a number of instances the men who took up those leases were prospectors who spent quite a lot of time and energy in that locality, and, when the find was made, they were handy, and quite a number got in and took up leases.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: More power to them.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: The department has had nothing whatever to do with what are termed monopolies. These men got their leases under proper conditions. They knew when they took the leases up that they could not work them individually and that they must amalgamate. They have got something out of their efforts which will enable them to extend their prospecting endeavours.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: That has always been the practice.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: That has been the practice all along the line. It is more difficult to work a small copper area than it is to work a similar gold area. Originally Charters Towers was worked under small leases of about 12 acres each. Some of those small areas were worked for years, but eventually it became unprofitable and the small leases were amalgamated. These men in the Mount Isa district are deserving of every success because they are bonâ fide prospectors and good workers. I am hopeful that they will be fully rewarded, not merely for their own sake, but for the sake of the community as a whole.

I listened to the hon. member for Oxley very attentively, and I naturally thought that, having the facilities he had during the last twelve months for gathering information and for seeing things, he would have said something worth listening to. I was rather disappointed with what he did say on the question of Queensland gems, for, after all, his advice was really a counsel of despair, and what he asked the department to do was to leave the gem miners on their own—to leave them to do the best they could to mine the gems and, after they got them, to leave them to do their own marketing as best they could. As everyone knows, although they may be exceptionally good miners, it requires something more than a knowledge of mining to enable them to do their own marketing. It is a matter of history now that, when previous Governments were in power, these men were left on their own, and, as most people know, they did not get more than 50 per cent. of the real value of the gems.

Mr. FOLEY: They got £1 an oz.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: As the hon. member for Leichhardt says, all they got was £1 an oz. It was the men themselves who went to the Department of Mines and asked the department to do something for them to protect them from people who were practically nothing more or less than robbers. The department did do something, and, although

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the first scheme was not altogether successful, it was infinitely better than the men could do themselves. It was not as satisfactory as it might have been, and the consequence was that something else was done. I certainly think that, if the men were asked if they were satisfied, it would be found that, although they may not be satisfied with what they are getting, they have a good deal more reason to be satisfied than ever they had in days gone by. To ask the department to leave these men on their own after an experience like that is certainly not very helpful and not very inspiring, and if in regard to other matters the hon. member has no better advice to offer, and can tell us no more than that, then his time has been wasted. He certainly ought to have been able to tell us something of advantage after having had the opportunities he has had in this direction. I am confident that the Department of Mines, not only so far as gem miners are concerned, but so far as others are concerned, too, has done the best that could possibly be done under the circumstances. The hon. member also took exception to what the Premier said when speaking on the other side of the globe. The Premier on that occasion was not really speaking for the Government. He was speaking for the State as a State, and he had just as much right, when speaking in that connection, to say that we were doing this or doing that, as anybody else had. In speaking on behalf of Queensland, he was perfectly justified in the statements he made. He did not want to do those things that hon. members opposite have been doing. He wanted to say the best he possibly could for the State he represented, and he certainly did not cry "stinking fish," or say something that would be detrimental to the State rather than otherwise, so in that connection I certainly think he was perfectly justified in what he said.

It does seem that not merely the Government but other people as well have been singularly unfortunate in connection with oil. Why it should be so it is difficult to understand, but I believe everybody who knows anything about oil considers that Queensland will become an oil-producing State. If that is so, it will be a good thing, not merely for the people who benefit directly, but a good thing for the State as a whole. Hon. members opposite in days gone by blamed the department, when the department had the matter in its own hands, because it had not been more successful in its search for oil. It is quite evident from what we know now that even private enterprise can meet with apparent disaster for the time being.

Mr. MAXWELL: They are not wasting public money on it.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: No, but they are wasting money, and it does not matter very much in the long run who wastes it if it is raised in the country. The country is that much poorer. But at the same time it goes to show that, while private enterprise is often lauded to the skies and State enterprise is cried down in the mud, private enterprise is not always successful by any means. I hope that in the future prospectors for oil will be more successful than they have been up to the present, as their success will be a good thing for the State as a whole.

Mr. RYAN (*Cook*): It is quite evident to anyone who followed the speeches delivered

[*Mr. Winstanley.*]

this morning on this vote that the hon. member for Oxley rose chiefly to fulminate against the Government for having embarked in State mining enterprises, and more particularly in regard to coalmining. The hon. member carefully refrained from referring to the benefit which is being conferred on the mining industry in the far North of Queensland as well as in other portions of the State, when the Government embarked in the Chillagoe enterprise, for instance. He refrained from telling the Committee the amount of money which was previously lost by the Chillagoe Company, and what would have been the resultant unemployment if the Government had not stepped in and continued that enterprise. I notice from the report of the Under Secretary for Mines—whom I compliment on the report, which contains a comprehensive fund of information—that there is roughly a total population of about 3,000 people in the Chillagoe mining district. Had that mine been closed down, the whole of that population would have drifted elsewhere, and, seeing that the trend of thought and opinion throughout Australia at the present time is in favour of decentralisation, I think the Government are to be complimented on their action in regard to that mine. The hon. member also refrained from referring to the Mount Mulligan enterprise taken up by the Government. It is quite possible that the debit and credit accounts in the ledger do not balance, but any business man knows that, although a certain percentage of cost may be saved through buying a commodity such as the Chillagoe works and smelters are buying from the State through using Mount Mulligan coal as compared with what it would cost for Southern coal, it would be unbusinesslike to put it down as a credit. Still the fact remains that a certain percentage is saved by the Government. Therefore the Government are doing the proper thing in keeping that mine open and in endeavouring to make it a payable proposition. I notice from the report of the General Manager at Chillagoe that steps are being taken to facilitate the output and increase efficiency, and in other ways to economise throughout the mine, and it is quite possible that much can be done in this direction. When the State took Chillagoe over, the machinery was in a very bad state. The coking ovens had the bottoms burnt out of them, and goodness knows what. In fact, the Government ever since they have taken the mine over have been for months repairing and bringing the machinery up to a state of efficiency in order to reduce the cost of production.

Another extraordinary statement made by the hon. member for Oxley was with regard to prospectors and prospecting. He attributed the scarcity of prospectors throughout Queensland to the fact that the Government were doing out relief—or words to that effect—to the unemployed throughout Queensland. I do not think the hon. member has ever been much in contact with prospectors. I have lived a good part of my life with them, and I can say that a more independent set of men cannot be found in this State.

Hon. J. G. APPEL and other OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: They are men who are as true as steel and as hard as nails. They live a hard life, work hard, and get very little return for it. The hon. member slandered

one of the best classes of men to be found within this State, and I think he is not to be complimented upon his remarks. [3 p.m.] I have lived and worked amongst prospectors the whole of my life, and there are men in their number who have never worked for a day's wages in their lives, and never will.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: There are men in North Queensland who will live from hand to mouth rather than work for wages, although very likely what they get is not enough to eke out an existence. I am going to say that almost every application for an advance from the vote for prospecting which I have made to the department—at any rate, every one within reason—has received favourable consideration. I think the steps the departmental officers are taking to see that the vote is properly spent are wise. I am not one of those who believe that the “wild-catter” and others like him should receive a subsidy, but men who are bonâ fide prospectors, who go out into the wilds—and these are the true pioneers of the State—should receive every encouragement. I have often heard hon. members on the other side refer to the squatters as the pioneers of Queensland. It is a remarkable thing that that kind of pioneer generally has a railway built to help him, whilst the miner goes out into the backblocks—right out amongst the blacks—and lives a hard life hundreds of miles from where it is possible for him to get rations. It is hard work even to travel from where he is to be found with a little bit of a mine to where he can get his rations, and that fact makes it doubly hard for him to pioneer these districts.

I notice in the annual report of the Under Secretary that in the far North—I think, in the Chillagoe district—there have been one fatal accident and injuries to five men as a result of premature explosions. These have been attributed to faulty fuse, and after exhaustive tests the suggestion has been made that probably the accidents occurred because the fuse flamed too much round the collar of the hole where it was coiled, and therefore fired a coil nearer to the charge than it should have done, and before the men could get away to safety. I have had a good deal to do with fuses and firing holes, and I am of opinion that the Government should take steps to exercise some supervision over the fuse sold to miners. I notice that one of the accidents occurred in the State mine at Girofla, and that is an additional reason why they should take some action. When I was mining, if we once got hold of half a dozen coils of fuse and found one was defective, we returned the whole lot to the storekeeper, who always took the fuse back, and it is quite possible that it was sold to some other prospector or mining company. Something should be included in the Act or regulations if possible to ensure that anybody who handles faulty fuse and returns it to a storekeeper shall at once report the matter to the nearest warden or officer of the Mines Department, so that the fuse can be destroyed. Otherwise it is quite possible that a rejected piece will bring about a fatal accident in the way I have mentioned.

I have worked with companies that have used inferior fuse. The single tape fuse, especially after it gets a bit dry, will set fire to a piece of fuse close round the collar of

the hole where it spits. Most miners roll the coil round the collar of the hole because it is more convenient for them to fire in that way, more especially if they have several holes to fire. They coil it in small coils, because in that way they can get at the fuse more readily and can get away more speedily. I have never known double tape fuse to run unless it was faulty, or broken, or mutilated in some way. The powder will not run with double tape fuse properly bound. I suggest that something should be done to see that faulty fuse is confiscated and destroyed.

Although the report of the department this year shows an increase in the gold production of £34,583, I would suggest that some indirect assistance should be given to producers of gold in the way of a bonus on each ounce of gold produced. It would be of great assistance and encouragement to the prospector and the investor if that were done, and I would also suggest that gold-mining companies should be exempt from taxation. That would be an incentive to mining investors and those who are engaged in mining to carry on their enterprise in a better way than they are doing to-day. On picking up our newspapers we learn that the new Commonwealth loan is free from State taxation, and I see no reason why the Government should not exempt the dividends of gold-mining companies from taxation. In some cases where big dividends have been paid, some restrictions could be imposed. Notwithstanding the fact that prospectors and shareholders of mining companies have paid calls for goodness knows how long, it is remarkable, when they come across payable ore, they immediately have to pay income tax and other taxes. The Government should consider the advisability of exempting those people from taxation. I believe that would tend to increase gold production throughout the State.

I would like to make another suggestion to the Minister, and that is in connection with the directorates of companies. Throughout the far North of Queensland we have the remains of white elephant companies that have operated up there. Two operated in the little centre of Wolfram Camp, where I once lived. One spent something like £200,000, and another spent one-quarter or one-third of that amount. It was known to the people who lived and worked there and had a knowledge of that particular field and the industry that it was impossible for those companies to achieve success. If the Government were to have a representative on each board of directors, it would have the effect of preventing much of the “wild-cat” scheming that is going on at different places in the share markets to-day. Just recently we constituted hospital boards comprising nine representatives, of which three were Government representatives, and undoubtedly it would be a step in the right direction if the Government were to appoint one director on each board of directors of mining companies in Queensland. We have our wardens, mines inspectors, clerks of petty session, justices of the peace, and other men who I am sure would be capable of undertaking these duties, and who, by their local knowledge, would be able to report to the Mines Department on the operations proceeding on the surface and underground in connection with these mines.

Mr. Ryan.

I submit these suggestions to the Mines Department and urge that consideration be given to them. I know that there are difficulties in the way of appointing a Government representative on the directorate of companies, but I do not think those difficulties are insuperable. I know that many of the directors of companies reside in Sydney, but the Government representative would be able to supervise the business workings and operations of the mines.

In conclusion, I compliment the Minister on the success attending his efforts to lift the mining industry out of the slough of despond in which it has been sunk. One of the legacies of the war has been that the cost of living has made it difficult for prospectors and others to go outside and work on their own account. There was a time when a man in these places could live in the bush and eke out an existence for about £1 a week. Perhaps double that amount would not keep a man going now. I do not agree with the hon. member for Oxley that the relief dole has anything to do with the curtailment of prospecting. My knowledge of this State gives me the evidence that prospecting at the present time is going on over a wider field and in a bigger way than it has done since I came to Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: I compliment the Minister on the assistance he has given to prospecting, but I cannot compliment the Cabinet upon cutting down the vote for prospecting by £2,000.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The Secretary for Mines this morning endeavoured to make out a great case for continuing to spend the money of this State in State enterprises carried on by his department. In the course of his statement he said that the State coalmines meant a saving to the Railway Department alone of £44,000 per year. The hon. member for Ipswich afterwards suggested that the saving to the Railway Department by the State coalmines was £95,000 per annum.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: My figures were supplied by the Railway Department.

Mr. MOORE: The figures of the hon. member for Ipswich, then, were imaginary?

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: No, I am inclined to think there was a much greater saving to the Railway Department than the figures which that department supplied.

Mr. MOORE: I have never found the Railway Department to be under the mark in their estimates. I am inclined to think they are perfectly right. We are not getting the value from these State enterprises that we should. Private enterprise has already established mines in the localities where the State coalmines exist, and I am perfectly confident they are in a position to supply the State with coal at a price considerably less than what the Railway Department is at present paying. It is only a waste of effort to use the money of the taxpayers on these less efficient and speculative enterprises.

There is one matter I wish particularly to stress. Something has been said about the finding of oil. There is no question that the discovery of oil would be one of the finest things that could happen to Queensland. That being the case, and the Cabinet recognising that to be the case, one would expect them to give every possible encouragement to

individuals to prospect for oil in those areas where there is the best chance of securing it. Instead of that, we find that they have tied up a huge area 60 miles long by 60 miles wide in one of the districts which has been geologically determined as being one in which oil is most likely to be found, and only allowing one company to sink a bore in that area.

Various excuses have been put forward by the Government on this very point, one excuse being that they did not want to allow people to lose their money in prospecting for oil until the one company had proved the existence or otherwise of oil there. Another reason advanced was that the Government wanted to reserve the whole of this area for their own prospecting operations. It seems a most ridiculous thing that in an area of 60 miles by 60 miles the Government should do nothing themselves and should tie up that large and presumably fertile area for oil operations for no other reason than their dog-in-the-manger policy. We have this very definite statement made on this subject by Dr. Jensen—

“ In October, 1922, I resigned my position in the Mines Department to contest the Federal elections. After my defeat I decided to try for an oil area myself, believing from the Minister's published statement that there was no longer any reservation except that of 25-mile radius from Roma. With four others I applied, between us lodging applications and application fees for five blocks of 2,000 acres each, about twelve months ago. We conformed with the conditions of the Oil Act then in force, but have from that day to this had neither official approval nor rejection of our applications. We have simply been ignored, and the department holds the application fees.

“ Since then applications for prospecting permits under the new Act have been made by six or seven parties, as far as I know all bona fide, and each of the applications was either refused or ignored. These facts do not indicate that everyone has been given a fair and equal chance, as has been stated. In fact, there has been considerable discrimination, and although Acts of Parliament often give wide powers to Ministers, it is very doubtful whether they were ever meant to favour one company and exclude another bona fide syndicate.

“ The Labour policy, as expressed by convention after convention, was to make oil a State monopoly. When oil leases were granted without any hesitation in geologically hopeless country, and to the Lander Company, in the centre of the area reserved for State purposes, geologically favourable country, and the Government drilling operations were stopped, it was only reasonable to think that the Government had decided—as indeed, the Minister stated on Wednesday—that 12½ per cent. royalty was nationalisation enough for it. If the Government really desired the reservation to be thoroughly prospected by private enterprise and yet to hold enough likely oil lands for itself, it could have achieved that purpose by adopting the suggestion that I repeatedly urged between 1920 and 1922—viz., to divide the area into squares of 16, 64, or 100 square miles; each on a chessboard pattern, and reserve alternate squares for

[*Mr. Ryan.*]

the Government, while private companies could take up the intermediate squares, and test them by approved methods.

"It is not too late to do this. Unless the Government decides to adopt an active drilling policy in the area reserved for State purposes, the hanging up of prospecting by companies is only hindering and delaying the development of the State.

"If the Mines Department had adhered to its original decision to reserve 60 miles by 60, and had not misled applicants for areas by accepting applications, and the Minister had not misled the public after granting the Lander areas by his statement about the 25-mile reservation, there would have been little cause for complaint, but people have been misled, and their time and money have been wasted by the ineptitude of the Government in this matter."

Those are fairly strong words to be used by a late official of the department like Dr. Jensen. Apparently he was one who was prepared from his geological knowledge, to sink part of his earnings and the earnings of others in the search for oil. The department should encourage everyone to look for oil and to expend money in prospecting. The Government had an opportunity, and sank £43,000 or £50,000 in an endeavour to discover oil, but they were unsuccessful. Then we find individuals turned down who are prepared to sink a great deal of private capital, on the recommendation of a geologist, and not as an investment, but as a good speculation—people who were prepared to develop the country and to do the very thing Queensland is hungering for, that is, to give oil-prospecting the greatest possible trial. The Government, while doing nothing themselves, are prepared to sit down and tie up a large area of land. They give no valid reason for retarding the development of this particular area and of the State. People adjacent to that area have made representations to the Secretary for Mines through their representative, and have pointed out that the district is being held back by the policy which is being pursued by the Government. We find that the Government absolutely ignore the request of those people, ignore the representations of their member, and, what is worst of all, we find them sitting down and doing nothing at all themselves.

The whole conduct of this oil business at Orallo has a very unpleasant flavour. To my mind the public have not been taken into the confidence of the department as should have been the case. Misleading statements have been made through the Press, and it has been suggested that these statements were made for the particular purpose of allowing the original holders to get rid of their holdings before it was discovered that there were obstacles in the bore. Whether that is the case or not it is not for me to say; but the department is not assisting us to arrive at a definite conclusion. The statements have been very conflicting. The Minister certainly pointed out this morning that the company was spending all Australian money, and that the members were all honourable men; but he stressed this to such an extent that many hon. members began to wonder what the reason was. We found him qualifying the statement by saying he was going to get fortnightly reports in the future, and that the reports are going to

be made alternately by different men. Apparently there is going to be no question of trusting to the honour of any individual in the future. It will be a question of keeping the public informed as to the manner in which this work is being carried out. I most emphatically protest against the system that is being followed of tying up a large area of land when there is an opportunity of securing adequate development—at any rate, of finding out by the expenditure of private capital rather than by the waste of the taxpayers' money, whether there is a good prospect of getting oil in this district or not. The policy of sinking Government money in speculative enterprises at any time is a wrong one; but a policy of holding up a large area of land that offers an opportunity for prospecting for oil and apparently a fairly good opportunity—doing nothing and allowing nobody else to do anything—is something that no Government should permit, and the people of this State should not permit it. We all know what an advantage to Queensland it would be if prospecting for such a valuable commodity as oil were allowed to follow its natural course. The Government have every protection in their oil legislation. They have provided for a very high royalty so that they may have their share out of any oil that is found, yet, notwithstanding that, they are prepared to block development and stand in the way of individuals who are prepared to sink their own capital and in the way of men who have an expert knowledge and who are prepared to use that knowledge both for the benefit of themselves and of the State. The Government evidently have not been prepared to give the public the information they are entitled to in regard to the position of affairs in this oil-bearing district. By the adoption of a "do nothing policy" the State is being held back and stagnation is being continued.

There is one other matter I want to mention. On page 59 of the report of the Department of Mines, this statement, headed "Croydon Gold Field," appears—

"No attempt has been made during the year to find the Iguana Reef on the eastern side of the intrusive bar of granite. The Iguana Consols Ltd., which was formed for that purpose, has now gone into liquidation, greatly to the dismay of this community. So long as this necessary exploratory work is postponed, then for such a period will the future of the field be held in suspense. Operations in Coles's Bore and Bennion's Mine prove conclusively that the reef does exist."

I have had a considerable amount of information handed to me by Mr. Bennion, who was part-owner and shareholder in this Bennion's mine, which it is specifically stated in the Mining Report for this year has conclusively proved that the lost reef does exist. There is no question that this company and Mr. Bennion sank up to £15,000 in endeavouring to locate this reef and successfully work this mine. The Croydon goldfield at one time was a very rich one, and there was a remarkable amount of gold won from it. It seems to me that there is a peculiar formation there. There is an outcrop right through the field by which the line of the reef was interrupted. The late Government Geologist, Mr. Rands, in the course of investigations suggested

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that a shaft should be put down on the other side of this interruption, when the line of reef would again be found. The Government themselves put down a bore hole, but apparently it was not put far enough over, and the results were negligible.

Then this Mr. Bennion—who was a very experienced mining manager and a man who had been connected all his life with mining in North Queensland, and had saved a considerable amount of money—decided to test his experience in the sinking of a shaft to discover this lost line of reef. He went down at considerable expense, because it was very hard ground to sink in, and, as has been pointed out in this year's report, the reef was discovered. Various inspectors were sent out to report. The reports in the various annual mining reports are contradictory, and in many cases appear to be misleading. There was a certain amount of subsidy—up to £2,000 altogether—granted by the Government to assist in the prospecting and developing of this particular area. The shareholders also contributed a considerable amount of money without there being very much to show for it. The extraordinary thing is that the more development there was done the greater prospects of success there appeared to be. The last crushing which was taken out from the mine was by far the best. This crushing was taken out after the report of Geologist Cameron, in which he stated that the reef had fizzled out and there was no use going on with it. The amount of gold taken out in this last crushing was considerable. It was between 2nd May and 19th June, 1911, and the cost of getting the gold out was as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Mine wages	378	10	0
Carting stone	8	8	9
Crushing charges	15	3	9
Watching crushing	4	11	8
Firewood	57	10	0
Charcoal	4	13	10
Secretary's salary	6	0	0
	£474	18	0
Gold returns	£411	3	11

That showed a deficit of £63 14s. 1d. That was the last crushing taken out of the mine, and that crushing was of stone taken out of the mine after the report of Mr. Cameron, who was sent to report on the mine, and reported so unfavourably that it was decided to give no further subsidy towards the prospecting of this mine. After that period the development of the Croydon goldfield was at a standstill until a year or two later, when the Government of the day decided to give £16,000 towards prospecting, not in this mine where the existence of the reef had been proved, but in another situation a little bit further away and to another individual altogether.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That was not this Government.

Mr. MOORE: I said the Government of the day.

Mr. COLLINS: Fred. Cuthbert.

Mr. MOORE: I do not know that it is necessary to mention particular names—there is no secret about it.

Mr. COLLINS: It was he who got the subsidy.

[Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE: He got the subsidy, and there was £10,000 of it spent. It seems rather an extraordinary thing that that amount of money should be given to spend on prospecting in an area in which there was only a supposition that the reef was likely to be found instead of continuing to prospect in an area in which they had already got fairly definite proofs that there was gold, although not at that time in definite payable quantities. This company was reported on by various Government experts, and in one case the report was unfavourable. From what one can judge by reading the correspondence and the different reports at a later period, it was certainly misleading and undoubtedly untrue, and it induced the shareholders in the mine no longer to continue to contribute by way of calls. It also served to prevent the Government at that time from assisting any further in the prospecting of this particular area. It seems a most extraordinary thing that in an area which, according to geological survey, gave every opportunity of securing a success, just at the time when success seemed to be assured, the Government should cut off supplies, and then later on give about ten times more than was asked for in this particular instance to prospect in another area, which proved to be absolutely unfavourable.

The whole point at issue is whether the shareholders were fairly treated in regard to the reports which were sent in about this mine. As to whether they were really

genuine reports made in good faith or whether they were altered to suit an application which was likely to come in in the future or for some other reason I cannot say, but there is certainly a mass of contradiction. The reports have certainly been proved in one or two points to have been untrue, and it is certainly a most extraordinary thing that there should be any parsimony in the matter when it involves a great injustice to the individuals concerned, and may mean that the development of the district has ever since been held back because of it. An inquiry was instituted some considerable time afterwards, but its scope was limited, and the principal person concerned did not have all the information which he has available to-day. In my opinion he certainly deserves a reopening of the inquiry so that he might be able to bring forward the final link in the chain of evidence which he has been able to procure only within the last three or four years. If an injustice has been done—and apparently it has—he should have every opportunity to prove his case and cross-examine individuals about it. Charges were preferred and sent to the Mines Department by certain individuals. They were certainly serious, and it is only fair to give him an opportunity to prove his case, since it involves not only the removal of an injustice to an individual but also—if we are to judge from the various mining reports and a statement in the report of the warden at Croydon—the reopening of a very important and rich mining district, and therefore the successful development of that part of the State. There seems to be a good deal of hesitancy about the spending of a few pounds in an investigation which might lead to a development of immense value to the State. In view of the statement which has been placed before the Minister and the definite assertion as to the final link in the chain of evidence secured by

Mr. Bennion, I certainly think the Mines Department would be well advised to reopen the inquiry and give full opportunity for the removal of what has been a bone of contention for a very long period of years. In this connection, I should like to acknowledge the courtesy and attention of the hon. member for Burke to the individual concerned, and I would not have spoken so much about it had it not been for a statement in the report of the department that the position is still as it was eleven years ago, and that the prosperity of that district practically rests on the question of whether the contention put forward can be proved or not. Even if there is only a possibility of this field being proved to be profitable, it certainly seems advisable to spend money in that direction.

Mr. Bennion only requires an opportunity to be able to clear up the situation once and for all. There is no occasion for me to go into the details, as the Minister knows the whole position and has the whole of the evidence before him on which to judge whether it is or is not advisable to adopt my suggestion. I only wish to stress that an opportunity for justice be given to an individual so that he may secure what has been denied him for a considerable number of years, and I hope that in the clearing up of that position a rich district will be opened up in North Queensland, and Croydon will be given an opportunity of becoming the rich gold producer that it was previously.

Mr. BRUCE (*Kennedy*): The leader of the Opposition did not make a very successful speech, but he made a very soothing one, as three hon. members opposite were asleep before he was half through. The Department of Mines is tremendously handicapped at the present time. Mining is of a speculative nature. At one time it may be extremely prosperous, and at another time it may be at a very low ebb, as it is to-day. It will be remembered that during the war period Queensland was producing quite a lot of metals which were seized by the Commonwealth Government and sold at a fixed price, which was below the world's parity at the time, with the result that capital which should be available for mining at the present time is not available. In addition to that fixed price, there were high charges for the handling and transportation of those metals. At the present time the European production of metals, or the world's production of metals, is coming into competition with the metals of Queensland. We have quite a large amount of iron and steel coming to Australia from European countries through Great Britain, and receiving the benefits of the preference in the Australian tariff, provided it is 25 per cent. British production; and that iron and steel is coming into competition here and preventing us from establishing iron and steel works. America, through the large amount of capital which she secured because of her advantageous position in regard to finance during the war, and because of her up-to-date methods of machinery, is able to work huge lodes of copper of a different nature from what we have in Queensland at a much cheaper rate than we can in Queensland.

As one who understands mining and smelting, I have to congratulate the general manager and the men employed at Chillagoe on the wonderful results they have achieved notwithstanding the handicap under which they have been labouring. This morning

the hon. member for Oxley, while posing as the champion of the prospectors, compared them with a domestic cat. He said that the domestic cat, if fed, would not work, but, if compelled to seek its own living, it would be of some use. If the hon. member for Oxley had made that statement when some of the prospectors were in the vicinity, I feel sure that he would have thought they were wild cats and not domestic cats. He also stressed it as his opinion that the Government should assist the prospector, but that they should have nothing whatever to do with the marketing of the products. He made those remarks more with reference to the production of gems. That is the old, old doctrine! Let the Government assist the prospector or anybody else in a position from which a profit cannot be made; but, when the prospector has been successful in producing something in the shape of gems, then he is to be left to the exploitation of private enterprise and those who want to profit out of his work.

The hon. member for Oxley also stated that he believed there was more mineral wealth in the earth than what has been taken out. Anyone who has any knowledge of mining at all knows that to be a fact. This fact must also be borne in mind—that mineral wealth is not now so easily available. Most of the copper mines in the past have been where the lodes outcropped and were discovered by people going through the bush, but to-day and in the future lodes will have to be discovered that do not outcrop above the level of the ground.

There has been a good deal of talk about coal, but the trouble in Queensland is that this State is so rich in coal that we produce more coal and have more coalmines open than can be utilised by the existing industries and markets.

There is an enormous reserve of iron in Queensland, but it is not profitable for several reasons. The smelting of iron in Queensland is at a disadvantage because of the established smelters in the older countries, and in the Southern States, as at Newcastle. The iron industry is at a disadvantage because of the patented processes used in regard to certain classes of steel. The resources are here, and the deposits of iron fortunately will not rust, and the time will come when the Mines Department of the day will be a prosperous one.

The cost of production in the mines is at present high; nevertheless, although the managers of copper mines and all those interested in the raising of copper continually speak of the increasing costs with a view to lowering the wages of the men employed in the production of copper, the fact is that the price of steel, which was very high in 1918, has considerably decreased and coke can now be made available at a cheaper rate than in 1918, while explosives, building material, etc., have also fallen below their cost in 1918. I am satisfied that by the employment of proper methods copper can be produced at a figure which will permit the product to be sold profitably at the present world's market price. In the Cloncurry district, with which I am well acquainted, there were formerly three different companies operating three different smelters. Any one of those smelters could have smelted the ore from the whole of the mines, but there was competition between the smelters, and we had the ridiculous

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spectacle of trainloads of ore passing one another going to different destinations, and naturally raising the cost per medium of carriage.

As regards our resources, the Cloncurry district to-day is absolutely untouched as a mining proposition; it is not yet scratched. If you compare the amount of mining done in Cloncurry with the minerals known to exist there, you must conclude that the district has not been touched from the mining point of view. Everybody should know that in the Cloncurry district, in addition to copper, we have gold, cobalt, iron, asbestos, mica, silver, lead, and molybdenite. These metals have all been discovered in that district, and there is not the slightest doubt that the time will come when that district will be the greatest mineral field in Australia, if not one of the greatest mineral fields in the world. The extent of the Cloncurry mineral belt is considerable, and a great deal of it shows some of the metals or carries ore-bodies of some of the metals that I have mentioned.

In different districts the miners are very often hampered, owing to the lack of transport. It is a pity that in some respects the Department of Mines has not the control of certain functions at present in the hands of other departments. For instance, the Ewan district is handicapped on account of its roads and tracks. It is a fairly prosperous tin district, but is handicapped through bad transport facilities. That could be remedied were it in the power of the Department of Mines to build roads to that district. The same thing applies to quite a lot of mining areas in the State of Queensland.

Another thing I would like to see incorporated in the activities of the Department of Mines is control of cases of compensation granted to miners suffering from miners' phthisis. Owing to the mines having closed down in the Cloncurry district and to the fact that I was resident there for fourteen or fifteen years in an honorary and an official capacity in the Australian Workers' Union, almost every month I receive applications from all over the State asking me to give evidence and prove the fact that different men worked in that district so that they may secure the allowance under the provision for miners' phthisis. The department which at present controls phthisis pensions was held up quite a considerable time, and a number of men were not getting the compensation they were entitled to because they could not secure this proof. I suggested to the department that they should secure the information from the resident inspector of mines in the district and the check inspector of mines in the district. This they did. Had it not been for my suggestion the department would not have thought of the idea and the delay would have continued. The care and welfare of those suffering through the operations of mining is one of the functions of the Department of Mines, and it should be incorporated in the Department of Mines. We would then have tangible information relating to the history of the men concerned—information which should be secured from the unions, the mine managers, and the inspectors. Those concerned would then have little difficulty in securing their pensions.

Reference has been made to the 10-acre leases at Mount Isa. Personally, I believe in the greatest good for the greater number,

[*Mr. Bruce.*

and I also believe that a miner's right is the greatest right that any man in Australia can hold. We had some reference recently to the Eureka Stockade. The Eureka Stockade business established the power of the miner's right. It is a right that we should never interfere with. A miner's right should enable the prospector or whoever has a miner's right to take up land under that right. I suggested at the time that the Mount Isa field should have been granted to the holders of the miners' rights. In addition to the successful prospectors who happened to discover Mount Isa, there were numbers of other prospectors in the district who had not been successful in discovering anything, and, had the field been granted to the holders of the miners' rights, these men could have come along and pegged out their areas, and would have received some recompense for the work they had done and for which they had received no reward. I do not deny that capital would have to come in later and amalgamate these miners' rights or leases and ultimately work them. I know that base metals such as copper, silver, and lead cannot be worked by individual men. But, when the companies who have the capital came along, they could have amalgamated the miners' rights just as they amalgamated the leases, and a larger number of men would have got a return. I get correspondence from that district, and I know that men pegged out leases in their own names, in their wife's name, their cousin's name, and in the name of every relative as well as every friend they had in the district. If the field had been granted to the holders of miners' rights, the genuine miners could have pegged out their claims and worked them until the man with capital came along, purchased their claims, and amalgamated them. If that system had been followed, just as much development would have taken place at Mount Isa as has taken place under the present system. I know that the genuine prospectors made some money under the present system. Men I have known for years, and who have been in the district working very hard as prospectors, made a few thousand pounds if they got rid of their shares at the right time; but a much larger number of men would have benefited if the country had been held under miners' rights. Nevertheless I want to congratulate the Minister on the fact that he did reduce these leases to 10 acres, thereby enabling the prospectors to get some reward for their labour, instead of allowing the whole country to be taken up in unlimited areas, as I have seen done in other fields throughout Australia.

I want to emphasise that the Department of Mines is a very difficult department to control, owing to the speculative nature of mining. At one period in the history of this State and in the history of other States gold was picked up on the surface. It was lying there for the first man who came along to pick it up, but later, as the fields were exploited and prospectors got farther and farther afield, the winning of the gold became more and more difficult, and consequently the rewards were not so great. Some of our bigger fields have petered out. It is natural for any mine to become depleted after a number of years. Unlike farming, where the land can be worked year in and year out, and where even in time of drought you get some return, the life of a mine is shortened every day the mine is worked. Knowing mining as I do, I sympathise with

the Secretary for Mines. I am pleased to know that he is an optimist, because one has to be an optimist to face the situation in the mining industry. I realise the difficulties which face the hon. gentleman's department at the present time. No one who uses common sense will contend that any Minister in the present state of the mining industry can bring forward a very glowing report in regard to the Mines Department. A Minister must have the material to build on before he can give a good report. I congratulate the Minister on the endeavour which has been made to improve the mining industry, and I hope that on the next occasion the Estimates come before us the mining industry will be in a much more prosperous condition than it is at present.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): Like most other natural resources in Queensland the mining resources of the State are wonderful. Anybody who has travelled over Queensland and has had anything to do at different times with mining in this State must know that practically minerals of all kinds are here in very great abundance. As previous speakers have said, some of the fields have only been scratched. We have indications that that has been the case near Brisbane, where we have had examples of mines being developed. I know of mines about 60 or 70 miles from Brisbane, as the crow flies, which are worth developing, but are now closed down.

We were pleased that the Minister, when introducing the vote, had some remarks to make about the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. I think everybody would feel distressed and it would be disastrous, if Queensland had not made an interesting exhibit at Wembley. It may have not been all that we desire, but it was very interesting as showing the amount of natural wealth which exists throughout Queensland from Cape York to Point Danger. The Minister did not appear altogether to appreciate being called an optimist. While he was speaking it seemed to me that it was not optimism but sophistry that he was showing. It was very interesting to hear of the great advantage that the mining industry in Queensland has received from the reduction in the price of coal which he claims is being brought about by the State coal-mines. There is one phase which is rather striking at the present time. Seeing that coal is being supplied at this reduced price, it seems unfortunate that the Railway Department should from Rockhampton northwards charge a higher rate of freight on material required by the people in the Western parts of the State. If they can get coal at a reasonable price, surely the Railway Department is not justified in charging the extra freight on goods sent there.

One part of his speech in which the Minister was not particularly optimistic was that in which he referred to copper mining. One of the reasons he gave as to why it was not more remunerative was the obsolete or out-of-date condition of the smelters and methods employed. It has been my experience that, if an industry is in a flourishing condition and there is a prospect of that condition continuing, the works are likely to be up-to-date; but, if it is languishing and for some reason or other it is not likely to be prosperous, one cannot blame people who have put money into it for ceasing to invest their money in it, and thereby allowing the works to become somewhat obsolete. A consider-

able reason why many of the works in Queensland are not more prosperous is industrial interference with the management, which creates a sense of insecurity in the investor so that he is afraid to put his money into that particular class of investment. It is no secret that in many cases—we do not need to go further than the State enterprises—the workmen do not give a very great amount of work for the high amount of money they receive, and that is one of the reasons in my opinion why copper mining is in such a bad state.

The hon. member for Quenton remarked that the Government had done their best for gem mining, and in fact for all miners throughout Queensland. I do not deny for one moment that the Government have done their best, I am sure that no member of the Opposition nor any man in Queensland will say that they have not done their best to make the State enterprises pay, but they have failed most lamentably.

Quite a lot has been said about the loss on Chillagoe, and it has been interesting to notice how much sophistry there has been in the speeches of hon. members opposite. They seem to think that one of the ways of preventing the loss is to supply Chillagoe with coal at a cheaper rate—that is, to make a bigger loss on the State coalmines and a smaller loss at Chillagoe. I am quite certain that would not be very great satisfaction to the general taxpayer.

A good deal has been said about the reason for the dearth of prospectors. I have had some experience in prospecting and have known a considerable number of prospectors in my time, and I know that they are particularly keen men. They will put up with almost any hardship, but in years gone by they would put up with even greater hardship than at present. There were also greater numbers of them then. I think the reason is that many years ago some of them were backed by men with capital, whilst the others who went out "off their own bat" knew that, if they struck something good, there would be no doubt about the rush of capital to develop what they discovered. To my mind those were very much greater inducements than those which offer under present-day conditions. That is one reason why we do not see so many prospectors about as we saw in years gone by.

The Minister made some reference to the unsatisfactory conditions existing under the wages system, and indicated that he would be very pleased to see some superior system introduced. If you are going to carry out any work, and you are going to employ men and pay them out of the return from that work, I do not think you will get very many men to take on the job at all. You will be left almost stranded. Let me give an illustration on that point. Many years ago quite a number of young men going through their assaying course had some material submitted for assay. They all agreed that they knew exactly the price that could be got for that metal at Cockle Creek and Aldershot in those days. I think about twelve assayed it, and they all obtained similar results, and from all the information they gathered they were of the opinion that the metal was worth about £120. These men had had some experience and were fairly well educated, but not one of them was prepared, even on his own assay, to give £60 for the metal and take the chance

Mr. Nott.]

of obtaining the other £60 when the metal was sold. If you did away with the wages system, probably the same thing would happen in many cases. Fortunately for Queensland, everyone who is not satisfied with the wages system has the right to strike out for himself. If there are very many men who are not quite in love with the wages system and have not altogether sufficient courage to start out on their own, they could employ an amount of money co-operatively in mining, and, instead of having to put up with a tremendous loss through strikes, they would be able to own sufficient mines to show what they could do on a co-operative basis or by following some other fantastic idea.

Mr. BRAND (*Burrum*): The importance of mining in Queensland certainly does not reflect itself in this vote. The total appropriation from revenue by the Mines Department is £70,000 annually, and, although the mining industry throughout the State has suffered a considerable loss, we should do everything possible to develop the industry.

I was very pleased to note the remark made by the Minister this morning that, with the exception of copper, base metals have made a little progress during the past year, and I sincerely trust that from the developments that are now taking place and from the contemplated developments that may take place in the near future there will be great prosperity in these metals during the coming year. In mining we need most sympathetic administration for its development, and I am pleased to know that the Minister is endeavouring to do something in that direction, more particularly in giving some assistance to the genuine prospector to see if it is not possible to find new mineral fields. From what he is doing there might be a development leading to another Gympie, Mount Morgan, or Charters Towers being established. If we could only find mineral fields—particularly gold fields—that would rise to the importance those fields did in years gone by, it would be a happy event for Queensland and miners generally.

The reports that are contained in the report of the department form interesting reading. I have read some of the reports of the mining inspectors. I would suggest to the Minister, more particularly in relation to coalmining inspectors, that these inspectors make their inspections without the presence of the mine manager. I understand that it is the usual custom for mining inspectors to make their inspections in company with the mine manager. The result is that the men are unable to bring forward any grievance they might have for fear of losing their job or being otherwise victimised.

Mr. GLEDSON: How can an inspector go around without an official of the mine?

Mr. BRAND: He can make an inspection, and, if he sees anything on which it is necessary to report, he can make a report on it. At the present time the men are unable to bring forward grievances for fear of losing their jobs.

Mr. GLEDSON: There is no fear of losing their jobs. We look after them.

Mr. BRAND: I am told by miners in my electorate that they very much prefer the mining inspectors making their inspection without the company of the mine manager.

[Mr. Nott.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They have the protection of their unions.

Mr. BRAND: Yes, but in some cases these men fear that they will lose their jobs by making complaints that are desirous in the interests of the miners.

Mr. GLEDSON: They will not lose their jobs now.

Mr. BRAND: I wish now to refer to the coalmining industry because of the remarks made by the Minister in respect to the State coalmines at Baralaba, Styx River, and Bowen. The hon. gentleman stated that the State had a great asset in those mines, and expressed the hope that some future Government would not dispose of them. I recognise that the State has a great asset in those mines. They are all known to contain large seams of coal.

At 4.11 p.m.,

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

Mr. BRAND: I must congratulate the hon. member for Stanley in taking the chair for the first time. (Hear, hear!) It seems that the State coalmines will prove of great value to Queensland in the future. It is true that some of the seams in those mines, more particularly in regard to Baralaba, do not contain the same good quality coal as those at Bowen and the Styx River.

Mr. FOLEY: The coal has 80 per cent. of fixed carbon.

Mr. BRAND: That might be so, but there are other mines in Queensland which contain much better coal for the use of locomotives than is to be found at Baralaba. As a matter of fact, Baralaba coal is totally unsuitable for use in locomotives. I wish to assure the Minister that the attitude of hon. members on this side of the Chamber towards the State coalmines is to give them a fair trial and put them on a commercial basis. That is a position in which the hon. gentleman has not yet placed them. If they cannot be proved to be a commercial proposition, then they will be of little value for the State to hold. The State coalmines have, up to the present, existed on orders received from the Railway Department. We know that coal has been taken from Baralaba to Bundaberg to compete against coal in the Howard district.

Mr. GLEDSON: Not for a long time now.

Mr. BRAND: But it has been, and from remarks that have fallen from the hon. member, they may revert to the policy of drawing the coal 270 miles when coal can be got about 36 miles away from Howard. There has been a falling off in the coal production in the Howard district during the last year. The production has increased in Queensland as a whole, 1,060,662 tons to the value of £925,227—an average cost of 17s. 5d. per ton—being recovered. In the Howard district we only raised 74,250 tons last year, for a return of £99,949, or a reduction of 5,019 tons. This can be accounted for by the quantity of coal brought from Baralaba to that district.

At present Baralaba coal is not suitable for the use it was put to previously, with the result that it is not now finding a market in our district. The coal in the Burrum district is much sought after by users of coal, particularly the Railway Department, and

I am satisfied that, if it got a fair spin, there would be a greater amount of that coal used by that department. At the present time the Howard coalfield is the nearest coalfield to the Gladstone district, which uses Styx and Baralaba coal mixed. The following figures show the distances of the three coalfields from Gladstone:—

	Miles.
Howard	147
Baralaba	158
Styx	155

If coal for the Gladstone district was drawn from the nearest coalfield, it is safe to assume that the Burrum or Howard coalfield would receive that big order and would be able to market coal there. Unfortunately the Government believe in State enterprises, and that State enterprises should be protected by them to the detriment of other enterprises.

Mr. GLEDSON: Howard coal is 10s. a ton dearer than Baralaba coal.

Mr. BRAND: I am satisfied that, although Howard coal is sold at a higher price than Baralaba coal, when you mix Styx and Baralaba together you will find the cost is nearly as great as Howard. I am satisfied that arrangements could be made whereby Burrum coal could be shipped to Gladstone at a cheaper rate.

We had some interesting figures given us this morning by the Minister with regard to the landed cost of Baralaba coal at Rockhampton. We were told that its landed cost was 18s. 10d. per ton. I do not know how the hon. gentleman arrived at his figures. I understand that the cost of coal at the pithead is 14s. 9d. a ton, and that the ordinary freight on coal from Baralaba to Rockhampton is 10s. 1d. per ton, plus 20 per cent. Therefore the correct landed cost at Rockhampton should be £1 7s. 1d. per ton, allowing for terminal charges.

Mr. FOLEY: You can buy Blair Athol coal for that.

Mr. BRAND: I am giving the ordinary rate on coal from Baralaba to Rockhampton. Evidently the Minister must be getting some special rate for his coal from the Railway Department.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: A halfpenny per ton per mile.

Mr. BRAND: Well, the hon. gentleman is getting a special rate that the Railway Department will not allow to private companies.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Blair Athol is on a similar basis.

Mr. BRAND: Blair Athol is allowed a special rate only under special circumstances. The coal for ordinary use in and around the different districts has to pay the ordinary rate.

Mr. GLEDSON: No—a special rate.

Mr. BRAND: A special rate is charged only in cases where the coal is used for a special purpose. At all events in my district there is only one special rate allowed, and that is from the Burrum field to Rockhampton for coal supplied to the Rockhampton gas works, as in the Rockhampton district there is no coal suitable for gas making. Some few months ago we had inquiries for coal for gas making purposes from as far north as Mackay, but we were unable to get the same concession as was allowed to the

Department for Mines. The result was that our district could not supply the coal, and Newcastle is sending in coal as fast as it possibly can.

There has been more controversy over Baralaba coal than over any other coal in Queensland. It has been foisted on to those who use it, with the result that we have complaints from engine men and firemen not only in Central Queensland but also in Southern Queensland. The use of that coal has seriously interfered with the engines in the Railway Department, and, when the Minister says there has been a saving of £44,260 to the Railway Department, owing to the use of Baralaba coal, he does not allow for the damage caused to the engines and the consequent loss of time and expense on overdue trains. If he were to take that into consideration, in conjunction with the special rates he evidently enjoys for his mine, he would find that the Railway Department has not saved anything as a result of using Baralaba coal. It is surprising to learn from the speech delivered by the Minister this morning that, although the Baralaba State coalmine produced 40,200 tons of coal last year, there was a loss of £4,885 14s. 6d.; that although the Styx mine produced 30,353 tons of coal, there was also a loss in connection with that mine, and, whilst the Bowen coalmine produced 74,665 tons of coal, they made a profit of only £333. Surely there is something wrong when these mines, although producing such a large quantity of coal, are not able to make a profit on the year's working.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Why don't you quote me fully? I said Baralaba recently has shown an improvement.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman made a subsequent statement that Baralaba had been improving of late. We sincerely hope it has, but we shall not know until we get the Auditor-General's report.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I quoted official figures.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman quoted the figures for a few weeks. What are a few weeks in a year's work? If the hon. gentleman can show a profit for the twelve months, then let him show it. Possibly between now and the end of the next financial year this mine may show a large loss. There may be strikes, and the Minister knows perfectly well that there is a crisis pending in the coal-mining industry in Australia, and that the miners are desirous that there should be a working day of seven hours, and that they should get a weekly wage. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman supports the miners in their claim in this respect, but, if he wishes to carry out the Labour policy in this direction, he should first of all give it a trial in the State mines which he is administering. I would not like to see a crisis in the coal-mining industry, because, as the Minister stated this morning, the coal-mining industry is the father of all industries. If there is trouble in the coal industry, it will have an effect on all the other industries in the country. If the miners are going to make these demands, it will certainly mean a crisis; and in an endeavour to avert that crisis I would urge that the Minister give the demands a fair trial in the State mines, where there are large seams of coal and production can be carried out cheaply. If there are any mines to which seven hours a day and a weekly payment should apply it should be the State mines.

Mr. Brand.]

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What is wrong with trying the proposal in Burrum?

Mr. BRAND: I am sorry the hon. gentleman will not support my claim. I thought he would carry out the Labour policy and first give the matter a trial in the State mines.

In connection with metalliferous mining, I trust that the Minister will exhibit greater sympathy in regard to the assistance rendered to those who are endeavouring to find further mining fields.

I also wish, like other hon. members, to pay a tribute to the work of the Under Secretary for Mines and his officers for the courtesy which they always extend to me when I make representation to them. With other hon. members on this side, I believe that we have a very capable set of officers, and I am satisfied that they will endeavour in the coming year to make the greatest possible progress in the mining industry.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I desire to say a word or two on this vote, recognising that the debate has been general, and that probably there is very little further ground to go over.

I want, first of all, to join with the hon. member for Burrum in congratulating you, Mr. Nott, on getting into the chair. I hope you may often be there. (Hear, hear!) I am not going to say that my speech is going to be congratulatory right through, but there are some things which are bigger than politics, and I sincerely congratulate the Minister upon the escape he had when travelling abroad. (Hear, hear!) Although we differ very strongly in politics, no one on either side of the Chamber desires to see any political foe removed from politics through misadventure. (Hear, hear!) We are very glad that the hon. gentleman had the escape he had when travelling.

There are some things which I want to find out from the hon. gentleman. I take it that the whole of the people in Queensland were deeply interested in some of the photographs we saw whilst the Minister was travelling. I do not know whether we all noticed the "bell-topper" hat and spats. I had an idea that "bell-toppers" and spats were opposed to Labour politics. (Laughter.) I am not saying that it applied to members on one side only.

I notice that there is an increase in the item "Postage, Telegrams, Travelling Expenses, and Incidentals" from £6,250 to £8,000, or a difference of £1,750. We want to know how much was spent from that item last year. I take it that we have the right—and I am sure the Minister will recognise it, because the Premier very carefully gave us information about certain expenses in connection with his visit to the old country—to know how much was spent and in what way it was expended. I think we also have a right—without reflecting on the

[4.30 p.m.] Minister in any way—to know what his expenses were on his visit to the old country. I am perfectly sure that it is very much better for us to have that information than that wild ideas should be current about it, however erroneous they may be. I have said before in this Committee—and I repeat it—that when a Minister of the Crown travels he should not travel

[*Mr. Brand.*]

second rate. Representing the State as he does, he ought to travel in a way in keeping with his office.

Mr. GLEDSON: You will get it now.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not know whether the hon. member who has just interjected expects to occupy a position on the front bench very shortly or not. If so, no doubt we shall get all such information at once, if not sooner. (Laughter.)

Mr. GLEDSON: I will give you all that when I get there.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am afraid the hon. member will not get there. I am perfectly certain that every member of the Committee realises the great importance of the mining industry to Queensland. As a public man, I can look back and remember how again and again it has saved Queensland, and I say it is the duty of this Committee to do everything within the bounds of reason and possibility to assist it.

The hon. member for Bowen very properly spoke of the prospector. I agree that the man who has sufficient courage to go out and prospect legitimately is doing good for this State. He is prepared to rough it, he is not taking the easy path, and, if I know anything of mining, it is not along the easy path that you get some return for your enterprise. The man who goes out and sleeps in a tent, or perhaps in the open air without a tent, deserves well of his country and consideration from the department. So in that respect I join with the hon. member for Bowen. Every man on this side of the Chamber is alive to the fact that, if Queensland is going to progress, there must be nothing sectional in the attitude of a member representing any district, and, although I am told that there are certain coal measures in my electorate, apart from that I have no reason for any sectional attitude on this vote.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I wish there was a 12-foot seam there, because we could have a good mine there and put you out.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am sure that the hon. gentleman would find it a very difficult task, because the men who have put me into politics have been the workers of Queensland. If there was a mine there I am afraid that the anticipations of the hon. gentleman would never be realised. Coming back to the bigger question, what can we do to help towards this progress and prosperity that are so desirable in the mining industry? Everything that can be done should be done by the Minister, and from that point of view I should like to know the reasons for the reduction of the votes for prospecting and loans for deep sinking. At any rate, there are votes which indicate that in some directions there has been a cutting down and paring in connection with mining enterprises. The Minister this morning rather reflected on the Administration prior to the Labour Government coming into office, and probably he had in view the gentleman who was at the head of the Mines Department at that particular time. All I have to say to-day is that no more earnest man in conducting a department, and especially the Mines Department, was found than the present hon. member for Albert.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not reflect on the hon. member for Albert at all.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am very glad to hear that. I want to pursue that a little further. The hon. gentleman says that he did not in any way reflect upon the hon. member for Albert, but at any rate the impression left upon my mind was that certain work had been undertaken which should not have been undertaken, and that the present Minister had stopped it. Did I misunderstand the hon. gentleman?

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes. The hon. member for Albert had nothing to do with it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am glad that I misunderstood the hon. gentleman in that regard. I think the Minister did not do justice to the Estimates this morning, but blew hot and cold. I have always thought the present Minister a kind of Micawber, a character whom Dickens so beautifully portrayed—he is always expecting that something is going to turn up. I am not going to suggest that in the direction of promissory notes or anything of that kind. He is one who has an optimistic temperament, just as one who is engaged in mining generally becomes optimistic. The hon. gentleman evidently is very optimistic, and, if there was ever an optimist occupying the position of Secretary for Mines, it is the hon. gentleman. He has told us this morning that the reports circulated in London were not quite accurate.

MR. GLENSON: Do you want him to be a pessimist?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not want him to be a pessimist, but I want him to realise that, generally speaking, we have not realised what he said was going to happen in Queensland. I do say that it is a mistake to advertise unduly if the advertisement is not afterwards realised. That is the position with regard to the hon. gentleman's optimism. I confess that I could not understand him this morning. Although he professed to be optimistic as to this mine, that mine, and the other mine, it seemed to me that somehow or other that he did not seem to be able to put any punch at all into what he had to say. I do not know whether his colleague had been putting a wet blanket over him.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. gentleman can accept my statement that I allow no one to put a wet blanket over me.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am glad to hear that even the hon. member for Ipswich is not allowed to put a wet blanket over the Minister, and I congratulate the hon. gentleman on taking a stand in that direction. The fact remains that somehow or other the hon. gentleman seemed to be depressed as though he had no punch, and somehow or other did not seem to realise the importance of his department. I need not refer just now to some of the industries—more particularly coalmining—to which reference was made this morning. In that connection we have been told that the miners of Blair Athol for some reason or other are getting a mere pittance. That is not told us by men who support the Opposition, but by men who belong to unions. That is the position in face of the fact that railway engine-drivers actually declare that Blair Athol coal is superior to other coal for locomotive purposes. It seems to me that there is something wrong in that direction. The Minister made some reference to cutting down the cost of production in regard to labour. I do not know how he is going to deal with that phase of the matter, because he was not

very explicit, though he was definite in his statement that something was to be substituted for wages. He ought to tell the Committee how he proposes to substitute something else for wages in connection with Government mines. Is it by some co-operative or share system? Is it to be on the same principle as operates in the sugar-mills in the North, where the farmers were allowed to come in and become shareholders in the mill? We have a right to know what is in the mind of the Minister.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: Read some of my speeches in the Legislative Council.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am sure the hon. gentleman does not want me to do that. I was never a member of the Legislative Council. He is the Secretary for Mines, and he should enlighten the Committee with some of those brilliant speeches that he delivered there. I am sure they would do us good.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: You might gain some enlightenment by reading them.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I might not lose anything; I might have my own convictions confirmed; I am perfectly sure that I would. Supposing the earnings of the mines were such that they did not bring the ordinary wage to the worker, how does the hon. gentleman then propose to deal with it? What is the new method? I know where the Government are going. They are going along step by step to extreme socialism; they are proceeding on Bolshevik lines. The Premier said that the Government were going along that road gradually. The hon. member for Bowen would probably like to hurry them along, but he is not allowed by the Premier to go quite as quickly as he would wish. Every step—and no doubt it is insidious—that is being taken is a step going in one direction, and that step seems to bring about what was desired by the party when it last met in conference at Emu Park. The hon. gentleman knows and ought to tell the Committee what is in his mind in that particular regard.

MR. WINSTANLEY: You know, so what is the good of asking?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I want the Minister to confirm my idea.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Ah!

HON. W. H. BARNES: Perhaps the hon. member for Queenton, who is a mining expert, might tell us. As representatives of the people we have a right to know whither we are going. The hon. member for Bowen said that the Government were going along too slowly.

MR. COLLINS: I know where we went when your Government were in power. We went down to 6s. a day.

MR. MAXWELL: You have no money at all for some of the men now.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We were in a very much better position as a Government than the Government are to-day.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would remind the hon. member for Bowen of something that transpired at Bowen. The Premier, when he was there, said that the steelworks were going on. He said, "It is all right, make no doubt about it, money will not affect us so far as getting it outside the State is concerned."

MR. KELSO: Where are the steelworks to-day?

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HON. W. H. BARNES: They are sleeping just now; they are having a rest, and are waiting for the hon. member for Bowen to apply force again and say that they are to be gone on with.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not see why they should not.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not want you to remind me, Mr. Nott, that I am getting off the track, but I will connect the matter with this vote. The steelworks have been jolly slow in coming. So far as the promises made in that connection are concerned, they have absolutely broken down.

Before sitting down I wish for one moment to deal with some of the mining enterprises which the Government have in hand. I am not able to quote the Auditor-General's report for this year, but I shall quote that for last year, and draw attention to some of the things said by the Auditor-General in connection with the State smelters.

Mr. GLEDSON: That is twelve months old. Our Estimates are dealing with this year—not last.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am in your hands, Mr. Nott, not in the hands of the hon. member for Ipswich. This is what the Auditor-General said—

“The profit and loss account discloses a loss on the year's operations of £58,795 15s. 1d., including £32,440 11s. 9d. for Treasury interest. The accumulated loss at 30th June, 1923, was £178,655 14s. 2d.”

I hope the people of Queensland realise the position we are getting into? Nearly every State undertaking we have in hand discloses a loss. Where are we going to end? There must be an end. It is something that cannot last. As a result of the policy of the Government, we are getting into a condition of drift, drift, drift! I am prepared to admit that the Minister stated this morning that there was a slight recovery in some things, but what is that compared with the awful drift that has taken place? I shall quote from page 89 of the Auditor-General's report for 1923—

“The following statement shows the total indebtedness to the Treasury at the 30th June, 1920, 1921, 1922, and 1923, respectively—

1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.
£243,531	£292,213	£525,160	£710,618.”

We cannot continue to go at that pace.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is indebtedness to the Treasury; it is not a loss.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I did not say that it was a loss. Will the hon. gentleman be able to pay his accounts by telling his creditors that he owes someone else £710,030 and that he cannot realise his assets? The point is that the State is absolutely drifting—drifting in everything it touches—and some of these mining enterprises are amongst those things which have caused the drift. The Minister must realise the importance of facing the position.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): In courtesy to the leader of the Opposition, I want to assure the hon. gentleman that the department has in no way treated the gentleman he mentioned, Mr. Bennion, unjustly. Some time ago the hon. member for Burke asked, on

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behalf of Mr. Bennion, for a departmental inquiry into certain allegations. That inquiry was held by Police Magistrate Ferry and Dr. Jensen, then one of the geologists of the department. They went North and took evidence, and the result of the inquiry was not at all unfavourable to the administration of the Department of Mines. I have no intention to abuse the privileges of Parliament by saying one word against Mr. Bennion. I believe he is a gentleman who has spent a good deal of money in Crofton, and deserving more sympathy than blame. His contention was that an officer of the Department of Mines had reported against a mine which, in his opinion, was a good mine, and he thought he should get certain assistance from the Department of Mines. That is very often done. Anyone with mining experience knows that a geologist from the Department of Mines may honestly make a mistake in reporting unfavourably on a mine which does not show value at the particular time of his visit. Mr. Bennion asked that the inquiry be continued in Brisbane, so that he could examine witnesses down here. At the request of Mr. Riordan, the hon. member for Burke, I gave Mr. Bennion an opportunity of again approaching the Commission—Mr. Ferry and Dr. Jensen—and this is their finding—

“The additional papers left by Mr. Bennion do not, in our opinion, help his case. The conclusions drawn from the previously examined documents are not shaken by them.

“On page 1 Mr. Bennion quotes Mr. Kidston as having promised further assistance, if such were warranted. The Premier, by that statement, intimated that he would be guided by his officers. On Mr. Bennion's own request official reports were made. The officers entrusted with these were Messrs. Fletcher, Young, and Cameron. Whether these officers were right or wrong, they did their duty to the best of their ability, but their reports did not suit Mr. Bennion.

“The suggestion on page 2 that the inspector's report did not go through Mr. McDonald's hands is a random guess, for which not one shred of evidence is given. The presumptive evidence is all to the effect that the report went through the proper channels and was not altered by anyone in Brisbane. Mr. Bennion alleges that Cameron ignored Dunstan's report. In the evidence previously examined, Mr. Bennion stated that Mr. Cameron had Mr. Dunstan's report with him, and frequently looked at it. He therefore did not ignore it. He may have differed from it, and may have been perfectly justified, since the mine had been developed considerably in the interval between the two reports.

“That Mr. Bennion has suffered great disappointment and is personally chagrined goes without question, but, unfortunately for his case, the evidence all points to the actions taken by the department in connection with his mine being quite honest and in accordance with established methods.”

Mr. MOORE: He has further evidence in refutation.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think Mr. Bennion has no further evidence to

offer. The department has never said that Mr. Bennion is not a man of good character. We have nothing against him personally. Mr. Bennion has spent a good deal of money in Croydon, and he has suffered the disappointment that many mining men do suffer, and the department in no way endeavoured to injure him either under my administration or under the previous administration. That is the reputation of the Department of Mines.

I was indeed pleased to hear the eulogistic references to the officers of the Department of Mines. Many members on both sides have said that, although they may not get exactly what they want at the department, they certainly get courtesy from the officers. In my somewhat lengthy speech this morning, I did not want to congratulate the officers of the department because it would be like the Minister asking members to throw bouquets. I am very pleased that the bouquets have been thrown at the officers of the department quite voluntarily and without invitation from myself. Queensland is to be congratulated on the high standing of the officers of the Department of Mines. I think that in Mr. Jackson we have one of the most honourable and upright men it is possible to get in a high office which controls the safety of a good many men. (Hear, hear!)

At this stage of the debate I do not propose to deal with all the questions that have been raised by the hon. member for Wynnum. Although I do not agree with the speech of the hon. member, I thank him for his sympathetic congratulations, and I can assure him that I personally reciprocate his good feeling.

Before the hon. member resumed his seat he made some reference to Chillagoe, and not only to this year's loss, but to previous losses. There is a compensating benefit in regard to Chillagoe. Although we have to admit the loss there, hon. members must realise that there is a big compensating benefit for Queensland. The Northern members in the Committee will bear me out. As I previously pointed out, Chillagoe was at one time a place of deserted homes and scrap-iron, but to-day the State is employing directly or indirectly considerably over 1,000 men. Although our production of silver-lead, bullion, and copper shows some loss, we have at least produced a very useful commodity, and the compensating benefits are shown in the employment of a great many men. It is the function of Government to create employment and to look after the people. It is better to create work, even though we may lose on that particular enterprise, than to have a form of relief which humiliates able-bodied men. The other compensating benefit is in the large revenue which the Railway Department derives from Chillagoe. The hon. member for Oxley, during his speech, stated that it seemed to him that the Bowen coalmine was of more benefit to Townsville than to Bowen because the coal was exported from Townsville. I would point out that the Bowen coalmine is a State coalmine established not only for the town of Bowen, but in the interests of the whole of the State. The hon. member for Bowen will agree with me.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: You had better ask the hon. member for Bowen.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think that the hon. member has the foresight not to say that the coal from that mine shall not be used beyond the boundaries of his particular electorate.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Bowen is the natural port for handling the coal.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member for Bowen will join with the hon. member for Oxley on this particular occasion. They are both alarmed that, when we are ready for export abroad, there will be no loading facilities at Bowen. That question is being considered, and the Government, with the Mines Department, are making inquiries regarding the establishment of an export trade in coal. But if we are to get an overseas coal trade, we must be able to compete with other coal-producing countries. It is a matter of transport, and we must bring our cost of production as low as possible, compatibly with giving men engaged in the industry a decent living. That is a large factor. Export trade will, in my opinion, depend upon the cost at which we can place the coal at the port where it is loaded, and I believe we can reduce our cost of production to a considerable extent, even below the cost I quoted this morning.

At 5 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member for Oxley, in dealing with the Bowen State coalmine, said that evidently the private company at Bowen could do better than the State mine. In that connection I want to assure the hon. member that I have in my hand a cost-sheet in respect of the Baralaba coalmine, and in compiling their balance-sheets and cost-sheets the Mines Department take everything into consideration just as a private company does. For instance, a private company has to pay a royalty to the Mines Department. The accountant in the Government service who is charged with this particular work is here and will bear out my statement. I have from him a copy of the balance-sheet which has been quoted, and which shows that we charge wages underground, wages on the surface, salaries and clerical expenses, stores, repairs, and renewals—everything involved in the total general cost of producing the coal, and also insurance, depreciation, interest on the capital expended, fares and travelling expenses, general expenses, and royalty. The interest payable by a private company would, no doubt, be very little, but I can assure hon. members that in compiling our balance-sheets we charge royalty whether there is a profit or a loss.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: What interest did you charge?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not know the exact rate, but the amount is £75 2s. 9d. The point I want to make is that in making out our balance-sheets we charge royalty whether there is a profit or a loss, because private companies have to pay it, and we think it only a fair thing to charge it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think that is all I have to reply to. I thank hon. members for having listened to me.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What about your expenses?

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The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I understand that the Chief Secretary is having a return compiled showing ministerial expenses generally, but that does not include my oversea expenses. I have not got all the items, but they total approximately £2,300.

Mr. MAXWELL: What about the Redcap lease—the machinery used and the names of the shareholders?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I shall have an opportunity of dealing with that matter on another vote.

I dealt this morning pretty fully with the point raised by the leader of the Opposition with reference to the Roma oil bore, although I did not deal with the question of area. The area within which the Lander Oil Company is permitted to prospect is the area of 60 miles by 60 miles, which was reserved, but I can assure the hon. member that the company has not a right to the whole area, but in that area only the one company is allowed to operate.

Mr. MOORE: Why block everybody else?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is a matter of Government policy. At one time the whole of Queensland was reserved for the State in connection with the obtaining of oil. The Government have spent something like £40,000 in the search for oil at Roma, and we have proved that we can obtain petroliferous gas there. The Government have a right to protect their own interests in their own field, and they have the right to reserve that area with a view either to continuing operations for the State, or until such time—

Mr. MOORE: Why reduce the area one day, and extend it two days afterwards?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Has that been done?

Mr. MOORE: Yes. One meeting of the Cabinet decided to reduce it, and an announcement was made two days afterwards that that decision had been reversed.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. gentleman cannot tell me that a proclamation was amended. A proclamation was issued reserving an area of 60 miles by 60 miles, and that proclamation stands to-day. What individual members' opinions may be and what appears in the Press are quite another matter.

Question put and passed.

IN AID OF MINING.

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

“That £13,000 be granted ‘In Aid of Mining.’”

Last year the expenditure on prospecting was £8,941; on roads and bridges £1,296; and in connection with deep sinking £3,300. This year there is an increase in the vote for roads and bridges, and a slight decrease in connection with deep sinking, but the latter item is somewhere about the amount that was expended in that direction last year. There is a decrease on the whole vote of £3,000, because there was a saving in the vote last year of £2,894.

I quite agree with the remarks by the hon. member for Cook regarding prospecting and the wisdom of continuing this vote, and the benefits likely to accrue to the State by a systematic form of prospecting and by proper encouragement to that class of man, who is

very valuable to a State like Queensland where there is so much prospecting to be done. A great deal of the debate on the previous vote centred round this particular vote. I quite agree that the vote is necessary and some good has eventuated through it to the State. I hope that next year's results will be better than the results for last year. It is true that during the year we had two or three important discoveries, particularly the one at Mount Isa and the one in the Chillagoe district. By the pick of the prospector who was courageous enough to go many miles from the railway, we have been able to bring into being the prominent Mount Coolon goldfield. According to the results—not altogether from assays, but according to the results from the crushing—Mount Coolon promises to be our next important goldfield. It is not situated near any railway line, but is situated between Charters Towers and Clermont, with the nearest railway point 90 miles away. That does not matter very much in gold production, because a motor-car could carry the annual production of a gold mine. The fact that the goldfield is situated so far from the railway is not a material handicap. Mount Coolon is the result of a prospector's work. The discoverer is not on this earth now. Every hon. member knows that to be a particularly sad case. It is a fact that this goldfield, which promises to be one of our bright spots in regard to the production of gold in the future, is the result of the work of one man for very many years. He lost his life in his prospecting work.

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): I regret that there has been a slight reduction in the vote for prospecting. I wish to point out the need of giving a greater measure of assistance from this vote to places throughout Queensland similarly situated to Clermont. I pointed out in my remarks on the previous vote that at one time Clermont was noted as a gold-producer, particularly of alluvial gold, and that of late years, owing to water difficulties, the production from that field has fallen off considerably. There is a reference in the annual report of the department to the work done at the Black Ridge mining field by Mr. Giese and party who received assistance from the department. One cannot help but pay a compliment to Mr. Giese for the manner in which he persistently prospected that alluvial deposit. A few years ago he made a rise in one of the mines on the Black Ridge, but since that time he has exhausted the money he raised from the washings in his continual endeavour to locate the gold running in the deeper workings. He has been considerably handicapped by water difficulties. He has not of recent date had a renewal of aid from the prospecting vote because he finds it difficult to get mates to assist him on the small amount that is granted by the Mines Department. I earnestly suggest that in cases of this sort the Minister should give a grant of a little over £2 per week in order to give the miner with a family a better chance of hanging on until some of those shafts are bottomed.

I also wish to refer to another proposition that is well worthy of the consideration of the Minister, who is cognisant of the work that is being done in a certain direction in the Clermont district. I refer to the invention known as the Bligh dredging process. The Minister gave some assistance to Mr. Bligh to assist him in

[*Hon. A. J. Jones.*]

demonstrating the advantages of his process. A proposition was made to the Government for an advance of £11,000 for the Queensland rights of the invention. Since then he has demonstrated in West Australia, but has been unsuccessful in persuading either the Queensland Government or the West Australia Government to buy the sole rights of his process. He has formed a small syndicate which now has its headquarters at Toowoomba, and they are offering to manufacture or arrange to have manufactured these plants for the aid of prospectors and miners as required. I would suggest that the Minister give consideration to the question of entering into some sort of contract with the Bligh Dry Dredging Company with a view to manufacturing dry-dredging outfits costing in the vicinity of £100 and £150. They would necessarily be on a small scale, and would enable parties of three or four miners to work at all the low-grade gold alluvial deposits in the Clermont and other districts in Queensland; for instance, at Ravenswood and Charters Towers. They could also work various ridges containing anything with from 1 foot to 2 feet of wash which contains a fair percentage of gold and is workable provided one uses a process which puts through a fair quantity of dirt a day. This process has proved itself in Australia. The difficulty experienced is the raising of the necessary capital to purchase these plants. If the Mines Department were to go into the question, they would find that parties of miners would take the plants and agree to repay to the department the cost spread over a period. That would do much towards increasing the gold production of the State.

In regard to the Anakie gem field, I thank the Minister for the assistance he has given to the field in the past in the matter of prospecting. I regret that better results have not been obtained for the assistance given. We have this advantage, that where the prospecting parties have carried on their operations on the Anakie gem field other miners know that it is useless to sink in those areas in their endeavour to get sapphire-bearing dirt. Still there is a large district, covering many hundreds of square miles, which, according to Mr. Dunstan in his geological report of 1902, is definitely sapphire-bearing country. About 20 miles away from the Ruby Vale and Sapphire Town there is Tomahawk Creek Camp, and in another direction The Willows field. Those areas have been proved in the past to carry sapphire-bearing dirt, but, unfortunately, owing to the distance and lack of facilities for miners, it has been impossible for miners to stick it out for any length of time in those areas, with the result that they have returned after getting a few ounces of sapphires, just when they were getting signs of locating payable dirt. They have preferred to carry out operations in the worked out portions of the field, where they can get rations and every other facility with greater ease than in the distant localities.

There is an application from a party of miners on the sapphire fields—I do not know whether the Minister has had it placed before him since his return—asking for a grant for a party of four—either a straightout grant or a subsidy on what they expend themselves—towards thoroughly prospecting an area between Sapphire Town and Ruby Vale camp. There is an area there that has not been tried to any extent, and which I under-

stand requires from 60 to 70 feet of sinking. It has also been suggested that if the Minister decides to give the miners the assistance asked for, he should make arrangements to send a boring plant—I think there is one at the Styx River not at present in use—so that two of the miners could operate the boring plant and punch down a hole quickly to find out whether the strata contain wash, thereby saving the party of miners carrying out sinking operations a good deal of unnecessary hard work sinking in places where no washdirt exists. I sincerely ask the Minister to give favourable consideration to the suggestion I have made.

Question put and passed.

MINING FIELDS.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I beg to move—
“That £31,356 be granted for ‘Mining Fields.’”

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): I desire to bring under the notice of the Minister the salaries paid to mining inspectors. The department does not appear to be doing very much in the way of increasing the low salaries paid to these men. I have been informed from a very reliable source that if any men need encouragement, it is the men occupying positions such as this. I bring the matter forward in the hope that the Minister will, at a very early date, take into consideration the nature of the work that these men have to perform, and at the same time give them a remuneration worthy of their occupation.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I would like to ask the Minister if he will go into the question of assisting miners to build homes on mining homestead leases. At the present time they can obtain a mining homestead lease on a mining field, but they cannot obtain any money under the Workers' Dwellings Act or by any other means for the purpose of building homes on these leases. I would like to know if something cannot be done to enable the miners to borrow sufficient money on their mining homestead leases to enable them to build homes for themselves.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): The point raised by the hon. member for Ipswich is an important one, by reason of the fact that we have two forms of tenure under the Mining Act. We grant miners' perpetual homestead leases, and we establish power under that Act—

Mr. MORGAN: You put up the rentals recently in connection with mining homesteads.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. The hon. member will know that at Mount Isa the other day there was a sale of mining allotments, and the 103 allotments sold realised a total of £27,000. One was sold for £3,000. We only take 1½ per cent. on the sale values.

Mr. MORGAN: You recently raised the interest on the sale value.

At 5.25 p.m.,

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

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

The House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

Hon. A. J. Jones.]