

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1924

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WEDNESDAY, 1 OCTOBER, 1924.

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

QUESTIONS.

"GOLDEN CASKET" STAFF—SALARIES AND DISMISSALS.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. How many persons are employed by the Government in the office of the 'Golden Casket'?

"2. What salary does the manager receive?

"3. What is the total amount per annum of wages paid to employees?

"4. Have many changes taken place in the staff since the Government commenced the running of the 'Golden Casket'?

"5. How many of the staff have been dismissed since the commencement of the casket—(a) For incompetency; (b) for carelessness; (c) for known dishonesty?"

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

"1. Ninety-nine.

"2. £12 weekly.

"3. For 1923-24—£19,312 13s. 10d.

"4. Appointments, 142; resignations and dismissals, 58.

"5. (a) 4; (b) nil; (c) 2."

STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT OF QUEENSLAND CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURERS *in re* DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY INDUSTRIES.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*) asked the Premier—

"Seeing that Mr. A. Watson, President, Chamber of Manufacturers, has contradicted the statement made by him in reply to a question by Mr. Clayton with reference to the progress of Queensland in the development of secondary industries, will he explain how he has arrived at his figures?"

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

"The figures furnished by me in reply were taken from the latest issue of the 'Official Year Book,' No. 16, 1923, by the Commonwealth Statistician."

TRAVELLING EXPENSES OF MINISTERS.

RETURN TO ORDER.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) laid on the table Return to Order made by the House on 14th August, 1924, on the motion of Mr. Morgan (*Murilla*) relative to the travelling expenses of Ministers.

TULLY SUGAR WORKS AREA LAND REGULATIONS RATIFICATION BILL.

INITIATION.

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

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to declare the validity of certain regulations dated the 30th day of May, 1924, purporting to have been made under the provisions of the Sugar Works Act of 1922, and for other consequential purposes."

Question put and passed.

ALL SAINTS CHURCH LANDS BILL.

INITIATION.

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

"That leave be given to introduce a Bill to enable the trustees of the land comprised in Certificate of Title No. 138235, being allotment 1 of section 27A, county of Stanley, parish of North Brisbane, in the city of Brisbane, granted upon trust for the appropriation thereof for Church of England purposes, to mortgage the said land or part thereof, and to apply the proceeds to the making of permanent improvements thereon; and for other consequential purposes."

Question put and passed.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*) presented the Bill, and moved—

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

Question put and passed.

The second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PAPER.

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

Report of the Commissioner, together with Statements of Accounts, Balance-sheets, etc., of the Respective State Enterprises for the year ended 30th June, 1924.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—FIFTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

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

Question stated—

"That £31,356 be granted for 'Mining Fields.'"

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): The annual report of the Under Secretary for Mines makes reference to the considerable falling off in the production of sapphires on the Anakie field. I wish to make a few remarks

in reference to that question and point out the main reason why that falling off in production has taken place. The hon. member for Oxley in speaking on a previous vote also referred to this question. Table C in the report shows that the value of gems produced in Queensland was—

	£
1919	42,885
1920	65,831
1921	46,524
1922	35,362
1923	23,309

The main reason for the falling off in production is that of late years the miners have been concentrating on the old alluvial deposits on the fields. The result is that these deposits have been turned over and over and very little maiden ground remains on these old leads at the present time, with the exception of a few very good claims that have been held for a number of years.

The figures in the annual report which point to an enormous production in previous years cannot be relied on to any extent. That is due to the fact that the mining warden, when compiling statistics in the past, had to depend upon the various private agents who purchased gems from the miners for the information he embodied in his report. Consequently, those agents in many cases exaggerated the price they paid and the quantities they purchased. Now that we have a Government gem scheme operating, we have accurate data as to what is being produced by and purchased from the miners. If that scheme continues, our statistics in future years will be more accurate than they have been in the past.

I think I am in order on this vote in making a few remarks in reference to the sapphire marketing scheme, as I had no opportunity on the "Chief Office" vote of dealing with the question. Although I do not think that the Government have realised the true economic value of the sapphires supplied by the miners through their marketing scheme, I claim that at least the miners get much better results through the Government marketing scheme than they did under the old system of buying on the field. Just prior to the Government entering into an arrangement with Rubin Brothers a slump of over six months took place on the field, and miners with large parcels of sapphires could not sell an ounce to the private buyers. When the Government by agreement with Rubin Brothers took over the buying all that stone was purchased from the miners. After the breakdown of the Rubin agreement another slump took place. Certain discussions and votes took place on the field among the miners as to whether they were going to agree to the Rubin scheme continuing or not, and the agents on the field made all sorts of statements as to the amounts they would purchase and the prices they would give. After the Rubin scheme broke down, as I say, a slump occurred, as not one of the agents who made statements as to what they would buy was prepared to come up to the mark when the miners offered their sapphires. The result was a slump for a number of months, and the miners were compelled to sell their sapphires, in many instances, at the ridiculous price of from £1 10s. to £2 an ounce to get a little money to purchase the necessaries of life.

Since the Government took over they have made an honest endeavour to try and secure the best price obtaining for the stones. I think we have the right man in Mr. Knowles, who has been in London endeavouring to organise the industry and to obtain the maximum price for the products of the sapphire field.

On a previous vote the hon. member for Oxley made a statement practically advising the miners that they would do much better to market their own sapphires instead of depending on the Government; but the illustrations I have quoted point conclusively to the fact that in the past the miners have not received a fair deal from the private buyers on the field, and that in every endeavour they have made to market their own gems direct in London and various parts of Europe they have received ridiculously low prices for the parcels of gems forwarded. Although the prices we are receiving at the present time do not compare favourably with the prices that have been paid on the Anakie field on one or two boom occasions for the best quality sapphires, at least they are, on the average, much better than the prices that were received by the miners on the field ten or fifteen years ago. Under the arrangement with Rubin Brothers, the average price paid was £7 10s. per ounce for the larger quality first blue sapphires, and £4 2s. 6d. per ounce for the smaller sapphires of first grade quality. Under the present arrangement the Government pay an average of £9 per ounce, and have received a price more than compensating them for the price they have given to the miners. The Minister should bear in mind that the present arrangement with Trefus Brothers should not be the end of his endeavours to market the sapphires from the Anakie field to advantage. Trefus Brothers are gem merchants, who were dealing in diamonds, and they decided to engage in the sapphire trade and endeavour to create a monopoly in these gems. After obtaining the sapphires from the Government, Trefus Brothers sell them in the rough state to other merchants in London, America, and Europe, who in turn sell to other merchants who have been connected with their firm for a number of years, and they in turn sell to dealers, and so on. The result is that when the sapphires are cut and polished by a lapidary and reach the manufacturing jeweller or retailer, they are retailed at the high price of £5 to £8 per carat for the best Australian sapphires. The price we are receiving from Trefus Brothers for the best grade sapphires works out at about 1s. 9d. per carat. That, multiplied by three, will give the value per carat of the cut and polished stone, which amounts to 5s. 3d. I would point out that Mr. Knowles, who had made a trip to London for his firm prior to his engagement with the Government, informed me personally that he had sold parcels of Australian blue sapphires in London at from £2 to £5 per carat, cut and polished, and he also informed me that in many instances Australian sapphires of the best quality were being sold in the retail jewellers' shops in London at anything between £8 and £10 a carat. These few facts should convey to hon. members that the prices we receive to-day for sapphires in the rough state are not the true economic value of the sapphires, and as soon as a monopoly is established

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in London, if the Minister decides to continue the agreement with Trefus Brothers, he should endeavour to make an arrangement with them to cut and polish the sapphires so that they will get a much higher price than is being received to-day.

To give just a rough idea as to what we should expect for these stones, and what we are getting, the highest price that Trefus Brothers have offered the Minister works out at between £12 and £13 per oz. for absolutely the best quality blue sapphires produced on the Anakie field. When an ounce of our best blue sapphires which are at present purchased by Trefus Brothers from the Government for about £13 are cut and polished, they will represent about 50 carats of cut and polished sapphires. I can make a definite statement on this matter. I have had a conversation on the telephone this morning with one of the leading jewellers in Brisbane, and he told me that I could make the definite statement to the Committee that we should expect not less than £5 a carat for the best quality blue sapphires produced on the field when they are cut and polished. That works out at £250 an ounce, so that hon. members will get a rough idea of the actual economic value of the blue sapphires produced in Queensland. I am not going as far as that, but I would state that the class of stones known as first grade blues graded by Mr. Knowles when handling the total production in London is such that one could safely say that, on the average, if these sapphires were cut and polished, we should realise at a very low estimate no less than £2 per carat. That would give £100 on 50 carats produced from an ounce of rough stones. If we deduct from that amount 2s. per carat for cutting and polishing—which is rather a high estimate considering what we can get these stones cut and polished for in France and Germany—that would represent a deduction of £5, leaving £95 per oz. In some parts of Germany you can get the stones cut for 6d. a carat, but it works out at about 1s. 6d. per carat in France, so I have taken 2s. a carat to be on the safe side. That leaves a realisable price of £95 per oz., basing the estimated price at £2 per carat, which is a very low estimate for the best quality sapphires which we produce in Queensland. Assuming that I am wrong, and that on the average we should only receive £1 per carat—which is a ridiculously low estimate—we then have a realisable value of £45 an ounce. I claim that if we just handled the percentage of first-grade blue sapphires produced on the field, cut and polished them, and then sold them in a finished state, we could purchase all the second-rate stuff from the miners and dump it in the river, and show a much greater profit than we are showing at the present time.

Mr. MORGAN: You are not showing a profit at all, are you? The trade account shows £32,000 to the bad.

Mr. FOLEY: We have shown no loss. The last account shows that we have sold £11,318 worth of stones, and on those sales, after deducting expenses, there is a profit shown which will mean the distribution of a dividend to the miners.

Mr. MORGAN: The trading account is still in debt to the extent of £32,000. How do you account for that?

Mr. FOLEY: We have stock in hand. This is the busiest part of the year for selling sapphires in London, and it is expected that

that stock will be sold before next March. We have £22,608 worth of stock on hand, making a total of stock on hand and sales of £34,000.

I would like to refer now to a statement which has been made out by the accountant of the Mines Department regarding the sales of gems under what is known as the relief scheme—that is, an arrangement which was made by the Government after the breakdown of the Rubín scheme to take from the miner a certain quantity of stones and allow him to draw so much per week until the value of the parcel deposited was exhausted, to enable him to carry on his operations until something better could be arranged. Under that scheme the grading was very slack and the quality of the stone deposited was very poor, an occasional good parcel only being sold under it. The selling price of the 512 oz. 13 dwt. amounted to £3,521 13s. 3d., the expenses of selling amounted to £371 13s. 6d., leaving an approximate profit of £594 upon that quantity of stone. On the 962 oz. of sapphires belonging to that arrangement which are still unsold the accountant estimates that the selling expenses will amount to £350, which he has deducted from the £594, leaving a balance of £244 14s. to be distributed to the miners. That is equal to something over 10½d. in the £1. I might point out that very few miners on the field expected to receive any profit or dividend from that arrangement on account of the poor quality of goods deposited and the loose grading. Under the present arrangement we have sold quite a lot of goods, and we know we have sold them at a profit and that there will be something for distribution to the miners, but unfortunately the accountant cannot finalise the accounts because certain data have not arrived from London. I honestly believe that, if a permanent agreement is entered into with Trefus Brothers, they will be successful in cornering the Australian sapphire market—I might point out they are the only sapphires which come now in the gem world on account of the production from Burmah and other fields being practically negligible—and once they are in a position to corner the market I think they will be able to show much better results for the miners than at present. I would like to emphasise the point I made a few moments ago, that in any agreement with Trefus Brothers provision should be made that they should attempt to cut and polish the Australian blue sapphire and endeavour to market it in a cut and polished state, and thereby obtain the true economic value of the gems for the producers.

Mr. BEDFORD (*Warrego*): The remarks which have been made with regard to the production of lead seem to be based on the idea that the price at the present time is an abnormal price due to the necessity for war replacement, and there seems to be also some suggestion that the continuance of that price is due to more preparation for war. Very probably war preparation has something to do with the price of greasy wool or molybdenite, seeing that the price of molybdenite is at 55s. a unit. To keep this price as a normal price, I do believe that it will become absolutely necessary for the Federal Government to help the miners of the State by imposing a duty on manufactured lead which will increase the use of lead for manufactures in Australia and will also affect the selling price of pig lead abroad.

[*Mr. Foley.*]

There is a matter that I am forced to allude to in connection with the prospecting vote, and that is the statement made yesterday by the hon. member for Oxley.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The vote under discussion is "Mining Fields."

Mr. BEDFORD: Mining fields would not exist except by reason of prospectors, and I submit, Mr. Pollock, that I am in order in mentioning the statements made yesterday as to the reason why new fields are not being discovered, which, according to [10.30 a.m.] the hon. member for Oxley, is because the prospectors have been influenced by doles to abandon their job of prospecting and now loaf around the cities. That may be true of the hon. member's own country—

Mr. MORGAN: Why did the hon. gentleman not reply to the remarks yesterday?

Mr. BEDFORD: I did not know that the hon. member for Oxley had made those remarks until I read them this morning. It is only necessary to remind Australians, who know their own country and have at least qualified for their ability to take part in Australian legislation by a knowledge of the country's conditions that they are going to legislate for, of the great work that has been done by prospectors in this country and the great type of men that they were—a better type of man than the hon. member for Oxley can ever aspire to be—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MORGAN: He said the prospectors were a very fine type of man.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Warrego is not in order.

Mr. BEDFORD: I have only to instance the cases so far as men being independent of doles—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have already told the hon. member that he is not in order in dealing with prospecting on this vote.

Mr. BEDFORD: I want to contradict the statement made by the hon. member for Oxley, which I consider is characteristic of his foolishness and insincerity.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): According to the tables relating to the Treasurer's Financial Statement the "Sapphire Trading Account" for the year 1923-24 shows an expenditure of £17,279, against which are receipts amounting to £6,529, or a debit to the Government to 30th June, 1924, of £32,711.

Mr. FOLEY: We have all those stocks on hand

Mr. MORGAN: That might be so.

Mr. FOLEY: The Minister has stated that all those stocks will be sold by December.

Mr. MORGAN: The "Sapphire Trading Account" definitely shows a debit to the Government of £32,711, but we have not yet been informed as to the value of stones that are held at the present time.

Mr. FOLEY: I mentioned that.

Mr. MORGAN: I would like an explanation from the Minister on the matter. So far as we are able to judge, there is £32,711 owing to the Government, and we are unable

to ascertain what is the value of any offset against that account.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): In reply to the hon. member for Murilla, I would like to point out that the £32,711 is the amount which the Mines Department has received from the Treasury for the purpose of purchasing the gems from the field, and the £6,529 represents the amount received from the sale of gems in London. Since 30th June last other sales have been made which do not appear in the report. The sales since that date amount to £15,048. The amount owing to the Treasury in connection with advances on gems is the difference between the total amount advanced and the amount sold, but against that amount we have gems as yet unsold.

Mr. MORGAN: Gems to the value of the whole £32,000?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes. As I pointed out yesterday, the scheme shows a profit to the miners and not to the department. The point that I desire to make clear is that the Mines Department does not make one penny of profit out of the transaction.

Mr. MORGAN: You do not lose on it?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. The department is out to assist the miners in this direction, provided it does not incur any loss. I have no doubt myself that the scheme will be successful, because of the value of the stones we receive from the field and the price paid for them. As I pointed out yesterday, the average price paid for the stones on the field was £9 10s. per ounce. The net result of the first sale of gems in London was £14 12s. 11½d. per ounce after all expenses had been deducted. The average price advanced against those gems by the Government to the miners was £9 10s. per ounce. The average price advanced by the Government against the second consignment of gems despatched to London was £4 17s. 6d., and a net return of £3 14s. 4d. was received for the parcel. Those figures show that we were able to pay a dividend on the sale of those sapphires, but the initial expenses in organising the scheme were somewhat heavy. The Mines Department have a right to recoup themselves for that expenditure, and so long as we give to the miners the full price of their sapphires, less the actual cost of marketing them, we are doing something that they should applaud us for.

Mr. MORGAN: That is all they can expect.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I can assure the hon. gentleman that there has been no loss to the Government on the dealing in sapphires, and there has been a profit to the miners. With regard to the argument used by the hon. member for Leichhardt, I do not think there is any possibility of getting the price that he or his friend, the jeweller down the street, suggested. The price suggested was £250 an ounce, but we are dealing with a quantity. That price might be obtained if there were no other sapphires in the world. I believe that we could obtain better prices if this scheme was successful, and if the Government undertook to establish a lapidary to cut the stones. They are at present sold in their rough

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state, and not as cut gems. There is probably a greater profit to be made in selling sapphires after they are cut, for the value of a stone is not known until it has been cut. I believe that I have given the hon. gentleman a satisfactory explanation of the matters he inquired about.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): This vote, dealing as it does with mining fields, mining inspectors, geological survey, and other matters, is one of the most important votes of the department, and is of vast importance to the mining community. The geological staff is one which we might well be proud of. (Hear, hear!) I remember saying in this Chamber some years ago when I was sitting in opposition that we did not have sufficient geologists to examine the resources of the State as they should be examined, and I still say so. I have not altered my views in connection with that matter. Years ago it was pointed out that to make a close examination of the Etheridge and Woolgar fields would require a staff of geologists working for a number of years. What is true of the Etheridge and Woolgar fields is also true of a large portion of Queensland. It is quite true that years ago Dr. Jack made a geological examination of a large portion of Queensland, but the world has learnt a great deal even since the time of Dr. Jack. Like all other sciences, geology has made progress, and while we may have men who go out prospecting from time to time, if those men were better posted from a geological point of view they might have greater success. All we have to look at for an example is the Mount Isa field, which is practically unique in the history of geology. I believe there is only one place where a similar deposit occurs, and that is in Austria. That proves that men experienced in prospecting did not anticipate the finding of such silver-lead ores as we know have been found at Mount Isa.

I am one of those who believe that the future, to a large extent, belongs to the scientist, and while men may sneer and jeer at times at geologists—which they do—not understanding the teachings of geology and what it really means, I consider the Mines Department would be well advised in getting more trained geologists to make a close examination of the great Cloncurry mineral belt. That mineral belt is practically a country in itself. Anyone who has been over it—as I have been, thanks to my colleagues putting me on the Public Works Commission, which enabled me to see that and other portions of the State—will realise, as the hon. member for Kennedy mentioned yesterday, that it contains a great many minerals in addition to copper. We know the principal cobalt mine that we have in the Commonwealth of Australia is situated a few miles from Mount Elliott, and by a close investigation we might make other discoveries in regard to other minerals. I hope that the Secretary for Mines will give serious consideration to this proposal.

It is all very well for us to talk about the decline in the mining industry, but if that industry is going to revive we must take the necessary steps to bring about that revival. If our geologists could devote more time to the examination of the rocks of the country, and also to the probability of what minerals might be found in those rocks, we might see the mining industry advanced at a far more rapid rate than is the case at present. I

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know that the Bowen coalfield owes a great deal to the Chief Geologist, Mr. Dunstan. It was practically on his report that the bores were put down. I believe Mr. Dunstan mapped out the place where the shaft should be sunk. If it was not Mr. Dunstan it was Mr. Jackson, the Chief Inspector of Mines. At any rate, Mr. Dunstan proved to be very accurate in his report on the Bowen coalfield. It is necessary, in the interests of the State in general, that the Minister should pay more attention to the geological staff. I do not think any of our geologists are overpaid, when you take into consideration what is paid to the geological staffs in the other States of the Commonwealth, and I think ours will compare more than favourably with any of the other geologists in this great Commonwealth.

I notice at page 37 of the report of the Department of Mines that the warden at Chillagoe, in dealing with the coal mine at Mount Mulligan, has the following to say:—

“Considerable work was involved in improving the ventilation of the mine—”

I want the Minister to listen very carefully to the following—

“and storage bins of 3,000 tons capacity are now being built alongside the line to ensure the regular loading and despatch of coal trains. Hitherto work in the pit was continually being held up waiting for coal trucks, and *vice versa*, but the completion of the storage bins will obviate all trouble of that nature.

“The coke ovens, which were out of commission throughout the year, were found to be in need of extensive repairs. These have now been completed and the ovens are being heated. The manufacture of coke should therefore be resumed at an early date.”

If the Minister will turn to page 102 of the report, he will find this:—

“Having conclusively demonstrated that a suitable coke can be manufactured, the future operation of this department rests with the cost of coal production from the mine, the latter item being accountable to a large extent for the loss on coke manufacturing, which is set out at £4,887 0s. 8d.

“The cost of coke production per ton was £3 18s. 6.98d., but, as the experimental work in the early stages of coke-making yielded only a 50 per cent. return of coke, this accounts for the extremely high cost of production.”

That is a very valuable report, and the point I want to make is that if it was necessary to have these bins of 3,000 tons storage capacity at Mount Mulligan, and if the necessary funds could be raised to build these bins of 3,000 tons capacity, then the necessary funds should be raised to build bins either at Bowen or the coalfield. I want to stress that point.

Now in regard to coke. We are told by the Railway Department that at the end of this year the railway line will be completed through to Cairns, and that means that we shall then have railway communication from the Bowen coalfield right through to Chillagoe, and considering that the cost of coal, as mentioned in the report, seems to

be rather high at Mount Mulligan, I suggest to the Minister that he have inquiries made as to the advisability of opening the Garrick seam at the Bowen coalfield with a view to the manufacture of coke and to see whether coke could not be manufactured there and delivered at Chillagoe cheaper than it is now being manufactured at Mount Mulligan. I understand that the future of Chillagoe depends upon lessening the cost of production. We used to have a saying when I was working at mining that any man could run a rich mine, but that it required a very good man indeed to run a poor mine. In other words, very little brains are required to run a very rich mine, especially in gold mining, but in a low-grade proposition such as is mentioned in many of these reports it requires an up-to-date manager with brains. I would draw the attention of the Secretary for Mines to page 99 of the report, which states—

“NIGHTFLOWER.

Central Lease.—On this lease a shaft was sunk 44 feet. Some very rich seams of ore were followed. A drive was put out 8 feet to the hanging-wall in formation. About 10 tons of ore were raised from this shaft.

South Lease.—Four shafts were sunk along the line of lode, three to a depth of 20 feet each, and one to a depth of 50 feet in gossan. Total sinking 154 feet.”

I worked twenty-five years at mining. I am not a mathematician—I never learned mathematics—but I must admit that I learned a little arithmetic. If a shaft was sunk 44 feet, and some very rich seams of ore were followed, and only 10 tons of ore were raised out of 44 feet, I would like to know the size of those very rich seams of ore, because it does not take many cubic feet of silver-lead ore to make a ton. When I read that, I thought the manager or whoever wrote it must have had a slip of the pen. If I was a mining speculator and read such a report as that, I should sit down at the table and work out exactly the size of the lode for a depth of 44 feet, taking an ordinary shaft, and I should feel satisfied that there was very little lode there at all.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They may not have sunk on the lode.

Mr. COLLINS: The report states that—

“Some very rich seams of ore were followed.”

What does “followed” mean? I am quoting from the report of the Mines Department, and, being a practical miner, I know a little about mining. I know that, if I was a shareholder of the mine and I was to read in the report that a certain number of feet were sunk or driven and rich seams of ore were “followed,” I should want to know the size of the seams of ore. In my day, we used to sit down and calculate the size of the lode, and if it did not come up to expectation, in many cases the manager was overhauled, and he was told to be more careful in his reports. I have no time for exaggeration in any shape or form. We pay the General Manager £1,750 a year for managing the Chillagoe mines and also the Mount Mulligan coal mine. When we pay a man that salary I expect to get good results. It is just about time that the Secretary for Mines got to know whether he is getting the results he ought to get, considering the expenditure which is going on. I am one

of those who believe that we should pay these men well, but when we pay them well I certainly expect results from so doing, because it is a fairly good salary—more than equal to that of three members of Parliament. I question whether any man living is equal to five men—even the brightest genius who lives. I hope the Minister will pay some attention to my remarks and tell us what was the cost of the bins erected at Mount Mulligan. If they are necessary there, then it is just as necessary that they should be erected either at Bowen or the coalfield.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I think that a matter of some consideration under this vote is our iron ore fields. We know that we have secured evidence at great cost through our geologists and others in the various parts of Queensland and Australia with regard to the development of our iron ore deposits, as the Minister a few years ago was particularly energetic in his determination to foster the mining industry.

In 1917 the Minister, after securing the fullest information and prior to the report of the Royal Commission on Public Works on the proposal to establish State iron and steel works in Queensland, expressed some very satisfactory opinions regarding the iron-fields of Queensland, particularly affecting my district. Speaking in the Legislative Council, he said—

“We are more advantageously situated in Queensland for the production of iron and steel than even New South Wales or any of the other States of the Commonwealth. . . . We in Queensland have all the material that we require for the manufacture of steel within a radius of 50 miles, and on the seaboard.”

He was speaking at the time of Urangan—

“Therefore we are better situated than New South Wales for the manufacture of iron and steel. We have in Queensland the best manganese mine in Australia. I have a sample here of iron ore taken from Biggenden. This is a beautiful magnetised iron. At Biggenden we can quarry 72 per cent. ore and lime from the one quarry. They are there together. You can see the lime in the sample I have here. It is pure carbonate of lime and 72 per cent. magnetite iron.”

Showing that the most valuable ironfield in Australia existed in the Biggenden district. The late Hon. Mr. Fahey asked what the size of the lode was, and the hon. gentleman replied—

“A very moderate estimate is 500,000 tons. As a matter of fact, it is not very difficult to calculate. We know the width of the lode, and we know the depth to which it is proved at the present time—we do not know how far it may go down. A cubic yard of ore will weigh 3 tons, and a very simple calculation shows that the ore in sight in the Biggenden mine totals over 500,000 tons.”

Later on he stated—

“The ore they use at Newcastle is a hematite ore of 66 to 68 per cent. The Biggenden ore is from 53 per cent. to 72 per cent. pure. I might explain that 72 per cent. is regarded as pure magnetite iron. It cannot be purer than 72

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per cent. The advantage of the Biggenden ore is that the other 28 per cent. goes to make up the flux for smelting the iron. Had the iron ore been any purer we would have had to get other fluxes with which to smelt it. The Royal Commission is still engaged on this work and they are doing very valuable work."

Then later the hon. gentleman said—

"The official breaking strain for the Government, and as used by the Water and Sewerage Board, is 1,090 lb. on an inch bar. The iron smelted from the Biggenden ore recorded a breaking strain at from 3,000 lb. to 3,500 lb. on an inch bar. The deflexion of the iron from Biggenden before breaking was 5/16ths of an inch in one case and 11/32nds of an inch in three other cases."

Those remarks applied to ore from this field. The unfortunate part of the situation is that, although these fields still lie practically controlled by the State—because the State took control of the whole of the iron ore in Queensland—the Government did not seek to develop them. They went outside our State—which presents superb possibilities in the opinion of the Minister—right to the north-west of Western Australia, where they acquired an option of Cockatoo Island in Yampi Sound at a cost of £3,000 in cash and £30,000 in debentures, or a total of £33,000. They left our wonderful field in the Burnett and other fields in Queensland and gave that the preference. The Government left that

field and secured a field at a cost [11 a.m.] of £33,000 on a far distant part of the coast of Australia, and claimed that they were going to develop the iron resources in the fields of Queensland. The Minister had already mentioned the great possibilities in our own fields adjacent to the coast and pointed out that the necessary flux was close at hand. According to "Hansard" for 1917, at page 2617, he said—

"If we had to depend upon the Mount Biggenden deposit alone, we should not be justified in introducing this Bill or establishing the iron industry. But we have many other deposits. Within a few miles of the railway—a railway station near Maryborough—there is a very large deposit of hematite iron. Samples that we have taken from it and tested were found to contain from 66 per cent. to 69 per cent. of iron."

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is all right.

Mr. CORSER: Then why did the Minister and his Government leave dormant those wonderful fields and the consideration of their development for fields that were outside the State?

Mr. WARREN: The distant fields are always the greenest.

Mr. CORSER: In this case the Government were the "green" ones. Why did the Minister want to boast—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am glad the hon. gentleman has raised the question.

Mr. CORSER: I am particularly glad, because it is a matter of very great concern. We know that it is sometimes stated that certain things are not done because the necessary funds were not available, but that cannot be said in connection with the development of our iron ore deposits. In the "Daily

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Standard" of 4th October, 1920, the Premier is reported to have said—

"There was nothing about which the Government was more in earnest than the establishment of the Bowen iron and steel works. To say that this part of the Government's policy was political window dressing was a falsehood. The Government meant to go straight ahead with the work and the failure of the London loans would not affect the position. They had local financial resources and the work would be carried out without delay."

That was the statement made by the Premier at Bowen at election time. The Secretary for Mines is thus reported in the "Daily Standard" of 10th September, 1920—

"It is an indication that we are going back to power that we will be able to finance and go on with the iron and steel works at Bowen."

The establishment of the Bowen iron and steel works meant the development of certain fields at Cloncurry possessing wonderfully large deposits, but nothing in comparison with the possibilities of the Biggenden field, of which the Minister must have been aware when he made his statement. I do not know what political influence was used to prevent these wonderful possibilities at Biggenden from being accomplished. The Minister claimed that there were wonderful possibilities at hand at Biggenden with its magnetic iron and fluxes that could be worked side by side with every facility, and there was plenty of coal to be obtained from the Burrum district with the possibility of the development of an export trade. The Public Works Commission proceeded to Urangan to make an investigation in connection with the matter, and its report stands to the credit of the whole of the district; but then we find that for some reason or other the Minister goes away with the idea of establishing the iron and steel works at Bowen and developing the coal industry there by securing iron, not from our fields, but from fields on the north-west coast of West Australia, for which the country is indebted for no less than £33,000.

Mr. COLLINS: Don't forget that since then a huge deposit of iron has been discovered at Mount Coolon.

Mr. CORSER: With all the Mount Coolons, the iron industry has not developed, although we had that definite statement from the Minister. In addition to the expenditure which I quoted, we find from the report of the Auditor-General that the Government have also spent to 30th June, 1923, a further sum of no less than £49,042 in connection with the same project. It was proved to the Minister that great possibilities existed at Biggenden with regard to the iron industry. These deposits were taken over by the Government and were controlled by the State, although private enterprise was prepared and promised to work the deposits. The Government promised to erect the steel and iron works at Bowen, yet nothing has been done up to the present time.

Mr. COLLINS: Thanks to your party.

Mr. CORSER: We were not in power.

Mr. COLLINS: Thanks to the delegation which went to London and stopped the Government getting the £9,000,000 loan.

Mr. BRAND: He has no other excuse.

Mr. CORSER: I have read the statement of the Premier, in which he stated that the

Government were never more in earnest about any works than they were in connection with the establishment of the iron and steel works at Bowen. The Premier also said—

“To say that this part of the Government's policy was political window-dressing was a falsehood. The Government meant to go straight ahead with the work and the failure of the London loans would not affect the position. They had local financial resources and the work would be carried out without delay.”

The statement of the hon. member for Bowen is the sort of political jam-case stuff he gives outside. He is contradicted by the statement of his own leader, and he must be subservient to him.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member for Bowen has turned a deaf ear to facts, and to the statement of the Premier, and he now contradicts the statement made at election time by the Premier to the poor unfortunate people of Bowen, who have not heard the other side.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I hope the opportunity will be given at no distant date to those who are prepared to develop the ironfields of this State, and that the Government will cease bothering about developing one section of the industry and securing iron from far distant portions of Australia.

Mr. GLEDSON: You are becoming a proper State socialist now.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What about your statement in connection with the arsenic mine?

Mr. CORSER: My statement was proved to be correct by the Government's own geologist, specialists, and analysts. My statement was that the liquid only contained 17 per cent. of arsenic, whereas the Government's own analyst proved that there was actually only 14 per cent. of arsenic in the first sample. The prickly-pear flourished better than ever on the fertilising effect of some of this stuff sold by the Government. That was not the only case; but I do not want to raise that question now. I only want to point out that my statement was borne out by the Government analyst.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): The hon. member for Burnett can get as much arsenic guaranteed to contain 95 per cent. of arsenic as he likes now at £10 per ton.

The hon. member for Bowen made reference to the ore bins at the Mount Mulligan mines, and wanted to know their cost. I have a statement here showing the assets of the Mount Mulligan mine, according to which the ore bins and accessories are valued at £8,922 17s. 7d. I do not know what their actual cost was. The hon. member for Bowen said that, if the Government could build ore bins at Mount Mulligan, they should also build coal bins at the port of Bowen to assist in developing the overseas coal trade which it was hoped to establish in the near future. I want to point out, however, that the cost of building coal bins on the wharf at Bowen would involve a very large sum. A site has been selected just off the wharf on the Bowen railway and, speak-

ing from memory, the estimated cost would be £58,000. That is quite a different matter to the building of a small coal bin on the Mount Mulligan field.

The question of an overseas coal trade is agitating the minds of the Government at the present time. We realise that to establish an overseas trade we need to be up-to-date and to have up-to-date facilities at ports nearest to the market.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: And to keep your cost of production down.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I said yesterday that the cost of production was fairly low. At the Baralaba mine the selling price of coal is 14s. 9d. per ton. The cost of production at Bowen is certainly a little higher than it should be, but now that we have altered the system there the cost of production will be reduced. It will be further reduced by getting overseas trade and by winning greater quantities of coal. The Government realise we have to get expert opinion as to whether the erection of coal bins at Bowen is the best method of storing and loading coal, as against having sufficient rolling stock and having coal bins at the mine. That question is still under consideration. The facilities for loading—cranes, &c.—will not be completed until the middle of next year.

Mr. COLLINS: I have been told May of next year, but I have been promised so often that I do not take notice of it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am hoping that the Department of Mines will have the necessary facilities for loading ready at the same time. There are three departments involved—the Treasury, which controls the Marine Department, the Railway Department, and the Department of Mines. It was said when we were developing the Bowen coalfields that we would not be ready for the railway, but we had our portion of the work developed earlier than the completion of the railway. I think the hon. member for Bowen is unnecessarily alarmed about the action of the Government in that matter. We shall be ready for the coal trade when we can get it. Every effort is now being made to secure oversea trade. As I pointed out yesterday, we must be prepared to supply the coal—we have the quality—at a price which will enable us to compete with other coal-producing States, particularly New South Wales, where they have very good coal.

I cannot give the hon. member for Bowen the information he requires regarding the Nightflower lease and the small quantity of ore that has been taken out from the shaft sinking and driving. That is a problem that probably only those who work on the field would be able to answer. I believe that the Nightflower field is likely to develop into a very good silver-lead ore-producing field. The difficulty is the transport. It is some distance from the railway and from the Chillagoe smelters. Transport difficulties are the greatest obstacle in connection with many of our outlying mining fields.

When at Wembley I was exceedingly interested in a new method of transport called the “road rail.” I do not know whether the hon. member for Oxley saw that road-rail working, but I suppose he did. It impressed me as being particularly adapted for Queensland, and especially on mining

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fields. The driving wheels work on the road, and the trucks are pulled along a two-foot tramway, obviating the necessity for making tunnels and cuttings. The cost of laying a mile of line is given as under £2,000, and anybody who saw it must have been impressed with the idea that it is a method of transport that is likely to benefit mineral fields, such as Mount Isa and the Nightflower field.

Mr. NOTT: That system has been in use for a good many years. It is not a new system by any means.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There are only 23 miles of road-rail in South Africa.

Mr. NOTT: I tried to get it introduced into the Toogoolawah district years ago.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am glad to know that the hon. member is impressed with the system.

I am also pleased that the hon. member for Burnett made reference to the iron and steel industry. I do not go back on anything I have said regarding the importance of that great parent industry. The hon. member quoted from my speech in the Legislative Council, in which I gave the analysis of the Biggenden ore. Those figures, of course, cannot be controverted. We in Queensland are blessed with having very large iron ore deposits. At Mount Philp, in the Cloncurry district, we have an iron ore deposit estimated at 30,000,000 tons above the level of the surface, and I am told by geologists that you can always estimate that there is two-thirds more underground which can be taken out without difficulty. At Mount Leviathan we have another big ore deposit of 10,000,000 tons above the surface of the ground. These deposits assay 59 per cent. That is the minimum assay we have received. Whether the iron and steel industry is a question for the distant or the near future—whether it has been abandoned for the time being or is merely held in abeyance—I claim that I was the first Minister to have a proper investigation made into the iron and steel industry as a possibility in this State. The hon. member does not understand that in order to have a successful iron and steel works nothing is more essential than to have a mixture of ores of various qualities. One might have a very good ore, such as that at Mount Biggenden—I do not know but that it is possibly one of the best deposits, although not one of the largest deposits in the State.

Mr. NOTT: There is good iron ore within 50 miles of Ipswich.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Quite so. We are particularly blessed in that regard, and we are lacking in our duty—I am speaking broadly—as Australians in neglecting that great industry in this country. We are tinkering about small jobs instead of devoting ourselves to bigger industries such as the iron and steel industry, which we know has made other countries of the world. Australia, in my opinion, will never be worth the proverbial "tinker's dam" until it has established the iron and steel industry.

Mr. MORGAN: I thought Australia was the best country in the world now.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have never said so.

Mr. MORGAN: I thought you did.

[Hon. A. J. Jones.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member is not going to put words into my mouth. I believe every country in the world is a good country.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would ask the hon. gentleman to keep to the question.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I have travelled recently through several countries, and I say that Australia probably is as good as any other country. We certainly have the natural resources so far as the iron and steel industry is concerned.

I am particularly pleased that the hon. member for Burnett raised the question of the purchase of Cockatoo Island, Yampi Sound, because I consider that is a splendid advertisement for the Government. We paid £30,000 in debentures and £3,000 in cash for the option. A proper investigation was made. Mr. Montgomery, a geologist and engineer of high standing in Australia, states that Cockatoo Island, Yampi Sound, contains one of the most important iron deposits in the world. Some day there will be a supply of iron ore from there to Great Britain, and it will be one of the leading iron ore deposits in the world. That is the opinion not only of Mr. Montgomery but of other experts. The ore can be easily loaded into boats. The Government secured those ore deposits remarkably cheap. When my friend, Mr. Fihelly, was Agent-General he cabled out to the Government to know if they would sell, as there were people in England who wanted the Yampi Sound iron ore deposits.

Mr. CORSER: Did he say who they were?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Certainly; I met those gentlemen myself.

Mr. CORSER: You have still got it tied up.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We still own the leases, which are a valuable asset to the Government. Only a few days ago a reputable firm in Melbourne wrote to the Mines Department asking if we would give them an option over the Yampi Sound leases. We paid £33,000, and probably there has been an expenditure of another £1,000 in investigation. They offered to take an option at a price of £40,000.

Mr. MORGAN: That is not much profit when you take the interest on the money into consideration.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No; but it shows that it was a good investment. The Cabinet wisely, in my opinion, turned the offer down.

Mr. CORSER: It is not a bad case, but I would not like to rely too much on the genuineness of the offer.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is a genuine offer, and certainly the offer in Great Britain is genuine. Some day the Yampi Sound iron ore deposits will be available for the supply of iron ore to Great Britain. We know that Great Britain years ago ranked first in iron and steel production, and that now America is leading the way. We know that in America they carry their ore thousands of miles by sea and rail, and handle it two or three times, and the highest percentage ore in America goes 51 per cent. Queensland contains large fields of iron ore deposits containing from 69 per cent. to 72

per cent. We do not realise the great possibilities we have in Australia.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: How are we going to advertise Queensland ore if we get it from Western Australia?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We cannot develop satisfactorily in Australia until we establish big industries for which we need iron, and we cannot bring people here until we establish those big industries. Personally, it may be a debatable point whether this should be a State industry or a private industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman is wandering away from the vote.

Mr. TAYLOR: Did you put an alternative price on those leases at Yampi Sound?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No; we did not put any price on them because we did not want to sell them. They are a valuable asset to our country.

Mr. CLAYTON: An offer of £40,000 would mean a loss on them.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Government have not abandoned the possibility of establishing iron and steel works as a State concern.

Mr. MORGAN: Are you not pleased that you did not go on with them at the time?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Yampi Sound ore is a non-silicious ore of high value. It is almost to be described as third-class pig iron rather than an iron ore, and in order to get a good production of steel we need to have a silicious ore such as is found in the Cloncurry district, and a non-silicious ore such as is found at Yampi Sound. I claim to know something about this industry, and I can assure hon. members that the Government's option at Yampi Sound is a valuable asset to the State, and that, if we wanted to get out of it to-morrow, we could sell our interest in it at a profit; but I hope that the Government will retain this valuable asset of the State, and that, if we do not ourselves establish iron and steel works, we shall some day be a supplier of ore to Great Britain and other markets.

Question put and passed.

STATE MINING OPERATIONS.

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

“That £6,600 be granted for ‘State Mining Operations.’”

This vote includes the State batteries at Bamford, Charters Towers, and Kidston, and the Government drilling operations. The expenditure on the State batteries and drilling operations last year was—

	£	s.	d.
Bamford	349	8	4
Charters Towers	873	0	13
Kidston	1,803	0	0
Government drilling operations	3,900	0	0

The total expenditure therefore was £6,925, and I just quote those figures to explain why we are not asking for so much this year as last year. Moreover, we are not likely to spend as much this year on Government drilling operations as last year, because we have completed the drilling at the Styx River

coalfield and so far we have no intention, with the exception of the work on the Chillagoe field, of operating our plant on any Government fields. The plant, however, will be useful in the future in assisting people who wish to test fields, for which, of course, they will have to pay. I do not think we shall spend very much money this year under this head. The State battery at Bamford is practically under a caretaker. It was established during the war for the production of molybdenite, and its practical closing down is due, of course, to the small production of molybdenite. The Charters Towers battery shows a small profit. It has been of immense value to the field, and, if we had not made that little purchase of the Venus mill for £2,000, many a miner would not have had the opportunity to get his ore treated. The Kidston battery, unfortunately, shows a loss of about £1,000, but it has been of some benefit to the district.

Question put and passed.

“QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT MINING JOURNAL.”

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

“That £1,912 be granted for ‘Queensland Government Mining Journal.’”

The vote last year was £1,843 and we are asking for a slight increase this year. Last year we exceeded the vote by a few pounds. I do not think we are asking for an excessive amount when we only require £1,912 for our “Mining Journal.” It is recognised in other countries as a valuable production, and I think the sum we are asking for does not represent its value to the mining industry. I know of my own personal knowledge that our “Mining Journal” is regarded in other countries as one of the best of its kind, and I must congratulate the editor on the splendid manner in which he conducts it. (Hear, hear!) I make that remark without meaning to convey any reflection on his predecessor, Mr. Morley, under whom the “Mining Journal” had a splendid reputation—(Hear, hear!)—but I think that it has improved and is even brighter and more practical under the present editor, Mr. Chester Reynolds. It has done splendid work, and I am sure that it will maintain its reputation, if not improve it.

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I endorse the remarks of the Minister in reference to the “Mining Journal.” It contains nearly all the State geological reports, and is something upon which investors in mining can rely. I have read the journal ever since its inception, and I consider a good move was made by the Government, of which I think the hon. member for Albert was a member, in establishing it. It is doing good and useful work. It publishes all the wardens' reports, and also tries to keep as up-to-date as possible in connection with what is being carried on in the different countries of the world. With the Minister, I must congratulate the present editor on the “get-up” of the paper. It is an improvement on the old style, and I am satisfied that the appointment of the present editor has been justified.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*). I am very doubtful as to whether the information contained in the “Mining Journal” is reliable, because I have found certain information appearing in it which was supposed to have come from

Mr. Morgan.]

the Minister, and which was repudiated by the hon. gentleman at a later date. This paragraph appeared in the "Mining Journal" recently—

"The Government have taken active steps to obtain all the information available, and a Public Works Commission was appointed to report to the Cabinet with regard to railway construction. The Commission has since recommended that in view of the general belief in the permanency of the deposits a railway should be built forthwith to the new field, as the Commissioners are of the opinion that there will be sufficient ore available for transit to warrant construction. To this proposal Mr. Jones has given his cordial approval, and in this course he was no doubt influenced by personal conversations he had with Mr. Saint Smith."

The Minister has already stated that that information is absolutely unreliable, and that he did not make any statement to that effect. When any information appears in the "Mining Journal" naturally one thinks that the information is reliable, or should be reliable, as the journal is the official organ of the Mines Department. The "Mining Journal" has no right whatever to publish a statement like the one I have quoted unless it emanates from the Minister, and the Minister has stated that the information is absolutely unreliable.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not say that. It was based on something I said in London.

Mr. MORGAN: The information appearing in the "Mining Journal" should be authentic when coming from a man occupying the important position of Secretary for Mines, and it should not be of such a nature as to boom a field in an unwarranted way, or be in the nature of a sensational report. All the information contained in the journal should be authentic, and nothing should be said by the Minister that would be likely to cause a boom and allow the speculator to make money as a result. Unfortunately the Minister does not realise what effect his remarks have when they appear in the "Mining Journal" or any other paper. His remarks in the "Mining Journal" may cause, and have already caused—this cannot be denied—a rise in the price of shares, because people in other parts of Australia naturally assume that any information coming from the Minister is reliable. As a result of certain remarks by the Minister contained in the "Mining Journal," it is possible to create an active interest in mining shares, and people are sometimes let down very badly. The speculator and the man who wants to boom things have fortunately been able to use the Minister in some way. I do not wish to infer that the Minister has in any way made money out of it, or that he was in any way out to boom something which was not worthy of being boomed; but it is unfortunate that the hon. gentleman is so optimistic in connection with everything he touches.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! The hon. member must confine himself to the vote under discussion.

Mr. MORGAN: I was dealing, Mr. Pollock, with reports said to emanate from the Minister that have appeared in "The Mining Journal." Some of the representa-

tions of the Minister that have been published in "The Mining Journal" are very optimistic, but unfortunately they have been proved in time to be wrong. People have been misled by those statements. Once the people are bitten they are twice shy. That is probably one of the reasons why people are not investing money in Queensland enterprises. They have found that the information is not reliable. The information might have been published for a good purpose at the time, but the Minister cannot be too careful in regard to remarks alleged to have been made by him that are published in the "Mining Journal," or any other official organ of the Government, because the people look upon what a Minister says as being absolutely reliable and correct. I have known the Minister for many years. I know that, when a report reaches his office, he believes on reading it over that everyone is as honest as himself. He takes that report to be correct, has it published, and it probably has the effect of doing Queensland a lot of harm. I hope that the hon. gentleman will take my remarks in the spirit in which they are made, as I do not wish to see such information as I have read out again published in the future, as it was incorrect. The Minister said he was not responsible for the paragraph, yet it is published in the official organ of the department. In regard to mining, I believe in being a little bit pessimistic rather than optimistic. I hope that those responsible for the information that goes into the "Mining Journal" will for the future see that any comment by the Minister that is published is authentic, so that it cannot be denied by the Minister when it is proved to be incorrect.

Mr. FERRICKS (*South Brisbane*): There is one suggestion I would like to advance in regard to the "Mining Journal." Like my friend the hon. member for Bowen, for a number of years I was a close student of mining matters, though perhaps not so keenly interested in recent years. I suggest that the department should find out whether the "Mining Journal" is accessible in the mining departments of other States. The charge was made in past years that it was not accessible. I read an article in the "Mining Journal" some years ago, and I subsequently was very keen to get hold of it. It was at the time that the Federal Government proposed exercising a control over metals. Some very valuable information from my point of view was contained in that article. I went to the Mines Office in Melbourne, where I expected to find the "Mining Journal," and I was then directed to two or three subdepartments, and I spent two or three hours getting round to the place where the files of the publication were kept. I then discovered that the file consisted of a few intermittent numbers thrown together anyhow. I suggest that next time a responsible officer of the department is in the Southern States he should ask to see the file of the "Mining Journal" to see if the publication is not only being filed but kept in order in those States. That is of great importance to people who desire access to it for various reasons. I am not saying that is the case to-day. The occurrence to which I refer took place four or five years ago, and the position may be changed to-day. I am merely making this reference so that, if the difficulty should exist, a change may be effected.

[Mr. Morgan.]

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): So far as I can see, the editor of the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" is making an honest attempt to supply authentic information with regard to mining throughout the State. I find that the journal is greatly appreciated, and quite an amount of investigation and investments in the industry of the State is based on the reports found in the pages of the "Mining Journal." With regard to the erroneous statement referred to by the hon. member for Murilla, no doubt it was cabled to the Press from London and was copied by the editor of the journal. It is very difficult to know what was said by the Minister when he had his spats and top hat on—(Laughter)—and no doubt it would be difficult for the hon. member to explain which of the things he is reported to have said are true. We have to differentiate between the things which the hon. gentleman said when wearing spats and those which he says after coming back to Queensland and returning to the fold as a Labour member. The editor of the "Queensland Mining Journal" cannot be held responsible for the truth of news that is cabled out to us.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*): I am sorry to hear members of the Opposition practically condemning the "Queensland Government Mining Journal."

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Who condemned the "Mining Journal" on this side?

Mr. GLEDSON: Hon. members opposite. The hon. member for Murilla produced a report to which he referred during his speech. The "Queensland Government Mining Journal" is looked up to in mining countries throughout the world, and it is sent to quite a number of places. However, I am not going to deal with that phase of the question. As a means of disseminating information in connection with mining matters throughout the world, the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" cannot be beaten. I have to commend the editor and those responsible for the information that is given. Those people take an interest in and make a study of mining. Especially do I commend their work dealing with the safety of mines, gas explosions, and various other matters. The editor goes to no end of trouble to get the latest information from all over the world, and it is placed in the journal and is of great advantage to those studying these matters. In addition, we have our own mining reports, and the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" is looked upon as being authentic. It gives reports from our geologists and those making reports on our mining fields. Those engaged in the work of mining are saved hundreds of thousands of pounds in connection with the prospecting and developing work by having reliable reports from geologists and those who report on fields placed in the journal where they are at their disposal.

For a number of years—long before I got into this Chamber—I have been interested in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal," and I read it continually. I particularly appreciate the articles in connection with dust in mines, gas, safety appliances for cages, ideas for the saving of life, and appliances for the protection of life, underground timber, timbering of shafts, and pit-head safety appliances. These matters are collected by the Department of Mines and by the editor of the journal and

are placed in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" for the information of the people of Queensland. The journal is a great boon to the people. Notwithstanding anything derogatory that may be said by hon. members opposite, I hope that the editor and those associated with him will continue along the lines they have followed and disseminate this valuable information throughout the world for the information of people interested in mining.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): No doubt I in some way caused this short discussion on this vote by the statement I made some days ago when dealing with another subject. At that time I took exception to certain statements made by the Secretary for Mines in Queensland, and I gave as an instance the report that appeared in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" of a statement the hon. gentleman made in the old country. It appears to me that members of the Committee have the privilege of criticising the "Mining Journal" if we so desire. I do not know the editor of the "Mining Journal," but I understand that earlier in this debate the Minister denied making the statement which appeared in the "Mining Journal." At any rate, the hon. member for Warrego got up and said he had seen the remarks which had been handed to the Press. What I said in reference to the "Mining Journal," and also in reference to the Premier and the Secretary for Mines, was that it was someone's duty to contradict the statement, and I say quite definitely that that statement should not have appeared in the "Mining Journal" without some comment from the editor. It is the duty of the editor of any periodical to see that the information published is authentic, and notwithstanding that it was an extract from a paper published overseas, the editor, in fairness to the Government, should have stated that it was not correct. He must have known that it was not correct. He must have known that the Public Works Committee has not reported in favour of a railway to Mount Isa. That was my contention—that Government periodicals were containing statements which in many instances were not true, and which were helping to bolster up the Government, and that that statement was one of them. I say again this morning that I do not know whether the Minister made this statement, or whether the "Mining World and Engineering Record" assumed that he made it, but what I do know is that in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" this appears—

"The Hon. A. J. Jones, M.L.A., Minister for Mines, who is now on his way back from England, has rendered the State of Queensland sterling service by keeping its name prominently before the British people, particularly that influential section with money to invest."

That is rather interesting. Evidently the "Mining Journal" realises that to develop this country we must have money. This article goes on to say—

"Mr. Jones's name appeared prominently in all the leading technical journals, and in every instance it was associated with level-headed publicity that commanded valuable space in the columns of responsible scientific publications."

I have only seen this one extract, but if all the Minister's statements when he was

Mr. Roberts.]

in England were as wide of the truth as that is, then I do not think the hon. gentleman did much service to Queensland from the point of view of honour.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*): I cannot allow that statement to go unchallenged. It is true that I was questioned by the Press in London regarding Mount Isa, and that I made certain statements which were founded on facts and based on the geological reports of the trusted officers of the Department of Mines. I am sorry that I did not bring along a copy of the original statement that I gave to the "Mining World and Engineering Record" and other mining journals in London.

Mr. ROBERTS: The hon. member for Warrego says he saw it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: In referring to Mount Isa I distinctly stated that I had never been on the field. I have never been to Mount Isa, and, as Secretary for Mines, I can only base my opinion on the reports of the experts of the department. I certainly said that Mount Isa, in my opinion, was a promising field, and that it would warrant the construction of a railway.

Mr. ROBERTS: We do not find fault with that.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: In the article the hon. member quotes from the press made a mistake. They gave a list of the enterprises which I was controlling, and they mentioned the State zinc mine. We do not control a State zinc mine, but a State arsenic mine.

Mr. CORSER: Did you say that the Public Works Commission recommended a railway?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not. How could I know? I stated that the Commission were reporting on the railway. I knew that the Government had asked them to report on that particular proposition. I qualified my statement with regard to Mount Isa by saying that I had never been on the field. My opinion was based on the opinion of Mr. Saint Smith, who reported on the field, and his report has been verified by the Chief Government Geologist, Mr. Dunstan. That is all the Government can do. I must contradict the hon. member for Murilla, who said that I had made statements which boomed the mines and encouraged people to put their money in them. I was asked by a gentleman, who at one time represented this State in England, whether he should buy shares at £55 each, and I have a letter to prove it. I reminded him that I was the Secretary for Mines and could not advise him on that particular matter. All I could do was to refer to the favourable report of Mr. Saint Smith. Can anything be fairer than that? I cannot run down Mount Isa. I could not cry "stinking fish," neither was I going to boom the field. If I am to be classed either as a knave or a fool, I would rather not be called a fool. I did not know the field, and therefore I could not encourage in London any unnecessary boom. The article which is published in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" is substantially correct.

Mr. CORSER: Which part is wrong?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The part in which it is stated that I said the Public Works Commission had reported favourably on the line. That is probably a mistake of the press. I have a faint idea

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of reading somewhere that the Public Works Commission had reported in favour of the line, but that may be wrong. I have not said that, but I did say that the proposition at Mount Isa warranted a railway. That is my own personal opinion, based on the report of Mr. Saint Smith. However, I am pleased that the hon. member recognises that the editor of the "Queensland Government Mining Journal" has done splendid work, and that there is no attempt at misrepresentation on the part of that journal.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): I am quite prepared to accept the Minister's statement in connection with the reports which have appeared. We have heard hon. members opposite during the debate pointing out that Chillagoe has been a loss to the State, and whilst a glowing tribute is paid to the report, nothing is said about the financial position. This is another of those extracts which appear in the "Queensland Government Mining Journal," and certainly Queensland knows something about it. It is stated—

"Some time ago the Government purchased the leases of the mines at Chillagoe, the railway and works, from a company well known to English shareholders. Since they were under English control, with its insufficient capital, a complete change has taken place, and Chillagoe is now a hive of industry giving employment to 1,500 men. To-day the township has a housing scheme, the works are in continuous operation, and there is ore in sight for three years. This compares with rusty rails, abandoned houses, and a few care-worn looking women, whose husbands were away looking for work. There is now a State store in connection with the State iron works, all provided with electricity."

That is another instance of clever journalism and writing up in the interests of mining, but it gives quite a wrong impression, because we know that venture has cost a terrific sum of money, and from what I have heard in this Chamber during the last few days hon. members opposite are not standing to that position.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAYS.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*): I beg to move—
"That £96,309 be granted for 'Railways—General Establishment.'"

The expenditure last year was £105,550, so that the vote shows a decrease of £9,241 as compared with the expenditure for last year. The chief reason for the decrease is that workers' compensation payments are now provided in the branch votes instead of in a lump sum for the vote for the "General Establishment." The total appropriation required for the department for this year is £5,160,385, as compared with an expenditure last year of £4,938,849, or an increase upon the expenditure of last year of £171,537. The reasons for this increase may be summarised as follows—automatic increases, extra staff and assistance to meet increasing traffic on new railways, and also extra train mileage, additional ballasting, extra bridge and fencing gangs, extra stores, fuel and electric power, painting bridges and station buildings, relaying and replacements. The

estimated revenue this year is £6,434,000, or an increase, when compared with the revenue last year, of approximately £750,000. The estimated increase may be accounted for as follows—increase of traffic, £250,000; allowance for expiration of concessions, £150,000; increase in rates and fares, £350,000.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): The remarks of the hon. gentleman and the information which he has given in introducing his Estimates are certainly disappointing. I remember that on a previous occasion he gave the Committee a very great amount of information when introducing them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In my reply.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Certainly, on this occasion he cannot be accused of giving the Committee any information whatsoever, and I think it is due to the Committee, considering the high importance of this department to the State, that we should have more information than he has given us so far. When you consider, as the Minister has already stated, that this department had a revenue of over £5,000,000 of money last year, and that he expects an increase of £750,000 this year, it is obvious that practically two-fifths of the revenue of the State is produced by the department concerned in this vote. I think about five-ninths of the loan indebtedness of the State has to do with this department, and therefore the Minister, in moving the vote, should have gone very much more fully into some of the circumstances which surround and govern the administration of his department, not only during the last year, but during the whole time they have been administered by the present Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In fairness to the hon. gentleman, I want to point out that I am allowing a discussion on the whole of the Railway Department on this vote.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I thought the Minister had indicated as much when he mentioned the total vote concerned. I do not say that the failure in connection with this department is due solely to the Railway Department itself, but a department which reflects the wellbeing and the development of the country as the Railway Department does should be dealt with in the fullest possible way. It is unfortunate that we have not received the report of the Commissioner for Railways, because now we shall have to fall back upon last year's report for our facts and figures, although there was never a time when it was more essential to look into the workings of the Railway Department than now.

At 12 noon,

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

Mr. G. P. BARNES: If as a result of one year's bad business we found ourselves in the position that we are in, that would be one thing; but when a loss is practically chronic in the department, it becomes more than ever essential to look into the various factors responsible for that loss.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There have been losses on the railways for forty years, with one or two exceptions.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: In the past they were infinitesimal as compared with the losses to-day. The accumulated loss to-day is an appalling one.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows that it is the result of subsidising industry.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That the Minister should calmly come into the Chamber and offer no excuse or explanation with regard to this accumulation year after year is a thing that this Committee should not put up with. I do not state that the Railway Department itself is entirely responsible for the loss that has been sustained, but when you put your finger upon the traffic of the country, you put your finger upon the development of the country. The Minister is quite right in his interjection in saying that other services are responsible to some extent for the loss on the railways. I take it that the indiscretions of other departments are partly responsible, especially in connection with the Department of Public Lands, the Department of Agriculture, and I might also add, the indiscretions on the part of the Treasury.

I have made up my mind that I will say nothing in regard to this great department which cannot be proved right up to the hilt by results and by the department's own figures. Again, I say it is the policy of the Government which has acted detrimentally on the Railway Department, and he who runs may read in that direction. The Government were no sooner in power than they commenced their acquisition of commodities in addition to imposing a land tax and other endless small taxes. All these things discouraged the producer. The land tax has brought down the value of freehold, and the farmer's equity in land became reduced. On top of that followed the various financial institutions who realised that their securities were becoming less. They in turn put their hand on the borrower; consequently men were glad to dissociate themselves from the land, and have done so. In many instances securities were realised.

I maintain that in these ways as well as in others the Government have brought about the conditions that obtain to-day in the Railway Department. Later on I shall show that the position of the railways is also due to the shortsighted policy of the Administration. Things are coming home to roost. The policy of the Government has been wrong, and it has reacted in a serious way on our railways. Notwithstanding higher freights and that sort of thing, the accumulated loss on the railways during the last eight years amounts to £11,504,933. I do hope, and I want to emphasise it, that the Minister will not think for a moment that the position of the railways to-day is due to his administration or to the management by the Commissioner for Railways. It is due to the general policy of the Government. The marvel is that a Government with such a policy could survive or retain the confidence of their followers and the country. I am sure that, if this party had been in power and had come down to this Chamber with even such a deficiency on the railways as has been shown by this Government for one year, they would not have continued to hold office. A servile following, though, is ready to concur in any loss or expenditure.

Let me state a few broad truths and facts before entering more fully on what I have already alluded to. The interest charge on the railways has grown to £2,183,330. The capital employed on our railways amounts to £50,728,600, as compared with £37,322,930

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in the year 1914-15. The ten years' increase in earnings is 63.18 per cent. That increase represents to a very large extent an increase in taxation. In the ten years expenditure has increased by 119.17 per cent. The return on capital has gone down almost to nothing, as will be seen by the following figures:—

" PERCENTAGE RETURN ON CAPITAL.		£	s.	d.
1918-19	...	0	13	9
1919-20	...	1	7	11
1920-21	...	0	9	9
1921-22	...	0	14	2½
1922-23	...	1	7	10"

It will be seen that facts like that disclose how serious and unsatisfactory is the position of our railways. If hon. members will study Table 5, page 40, of the last report of the Commissioner for Railways, they will be very much illuminated. The facts there are most startling, and give evidences of mismanagement greater than one could imagine. I shall deal with the years 1906-07, 1914-15, and 1922-23. These figures will reveal the true position of our railways, and hon. members will be able to realise just what has brought about the present condition. These are the facts—

	1906-7.	1914-15.	1922-23.
Length of line	3,137.44 miles	4,838.45 miles	5,905.41 miles
Passengers carried (exclusive of season ticket holders)	5,269,144	13,131,512	15,184,846
Tonnage of live stock	122,748 tons	570,222 tons	396,670 tons
Earnings—			
Coaching traffic	£648,811	£1,315,623	£2,129,929
Goods traffic	£1,180,862	£2,516,380	£3,290,471
Total	£1,829,673	£3,832,003	£5,420,400
Working expenses	£912,638	£2,401,679	£4,714,262
Net earnings	£917,035	£1,430,324	£706,138
Capital expended, open lines	£21,839,081	£35,464,770	£47,158,611
Percentage of net earnings to capital expended on open lines	4.199	4.033	1.498
Gross earnings per train mile	5s. 11½d.	6s. 4½d.	9s. 11½d.
Cost per train mile	2s. 11½d.	4s. 0d.	8s. 7½d.
Percentage of working expenses to gross earnings	49.88	62.67	86.97

There is an extraordinary state of things. Whilst in the first eight years there was a gradual and solid increase there was a decrease during the latter period.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You had no world war during the earlier period.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The hon. gentleman is bound to try to find an excuse.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a solid fact.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is not reflected in every direction. It did not cause a decrease in passenger traffic. I want to dwell upon the significance of the facts which have been presented. When this Government took office, the tonnage of goods and minerals carried was 4,400,651 tons, and last year the total traffic was 3,812,310 tons, and that on top of an increase in the length of lines opened from 4,838 miles to 5,905 miles and an increase in capital expended of over £12,000,000. Then you have to remember that the net earnings, which were £1,430,324 in 1914-15, shrank down to £706,138 in 1922-23. In other words, while the capital expended in connection with the railways advanced in round figures by 33 per cent., the net earnings of the railways were reduced by 50 per cent. Surely there is room, under such circumstances, for a Minister to give an explanation when introducing Estimates covering such an enormous amount of money. This has not been forthcoming. The significant thing again is that during the period of eight years preceding the advent of this Administration, there was a gradually upward movement in all things; but the moment the hands of this Government are felt on the affairs of this State results commence to topple. This Committee should demand a very great deal more information than has been given so far. How the Minister is going to explain away

the conditions that have ruled during the last eight years is more than I can tell. The country has not developed under the management of the present Government, and, while the population has increased very considerably, and the passenger traffic on the railways has increased, we know that production has been at a standstill. We have been practically stagnant. I am referring to this now because I wish to emphasise very earnestly that there is need for a very big change in the policy of the Government. In other States they are succeeding by different methods to us to a very large extent. In New South Wales the net revenue last year was 5.21 per cent., in Victoria 4.40 per cent., in South Australia 4.59 per cent., and in West Australia 3.80 per cent., and in Queensland 1.5 per cent. The time has arrived when different conditions should obtain in the management of our railways. It is quite evident that the system of political management of railways is altogether at fault, and must be altered. We are shown by the evidence I have quoted that the railways can be capably managed when removed from the political sphere.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Take the position in connection with the tramways. The Tramway Trust are to be congratulated, after one year's operations, on the wonderful success which has attended their efforts. I find from the report of the Trust that, after paying interest on £1,400,000, and providing upwards of £40,000 in other directions, they come out with a credit balance of £97,000. That is a wonderful result for a year. In New South Wales a move is being made in connection with placing the railways under non-political control. It is not half as essential for that move to be made there as it is for us to alter the system here. The move being made in New South

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Wales is indicated in this Press telegram which came to hand yesterday—

“An important measure, which will have to be passed in the State House this session, is a Bill to amend the Government Railways Act. The Minister for Railways (Mr. Ball) prepared a Bill some time ago, but it is now waiting the recommendations of the Royal Commission before completing the draft. The expert's report is expected to be in the hands of the Minister in the course of a week or two. The consensus of opinion in political and railway circles is that the Royal Commission will recommend that the railways should be placed in the hands of a board absolutely free from political control, with power to deal with its own funds for the development of the railways of the State.”

There is an example of people running their business successfully. We want to know from the Minister whether the Government have in their mind any alteration in connection with the railways.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your Government passed the present Railway Act.

MR. G. P. BARNES: There is nothing perfect in political life. If our work once done is good for ever and there is no need for improvement, there is no occasion to meet here from year to year. In the process of evolution things must develop, and it is to improve them that we meet here.

Take Italy, for instance. They have had to make a departure there. The “Annalist” an American paper, thus sums up the attitude of Italy in respect of these matters—

“The public services, such as railroads, telegraphs, telephones and post, which all had big deficits under Government control, are shortly to be denationalised and handed over to private enterprise. In the meantime, until this can be done, the railways have been placed under the control of a Royal Commissioner. He started with a deficit (1921-22) of 1,200 million lire and a total staff of about 225,000 men. The official estimate places the deficit for 1923-24 at about 250,000 lire, or a saving of approximately 1,000 million lire over two years, while the personnel had been reduced by 48,000 men without any detriment to the railroad service.”

Then the article goes on to show that, although that change has taken place, employment has not suffered—

“Unemployment has also declined, the most trustworthy estimate of the number out of work at the end of 1923 being 180,000, and this, too, in spite of the heavy restrictions on emigration.”

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him by the Standing Orders.

MR. GLEDSON (Ipswich): This is a very important Estimate. I gathered from the remarks of the hon. member for Warwick that he thought that the railways should be taken out of political control. Hon. members on this side would like to know definitely what he means by that. Does he mean that our railways should be handed over to private enterprise and run in the interests of private enterprise?

MR. G. P. BARNES: No. Look at the Brisbane Tramway Trust.

MR. GLEDSON: The desire of hon. members opposite should be explained. Is the idea that the railways should be handed over to and run on a commercial basis by a separate commission or trust appointed by the Government? Let us know what they have in their minds. If that is so, the position would naturally resolve itself into a state of things where the people who use the railways would pay for the services they get. At present they do not, and the country bears the loss. If it is the contention of hon. members opposite that the railways should be made to pay, and that the producers who send their products to market should pay enough in freight to carry those goods there, we shall know where we stand. The policy of this Government has been to endeavour to open out the country, and you cannot do that with a country of the extent of Queensland and build railways in the practically unsettled districts without running those railways, for some time, at any time, as non-paying concerns. The trouble in Queensland is that we have so many miles of railway running into districts where there are very few people to the square mile that it is impossible to make the railways pay unless we charge higher freights.

I would like to ask the Minister whether he has any idea of the amount of money which the department is paying in overtime. I was told some time ago that an effort was being made by the department to obviate the necessity for paying overtime. I am given to understand, however, that some of the men, especially in the running service, are drawing very large sums of money in overtime. That should not be. If there is work to be done, we should put on additional men and thus give them the opportunity to make a living, instead of paying overtime and giving the men in the service very high wages. I hope the Minister will be able to tell us what is being paid in overtime, and whether an effort is being made to cut it down.

Another matter I would like to bring before the Minister is the necessity for providing better railway station accommodation at Ipswich. Members of the Committee know that £170,000 was spent on building retaining walls, platforms, and subways to enable the people to get from the proposed new station on to the street, but the whole thing was hung up for want of the station buildings. I take it that it is all a question of finance—of what is going to pay—and, so far as I can, I have worked out on a very low basis what it is costing the department for the out-of-date station we have working now. As you know, Mr. Cooper, they keep an engine there standing practically all day and night, necessitating the services of an engine-driver, a fireman, and a shunter, because, as there is only one [12.30 p.m.] platform, this engine has to be coupled on to every train that comes in to shunt it one way or another to get it out of the road. That means a continual cost to the department, which I have worked out on a very low estimate, and I find that for these three men alone, allowing for only one shift—and we know there are more shifts than one—the cost is £1,040, and the cost of running the engine eight hours a day amount to £1,825, and the cost incurred in overtime, due to delay of trains in having to wait on the top of Devil's Gully bridge,

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during which time passengers can look at that beautiful sight while other trains are at the Ipswich platform, amounts to £1,000, making a total extra cost to the department in connection with this engine alone and the delays at the station of £3,865 per annum. I ask the Minister if it is not possible to spend so much of the £63,000 which it is estimated the new building will cost, and get some of the unused wagons or old wagons that have been discarded by the railway workshops and place them on the new platforms and use them as ticket offices. By doing that we might be able to obviate the expense incurred in having the engine that I have referred to. A considerable sum has been spent in connection with the erection of a new station at Ipswich, and the expense that would be saved by my suggestion would probably more than pay the interest on any money expended on the building of that station. I would like the Minister to go into the matter to see if it is not possible to make some arrangement for the selling of tickets there, so that the trains can be taken to that platform and thus obviate the delay caused by trains having to wait at the one platform. A city of the importance of Ipswich has only one main platform, and I cannot understand how they have put up with it for so long.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): After nine years of socialistic rule, I think it can be rightly stated that the Railway Department as it stands is the Socialists' big blunder, or the Socialists' big bungle.

Mr. HYNES: Is the hon. gentleman going to advocate handing the railways over to private enterprise?

Mr. KERR: I have not said anything about that up to the present. During the administration of the Railway Department by this Government, the department has shown a total loss of nearly £11,500,000, which means that there has been accumulating a dead loss of an average of £3,490 per day, or £25,430 per week every day and every week for the past nine years, which justifies a very serious complaint from the taxpayers of Queensland.

We have been very proud of our railway system. Queensland's length of railways exceeds that of any other State in Australia, and it has served a very invaluable purpose in opening up vast territories and in making settlement conditions more reasonable, more comfortable, and more profitable. Prior to the advent of this Government they were the live factors in connection with our railways, notwithstanding the statement sometimes made that many of the lines were political jobberies. As I proceed I shall show that, although there might have been political jobbery, those lines are in the fortunate position of being able to pay expenses. I am not going to take up the attitude that all extensions should be able to pay expenses, because I believe that some of the expenses in connection with extensions should be borne by the main line. Let me take the section from Mayne Junction to Dayboro'. That is a section which is not paying, yet, when the section was only opened from Mayne Junction to Enoggera, it was paying handsomely—somewhere between 8 per cent. and 9 per cent. It is only right that the thickly-populated part should carry some of the cost of the extension to Dayboro'. I believe in treating our railways

[Mr. Gladson.

in that manner, but I am firmly of opinion that they should be made to pay their way. Not only am I satisfied, but evidently the Minister when sitting in opposition was satisfied that this was the policy that should have been adopted, for he then had this to say—

“If we cover working expenses and interest on the cost of construction, then I think we have done all that can be reasonably required of us.”

We are putting forward the same contention to-day as the Minister put forward in 1914. We want the railways to pay the interest charge and running expenses.

Mr. HYNES: Tell us how to do it.

Mr. KERR: I will tell the hon. member how it has not been done.

Mr. HYNES: But tell us how to do it.

Mr. KERR: I shall tell the hon. member later of a method whereby something can be achieved.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KERR: It is all right for hon. members opposite to say now, “Was it possible to do this?” If it was possible in 1914 to pay interest and working expenses and also pay into the Treasury a surplus, then it is possible to do so again to-day. I am not one of those who say that we should create a surplus in the department, but we should create a sinking fund sufficient to wipe out some of the capital expenditure. If such a provision is not made and replacements have got to be made, the utility will become over-capitalised. If that goes on indefinitely, the railways will never have a chance to recover. The policy of drift has been permitted to creep in, and the railways have drifted so far that the situation is becoming desperate and will require concentrated and definite attention.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The country is not developing with the railways.

Mr. KERR: That is so. I listened attentively to the speech of the hon. member for Warwick and that was one of his points.

Mr. HYNES: That is owing to the operation of the middleman. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. KERR: That is something new since the advent of the Labour party to power, because that position never existed before. The hon. member for Warwick made the statement that our railways—particularly the new lines—had outpaced the growth of our traffic. That is one of the reasons why the railways to-day are not paying.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and you know the Opposition have asked for more railways.

Mr. KERR: We ask for a lot of things. The people are always asking for something, and we have to make representations on their behalf.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not a consistent attitude.

Mr. KERR: As the representatives of the districts we have to make representations on any request that is brought before us.

The whole railway system to-day is undoubtedly over-capitalised. The new lines, or most of them, are in a worse position

than the older lines, for the simple reason that the costs have been greater. The wages of the construction workers, the interest on loans, and the cost of materials of new lines are all higher than they were on the older lines, while in some cases the country through which the new lines pass was not quite as good as the country which the older lines traverse. When we talk of over-capitalisation we must remember that approximately 60 per cent. of our public debt is represented in the capital expenditure on the railways. What has been happening with regard to the over-capitalisation under the old system, and the higher interest brought about by the renewals of the old loans? This has to be carried by the Railway Department. When some of the railways were built we were borrowing money at anything from 3½ to 4 per cent. Those loans have to be renewed to-day at something like 6 per cent. to 7 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Labour Government are not responsible for that.

Mr. KERR: I do not suggest they are, but they are putting us into such a position that it will be difficult indeed to get out. They are taking no action after being nine years in power. They are following a policy of continual drift. There has been a continual drift for nine years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There have been deficits nearly every year for forty years.

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman is not right in that statement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, yes I am.

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman is not right in that statement, and I will prove that he is not right.

Mr. HYNES: Don't you know that railway construction has to precede land settlement.

Mr. KERR: The Secretary for Railways has made an erroneous statement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have the figures here.

Mr. KERR: Take the comparison of percentage returns on capital invested.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take the charge on revenue since 1885.

Mr. KERR: Let me take this point. The hon. gentleman said the drift has occurred for forty years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, with very few exceptions.

Mr. KERR: Let me quote these figures—

COMPARISON OF PERCENTAGE RETURNS ON CAPITAL INVESTED.

	£	s.	d.
1907-08	3 10 4
1908-09	3 7 6
1909-10	3 5 9
1910-11	3 18 10
1911-12	3 9 11
1912-13	3 8 6
1913-14	3 11 9
1914-15	3 13 9

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your argument is erroneous. What you want is the charge on revenue.

Mr. KERR: I shall give the hon. gentleman what he wants later. Since this Government came into power they have not reached the figure of £3 13s. 9d per cent. The average since then has been £1 6s. 10½d. per cent. That is the return on capital invested as against £3 10s. 9½d. per cent. for the nine years previously.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: With few exceptions there have been deficits for forty years.

Mr. KERR: I do not know; I have not the complete list here.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: But I have.

Mr. KERR: I have it somewhere, and will take the opportunity later of showing exactly how the deficits and surpluses stood under previous Administrations. The total deficit is one of the things to be taken into consideration.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There were deficits amounting to £10,000,000 before we came into power.

Mr. KERR: Spread over what number of years?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take the percentage of deficits to revenue and you will find it is heavier under previous Governments than at present.

Mr. KERR: It is sheer nonsense for the hon. gentleman to talk like that. What return did the capital give? That is the point. If the capital is giving a return sufficient to meet the interest and running charges the railways are paying.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They were not doing that.

Mr. KERR: They were. My figures prove that. The whole system is growing worse, and it is due to over-capitalisation, higher wages, greater cost of repairs, and the depopulation of the country districts.

Now that the Minister has settled down a little bit, I would like to tell him that for the previous eight years the deficit in the Railway Department was £236,102. That is what the hon. gentleman is talking about—the charge against revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member is absolutely wrong.

Mr. KERR: Let me make that statement again. I have taken out the charge against revenue for the previous eight years, which amounted to £236,102.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are wrong.

Mr. KERR: I venture to say that my figures are correct.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Do the sum over again.

Mr. KERR: There is no necessity for me to do it over again.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I spoke of a forty-years' period.

Mr. KERR: You said mostly every year for forty years. You are quibbling again.

At 12.45 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. KERR: When the Government came into power in 1914-15, they started with a surplus of £48,651. That is to say, when

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they came into power the railways showed a surplus of that amount, but for the last nine years the railway deficit totals £11,467,484. That is an appalling position which cannot be continued. The Assistant Home Secretary recognised the position when he made the statement that he could save the State thousands of pounds in connection with the railways. He has not saved a bean, but he has been a member of the Government that have increased costs. The hon. gentleman interjected a little while ago, "What would you do in regard to this matter?" The only way to lighten the burden of the people of Queensland is to get the greatest possible result from the comparatively deserted lands alongside our present railways. I may be asked where these lands are. I have travelled through nearly every part of Queensland, and I make the statement that a lot of the land that our railways pass through is deserted land. I want to know if the Government have given full consideration to the question of utilising the land along existing railways. If they have, why has the Commissioner for Railways in Queensland got this to say—

"From a national standpoint, and looking to the future, the opening up of country for closer settlement by new railways is desirable, but from the standpoint of the present management there can be no doubt that the construction of new lines has outpaced the growth of traffic; consequently the railways are over-capitalised for the amount of business done, as the revenue from increased tonnage falls far short of paying the additional interest. What we require to make the railways pay is a greater traffic along existing lines."

This Government immediately should appoint a Commission to ascertain the area of unused lands alongside our railways, and also the best possible use to which those lands could be put. If that is done, it may save this State millions of pounds. It is no good quibbling and trying to get over it by saying that the railways are run to open up the country and to benefit agriculture. I shall show presently that the railways are not having the result that it was sought to achieve. Let me also mention what the Commissioner for Railways of Victoria says on this question—

"On our tours of inspection we have been impressed by the scanty settlement and the absence of cultivation in various areas served by the railways; and while new lines may be found necessary for opening up special localities, it is beyond all doubt that the utilisation to the fullest extent of areas in proximity to existing railways could not fail to be very beneficial not only to the railway service, but also to the State and the community at large."

Then the Commissioner for Railways of South Australia has this to say—

"In the United States of America it is accepted as an axiom that territory that does not boast more than 300 inhabitants per mile of line does not invite railway construction unless it has exceptional possibilities in the way of freight The average number of inhabitants in South Australia per mile of line open is 204. . . . It will be seen what a difficult problem is constantly faced by the management of the railways in

endeavouring to make lines of development in any way remunerative."

There we have the position in a nutshell. The Secretary for Railways has made the statement that it should not be treated as an ordinary business, but more from the point of view of getting land settlement and agricultural development. He states that he prefers to put a burden on the great land monopolists and wealthy companies. Surely the Government, when they make these statements, have at last recognised that their policy is a mistaken one! Surely that has been brought home to them by the fact that they have had to reverse their action in regard to retrospective rents which they put on the great land monopolists! If they do not know that, the Premier and the Secretary for Public Lands have misled the country.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KERR: It is a question of policy on the part of the Minister. The Minister says that he prefers to put the taxation on the land monopolists and wealthy companies in Queensland. It is time that we asked that something further should be done in connection with our railways so that they may pay their way. The railways have not served their purpose in regard to opening up the country.

Mr. COLLINS: Tell us how to make them pay.

Mr. KERR: The hon. member has evidently been asleep in that regard.

Mr. HYNES: Do you suggest increasing freights and fares?

Mr. KERR: I have not made any such suggestion. The Minister says that in 1922 certain concessions were made—I think up to 20 per cent.—in respect of freight and stock, dairy products, etc.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A big concession.

Mr. KERR: We are short in the Railway Department this year by over a million and a-half, and according to the report of the Commissioner for Railways, that concession only amounted to £161,610.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Last year?

Mr. KERR: No, I have not seen the report for last year; it has not yet been published. This is the report for 1922-23. It was stated at that time by the Minister that the department was helping agriculture, yet we find that the concessions given only amounted to £161,610, while we were on the wrong side of the ledger by over a million. The rebates allowed to the Mount Morgan Company only amounted to £45,000. We are not looking for paltry sums, or concessions to the extent of £100,000, but we are looking at the fact that we are £1,500,000 to the bad. The policy of the Government ought to be changed. Take the matter of population, for instance. The figures with regard to population in Queensland are—

POPULATION.			
	Census, 3rd April, 1911.	Census, 4th April, 1921.	Increase Per Cent.
Cities	141,565	214,076	51.2
Towns	90,518	125,344	38.5
Shires	368,292	423,857	15.1

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This indicates that the policy of the Government is not right, and that it has had the effect of bringing people from the country into the cities. I would take an opportunity later on of showing the increase in the fares. It has been definitely stated that the fares in Queensland are lower than they are in other States, but that is not borne out by statistics. The population has increased by 15 per cent., yet, although we have over 1,000 additional miles of railway we are doing less business than in 1914-15. The tonnage carried last year was less than in 1914-15. The average revenue from the carriage of goods and live stock in 1914-15 was 10s. 1d. per ton, and the average revenue in 1922-23 was 15s. 8d. per ton, or an increase of 5s. 7d. per ton. Add to those figures the recent increase in freights, and you will find that the total increase in the freight for live stock since 1914 is about 67 per cent. I venture to say that in no other State in Australia has the Railway Department increased freights to that extent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The average increase has been lower than that in any other State.

Mr. KERR: The fact is that the freights are still higher than in any of the other States. Let us take the figures for 100 miles for the highest class freight—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
New South Wales	76	8
Victoria	63	3
Queensland	89	4
South Australia	77	3
Western Australia	77	1

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take the rates up to 200 miles.

Mr. KERR: You must take the average. You cannot take one detail here and one there.

Then let us look at freights on agricultural produce. The average increase between 1914-15 and 1922-23 amounted to 53 per cent., and, adding the recent increase of 7½ per cent., the increase is well over 60 per cent. greater than in 1914. A consideration of the earnings per train mile will bear out what I say. In 1914 the gross earnings per train mile were 6s. 4½d., and in 1922-23, 9s. 11½d.—which confirms my estimate that the increase up till last year was 55 per cent., and that the recent increase brings the total increase since 1914 to nearly 65 per cent. I venture to say that the time has arrived when there has got to be a stocktaking on our Queensland railways. We say that political interference has got them into the position in which they are to-day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are not talking of your own party's experience?

Mr. KERR: Prior to this Government coming into power the railways were a credit to the State. Even our present Premier admitted that. Queensland was not like New South Wales, where their railways all ran down to a central port. Ours went to the natural seaport direct.

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

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*): I do not think the Government have anything to apologise for in their railway policy. I have listened to hon. members on the other side criticising

it, but I want to say that that policy has resulted in placing 1,000 new settlers on the land in North Queensland in six months. I accompanied the Celotex party recently in the Queensland railways as far as Townsville, and those gentlemen were loud in their praises of the Queensland railway system. They were astonished to find that in a State like Queensland there was the largest railway system in the world in proportion to population. Before we came into power, Mackay received no consideration whatever from a railway point of view. I had the pleasure recently of taking the member for Hobart over the northern system of railways, and he was loud in his praises, not only of the way in which he was treated, but also of the railway system and the length of railway which this Government had developed.

[2 p.m.]

Observant visitors from overseas and from the other States, when travelling on the Queensland railways, have always been struck with the big problems that confront a Government running a State like Queensland from the point of view of the length of the lines and the sparse population. Ever since I have been in this Chamber, I have noticed that when these Estimates are under consideration the Opposition were never fair enough to allow those matters to be taken into consideration. Everyone realises that it is grossly unfair when discussing the administration of Queensland railways to compare the administration of our railway system with the administration of the railway system in New South Wales or Victoria, where they have not the same problems to face. I particularly mentioned these gentlemen connected with the Celotex Commission, because those gentleman have travelled all over the world and have probably done considerable railway travelling, but immediately they reach Queensland and get to the North they realise the big railway development policy of this Government and the difficulties with which they are confronted. They stressed the fact that the attention and conveniences that they enjoyed when travelling on the railways of Queensland compared favourably with those on any railways on which they had travelled. Mr. Grant—who is the member for Hobart in the Tasmanian Parliament and who is not a Labour member—was persuaded by me to take the railway journey to the North, and on his return to Hobart he was so impressed that he wrote a special letter of thanks to the general manager of the North Queensland railways at Townsville, thanking him for his courtesy and attention, and pointing out that he was satisfied that Queensland must advance under the policy of this Government. These are matters that should be circulated, and the Opposition in their criticism of the Railway Department should, in all fairness, take these facts into consideration.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity of thanking the Secretary for Railways on behalf of the people of North Queensland for his continued advocacy, which has resulted in the linking up of the Northern and Southern railway systems. Hon. members will be pleased to know that the final link has been made, and now it is only a matter of waiting for the construction of the Darraji bridge. So far as the laying of the line is concerned, the North is linked with the South, and, as the member for Herbert, I pay a special tribute to the Secretary for

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Railways for his advocacy in this connection. I know that in 1921, when there was a monetary stringency, railway construction had to shut down, but I was fortunate enough to persuade the Minister to go North and see the possibilities of that part of the State, and I know that it was owing to his advocacy that the line was continued and completed. I do not want to be parochial because I represent a northern electorate and say that the North alone is going to benefit. The whole of Queensland is going to benefit by this connection, and, had the Governments of the past, who were not faced with financial difficulty and could have got money at a reasonable rate of interest, done their duty to the people of Queensland, that line linking the North with the South would have been built twenty years ago and the railways would have paid. The Governments in those days were not confronted with the problems that we have had to face. The present Government deserve the greatest credit for facing this problem of linking up the North with the South, which has cost some millions of pounds borrowed at a heavy rate of interest. I am quite satisfied that that money will be repaid. I take this opportunity of conveying my thanks to the Premier, who has taken a very active part in the construction of this line. He has been a big factor in constructing this line. The people in North Queensland realise that the finding of some millions of pounds—which this line has cost—was a hard task under present conditions. I know when the Premier goes North in December of this year—when I understand the official opening of the railway through to Cairns will take place—he will be told by the people what I am saying now, and that is that the people in those districts realise that the Government have done their duty. The people of the North realise that the Government have done their duty, not only to them but to the people of the whole of Queensland, and they have done their duty as business men would do in connection with the railways, because until that link from North to South was completed the railways could not pay. I am satisfied that the completion of that link will practically add a new province to Queensland.

The hon. member for Warwick talked about increased taxation. I am going to show him and other hon. members in this Chamber that the completion of this line has already reduced taxation to a class whom the Government are not supposed to be catering for. About 100,000 bales of wool passed through Townsville last year for Southern destinations. Owing to the completion of this link in the railway system the shipping companies have reduced the freight on a bale of wool from Townsville to Brisbane by 3s. 6d. a bale, and that reduction represents £17,500 to the wool producers of North Queensland. That is a factor that members of the Opposition ought to take into consideration. The policy of the Government has made that reduction possible. I question whether the wool producers of North Queensland pay £17,500 in taxation annually. If they do pay that amount, they have got it back in a reduction in freight, and possibly time will result in a further reduction on the freight in wool.

Take the people who have been travelling North and South in the past! Look at the amount of money they have had to pay in steamer fares! They could not obtain return

passages, but immediately the railways came into competition with them the shipping companies reduced their freights very considerably. That again is a reduction in taxation. Hon. members opposite should take all these factors into consideration when they criticise the policy of the Government in regard to the development of our railways.

I also want to show what the completion of the link between the two systems meant in the finding of markets for Southern products. Truck loads of butter from Gympie and Gladstone are arriving by railway in Townsville to-day. Before the link was completed that butter could not be sent to Brisbane, and then resigned to Townsville by steamer. In many places in North Queensland, when the Atherton Dairy Company could not keep pace with the consumption of butter, additional stocks were secured from the Southern States. The dairying people in the Gympie and Gladstone districts have now a new market for their products. Quite recently train-loads of potatoes came by rail to Townsville from Murgon. Previously potatoes were imported from Victoria and New South Wales. Truck loads of fruit also arrive at Townsville from Stanthorpe. It was not profitable for the fruitgrowers in that centre to send their produce to Townsville by steamer, as the cost of handling and freight and the delay in transit was too great. To-day hundreds of pounds worth of fruit arrive in Townsville two or three times a week to be consumed by the people in the North.

Again, members of the Opposition have talked about the Government not settling the people on the land. Three years ago the tract of country between Cardwell and Innisfail was practically deserted. To-day there are thousands of people up there. It would be no exaggeration for me to say that there are certainly 1,000 settlers between Innisfail and Ingham, and that they were not there until the people realised what the construction of the railway would mean to them. The Tully River sugar-mill is going to be of service to 1,000 people in that area next year. That would not be possible if it were not for the policy of railway development of the Government.

Take the condition of the people in the North. The average working people could not afford to pay the steamer fares demanded to come South. Now, owing to the policy of the Government of giving cheap excursion fares at such holiday seasons as Christmas and Easter, the working people of North Queensland are able to bring their wives and families to the metropolitan areas. The metropolitan people, and the firm of which the hon. member for Warwick is a member, are going to reap a good deal of benefit by those people coming down here. A good deal of shopping is done by parcel post by the people of North Queensland. Before railway communication was established a good deal of that trade went to Victoria and New South Wales. I now find that a good deal of that parcel post trade comes to Brisbane.

What I want to try and get this Committee to understand is that not only North Queensland is going to benefit by this action, but the whole of Queensland is going to benefit. I am quite satisfied that the benefits will be very appreciably shown in the report of the Commissioner for Railways next year. There is another factor—perhaps more important to the primary producer, to whose

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interests the Country party are supposed to attend—

Mr. CORSER: We do attend to them.

Mr. PEASE: They do not. Through the action of the Government in pushing on with this line, we have received 25,000 tons of sugar-cane at the Giru mill, in the Tully area, which would have been scrapped without that line. Right through the piece that sort of thing has been happening; so that, even though the burden of railway construction is fairly high, the added benefits which the producers and the people receive from the policy of the Government are more than twice the amount of that cost.

I had the pleasure of introducing a deputation to the Premier last week in connection with a railway from Boogan to Mourilyan, which has been approved by the Public Works Commission, and which will link Mourilyan with Innisfail. The amount involved is something like £100,000 and the Premier pointed out that it was not possible to carry out the work this financial year. Some people may consider that the people in the North should be satisfied, considering that some millions of pounds have been spent to link them with the south; but this Boogan proposal is to make a port which would be of considerable benefit to a big tract of country which will be opened up for settlement and would make the proposition a payable one.

I do not think I can do better, in conclusion, than to mention a wire which I received from one of the shire councillors at Cardwell, which represents an area in which the new Tully sugar-mill is situated. He said that for over fifty years the people of the district had waited for the consummation of this railway line, and that, thanks to the Theodore Administration, they had at last achieved their desire. I am very pleased indeed to have the opportunity of expressing, on behalf of the people of North Queensland, their thanks to this Government for carrying the line to a successful conclusion, in spite of the immense difficulties with which they have had to contend.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): It is very pleasing to hear that some of the railways of the State have been completed. We must remember that for the last five or six years the Government have had an opportunity of formulating a scheme for the opening up of the Upper Burnett country, which has resulted in three railways to Monto being passed. One is from Rannes, one from Many Peaks, and one from Mundubbera, and they are to join at Monto, in the Upper Burnett. Since that time, in pursuance of their policy, the Government have established 700 settlers in that district with the intention of opening thousands of farms. These settlers have now been in the locality for some months, and it must be a drawback—it has certainly damped their ardour—that the Government have curtailed the building of the railways. The settlers in the Callide and Burnett area view with consternation the fact that the Government have withdrawn many labourers from the Rannes-Mundubbera-Many Peaks railways. Many of those who are settled 40 or 50 miles from the railway are absolutely dependent on railway connection. Some of them are at the present time preparing for harvesting crops, and others have crops growing with the prospect of a dairy season. It cost them over £4 per ton to deliver their cotton to rail head, and unless there is a very much

more live policy of railway construction followed, this is going to continue for a very considerable time. It was stated by the Secretary for Railways, when opening the first section of this railway, that at least the Mundubbera-Monto Railway would be gone on with. It is being gone on with, but the unfortunate part is that it seems to be the desire of the department to construct these railways at a very slow rate, and, unfortunately, though two years ago I made a request to the Railway Department for the construction of the bridge across the Burnett at Ceratodus to be included in the first section of the railway above Eidsvold, it was decided by the department to make it the first link of the second section of the railway. An amount of work was held up because this river crossing was not included in the first section, and this has curtailed the possibility of advancement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They expressed pleasure at my decision to go on with the second section.

Mr. CORSER: They certainly expressed pleasure, but what they want is an honest continuance of that railway. Construction is going on so slowly that you can hardly see it owing to the withdrawal of workers. There does not seem to be a desire on the part of the Railway Department to push that railway on to a successful conclusion.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is an unfair statement.

Mr. CORSER: The settlers feel that there is not that determined desire on the part of the department that there should be to push the railway on to Monto, as was supposed to be the intention when these people took up the land. I must voice an appeal on behalf of these settlers and on behalf of those who are going into the new area to be opened in a few months, and I urge the Minister to do everything in his power to persuade the Cabinet not to keep these railways hanging on year after year, but to see that they are connected with Monto, as they told the settlers would be done. The settlers are compelled to fulfil their agreements and improve their farms, so the Government should first carry out theirs. I do not think that is an unfair request to make, and the Minister will agree that, if the Government could find the money to connect up the coastal railway when there was already facilities for the conveyance of goods along the coast, surely to goodness they can find the money to build agricultural railways to districts that were settled wholly under a Government scheme! Years ago they claimed that that scheme was ready. Years ago they claimed that they were determined to carry out that scheme. They have made a start, and there are settlers there; but they have been hampered from every angle through want of Government assistance and through the Government not carrying out their announced railway policy in regard to the Upper Burnett. Railways are essential. They are essential for the cheaper carriage of materials for the buildings on the farm, for the settlers' homes, and for the building of the schools. They are essential in every direction in the opening up of these Burnett and Callide lands, and I sincerely trust the Minister will give us more than words, and will see that his promise that the railway would be carried on to Monto is fulfilled, not only technically, but practically, and that

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the settlers will have confidence in feeling that, when they further develop these lands and encourage others to come along and settle there, this railway will be completed to Monto as stated.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): I hold with the hon. member for Burnett that railways should go hand in hand with land settlement and education in our State. The Government must admit that their policy has been very dilatory in connection with the construction of railways into new areas. I do not mean to say that the Government have not made an effort to construct railways for development of the State from an agricultural point of view; but unfortunately it is often such a long time before railways passed by Parliament are carried out that the people who have settled on the land in anticipation of the railways being built are in such financial difficulties by the time those railways are constructed they are nothing like the value to them they would have been at an earlier stage. I could refer to railway proposals which have been discussed and passed by Parliament many years ago. There is one line in my district which is now nearing completion. The people there have been living in the district for many years, and are only now getting the railway which was promised to them a long time ago. I maintain that the delay in building railways is not in the best interests of settlement, and it is not advisable from a railway business point of view.

I agree that a great deal of money spent in North Queensland has been absolutely essential in the interests of development in the North and in order to open up railway communication with the southern portion of the State, as it has assisted in making markets accessible to the producers and has brought about advantages in many other ways from a railway point of view. There is, however, one matter in southern Queensland which requires attention, and I do not think that an hon. member would be doing his duty if he did not mention it. We have a glaring spectacle of the Government's lack of interest in regard to the linking up of the southern railways. There is a railway line in the Southern Burnett the terminus of which is 14 miles from the Brisbane Valley line. I know that the hon. member for Ipswich will agree with me that this short length of railway should be immediately constructed by the Government. It is a most serious thing to primary producers, more particularly in my own district where they are growing lucerne on the black soil flats of Barker's Creek and have to cart it for many miles to the railway. If the short length was constructed between Nanango and Yarraman, it would be a great advantage to those producers.

Then there is the connecting link between the Burnett railway line and the Downs. That matter was taken up many years ago by the Government. It would only require a small expenditure to link up these railways, and the Government should take action. This linking up would give the producers in those areas much greater facilities than they have at the present time.

I wish to say a few words in connection with new lines. There is room for development along these new lines in the shape of weigh-bridges, sidings, and other things of importance to settlers. It is one thing to have a railway and another thing to bring

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produce on to it and put it on the trucks and send it away miles and miles, and sometimes not be able to get any definite information as to the return from it for a fortnight or three weeks at a stretch. I know the Minister will use the argument that it is impossible to make the railways pay and carry out a great expenditure at the same time. But I am not using that argument; I never have. I do not agree with the argument of the Minister that, if you are to make the railways pay, you must put up fares and freights, because when you are running a business and the people will not come into your shop to buy, if you keep on putting up your prices, you gradually prevent any of them coming in at all. That is just what is happening in the case of the railways. Motor traffic is in many instances running in competition with them and taking away business.

Mr. WEIR: Aided by good roads.

Mr. EDWARDS: Yes, roads built by the State, although, if the hon. member would follow the road over the range between Nanango and Yarraman, he would find that some of it has not been built by anybody. I believe that during Show week in Brisbane, at least 500 passengers came by motor-car over that bad road rather than do the big journey round by train.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: That is not the reason. They are better off now; they can afford to travel in motor-cars.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is not the reason. They would have had to catch the train at 5 o'clock at night, as I did last night, and arrive in Brisbane next morning at 6 o'clock, and that is too long to come 120 miles to Brisbane. If that connection were made, there is no doubt that there would be an increase in fares and freights received by the railways in southern Queensland, and now that there is so much traffic on the North Coast Railway, it is more essential than ever that that link should be built.

These are things to which the Minister should give very careful consideration. The Minister is not to be envied by any man, if he is to do justice to his position. It is an age of good roads, and where the good roads are built the Minister must know that before very long the whole of the railway policy will have to be carefully reviewed. There is no doubt that motor traffic on the roads will militate against the good working of the railways, and is a factor for very careful consideration. Although it may be against the policy of the Government, I think the time has arrived when the contract system of railway construction should be tried out against the day-labour system. I am satisfied that we would get our railways built more cheaply, and that would be in the interests of the railways and of the development of the State.

Hon. J. G. APPEL (*Albert*): I do not propose, during this debate, to quote statistics as to the financial position of the railways of the State. That has already been ably and fully done. I want to repeat what I have said on previous occasions, that in my opinion a great deal of the present financial difficulties of the railways is due to the fact that a considerable amount of political influence has been permitted to interfere with their management by the Commissioner for Railways, which is contrary to the policy which has been laid down that the adminis-

tration should be entirely in his hands. If that were done, unquestionably [2.30 p.m.] an improvement in the financial position would take place. What do we find to-day as a result of that political interference and influence? We find that the service is certainly not a contented service. Discontent appears to prevail in practically every section of the service. It is an unfortunate position, because this is one of the utilities in which all those who are employed in carrying out the business should co-operate one with another. There is no doubt that, if this feeling exists, it is not for the benefit of the system itself, nor does it promote the better financial position that we would like to see. I quite admit that, having regard to the enormous mileage of our railway system and the fact that railways have been constructed into districts which are more or less unsettled and undeveloped, it naturally follows that you cannot obtain such a return immediately after the railway construction is completed as would otherwise take place if the construction was into a developed district. One of the main objects of railway construction in Queensland was to assist in the settlement and development of areas which could not possibly be settled without railway facilities. I have on different occasions, when the question of fares and freights have come up for discussion, stated that, if in the opinion of the Commissioner it is necessary to increase the freights and fares in an endeavour to make the system a payable proposition, so long as that increase is applied to every section of the community who use the railway system, I could see no objection to it; but, unfortunately, so far as I can analyse the position to-day, the greater portion and the greatest burden of such increase has fallen upon the shoulders of the primary producers. That is an unfortunate position, because they are a section of the community who can least afford to bear this increased burden. A greater burden should have been borne by those who are better able to bear it. The passengers who use the railways should have had to pay a considerably greater increase than they are called upon to pay to-day. Take, for instance, the passengers who are travelling for pleasure. The first-class railway fares should have been increased to a greater extent than they have been, in place of the increased burden being placed upon the primary producers, and that would have been more equitable than casting a heavier burden on the section whom I have already named.

There is one matter I would like the Minister to consider, and it refers to another increased burden which has been placed upon the shoulders of the primary producer. Hon. members are aware that a large quantity of cream is carried upon our railway system to the different butter factories. There has been an increase in the freight on cream owing to the Government's action in deciding on an all-round increase of fares and freights. For many years assistance was given by the department in the way of an additional porter, who travelled with the train to give assistance to the guard in loading that cream into the wagons. Owing to the passenger traffic at certain stations, the whole of the onus of loading cream is cast upon the owner and consignor of that commodity. In some instances that means a very considerable loss of time. I know of one particular instance—I refer to Bethania

Junction—where I am prepared to give to the Minister individual names if he thinks it necessary, where men over seventy years of age are required to assist and often load the cream-cans themselves into the wagons. I appeal to the hon. gentleman as to whether this is a fair proposition in view of the increase which has been made in this particular freight. That is quite outside the loss of time that falls upon the producer through being compelled to remain at the station until the loading is completed.

These are all matters which possibly have not been brought before the Minister. In view of the position I would urge him to take such matters into consideration, as they involve an addition to the actual increase which the dairyman is called upon to pay.

Mr. WEIR: He gets a special cut rate. Surely you do not want other assistance too?

HON. J. G. APPEL: That cut rate has been increased.

Mr. WEIR: Well, it should be.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I am not cavilling for the moment at that phase; but is it a fair thing that these conditions should obtain unless they are made to apply to every station? I am given to understand that they do not apply to every station. They cannot apply, because in many instances the cream is loaded from the back of a vehicle into a cream shed, and it has to be loaded from there into the train by the officials connected with the train. In the particular case that has been brought under my notice the cream is placed upon a platform, which is not one of the high platforms, and then lifted from the platform into the wagon. As I indicated, in some instances men over seventy years of age are required to do this because the department refuses to provide the necessary labour. The guard has not sufficient time to carry out that duty, owing to the large passenger traffic. I ask the Minister to cause a reversion to be made to the system whereby a porter travelled with the train to assist in loading goods of that character. I know that those who bring fruit and timber to the train are required to do the loading. I would be willing to accept the position if it were necessary and made uniform at every station and the department was unable to afford the assistance which is required. If in certain stations the sender of cream is required to get that assistance or to load his own cream, it is inequitable, and, in view of the increase of the freights, it is only fair to the senders of the cream that such assistance should be given in those as well as other cases.

I listened with very great interest to the remarks which fell from the hon. member for Herbert. I confess that, if I had not been aware of the facts, I would have come to the conclusion that the inception and conception of the Great North Coast Railway was due to the Labour Government. Let us give credit to the man who deserves that credit. It was the inception and conception of the late Hon. Dr. Kidston.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. J. G. APPEL: The whole idea was suggested by him, and the whole matter received parliamentary sanction under his Administration. Funds were provided by loans and a considerable mileage constructed before the Labour party came into power. It was a great scheme, and one which no doubt, as has been said, will materially assist

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in the development and settlement of that fertile portion of the State of Queensland. The present Administration have had what I call the honour of continuing that great scheme, and the quicker the scheme is completed the quicker may we expect some return. Admittedly in a great scheme like that, which is passing through a large area of land which in some instances is not even settled and in others is only now becoming sparsely settled, we cannot expect at first to get a return which will make it a payable proposition. In the future it will become a payable proposition and the boldness of the conception of the late Hon. Dr. Kidston and his Administration has been proved by the evidence given by the hon. member for Herbert. The hon. member gave evidence as to the facilities which are now being afforded to the people living in the northern part of the State to those who are growing produce, by which they are enabled to get to a better and an easier market.

The question of further railway construction is a matter that is very debatable. I have come to the conclusion that, in view of the development which has already taken place, it would be unwise to undertake further railway construction into unsettled areas. Apart from the necessary construction in connection with this great linking up scheme, no further extensions should take place. If we do undertake further railway development, we are simply thrusting upon the shoulders of the taxpayers of the State burdens which are not justified. Let the schemes which have been initiated and are being carried out be completed and perfected. With that completion and perfection there is no doubt a large amount of development and settlement will take place, which will afford relief and opportunities for those who desire to go upon the land—land which I have no hesitation in saying ranks amongst some of the most fertile and best watered in the whole area of the State of Queensland.

There is one other matter that I would like to bring under the notice of the Minister, and that is what might be termed the starving of the service. In many instances we find that a sufficient appropriation is not made to enable the department to carry out necessary additions to the inadequate accommodation which exists to-day. In some instances accommodation which was provided before there was any development on a particular line is still there. Owing to the development that has taken place in connection with passenger traffic, particularly in the South Coast district, we find that the accommodation is absolutely inadequate, and that no conveniences exist that should exist, having regard to the passenger traffic and the goods traffic. Then, again, we find that adequate provision has not been made for rolling-stock, and that old faulty rolling-stock is now used. It is very hard to condemn the department, but to my mind it is a great pity that such old carriages should be used. In some of the first-class passenger carriages, we find that the cushions, owing to their age, are torn, and the horse-hair is protruding and getting lost.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is directly contrary to the report of the Commissioner.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I travelled the other day from the border at the south-east corner of the State in a first-class railway compartment, and there can be no question about

it being ancient. The paint was all discoloured, and large patches of leather had disappeared from the cushions.

Mr. NOTT: In the carriage I came down in yesterday, on the Brisbane Valley line, the hinge fell off the lavatory door, which could not be shut.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I am not blaming the Commissioner, because he can only expend the money that is provided.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We provide more money for rolling-stock than any previous Government.

HON. J. G. APPEL: Of course; but has not the revenue increased? Has not the mileage increased?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not the train mileage. We have more powerful locomotives.

HON. J. G. APPEL: Take the South Coast line. Seven years ago you could arrive at the Melbourne Street Station a minute or two before the train left and you would find any amount of accommodation in any carriage you wanted to travel in; but to-day, unless you are at the station half an hour or three-quarters of an hour before the train leaves, you practically cannot get a seat. That is evidence of the increase in the passenger traffic.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Warwick said our trains were empty.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I am not going to speak of any railway system with which I am not acquainted. I am not speaking in a hostile manner. I am urging the Minister not to starve the department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are giving the question of rolling-stock very close attention.

HON. J. G. APPEL: The hon. gentleman must know that the rolling-stock is not adequate. The other day an accident occurred at Mayne Junction which might have been very serious indeed. According to the reports, the accident was due to the fact that the wheels in the under-carriage were not in a proper condition, and the flanges were worn to such an extent that they would not take the points. These are all matters that members of the Opposition are not simply endeavouring to make capital out of, but it is our duty to point them out to the Minister when his Estimates are before the Committee.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are making an appropriation for rolling-stock this financial year.

HON. J. G. APPEL: What amount has the hon. gentleman appropriated for repairs, additions, and matters of that kind in the South-Eastern districts of the State?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are appropriating about £750,000 for rolling-stock.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I am not referring particularly to rolling-stock, but to additions and improvements in regard to the accommodation required at different stations. The amount of this vote is absolutely inadequate. I admit that it is due to the financial position which the present Administration is in, but it is mistaken economy. I urge the hon. gentleman to increase the amount at present made available, so that the Commissioner for Railways can carry out this

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work. Hon. members have frequently to go to the Commissioner for Railways on matters affecting their electorate, and it is invariably admitted that repairs and additions are urgently required, but we are told that there is no money available. I know the Commissioner would be only too pleased to carry out additions which are necessary to meet traffic requirements; but if the Minister will not make a sufficient appropriation, it is impossible for the Commissioner to carry out the work that should be done. I have always found the Commissioner only too willing to meet hon. members whenever it is possible for him to do so; he has certainly done so in my case. But what are the facts? Take Coolangatta, for instance, where there is the small accommodation which was provided many years ago. There is no veranda over the platform, and in rainy weather, before people can get from the train into vehicles and reach their destination, they practically get wet through. It is admitted that a veranda over the platform is necessary, but the Minister will not make the needful appropriation. People are paying increased railway fares, and the traffic has increased so much that it has become necessary on certain days to run through trains from Melbourne Street to Coolangatta without calling at Southport; yet there is only the old inadequate accommodation at Coolangatta. It is necessary that some additional conveniences should be given by the Railway Department to people who are travelling and who are paying increased fares.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): The vote for the Railway Department is one which affects every electorate in Queensland. It would be a good thing for the Government to take into consideration the suggestions which have been offered time after time from this side in the direction of altering their railway policy. The time has more than arrived when we should have a Commission appointed to inquire into the relative merits of day labour and contract work in the building of railways. We have had a Commission of Inquiry in connection with the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board in Brisbane, and it is patent to everyone that a good deal of work was being slummed and a good deal of money lost on work which was not reproductive.

Any member who has had railway construction going on in his electorate knows that the same things obtains, and should mention it if only for the reason that we, as the custodians of public money, should see that the policy of any Government should be to get the very best return possible for the money contributed by the taxpayers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do you remember what Mr. Paget said about day-labour work?

Mr. VOWLES: I do not care what Mr. Paget said. He may have been speaking entirely from what he knew from departmental documents, which possibly were misleading. We do know that in many cases the day-labour work is slummed and there is not the amount of supervision of the Government work generally that there is where private individuals are interested. That applies not only to railway construction, but to all work in which the Government are interested. I do not advocate driving methods, but I do say that we should have proper supervision,

and that where it is possible the contract system should have an opportunity of proving itself.

I was very pleased to hear the hon. member for Albert reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Herbert, in which the latter took to the Labour party all the credit of the construction of the North Coast Railway. The hon. member must know from the history of railway construction in Queensland that this scheme was originated years before his Government came into power. Mr. Kidston, Mr. Paget, and Mr. Denham were the men who started the ball rolling, and this Government merely completed the track.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This Government found the money.

Mr. VOWLES: They merely carried it to fruition. The scheme was approved of and commended by a previous Government, and what is the good of the hon. member coming along now and endeavouring to give all the credit for it to the Labour Government? His logic in other respects will not bear scrutiny either. He told us that the woolgrowers—and they are not a section whom the Government claim to represent; they say they represent all classes and we are supposed to represent only one class—have been assisted by his Government, and that in their generosity they have done something which will put into the pockets of the woolgrowers £17,000 in the saving in railway freights on wool which they previously had to send by steamer. But while these men get the benefit of 4s. 6d. a bale because their wool is carried at a reduced rate, income tax and super income tax are being collected from them to make up the shortage in the running of the railways. They are prepared to pay those taxes, however, as part of a development scheme which is going to help Queensland to go ahead. We were told that, if we could only get the iron horse to North Queensland, we would get that district settled, because it has assured seasons, which other parts of the State have not got.

With reference to the railway from South Brisbane to Kyogle, it must be evident that it is going to be the means of relieving the Western railway, and will thus obviate the necessity for duplicating the main line to cope with the traffic coming from the West. At present the Southern and Western railway is the only means of taking passengers from Brisbane to Sydney, and now that we are going to carry passengers and freight from the North also, we would have a bigger congestion than ever at Wallangarra, if this railway were not coming along to relieve it.

The hon. member for Albert spoke about the use of political influence in the running of our railways. We are told frequently that the railways are the property of the people and that the railways are not supposed to pay. If that is the doctrine of hon. members opposite, we say that people who live in the backblocks should get at any rate reasonable concessions in the matter of railway communication.

I agree with the hon. member for Albert that with the price of material, the price of labour, and everything else pretty well at a maximum it is to-day, it is not a desirable time to go in for building new lines until the lands adjacent to our existing [3 p.m.] railways are tenanted. If the Government would adopt one of the planks of the Country party's platform, and, if necessary, repurchase estates

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along the existing lines and have that land settled, there would be some possibility of making the railway lines pay.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No new lines will be constructed this year.

Mr. VOWLES: I know that is so, but that is one of the things I want to refer to. The Government are not going to build or complete any new lines during the coming financial year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Except the South Brisbane-Kyogle-Grafton line.

Mr. VOWLES: During my speech on the Address in Reply I pointed out two instances that were very unbusinesslike. One was where the Government were playing the fool with the Tara line, and the other was in connection with the Toowoomba railway yards, where engine sheds are supposed to be erected in the future. During the last election and the election previous to that a number of men were rushed into the Toowoomba district, and £70,000 was expended in the building of bridges and the making of a little bit of a loop. There are no buildings there for engine facilities, and the old shed, which is in a state of ruin, is being patched and a new top is being put on it. Think of that dead money, amounting to £70,000! Then we have probably £150,000 lying dead in the Ipswich yards—possibly for more than ten years. Going from Toowoomba and Ipswich we come to the Tara line, where a number of men were rushed into the district immediately before the last election. A certain amount of work was done, but that work is gradually decreasing. Men are being taken away, but the overhead expenses are there all the time; and, although they have completed, I believe, something like 7 miles of line, the line has not been brought to a payable position, consequently the whole of the money which has been expended in that direction is lying dead, carrying interest and bringing in nothing in the way of revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The percentage of dead capital under the present Government is no greater than under previous Governments.

Mr. VOWLES: The money has been lying dead at Tara, Toowoomba, and Ipswich for years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The percentage is not any greater.

Mr. VOWLES: There is a considerable capital outlay there, and nothing comes in by way of returns. I often wonder if the Government and the Commissioner realise that the people who run motor buses and motor-cars are coming into serious competition with the Railway Department.

It is highly necessary that the Commissioner should reorganise his department and revise the time-table in country districts. In the summer time, unless first-class cream can be brought to a butter factory, it is valueless to the producer at the present price, because what he receives does not pay him for producing the commodity; consequently, if the railways are going to be run for the purposes of land development, they must cater for the public, and must give them facilities for bringing their produce in so that they will get the best possible price. Quite recently I was reading a report of the evidence of farmers in my district given in

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connection with the award for rural workers. They all claimed that they could not pay the wages because of the price they received for their commodity, and they all stated that for the want of proper railway facilities they were unable to get the price they should get, more particularly in the summer time.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is an incorrect statement.

Mr. VOWLES: It is perfectly correct. Go to the butter factory at Dalby and get the particulars of the Tara consignments and all the consignments along the Bell line, and you will find that in the summer time with a service two days a week it is impossible for more than 70 per cent. of the selectors to get a first-class result, more particularly because of the way the trains are run at the end of the week.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have received scores of letters of appreciation of our services.

Mr. VOWLES: Probably from some of your friends.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And from some of yours, too.

Mr. VOWLES: If the hon. gentleman peruses the evidence contained in the issue of the newspaper at Dalby last Tuesday, he will see that every witness who gave evidence in connection with the rural workers' log said the same thing about his produce. They all said they could not produce profitably and pay the rates demanded unless they got first-class prices for their cream, and they could not get first-class prices unless they got the facilities by rail to get their cream to the factory promptly. There is now competition with the railway in the Dalby district. There is a motor service between Jandowae and Dalby and between Bell and Dalby. Passengers do not travel by those conveniences because they prefer them to the railway, but because the time tables are more suitable. I know that, if there was a little alteration in the railway time table by the introduction of a double service, it would mean an additional outlay of only £80 or £100 a year. Under the present conditions some of the railways might just as well be closed up or be taken over by private enterprise, because, if that were done, we would have better services than we have to-day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The tonnage on our railways has increased considerably.

Mr. VOWLES: I quite expect it would with the extra lines that have been opened, and more particularly with the linking up of the systems of Northern and Southern Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There has been an increase in the passenger traffic also.

Mr. VOWLES: Queensland is expanding every year, and we naturally expect that every department would expand. But we know that the cost of running the department is expanding pretty freely. We know that it takes double the revenue to run the State to-day that it took when the Government originally came into office.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You know, too, that all costs all over the world have gone up considerably.

Mr. VOWLES: We know that the State is expanding, and with the opening up of

new lines we naturally would expect an increase in the tonnage and passenger traffic. We are told that Queensland has become prosperous under a Labour Government. If that is so, we should get an increased tonnage and passenger traffic on our railways.

The hon. member for Albert spoke about the inconveniences that the people have to suffer in the outside districts. I remember some years ago going with a deputation to wait on the Hon. W. T. Paget, the then Secretary for Railways, at his office in George street. Mr. Coyne, the then hon. member for Warrego, and the hon. members for Balonne, Maranoa, and myself comprised that deputation. I will never forget the tirade of abuse that the late Mr. Paget was subjected to on that occasion, more especially by the hon. member for Balonne. The grievance was that there were no water bags attached to the Western trains. You never see them on the Western trains in these times when a Labour Government is in power.

Mr. HYNES: Probably you never look for the water bag. (Laughter.)

Mr. VOWLES: They are certainly very handy. Again, no passengers should be asked to travel the long distances they have to travel in the West unless they have proper lavatory conveniences. We shall be told that there are a certain number of lavatory conveniences on the train, but, if you travel down from the West on Tuesday and Friday, it will be found that the bulk of the train is made up of sleeping coaches, to which the ordinary passenger has no access until Toowoomba is reached. There is a 50-mile run from Dalby to Toowoomba, and very often it is not possible, except for those in privileged compartments which are locked up, to get to a lavatory on the train. Passengers are always complaining of that fact.

I will say that the people of the West have received some concessions from the Government, and they appreciate them. Those concessions are in the way of better passenger traffic. The train that leaves Toowoomba after the arrival of the mail train on Monday and returns again from Roma on Wednesday is one of the greatest boons in the West.

Mr. MORGAN: It took us a while to get it.

Mr. VOWLES: Yes; we had it originally, then it was taken away and again re-installed. Again, the train for Western passengers, which leaves on Tuesdays and Fridays at 3 o'clock, is highly appreciated by the people who have to travel long distances in the summer. But, while we have those benefits, we have to realise that freights and fares have been increased.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not as much as in the other States.

Mr. VOWLES: More so. If the hon. gentleman will go through the records he will find it is so. It is a mistake to increase freights at all.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said the increase was not so great as in other States.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman is trying to sidetrack. If we have those facilities, we have got it in the neck in other directions. How are we to encourage people to go out into the back country if we put high freights on their produce? If the

Minister will look at the comparative charges on articles necessary for the development of the land, such as fencing wire, and galvanised iron—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Take cattle.

Mr. VOWLES: That is an exception, because of the slump in cattle. If the hon. gentleman compares the freights on the articles I have mentioned with those obtaining in New South Wales and Victoria, he will find that our settlers are charged twice as much as those of the other States. When the hon. gentleman and his party put a 30 per cent. increase in freights on wool and on sheep going to market, they tried to make people believe that the only persons affected by the impositions were the big sheep men, whereas the smallest grazing farmer and producer is also penalised.

Mr. HYNES: Produce is carried more cheaply on the Queensland railways than on the railways of any other State in the Commonwealth.

Mr. VOWLES: Let the hon. member produce figures to prove that statement. He cannot.

Mr. HYNES: I can.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member cannot, because it is not a fact. Like the Minister the hon. member may say that our fares and freights have not been increased at the same rate during the last few years as they have in other States. Nevertheless the comparison is in their favour. It is a mistake to impose this increase in fares and freights on the people in the back country. If the Government want to induce people to go out and develop the country, they should give those people concessions and preferential railway freights on the necessities of life, and so make their burdens easier. We have advocated this on many occasions. It is one of the outstanding things so far as railway matters in Queensland are concerned.

Too much money is being lost on our railways. The state of affairs existing to-day did not exist in 1914. We were then getting better results for the money expended. We have found out in other directions that there have been leakages, and that there has been slumping of work. That has existed for a long while, particularly in connection with railway construction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You had more men per mile of railway than we have.

Mr. VOWLES: We were able to show a profit to cover interest on cost of construction, whereas the hon. gentleman's Government can only show an accumulated list of deficits, ranging from £1,250,000 to £1,750,000 a year, and totalling in the aggregate something like £10,000,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There have only been three small profits in the railways of Queensland during the last forty years.

Mr. VOWLES: I am not talking about profits; I am referring to the interest on the cost of construction. One expects any business at least to pay the interest on the cost of construction. If our railways were paying we, as representatives of the taxpayers, would be satisfied. The railways were doing that in 1914, but have not done so since.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That was not so in 1914.

Mr. VOWLES: The only excuse the hon. gentleman can offer is that the railways are

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not intended to pay. If they are not intended to pay, why did the Government impose the recent increases in freights on the produce of the man on the land, the man who is producing wool, and the man who is sending his sheep to market? We cannot class that man with the wool kings and the big companies. The small farmer suffers with the magnate.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your party advocated an increase in freights.

Mr. MORGAN: Our party did not. It is no good saying that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Albert did.

Mr. VOWLES: Whatever opinions individual members of the party may express, they have nothing to do with the politics of the party. It goes to show, what members on this side always claim, that we are at liberty to ventilate our own individual opinions. We are not bound down like hon. members opposite. There are no Caucus slaves on this side. Members on this side are not driven. They are at liberty to vote according to their conscience, and that is why you find at times individual members ventilating their own troubles and giving their own private opinions.

I want to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that, in the Railway Department, just the same as in the other departments, they are allowing their buildings to get into disrepair for the want of paint, and it is highly necessary—more particularly in the western country—that the buildings should be painted frequently if you want to preserve them.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: More expenditure!

Mr. VOWLES: It is not a matter of more expenditure. It is a matter of saving an asset. It is an insurance. It is much better to pay £100 for painting and for the upkeep of a building than to allow it to get into a state of disrepair, and possibly have to pay several hundred pounds later on to re-erect it.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: You should be sent up to make a report.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member should be the last to talk about making a report. Do we not remember the time when the hon. gentleman was appointed to make a report on railway matters? Do we not remember the report which he presented to this House—an immense volume, which nobody ever read?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What more do you want?

Mr. VOWLES: We want appointed to Railway Commissions men who will report impartially, and not men who have an axe to grind. A man who was a member of the Railway Union should never have been appointed to a Royal Commission to report on the work of the Railway Department. Disinterested outside experts are the persons to get on these occasions, and not a man who will get up in this Chamber and tell us he can save a quarter of a million a year in the running of the department, and then come back with a blank sheet as the result of his inquiries.

Mr. RIORDAN (*Burke*): I suppose this vote presents a good opportunity to members to ventilate grievances. The hon. member for Dalby talked about the large surpluses of previous Governments in connection with

the management of the railways, but since this Government came into power we have had practically the whole of the Northern and Western districts closed down. It is all very well to level criticisms at the Railway Department. A good deal of it probably does no harm, and it may do a lot of good, but we have to realise that the Normanton-Croydon Railway, the Cooktown Railway, and the railway from Cairns to Forsayth probably do not pay for axle grease. All these things have to be taken into consideration. Since the advent of this Government there has been a collapse in the Cloncurry district, where mining propositions which previously were good payable concerns for the Railway Department are not now holding their own, but have been getting behind year after year.

The southern people are treated very well from a railway point of view, and get a far better spin from the Railway Department than the people in the country districts.

In regard to the grievance about water-bags, it is a very difficult matter for railway men to keep their eyes on water-bags while trains are running along. From my experience, before the trains get to their destination the water-bags become the playthings of the children on the train, and as soon as they are emptied or partly emptied they are dropped out of the window. (Laughter.) Unless the bags are placed as a fixture, it would be very difficult for the train officials to keep them in their places. Some fixture should be provided for the water-bags so as to give a supply of water on long-distance trains. It is only reasonable to give the best to women and children, as a man can battle along and get a drink at any tank along the line. There are plenty of conveniences in this direction for the male folk.

The Public Works Commission intend to make a report on the suggested railway line from Kajabbi to Mount Isa and thence to Burketown; but before any railway line is constructed to Mount Isa it should be proved that that field is one which is likely to last.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RIORDAN: In the past mining companies have had a good deal of consideration. At one time it was necessary to build a railway line to get communication, but our improved main roads and motor facilities will serve some districts and enable their produce to be removed in that way for many years to come without going to the expense of building a railway line when the mine will perhaps only last for five or six years. Our experience with regard to copper mining in Queensland has not been very encouraging. The fields have been short-lived, the ore only existing at a shallow depth, and railways which have been built for mining companies are practically white elephants. This party is not responsible for that. Then, again, take the building of railway lines out to Western Queensland, and the foolish policy adopted by Governments of building railway lines through big holdings of perhaps a thousand square miles in area, and only employing a manager, a bookkeeper, a jackeroo, and about thirty aboriginals. What hope was there of getting any settlement when these people had leases of the land for forty or fifty years?

Mr. MORGAN: Do not the Government provide for resumption after a certain period?

[*Mr. Vowles.*

Mr. RIORDAN: When resumptions fell due a fair average portion of the holdings had to be taken, and I do not know who was to be the judge of a fair average portion of the run. I do not think that some of the resumptions would bear investigation. Resumptions should be made for closer settlement along railway lines, and the people with large holdings forced further back. The selector puts the land to better use, and is a better feeder of the railway line than a big pastoral company. I am thinking of Maxwellton, Marathon, and Afton Downs in my electorate, which should be supporting a hundred or more families. The land would be stocked to its full carrying capacity, and we would get a better return from the land. We would provide traffic for our railways, and would be able to take produce from the interior to the seaport at Townsville. The railway was built from Townsville to Cloncurry, but within a couple of hundred miles of Cloncurry there was the port in the Gulf. I have heard one hon. member say that the water is blown out of the river up there at certain seasons of the year, which is a silly statement, and there is nothing to stop a lightering scheme, which would have been more profitable and efficient than building a railway and forcing the people to send their goods 600 or 700 miles to Townsville when there were water facilities right at their back door. We know that the men who were responsible for the building of the railway to Cloncurry had big interests in Townsville. The hon. member for Carpentaria, at that time Mr. Forsyth, was a member of a firm which had all its interests in Townsville, and the extension of the Northern Railway practically meant the ruination of the Gulf country, which it put back half a century. As to the cry about the Government being responsible for the failure of the railways, I do not think this Government is responsible for that. I think the responsibility rests on previous Governments for being so short-sighted as not to make provision to get hold of land along existing railway lines instead of allowing it to be overrun with prickly-pear. That is the condition of things one can see along the railways to Dalby and Tara and such places, where land which should have been a big producing factor in the hands of small settlers is held by large landholders, and allowed to go to ruin.

Mr. MORGAN interjected.

Mr. RIORDAN: A man who is practically forced out of his electorate by prickly-pear still stands for the big landholder! Yet he has evidence of the state of affairs every time he goes to his electorate.

Mr. MORGAN: The policy of the Country party is to cut up the land.

Mr. RIORDAN: The Country party! It changes its name as often as it can conveniently get a pact! It has been swallowed in the Federal Parliament, and it has been swallowed here. I have no illusions about the Country party, any more than have the people in the country. It is only a matter of another election, when it will disappear altogether.

Another matter I would like to refer to is the charge made to selectors by the Railway Department for sidings. I think that is an unjust taxation on people living in country districts. I do not know whether the policy is adopted in the Southern Division of the State, but a siding is an asset to the Rail-

way Department, and I do not think any settler should have such a tax imposed on him. If sidings are warranted, I think it is the function of the Railway Department to put them in without making any charge for them. If, on the other hand, the loading does not warrant them and a couple of selectors are financially in a position to put in their own siding, or if only one individual insists on having one, well and good—let them find the money. Where, however, a group of selectors want a siding, the cost should be defrayed by the Commissioner, because as an asset the siding is absolutely no good to the selectors. It is an asset to the Commissioner, and can be removed and used elsewhere in the event of the place going back, although I do not think there is a likelihood of places going back in country districts.

There is another matter I would like to bring under the notice of the Minister and the Commissioner for Railways, and of the Maintenance Branch especially.

For many years there has been a strong demand for decent living quarters for maintenance men and for the establishment of group camps, and I hope they will work out established for the education of the children, and where the people's social life can be made more pleasant and more congenial, under which system there would [3.30 p.m.] be a tendency to keep a good set of men together for railway maintenance. The Railway Department have commenced the establishment of group camps, and I hope they will work out successfully; but they should not be made a lever by the department for reducing the maintenance strength. Along the Western Railway the department has reduced the strength to a pretty fine point, and in some cases two men have to look after 24 miles of line, which is a ridiculous state of affairs. The department is only courting trouble when they get down to such a fine point. We realise that the traffic is not so heavy on the different lines in the North since the slump in the mining industry; still, it is necessary to keep the lines up to a certain standard. The Western mail to Cloncurry runs at a pretty fair speed, and unless the line is kept in good repair, some trouble will eventuate, and the department is only looking for trouble when they pursue their foolish policy of discharging one man in each gang, thus weakening the strength of their maintenance section. In some cases the lengths are even greater than two men to 24 miles, and I think it is bordering on a scandal to reduce the maintenance strength to such a fine point. I strongly object to the group system being made a lever for dismissing maintenance men. The group system could be made a good one, and could be worked economically by the department. A greater mileage could be more efficiently maintained by twelve or fourteen men in a gang, aided by the services of a rail motor-car, than by sacking men as a result of inaugurating the group system of settlement.

During my service with the Railway Department, according to the regulations, if a man was employed temporarily for more than six months, he had a claim to be appointed to the permanent staff. Some men are employed temporarily for twelve months and over, and the department should have these men appointed to the permanent staff, and give them the opportunity of enjoying

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the privileges that the permanent officials enjoy. There is a degree of uncertainty about the temporary man's employment, because after he has been six months or twelve months on the job he is put off for a day, and he registers at the Labour Bureau, and if labour was properly supplied through the Labour Bureau that man's name would be placed at the bottom of the list and the top man would be selected, and the temporary man would have to wait his turn again.

There is another matter in connection with charging for seating accommodation on the Western mail. That practice may be justified in Brisbane where there are big crowds travelling, and where we have sleeping carriages on the trains, but it is practically ridiculous to institute such a practice on the Cloncurry line. It is a rather miserable way for the Railway Department to go about collecting an extra shilling or two. We know that there is a limited amount of space on the Cloncurry mail and all western trains, and apart from sleeping-berth accommodation, there should be no charge for seating accommodation. Once a passenger pays for his ticket he should have the right to go along and get his seat in the train, which was the practice until a few months ago. To charge for seating accommodation is a bad system to establish in the Cloncurry district, and I am sure the Commissioner will give favourable consideration to wiping out this humbug tax on the people in western districts. It is most objectionable to have to wait about the platform at night time at a place like Hughenden until the train comes in from Cloncurry. The passengers have to wait on the platform until the Railway Department ascertains what seats have been booked. The passengers then set about booking seats. The first night the practice was introduced the train lost about forty-five minutes. Twelve seats were booked. It cannot be said that the 12s. which was received for those twelve seats compensated for the forty-five minutes' delay to the train. During that time the whole of the train staff were idle, and the rolling-stock under those conditions will not show a good return.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Where was the booking done in the first instance?

Mr. RIORDAN: The booking is done in the first instance at Cloncurry, or wherever you first join the train. You then have to wait until the chart is obtained from the conductor before the seats are allotted. Such a system might be all right in the Southern Division, where they have up-to-date trains, and where the people have to "scrap" for their seats; but these "fads" should be kept for the people down here. The Commissioner will find it more profitable and save a great deal of delay by withdrawing this charge of 1s. for seats in the Northern Division.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I would like to say something with regard to the freights on cattle. The Minister interjected across the Chamber that cattle were carried at a cheaper rate in Queensland than in any of the other States. That might be so so far as the cost per mile is concerned, but, if the fact is taken into consideration that cattle in Victoria are to-day worth 75 per cent. more than in Queensland, it will be seen that the charges in Queensland are a great deal heavier.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It costs more to carry them here.

[*Mr. Riordan.*]

Mr. MORGAN: Cattle in New South Wales are also worth a lot more than in Queensland. Nevertheless, we find that the freight on cattle is considerably higher in this State than in any other part of Australia. I have figures showing that in some instances the freight on cattle in Queensland is equal to 20 per cent. of their market value. It seems to me extraordinary that in an industry which is down and out, and in which the people engaged are losing a considerable amount of money yearly, the Government should take from those people 20 per cent. of the value of their cattle. In 1914, when the industry was in a better position than it is to-day and when it was more profitable for those engaged in the industry, the freight on cattle for 100 miles was 80s. per truck. I am now referring to the "K" wagons which are said to be capable of carrying eighteen head of large cattle. That freight was equal to 4s. 5d. per head per 100 miles. But at that time there was a further concession, which has since been taken away. If the meatworks engaged a train to carry cattle, a reduction of 20 per cent. was allowed. That is, the charge per truck on a train load of cattle amounted to 64s., or 3s. 6d. per head per 100 miles. In 1924 the freight on cattle for 100 miles is 139s. 3d. per truck, or 7s. 8d. per head, against 4s. 5d. per head in 1914.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There has been an increase in working costs since then.

Mr. MORGAN: There are relatively increased charges for longer distances. Let me take these figures—

FREIGHT PER TRUCK, PER 500 MILES.

				s. d.
1914	291 0
1924	443 6

That means a cost of £1 4s. 7d. a head to truck cattle 500 miles, which is equal to 20 per cent. of their market value in the Enoggera Yards to-day. The Minister must himself admit that it is an enormous taxation to place on these people.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The last increase of 5 per cent. did not apply to cattle.

Mr. MORGAN: No, but surely the Minister has taken sufficient from that industry by increasing the freight on cattle by 64 per cent. since 1914.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Compare the working costs for the department over the same period.

Mr. MORGAN: There was a conference held some time ago, and in order to place the cattle industry on something like a sound foundation and to enable people to carry on in some manner or other, it was decided to reduce the shipping freights overseas considerably. The workers in the meatworks also volunteered to have their wages reduced so that the men engaged in the industry could carry on. That was voluntarily done; the employees consented to a reduction, and the shipping companies reduced their freights, and the Queensland Government decided to reduce their railway freights by 30 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And the Federal Government?

Mr. MORGAN: The Federal Government gave a bonus.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Which they withdrew.

Mr. MORGAN: It was withdrawn this year, and the State Government have also withdrawn their concession of 30 per cent., which was a very big item.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It operated for a long time.

Mr. MORGAN: Notwithstanding the fact that the industry has not improved, the cattle people are now paying this extra 30 per cent. I am pleased to say that the workers in the meatworks have not struck and asked to have their wages put back to the old rate. They would be justified in so doing, owing to the fact that the Queensland Government have, as it were, set them a lead.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Federal Government set the lead.

Mr. MORGAN: I am pleased to know that the shipping companies have not increased their freights overseas.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They want that subsidy from the Federal Government.

Mr. MORGAN: The Queensland Government are the ones who are interested most in the cattle industry. They know whether the State stations are paying or not, and whether the cattle industry is paying. They have all the figures available, and, notwithstanding the fact that they are themselves losing a considerable amount of money each year, they come along and put on an increase of 30 per cent. in freights, while those engaged in the industry are attempting to put it on a solid foundation. The cattle industry is practically confined to Queensland. The Southern States are not interested at all in the export of frozen beef. The industry is one of Queensland's principal industries. When we take the by-products—canned meats, hides, tallow, etc.—it is the second largest industry in Queensland from a revenue-producing point of view. Notwithstanding that fact the Government have not helped the industry in the way they should.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have.

Mr. MORGAN: The least they could have done was to continue the rebate of 30 per cent. in freights, until the industry reached a sound foundation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why did not the Federal Government continue their subsidy? They had a big surplus.

Mr. MORGAN: The Federal Government are not so greatly interested in the cattle industry. The Southern States are not sending beef out of the country at all, and the Federal Government realise that it is an industry wholly and solely confined to Queensland. Why should the Federal Government subsidise the cattle industry when it is of no interest to the other States? It is the duty of the State Government to look after this industry and do all they possibly can to put it on a payable foundation. The Federal Government were not asked, and naturally would not be asked, to subsidise Mount Morgan; yet the Government have not thought fit to withdraw the subsidy of £60,000 a year to Mount Morgan. The price of copper still remains at a value that will not allow Mount Morgan to be worked at a profit, and the Government are still continuing the subsidy to that company. Why, then, do they not also continue the reduction in freight on cattle until such time

as the cattle industry is once more placed on a payable footing? I do not object to freights being increased on products that are realising high values. Nobody complained when the Government increased the freight on wool. Although wool carries a very high freight, nobody complained when the rate was raised, because wool is a wonderfully paying proposition at the present time. We recognise that, when the freight on cattle was put up during the war—it was increased by 64 per cent.—we were getting £3 per 100 lb. for our cattle, and we could well afford to pay the increase in the freight. The Government were perfectly justified in increasing the freight on that occasion; but when cattle came down to £1 per 100 lb., the Government had a perfect right to reduce the freight to what it was in 1914.

Mr. WEIR: How did you roar when the Government increased the freight?

Mr. MORGAN: We did not roar. We recognised that we could afford to pay it. I remember that on one occasion Mr. Fihelly said he thought railway freights should be raised and lowered according to the value of the produce that the railways were carrying. That would be a sensible thing to do. Mr. Fihelly mentioned lucerne chaff, and he said that, when the farmers were getting £20 a ton for lucerne chaff, they could well afford to pay a higher freight than when they were getting £5 a ton. The producers can afford to pay a higher freight when they are getting a good price for what they produce. The Minister is continually arguing that the freights in Queensland are lower than they are in any other States. He knows that is wrong.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said the percentage increase is lower.

Mr. MORGAN: We saw recently that in New South Wales they are going to reduce the freights on the railways by some hundreds of thousands of pounds, and in Victoria the rates are very much lower than they are in Queensland. The freights on primary products in Queensland are very much higher than they are in the other States. Let us take agricultural produce. Recently we got the figures from the Minister so far as they apply to Queensland. The following table will give a comparison between the freights charged in Queensland and those charged in Victoria on agricultural produce—

	Queensland.	Victoria.
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
50 Miles	9 11	7 0
100 Miles	17 2	10 10
200 Miles	27 4	14 4
300 Miles	33 9	16 6

There is an increase of 100 per cent. on freights on agricultural produce in Queensland as compared with the freights charged in Victoria.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are not quoting the "to port" rates.

Mr. MORGAN: No; but I am going to expose the Minister on the "to port" rates. Take flour as an instance. To bring flour down from the country to Brisbane to feed the people of Brisbane, the Railway Department charges 12s. a ton for 200 miles. But to take it up country—to feed the

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people living in the bush—the department charges 39s. 11d. per ton. That is three times as much as the “to port” rate. That is where the Minister and the Premier mislead the people. When they quote the

freights on agricultural produce they quote the “to port” rate, but they do not quote the freight charged to take that produce up country. Let us deal with dairy produce—

COMPARISON OF FREIGHTS—QUEENSLAND AND VICTORIA.

Commodity.	State.	50 Miles. per ton.	100 Miles. per ton.	200 Miles. per ton.	300 Miles. per ton.
Dairy produce	Queensland ..	<i>s. d.</i> 28 10	<i>s. d.</i> 48 11	<i>s. d.</i> 79 11	<i>s. d.</i> 106 4
	Victoria ..	13 6	25 2	42 4	54 2

There, again, the freights on dairy produce are nearly 100 per cent. greater in Queensland

than in Victoria. Then take fresh fruits, in lots of 3 cwt. and over—

Commodity.	State.	50 Miles. per ton.	100 Miles. per ton.	200 Miles. per ton.	300 Miles. per ton.
Fresh fruit (3 cwt. and over)	Queensland ..	<i>s. d.</i> 9 11	<i>s. d.</i> 17 2	<i>s. d.</i> 27 4	<i>s. d.</i> 33 9
	Victoria ..	9 0	16 0	26 0	33 4

In regard to fresh fruit there is very little difference between the freights in Queensland and Victoria.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Look at the enormous population and the small area of Victoria.

Mr. MORGAN: A most important thing in Queensland to develop our resources is to get people to go out to distant parts and grow produce, the carriage of which will enable the railways to be self-supporting. How do the Government encourage these people? Then take wire-netting in truck loads—

Commodity.	State.	50 Miles. per ton.	100 Miles. per ton.	200 Miles. per ton.	300 Miles. per ton.
Fencing wire (truck loads)	Queensland ..	<i>s. d.</i> 17 5	<i>s. d.</i> 29 11	<i>s. d.</i> 51 3	<i>s. d.</i> 64 1
	Victoria ..	11 10	21 4	34 6	44 4

You can see from that that freights are considerably higher in Queensland than they are in Victoria.

Then with regard to wire-netting in truck loads. It is a most important thing to

Queensland; we have dingoes, foxes, and rabbits. In Victoria they have no dingoes and do not need wire-netting to the extent that Queensland does. The comparative rates are—

Commodity.	State.	50 Miles. per ton.	100 Miles. per ton.	200 Miles. per ton.	300 Miles. per ton.
Wire netting (truck loads)	Queensland ..	<i>s. d.</i> 17 5	<i>s. d.</i> 29 11	<i>s. d.</i> 51 3	<i>s. d.</i> 64 1
	Victoria ..	6 2	10 10	17 6	22 8

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Your own Government did that.

Mr. MORGAN: These rates are in existence under a Labour Government, and, if they are wrong, the Labour Government

should right them. Unfortunately they have not done so, but on top of these freights they have imposed the recent increase of 5 per cent.

Then take the charges on manures and fertilisers per ton—

Commodity.	State.	50 Miles. per ton.	100 Miles. per ton.	200 Miles. per ton.	300 Miles. per ton.
Manures and fertilisers (truck loads)	Queensland ..	<i>s. d.</i> 4 1	<i>s. d.</i> 4 5	<i>s. d.</i> 8 9	<i>s. d.</i> 10 3
	Victoria ..	3 6	5 4	7 10	10 6

So that on fertilisers there is very little difference.

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The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Quote the long-distance rates—200 miles and over.

Mr. MORGAN: I have given up to 300 miles, and I cannot go above that, because there is no railway in Victoria longer than 300 miles.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Then compare them with all the other States.

Mr. MORGAN: The people in the country do not mind so much the increased fares. A great number of them do not ride on the railways once in twelve months, but they are using these things I have quoted every day of their lives. If they use the railways, it is generally because they are going away and are going to spend £20, £30, or £40, and the extra 5s. in fares does not affect them. They do not travel backwards and forwards every day to their work. Some of them do not travel on the railways once in five years.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: What?

Mr. MORGAN: I know people in my district who are over seventy years of age who have never ridden on the railway yet. They went up there in their young days, and they have been on the stations ever since. We are more interested in the cost of the necessities of life than we are in respect of these other matters.

Now I want to point out that, owing to the fact that the Government have adopted a policy of increasing the freights on the railways, they are losing a great deal of revenue. The Minister must know that in America they have adopted the principle of a big volume of tonnage and low freights, whereas in Queensland we have evidently adopted a policy of high freights and a small volume of tonnage. We are apparently trying to squeeze the people as much as we can and to get as much as we can out of them and carry as little on the railways as possible. Under that policy the Government impose high freights on motor-cars travelling on the railways, and the result is that the motor-cars go by road. The freight on motor-cars is prohibitive, and, unless a car breaks down and is unable to run under its own power, the railways carry very few cars. The motor people in Brisbane to-day will tell you that they can send a car to any part of Queensland for one-third of what it costs on the railway.

Mr. WEIR: Nonsense!

Mr. MORGAN: It is not nonsense. I quoted figures here previously to show that it is true. I got figures from some people in Queensland showing that, where a car would have cost £15 to send to a certain place, it was run up to that place for £5.

Then, again, take cattle. Owners are not trucking them from Toowoomba to Wallangarra, for instance; they are walking them direct to Mungindi or Garah and trucking them from there to the Southern markets. It is no use the Minister telling me that I am wrong. You have only to look at the papers every day to see where the cattle are going. Another thing is that the Railway Department is not making an effort to provide facilities for the trucking of cattle. We know that the greatest difficulty we have to-day is to secure trucks. We have had a very big killing season this year, and to secure trucks it is necessary to give six or eight weeks' notice owing to the fact that the Government have not sufficient trucks to carry the live stock in the State.

I wish to show that from a statistical point of view the Queensland railways ought to be

run more cheaply than those in any other State, whereas the working expenses of the Queensland railways are much greater than the working expenses of the railways in other parts of Australia. The figures are—

PERCENTAGE OF WORKING EXPENSES TO GROSS REVENUE.

	1921-22.	1922-23.
New South Wales ..	73.07	69.97
Victoria ..	74.38	72.11
Queensland ..	93.32	86.97
South Australia ..	76.94	74.96
Western Australia ..	82.35	75.80
Tasmania ..	91.46	89.86

PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE TO CAPITAL COST.

New South Wales ..	5.21
Victoria ..	4.40
Queensland ..	1.58
South Australia ..	4.59
Western Australia ..	3.80
Tasmania ..	0.94

[4 p.m.]

With the exception of Tasmania Queensland shows the lowest return of revenue on capital cost of any State in the Commonwealth.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And the lowest running cost per train mile.

Mr. MORGAN: The following table shows the miles constructed and cost of construction and equipment to the year 1922-23:—

	Miles Constructed.	Cost of Construction and Equipment.	
		Total.	Per Mile.
Queensland ..	5,906	44,824,000	7,589
Victoria ..	4,333	64,615,000	14,912
New South Wales	5,318	87,714,000	16,493

Those figures show that Victoria has to pay interest on twice the amount of money per mile that Queensland has; yet the freights and fares in Victoria are cheaper than in Queensland. Notwithstanding the fact that it has cost the Queensland Government about 50 per cent. less to construct and equip her railways than it has cost the two principal southern States, our freights and fares are greater in Queensland, and the railways are not showing a profit, while the railways in both the other States are showing a working profit. That goes to show that there is something wrong, and that the freights and fares on the Queensland Railways are ever so much too high, and that something should be done. Political jobbery is the cause of it all. We should have the cheapest railway freights and fares of any State in Australia, because we have to pay interest on only £7,589 per mile, as against £14,912 paid by Victoria, and £16,493 paid by New South Wales.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): I desire to reply to some of the statements which have been made by the hon. member for Murilla and the hon. member for Enoggera in connection with the comparison made of the

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freights and fares in Queensland and Victoria. I also have compiled a table which clearly sets out that in Queensland, taking the average, the cost to the producer of getting his produce to market on the railways is much less in Queensland than it is in the Tory-governed State—or until-recently-Tory-governed State of Victoria. It is quite an easy matter for the hon. member for Murilla and other hon. members opposite to get hold of a freight and fares schedule and make out a case for their own benefit, but I am dealing with averages. The hon. member for Murilla is particularly interested in the cattle industry, and as he stated, it is one of the most important industries we have in Queensland; and it is only right and just that the Government of this State should cater particularly for people who are engaged in this most important industry. The Government have done so. I find that the freight upon cattle in Queensland is much less than in the State which the hon. member for Murilla always quotes in this Chamber, and which was a Tory-governed State for many years—that is, the State of Victoria. These are the figures that I have been able to obtain—

Distance.	Freights per Head upon Cattle.	
	Queensland.	Victoria.
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
25 Miles	2 3.1	3 0.6
100 Miles	8 2.29	11 1.2
230 Miles	14 4	17 1.4
300 Miles	19 0.52	25 5.2
500 Miles	26 1.06	42 2.3

The recent 5 per cent. increase in freights did not apply to cattle.

Mr. MORGAN: Do you say there is a railway of 500 miles in Victoria?

Mr. HYNES: I said that it is possible to carry produce 500 miles in Victoria.

Mr. MORGAN: There is no railway 500 miles in length in Victoria. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. HYNES: But it is possible to travel 500 miles on the railways in Victoria.

Mr. MORGAN: Yes.

Mr. HYNES: I would advise the hon. member to make further inquiries before interjecting.

Let us now get on to agricultural produce. We contend that the Government, notwithstanding the fact that the Opposition call themselves the Country party, have done more towards encouraging land settlement than any of the Tory Administrations which have been in power in Queensland since the inception of responsible government.

Mr. MOORE: Talk sense.

Mr. HYNES: The rates of freight on agricultural produce per truckload to the nearest port are—

—	Queensland.	Victoria.
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
25 Miles	3 10	4 2
50 Miles	5 8	7 0
100 Miles	10 2	10 10
200 Miles	17 3	14 4

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The rate of freight on agricultural produce other than to port in small lots per ton is—

Queensland.	Victoria.
<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
5 11	8 2

Mr. MORGAN: They have no differential charges in Victoria. Did you quote the up-country figures for Queensland?

Mr. HYNES: I will now deal with the freight per ton on potatoes in small lots other than to port—

Queensland.	Victoria.
<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
4 9	6 4

The hon. member who has just resumed his seat made the statement that the people do not use the long-distance passenger fare concessions that obtain in Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: Not every day or every week.

Mr. HYNES: I say they do; and hon. members opposite have advocated and asked for further reductions.

Mr. MORGAN: We think they are entitled to them.

Mr. HYNES: The following is the comparison of the long-distance second-class passenger fares:—

—	300 Miles.	400 Miles.	500 Miles.	600 Miles.
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Queensland..	28 9	36 0	43 0	50 0
Victoria ..	35 2	42 8	50 1	57 7

Those figures which I have read out for the benefit of the hon. member for Murilla and other hon. members opposite are a clear indication that under a Labour Administration people living in the rural and remote parts of the State have been catered for on the railways to a greater advantage than people living in the rural and remote districts of Victoria.

A great deal of criticism has been levelled by hon. members opposite at the Government because the railways show an accumulated deficit. One would think, when listening to hon. members opposite, that under the Tory regime there was no such thing as a deficit in the Railway Department; but we know that on many occasions they had very large deficits.

Mr. MORGAN: Not every year.

Mr. HYNES: We know that the accumulated deficits of Tory Administrations of Queensland and other States put the deficits of the Labour Administration in the shade.

The Secretary for Railways, in a very able speech delivered by him in this Chamber last year when this vote was under discussion, stated that we lost £1,000,000 on the agricultural railways of Queensland last year. The hon. gentleman very aptly referred to that loss as a subsidy to country development. Do hon. members opposite object to subsidising country development to that extent? Hon. members opposite profess to be friends of the farmer and of the people settling in the State, yet they object to paying a subsidy for the purpose of benefiting those people and encouraging land settlement. Under the old Tory regime—and

there are hon. members opposite who were members of the Tory Government prior to the advent of the Labour Government in 1915—the Governments in power allowed an iniquitous and unjust measure to remain on the statute-book—the Railway Guarantee Act of 1895. Under that Act the people adjacent to a new railway were compelled to guarantee any losses on that railway. That was a tremendous factor in retarding the development of this State. When the Labour party came into power in 1915, they repealed that Act and wiped out a debt of £220,000 which was owing by the settlers of Queensland. (Opposition interjections.) That is one thing that the Labour party have done for land settlement. The treatment that the Labour Administration are giving to the people on the land is reflected in the fact that we have a smaller percentage of the population of Queensland living in the metropolis than is the case in any other State of the Commonwealth with the exception of Tasmania. I do not want hon. members opposite to take my unsupported testimony for that statement. We find these figures in the "Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia"—

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION OF STATE LIVING IN THE METROPOLIS.

State.	Population.	Percentage in Metropolis.
		Per Cent.
Sydney	926,000	43.55
Melbourne.. ..	796,100	51.27
Adelaide	260,500	51.84
Perth	155,592	46.42
Brisbane	217,714	28.27

These figures are a clear indication that in Queensland the Labour Government have encouraged rural development to such an extent that there is not the same tendency to drift into the metropolis as existed under the Tory Administration.

Mr. MOORE: How do you explain the 50 per cent. decrease in land settlement?

Mr. HYNES: We admit that there is likely to be a deficit on railways in a new country, that is, if the Administration are endeavouring to carry out the chief function of a new railway—the opening up and development of the State. Any person who has gone into the matter and given it consideration must admit that railway construction must precede land settlement. That is absolutely necessary, and it entails a loss on the working of these agricultural or rural railways. That is a policy for which this Government stands. I asked the hon. member for Enoggera, when he was criticising the railway administration, how he would remedy the position. He said he would endeavour to encourage land settlement. I have pointed out that this party has encouraged land settlement, and has encouraged it to a larger extent than any of the Tory Governments of the other States or any of the past Tory Governments in this State. The only way in which the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for Murilla would reduce the deficit on the railways is, I take it, by bringing about retrenchment in the railway service and a reduction of wages. That is the policy they have always stood for. It is a logical conclusion that the only manner in which they can possibly reduce

that deficit, without increasing freights and fares, would be by reducing wages and bringing about drastic retrenchment and speeding up in the railway service. We are opposed to a policy such as that. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, the railways of Queensland are more efficiently run than they are in any of the Tory-governed States of the Commonwealth.

I desire to make some reference to production. This party, by building railways, has increased production enormously in the State. The agricultural industry, with which I have been associated all my life is the sugar industry, and the extension of our railways has been instrumental in increasing the production of sugar north of Townsville from 81,000 tons in 1914 to an estimated production of 170,000 tons this year. That is the result of the far-seeing and statesmanlike policy of the Labour Administration which is in power at the present time. In addition to that, as a result of the new Tully mill and other mills which have been erected by this Government to encourage development and settlement, there will be something like 80,000 acres of suitable sugar land made available in North Queensland during the next few years. Then we have the soldier settlement at Maria Creek, where eighty soldier settlers, who represent an outpost of defence for this country, are producing this year £40,000 worth of cane.

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

Mr. HYNES: I was pointing out that we are endeavouring to reduce the deficit on our railways by encouraging settlement and production.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is in connection with my own electorate. I understand that it is the intention of the Government to increase the accommodation in the workshops at Townsville for dealing with rolling-stock. It is very necessary to do that. We are situated quite a long way from the Ipswich workshops, and it is necessary for us to carry out our own repairs, and a good deal of construction work in connection with rolling-stock could be accomplished efficiently in Townsville. I trust that the Minister and the Commissioner will see fit to give us more accommodation in the Townsville workshops than we have at the present time. It is true that there is a considerable sum on the Estimates this year for that purpose.

At 4.20 p.m.,

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

Mr. HYNES: I also hope that the Minister will see the advisability of giving us a new goods-shed in Townsville at as early a date as possible, because the cost of handling goods in Townsville is higher than it is in any other part of the State owing to the obsolete methods and the lack of facilities there at the present time.

Those are two important things in connection with the North. Not only does it affect my electorate, but it affects the whole of the North which is served by the Northern railway. The cost of handling goods in the Townsville goods-shed certainly must be borne by the consumers who are living out at

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Cloncurry and west of Cloncurry, and the people who are settled in that part of the State should be considered by the Administration. I am sure that the Minister will see the advisability of giving us as speedily as possible a new goods-shed with better facilities for handling goods and traffic than we have at the present time in Townsville.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): The big problem surrounding our railways in Queensland is not going to be solved by simply making assertions across the floor of this Chamber as to what past Governments have or have not done or what other States are doing. The blunt, cold fact remains that Queensland is being bled by the railways at the present moment, and has been bled to the extent of about £11,000,000 in the last nine years, a state of affairs which is seriously reflecting itself upon the community generally. The position we have to face is to find out what can be done to remedy that position. The improvements that can be introduced are, in my judgment, apparent, and should receive consideration, because the cost of administering the railways under existing conditions is not going to be reduced; that is, the expenditure is going to become greater as the years go on unless some form of economy is introduced.

The hon. member for Warwick very rightly pointed out that the other States in the Commonwealth, whose railways are in a very much more satisfactory condition financially than ours, have found it necessary in one case to expend at least £30,000 in finding out in what direction economies and alterations can be effected, and surely it is up to Queensland to consider whether something of that nature can be done when our loss amounts to approximately £1,500,000 a year. I do not think any of us really appreciate what a very serious drain that great loss has upon a small community such as we have in Queensland. We have got so used to this annual deficit that we look upon it as being almost necessary; but the effect of it is very far-reaching. If means can be found of reducing that loss and of introducing a little hope of relief in regard to taxation in the minds of those who are really responsible for the industrial activities of the State, the effect it would have would be remarkable.

It has been argued that land settlement benefits by the extension of the railways. Is it not a fact that last year land settlement in Queensland actually went back? Does it not mean, therefore, that that false basis of reasoning is one that must be discouraged? It is no good consoling ourselves with the fact that what we are losing on the one hand we are making on the other when actual statistics prove otherwise. The report of the Department of Public Lands this year is very sad reading to one who looks for this expenditure on the railways to give us increased income from land. When there is no sign of the relief or compensation we were expecting in the Lands Department, we are forced to look for such relief elsewhere.

A great deal has been said about political interference with the conduct of the railways. There is no doubt that in days gone by during the life of this present Government political interference was indulged in to a very large extent, but I think—and it is a healthy sign—that the evidences of political interference are not so great as they used to be. The Minister seems to think that it

is best that his executive officers should be allowed freedom of judgment up to certain limits. I think that the Railway Department would be better still if it were left entirely free from political interference, although I do not think that interference is so great as it once was. As hon. members are probably aware, South Australia was in a difficulty about its railways, and decided to import a Railway Commissioner, and a Mr. Webb was brought over and installed in the position. If my information is correct—and I am sure it is—the first step on which he insisted was that some steps should be taken to relieve the over-staffing of the service, and I am informed that the figure which was mentioned was between 30 per cent. and 40 per cent.

Mr. WEIR: Now you are in your element.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I shall be frank in what I have to say, and I shall tell hon. members what I have to recommend. Mr. Webb insisted that that step should be taken, and in my opinion the railways in South Australia are very much the better for it. Tasmania also was in a difficult position in regard to its railways, and it went to one of our best managed railway systems—that of Victoria—and now the third Commissioner of the Victorian Railways has control of the Tasmanian system with a view to introducing the necessary improvements, and the indications are that those improvements are having the desired effect. I contend that, quite regardless of what we may think of our officers—and my opinion of them is a high one—some outside opinion based on the experience of other States could not but be helpful in suggesting ways whereby our system could be run more economically than at present. I shall just give a few impressions as to what in my opinion would result if an independent commission were appointed, as has been done in New South Wales.

The first recommendation that would be made would be that the staff of the department should be considerably reduced. It is no good burking this question if we are going to save this annual drain on the resources of Queensland. One must admit that there are more employees in the department than the service actually needs, and that being so it is obvious that a waste of money is going on.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are less per train mile now than in 1914.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am not going to take that into consideration. We have to look at the position as it is to-day. We are losing a million and a-half sterling a year on the railways, and the community cannot stand it, and the question is how we are going to relieve the position. The Government have shown very encouraging signs that they recognise that steps have to be taken to stop these losses which are occurring year by year. It is encouraging, for instance, to hear the remarks of hon. members opposite about the necessity for dealing with the Chillagoe proposition. We think the time has arrived when money stringency forces attention to these matters, and therefore I suggest that, if a commission came here, they would find that our railways are much over-staffed, and if you have one officer tumbling over another, neither can give efficient service. I know of nothing more demoralising than to give a

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man work to do which he cannot recognise needs doing. It distorts that man's whole outlook on his work and his appreciation of what is due from him. In that regard I was very interested to listen to the remarks of the Chief Engineer of the Swiss Railways, whom I had the pleasure of meeting recently, in which he pointed out that the introduction of a certain labour-saving machine had had a certain beneficial effect in improving the moral tone of the employed who had previously done the drudgery which the machine now carried out. He argued that the men are now more satisfied, and that

[4.30 p.m.] they are doing work more in keeping with their status than when doing this mechanical work which hitherto they used to perform. I argue that the same thing applies here. I have no complaint whatever to make against the railway employees, but I am simply making the statement that a system which permits more men to be engaged than there is actual work for has a demoralising effect on the men in keeping them in unnecessary positions, and it affects the efficient man who would be required under any circumstances.

The second suggestion which should be made is that, when money is costing us the enormous price that it is to-day—it is costing us at least 50 per cent. more than it did in pre-war days—and when the cost of railway construction is twice and sometimes three times as much as the cost of construction was in days gone by—if my memory serves me correctly I understand the Bowen coal-field railway cost something like £12,000 per mile—an unheard of figure in days gone by—and when this money which costs so much only goes a fraction of the distance that it used to go in pre-war days, and when the materials necessary for the construction of our railways are so much dearer than they used to be, surely the cautious man must recognise that it is time to call a halt in regard to railway construction except in directions that are absolutely necessary. I make bold to suggest that, if any commission were utilised here, they would undoubtedly make a recommendation in that direction. It would suggest the introduction of piecework in our workshops wherever it can possibly be engaged in. I know that it is a red rag to a bull to mention this to hon. members opposite, to whom the introduction of piecework means the breaking up of the solidarity of labour, and thereby losing to them the jobs that keep them on these seats. I can understand their natural objection to my contention; nevertheless it will not prevent me making it. I argue that, if piecework, or payment by results, or whatever you like to call it, was introduced into the workshops under the direction of the Arbitration Court, you would undoubtedly effect considerable economy, and these are the factors for economising.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: At the Ipswich workshops they can do work very much cheaper than it can be done by private enterprise.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am very glad to hear that. I have already said that I have absolutely no complaint to make against the employees of the Railway Department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You want to see two men scrambling for one man's job?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I contend that it is possible to economise in the way I have suggested.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You are insulting the workers.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I leave the workers to be the judge of that. I have a large number of railway workshop employees living in my electorate, and they do not recognise evidences of the insult that the hon. gentleman talks about. If one is to judge by my increasing majorities from time to time it looks as though the workers place more reliance on my judgment than on that of the hon. gentleman.

Another matter I want to refer to briefly is in regard to overtime. I suggest that this matter be very seriously considered. Overtime must be cut out wherever and whenever possible. Quite recently I was rather distressed to hear from a very reliable source that a certain engine-driver was fined £5 by his union for picking up twenty minutes on a run.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: I do not believe it. I would like to know the name of the driver and the name of the union that fined him.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am making that statement. There are certain hon. gentlemen in this Chamber to-day who know that the statement I am making is correct. Hon. gentleman opposite who have to support any system which gives the unions dominance over the men so that they have not an opportunity of voicing their opinions, of course, will call that bunkum, but that does not upset the argument.

The next point I am going to mention is this: As indicated the other morning, labour-saving devices have got to be introduced. It was very pleasing to hear the hon. member for Bowen state that our coalmines had now arrived at that stage when labour-saving devices had to be introduced to secure overseas trade. Whenever we can save costs by introducing labour-saving machinery it must be done. By that means again we would help to reduce the cost of upkeep of our railway system.

Another suggestion that might be made is in regard to running excursion trains. If hon. members studied the English railways, they would find that excursion trains are run on every conceivable occasion, the object, no doubt, being to keep the rolling-stock continually working. By that means the overhead charges are reduced on the system as a whole. We do run excursion trains here, but I suggest to those in charge of the administration of our railways that they keep before them the evidence that other parts of the world furnish, and run excursion trains on every possible occasion, as such a practice would tend to economy.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: You cannot get carriages now, because they are all used in the excursion trains that are being run to Sydney and Melbourne.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I was hoping that, when the hon. member for Brisbane assumed the honourable distinction of ministerial rank, he would also assume ministerial dignity, and I hope that we shall not in the future have those loud interjections from him flung across the Chamber.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: A lecture on dignity.

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Mr. ELPHINSTONE: We should run shopping excursion trains on certain days in the week from the populous suburbs to the metropolis, because any step which will fill our passenger trains is the essence of economy.

Another suggestion that might be made is that we should buy our materials in the cheapest market consistent with quality.

Mr. BRUCE: From Germany?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Yes, certainly, from Germany, if necessary. The Commonwealth Government protect local industries with tariffs and dumping duties. The time has come when we have to maintain our position among nations on our efficiency and not on sentiment. This country has had too much sentiment attached to it of late. It is now right up against the question of £ s. d., as hon. members opposite have begun to appreciate. That being so, you have to study this position, and buy in the cheapest market, consistent with quality. We protect the Australian industries by imposing tariffs and dumping duties and, with that to help them, the Australian manufacturer should be satisfied. I make bold to say that the time has come when we should consider whether our tariff is not too high, and whether it is not encouraging inefficiency among our manufacturers in Australia.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: My remarks are quite in keeping with this vote, Mr. Dunstan, because I am trying to show that the department should buy their materials in the cheapest market consistent with quality, and protection to Australia is provided in the duties and dumping duties which the Federal Government impose.

Another point—and quite a sore point—but one which is bound to arise in these times of difficulty—is in regard to the methods which are being employed to subsidise and bolster up industries by concessions in regard to railway freights. I well remember certain remarks of the President of the Arbitration Court, who said that, if an industry could not pay a wage which the court thought necessary, then that industry should go out of existence.

Mr. WEIR: Then the cattle industry should go out of existence.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The time has arrived, especially as money is assuming so important a position, when we in Queensland will have to consider that matter. If an industry is to be bolstered up to keep its head above water, careful scrutiny should be made to see that it is being conducted with proper efficiency, and that everything possible is done by the industry to assist itself. My investigations—and they are considerable—showed that in recent years these industries have not employed the efficiency they should to see that their products are marketed in a profitable manner. It seems to me unfair that the progress of Australia should be handicapped by those drags on the taxpayer, and by the bolstering up of industries which in some cases are doing very little from an efficiency point of view to place their products in an attractive manner on the market. I quite agree that the introduction of some of these suggestions which I make bold to put before

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the Committee might bring about a certain amount of temporary dislocation; but I argue that the relief which I believe some of my suggestions would introduce would be immediately reflected in less drain upon the taxpayer of Queensland, which is stifling industry and development in so many directions. We recognise that industrial development is stagnant, and any man of an observant nature can see that that stagnation is induced by high taxation and the lack of money for the advancement and development of the State. If that is the position—and most of us admit it is—then we are bound to search through all these various channels to find out some means of economising, and surely the Railway Department is one of the departments that most needs attention.

Mr. BULCOCK (*Barcoo*): It is not often that we have an opportunity of overhauling the railways in a figurative sense. Hon. members opposite have complained in the past that they have not been able to get to the Estimates of the Railway Department in the way they desired. To-day, when the opportunity was provided, the criticism that has been advanced has not been very damaging nor yet very drastic, and the solutions offered are only the same old hackneyed solutions that have been offered from time to time.

One would have thought that the hon. member for Oxley would have brought back some new ideas as a result of his trip to the other side of the world, but we find him merely perpetuating the same old doctrine of conservatism in its application to industry. I do not think that the solution suggested by the hon. member is a solution at all. We have to remember, amongst other things, that here in Queensland we have a distinct disadvantage so far as railway transit is concerned. Hon. members must take that factor into consideration in arriving at a determination as to our railway policy and programme. As we all know, the most successful railways are those passing through fertile and highly productive country, and lifting freights and passengers at regular and close intervals. Under those conditions every railway must pay, and, if you apply those tests to railways like those of Victoria, it is obvious that the railways of Victoria must show to better advantage than the railways of Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: Why did our railways pay in 1914?

Mr. BULCOCK: The hon. member who interjected is perpetually and incessantly telling us of the glories of Victoria, yet the hon. gentleman left Victoria to farm in Queensland. I cannot understand that. After all, the railway fare to Victoria is nil so far as the hon. member is concerned, and there are no other circumstances that I know of debarring him from going back to Victoria.

Mr. MORGAN: Why did our railways pay in 1914? We had the same territory and a smaller population.

Mr. BULCOCK: I wish to deal with some of the solutions suggested by the hon. member for Oxley. First, the system of payment by results. That is a hardy annual which the hon. member continually brings into this Chamber. Who is going to determine what are the desired results? This continual reiteration of payment by results in the Government service is, in the final analysis, a slur on the men in the employ of the

Government, because it is suggesting that they have something better to give under that system than they give at present. It is a slur on the supervising executives of the various departments, by reason of the fact that we must come to the conclusion that, if the men are not doing the fair thing under the present system of payment, then the executive officers are failing in their duty by not passing them out.

Hon. members on the other side seem to think that we stand for inefficiency in the railway service. We do not stand for inefficiency. Any man who stands for inefficiency in a big organised service like the railway service is a fool. The sooner we realise that we must have efficiency in the conduct of our services, the better it will be. The hon. member has suggested the elimination of a big number of employees, basing his estimate on the South Australian figures, where he said some 40 per cent. of the total number of railway employees had been dispensed with.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I said from 30 per cent. to 40 per cent.

Mr. BULCOCK: It is rather significant that there have been quite a number of reinstatements of recent date in South Australia, as it was found impossible to conduct the railways under the big drastic retrenchment that took place. There are only two ways in which working costs can be reduced in a country like Queensland. One is a reduction of wages and in the cost of material, and the other is a reduction in the staff. I believe that in our railway system we have got down to the bone in every direction. I believe that we erred on the side of stringency and cheeseparing on one occasion. We cannot expect a railway system like ours to pay, carrying, as it always has done, the cost of development. The capital that returns nothing year in and year out, owing to our comprehensive railway policy, must be taken into consideration in determining the final value of our railways. The hon. member for Oxley has suggested that the railways do not bring about land settlement, because there has been a diminution in land settlement during the past twelve months.

Mr. MORGAN: Is that not true?

Mr. BULCOCK: I am prepared to admit that it is true in Queensland, but is it not also true in every other part of the world?

Mr. MOORE: No.

Mr. BULCOCK: It is true in every other part of the world, and there are economic reasons which justify that. Farming is becoming an industry that is more expensive. More machinery is used, men can do more work, and less labour is required; bigger areas can be cultivated; and all these factors have taken the question of farming away from the small man with a small holding, and made it a question for the big man with machinery and a big holding. That is one of the reasons why there has been a diminution. The hon. member for Oxley should take another factor into consideration in this connection. Although there has been a diminution in land settlement during the last twelve months, would the diminution have been greatly in excess of what it actually is had the railways that have been built into our agricultural areas not been built? We know that there has been a considerable range of settlement in Central Queensland, where we anticipate there is going to be a

big development in farming, and more especially in the growing of cotton. You cannot eliminate the consideration of the development in farming and the establishment of a new industry. It is the progress in these directions that makes a State great. The recent increase in freights and fares was brought about because of increased working costs.

The hon. member for Oxley suggests that, if an industry does not pay, it should not get any concessions; and that we should close down certain industries. Let us analyse the cattle industry from that point of view. For some considerable time we were giving the cattle men very substantial considerations, not only in regard to railway freights, but also in the matter of rentals and in connection with the wages paid to the employees. With the revision of railway freights there was no increase on cattle, while the rates on sheep and wool and other commodities, both going and coming, were substantially increased.

Mr. MORGAN: Cattle freights have been increased by 64 per cent.

Mr. BULCOCK: There was no increase on cattle freights on that particular occasion, and, in spite of what the hon. member for Murilla may say, the freight on cattle per train mile in Queensland to-day is the lowest cattle freight in Australia. The hon. member can quibble and equivocate and by a thousand explanations try to damn that, but that is in some degree in the nature of a concession. Would the hon. member for Oxley suggest that we should put up the cattle freights 20 per cent., as was done in the case of sheep? I say that some definite arrangement should be entered into, and railway freights adjusted arbitrarily from time to time in accordance with the prosperity of the industry. We find there has been another rebound in wool. We saw that wool yesterday brought unprecedented prices. I say that the Government would be more than justified in raising the freights on wool in accordance with the earning capacity of the wools which are sent to market from time to time.

I want to congratulate the Minister on having kept the construction work on the Longreach-Winton line going. True, owing to the exigencies of the situation, it is to be regretted that a number of men have been displaced, but I believe that a number of those men were displaced at a good time in the year, when it was possible for some of them at least to be absorbed in shearing sheds and sugar works, and in various other industries. For the balance of the men displaced, of course, the position is regrettable, but it was unforeseen. This question of the unforeseen dismissal of employees is one that might receive more consideration in the future than has been given to it in the past. I would urge that, when a railway construction policy is embarked upon, it ought to be possible, now that we have adjusted our loan money on a pretty fine basis and know how much loan money can be used for railway construction, to determine the number of men who can be employed year in and year out from the commencement to the end of the job. If we could do that, we should save the permanent dislocation year in and year out which occurs through our not being able to determine what our financial policy in regard to railway construction will be in the following

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year. If we could adopt a policy that would allow us to employ a permanent number of construction men year in and year out on the various jobs we undertake, it would be better than our present haphazard system of employing a large body of men and having a big plant in order that the men might work efficiently, and then discharging a large number of men and keeping only a small number working with the plant not fully utilised.

In the course of the next year or so we shall complete our railway construction policy. I understand that the Northern railway will be completed to Cairns in the near future, and I suppose it will not be a matter of many years before the Longreach-Winton connection will be made. That is a most valuable and necessary connection.

There is another connection which I think should be made before we abandon our railway policy. I think money might be spent on other phases of work after we have established a network of railways which will be strategically sound and enable us to withstand the ravages of drought and the vicissitudes of nature in other directions. There has been for many years an agitation for the building of a line from Blackall to Charleville. The loss of stock in one bad year when there was a drought in the North would be equivalent to the cost of building that railway. With the present indications in regard to sheep and the extension of sheep-growing activities in the North, it is obvious that, if a big drought strikes the North, there is going to be a disastrous smash.

We cannot afford to lose our most valuable assets of sheep and wool. If we build a railway to carry sheep from the North to the South or from the South to the North, we shall certainly minimise our losses considerably. It is obvious that it is not often that a drought strikes the whole of the State. When the South is drought-stricken, agistment is generally available in the North, if the cattle and sheep can only be travelled over the barren stretch of drought-afflicted country between. If the Charleville-Blackall line were built, it is obvious that we would be able to cope with the threat of national disaster—and it is a national threat—and transport our flocks and herds to the places where they could use the pasture that was offering and so economise our national resources. I hope that, as the Railway Department has been showing an appreciation of national railways in other directions, so it will not lose sight of the necessity to build that line as soon as possible.

I notice in the vote some provision for the accommodation of fettlers in fettling camps. I have no particular criticism to offer—I know the Railway Department are very hard pushed financially at all times—but I would ask the Minister in allocating the vote to take into consideration the climatic conditions in which the men concerned have to work. That is to say, I suggest that he should not allocate the greater part of the vote to districts where the conditions of climate are fairly favourable but make the greater part of it available to fettlers and their wives and families in the west and north of the State, where conditions of life are very hard and proper accommodation is sincerely appreciated. On some branch lines the accommodation at present leaves a good deal to be desired. I refer in particular to the Blackall-Yaraka line as an object lesson in what not

to do. I hope the Minister will give some consideration to the question of the accommodation of these men who are engaged in the very necessary work of making our railways safe and efficient.

I would also like to raise a question which may not be very palatable. I refer to the fumigation of our sleeping carriages. I do not want to labour that point, but I hope that the Minister will see that the sleeping berths and bedding are fumigated regularly, because I have had personal experience not long since in that direction. I think that regular fumigation for the destruction of vermin is very necessary, because I think some of us doubt whether it is wise to take our portmanteaux to our homes after they have been in some of our rolling-stock for fear of contaminating them.

Now I want to have a word or two to say about what is known as the once-a-year concession. Hon. members on the other side have not dealt with this question. Of course, we could probably raise thousands of pounds a year in additional revenue by wiping it out, but then we would not give the women and children the opportunity of coming to the coast every year at a reduced rate.

Mr. MORGAN: That has never been hinted on this side yet.

Mr. BULCOCK: No, but hon. members opposite say that we should reduce working costs. We could do so by withdrawing this concession, but that is a thing that should not be done, although, like every other good thing, it is subject to some abuse. It was introduced so that women and children could travel from their homes in the West to the seaside once a year in order that they might recuperate and that the children might have a holiday and a change of climate; but it was intended only for those whose circumstances did not permit them to travel in the ordinary luxurious way of a first-class carriage and sleeping berth. I think it would be a good idea if the Minister would make one car on each train available for users of this particular concession and cut out any class distinction. There are people who can well afford to travel first-class and who came down every year before the concession came into operation, but who now avail themselves of it. I take it that it was not intended that they should do so, and, if one class were established on each train, and one car set aside for users of the concession, we might be able to give even a greater reduction of fares than we do, and certainly we would benefit the class for whom the concession was intended, and not enable people to avail themselves of it who should not do so but who thus evade their obligations to the State.

I want to say a word or two generally about the conduct of the Railway Department so far as it affects my electorate. Hon. members opposite have suggested something about political influence. I will be frank about the matter. I very frequently regret that we cannot use more political influence to get certain things that we desire to obtain.

I do not believe in political influence in theory, but every man in this Chamber believes in political influence in practice when it suits him to do so, and it is no use hon. members cavilling about the issue, or getting up and saying that they would not have a word with the Commissioner about getting Bill Smith transferred if Bill Smith was in their electorate. It is no good hon. members cavilling about

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the issue or throwing innuendoes across the Chamber that they do not believe in political management. No big institution and no big organisation can be managed by political influence, but in the little things we are justified in asking for concessions. In many of the big things—things of policy—things of moment—the Commissioner and the Minister look at the business side of the question and not at the side of how it is going to influence a member's vote, or what is going to happen to a certain representative. I believe that the Minister has adopted the right policy in this direction, and we should not cavil at a question that might involve the transfer of Bill Smith, who rightly deserves a transfer, but whose claim has never been heard.

I have very little complaint to make regarding the running of trains, etc. Many people in Brisbane say that our railway system is inefficient. I do not believe that it is inefficient. Many people say that, if the railways were conducted under a different system of management—that was suggested by the hon. member for Oxley this afternoon—the railways would be in a better position. I do not believe that. I believe that we have peculiar problems, and problems that we have to settle in our own way, and we can best settle those problems by availing ourselves of the mature experience of the gentlemen who have served their time with our Railway Department. I do not believe that any valuable result would accrue from bringing a Commissioner from some other part of the world to tell us how to run our railways, when we have the Minister, the Commissioner, the Secretary to the Commissioner, and men who have spent many years of their lives in studying the transport problem of Queensland in connection with the railways. It may be possible, from time to time, to introduce improvements. The department has not been tardy in that direction, and when it has been conclusively shown that improvements should be introduced, improvements have been introduced; but you must take into consideration the fact that we have such a vast State, such a long railway mileage, so much country that is barren and waste, and so much country given up for sheep walks and cattle pastures, so much country to be tapped by our railways, and so many railways to be built in the development of the country—and they are not now paying even axle grease, but will do so in the future—and balance all those things against the wellbeing of the community. The production and transportation of foodstuffs for the community is the first essential, and if we have a deficit, we can make it good out of consolidated revenue by taxing the people who are best able to bear those taxes, and at the least we can transport food to the people at the lowest possible cost.

At 5.5 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

* Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): This department is another illustration of failure on the part of the present Administration. I must voice my protest against being asked to speak on this vote before I have received the report of the Commissioner for Railways.

It is very undesirable that we should be called upon to discuss these votes without having the report containing the latest figures supplied to us beforehand.

I have risen chiefly to speak on the recent

increase in fares. The Premier and the Secretary for Public Lands quite early in the session explained that we had reached the limits of taxation in Queensland, and that taxation had just about reached breaking-point. They both recognised that, when taxation reached a certain degree of incidence, it began to interfere not only with the business of industry but with the prosperity of industry. To my mind that dictum was perfectly sound. Hon. members on this side have constantly reminded the Government that would be the natural sequence if taxation was advanced too far. We now find that the policy of the Cabinet is not to increase direct taxation but to obtain extra revenue by imposing an increase in railway freights on those people who are removed from the various centres of population. Those freights rest very heavily on the people in the country. They are only paid by the residents outside of the metropolitan area. Hon. members opposite are constantly claiming that they are out to assist primary production and second industries. There are secondary industries in Ipswich—I refer to the woollen mills—which are deserving of every consideration, but this extra increase in freight is a direct tax upon them.

I wish to take as an illustration of the general inefficiency of the railways the service on that line which runs from Brisbane to Yarraman, and what I say in regard to this line is applicable to many other lines. The distance is only 126 miles, yet the fastest train takes about ten and a-half hours to come from Yarraman to Brisbane, and it takes no less than four staffs to carry the train for 126 miles. Greater consideration should be shown to the residents of Yarraman and the district by running these trains a little faster. There should be no difficulty in the way of doing so, because there are quite a number of trains running on this line both in the day and at night time. I see no reason why the timber or goods trains could not do the shunting that the mixed and passenger trains have now got to do. If that were done, it would save quite a lot of time. Anybody could then come down from round about Toogoolawah to Brisbane in an expeditious manner. At present they may come down by car, do their business, and return next day, whereas, if they use the railway, it takes them three days. It takes them one day to come to Brisbane, the next day to do their business, and they have to wait until the third day before they can return home. On account of this lack of facilities and also by reason of the increase in fares, there is not at present as great an amount of traffic on that line as there should be. A fortnight ago I was leaving Toogoolawah for Brisbane by car, and no less than five car-loads of passengers were coming down at the same time. Those men usually travel by train. That shows that the increase recently made in our fares is likely to be a deterrent in the matter of railway travelling.

We have heard quite a lot of statements lately with regard to increased traffic. If the matter were gone into and the traffic compared with that of many years ago, it would be found that there is a diminution of traffic. When our railways are run like the one I quoted that cannot be wondered at. On that particular line for some time past the people of the Mount Hallon district have been endeavouring to get a goods shed or cream shed, and also a level crossing to

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facilitate loading. There is a very fertile area about 6 miles from the station which produces a lot of goods, but on account of the lack of facilities, these people send their produce 19 miles to Forest Hill, or 8 or 9 miles to Esk or Coominya, instead of to the station at Mount Hallon. The railway authorities may argue that, if these people take their goods to Forest Hill or Esk, the department gets the freight just the same, but in many cases where the produce is of low value men will not despatch it at all, and the railway does not get any freight from it. One reason why they prefer to take their goods a long distance is that, when they go to Mount Hallon, they may have to leave the produce on the wagon, take the horses home, and return next morning to load the truck. Instead of taking that risk, they prefer to cart the produce the longer distance. Again, there is the difficulty of the level crossing. When they arrive within about 50 yards of the station they should be able to use a level crossing and pull in adjacent to the platform. For some reason or other that I cannot understand, and nobody knowing anything about level crossings can understand it, when a man gets to the station he has to go along the line for half a mile before he gets to the crossing, then cross and return that half mile to the station. After unloading he has to cover those two half miles again to get back to the starting point. If a level crossing were provided in the proper position, instead of travelling those 2 miles, the farmer would only have to travel about 50 yards. Yet, the Railway Department wonder why they do not get all the loading they should!

The unfortunate part is that even when the train does get a full load it is still a losing proposition. There has been a tremendous loss on this line for some considerable time. During the last nine years the loss has been in the vicinity of £40,000 a year, and I hold that, if a sum of £20,000 were expended in reducing some of the high grades and some of the sharp curves, there would be a possibility of the line paying, especially when we remember that very few engines coming down to Ipswich do not have a full load. It is a common practice for trains to get stuck on these high grades and be forced to go back and make a second run. I do not think many days pass without that happening. This line is within a short distance of Brisbane, and these things must be well known to the railway officials. Hon. members will agree with me that, if anyone is running railways or anything else as a business concern, it should be one of their duties to rectify these things. This is one of the reasons why we have inefficiency and the tremendous loss that we have on our railways at the present time.

Some little time ago a man purchased some cattle in the West. He wanted to remove them to nearer Brisbane, and he applied early in May for trucks in which to remove these cattle. At that time most men who were shifting cattle by railway received a certain rebate on the freight. These trucks were not supplied until July, and although they were ordered in May, the department would not allow the rebate that the owner of the cattle was justly entitled to. The reason given for not allowing the rebate was that a regulation had been issued in June that no further rebates on railway freights were to be allowed. In this case, as the trucks had been ordered in May, this

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man was justly entitled to the rebate of 30 per cent. At least, that is my opinion, and that is his opinion.

I would like to know why a higher freight per mile should be charged from Rockhampton westward than is charged from Brisbane westward. This is the case in regard to power oil and material of that sort sent out from Rockhampton to the far western stations.

There have been quite a number of remarks made this afternoon in regard to the railways being used to develop the country, and it has been said that the people in the country should be thankful for the loss on the railways and look on it as a subsidy to assist the men on the land. Personally, I do not think that the loss on the railways should be looked upon as a subsidy to the primary producers. The railways are necessary, and should be one of the main factors in assisting the primary producers to establish their industries; but we must realise that, in addition to the freights the people are paying, every man, woman, and child in Queensland has to pay approximately £2 per head in interest for the upkeep of the railways. Several members on the Government side have claimed that there has been very successful development during the regime of the Labour party, and that the Government are doing a great deal for the man on the land by way of railways. As a matter of fact, the previous Governments, when there was a more sparse population, built the greatest length of railways in Queensland. They were the pioneers in building railways, and they spent a tremendous amount of money on them, and at that time they were running the railways at no very great loss. During the last ten years the present Government have been running the same railways, plus a small percentage which they have built since, at a tremendous loss, which is equal to a charge of £2 per head of the population of Queensland. It would not be so bad if it stopped at that; but, unfortunately, under their regime, land settlement in Queensland has not gone along at the same rate that it did before they came into office. As far as I can see, not only have the Government, by their administration, shown tremendous losses in the Railway Department and failure to run the department in an efficient manner, but they have shown just as great inefficiency in regard to land settlement.

I would also like to support the suggestion of the hon. member for Barcoo that the Railway Department should be asked to take immediate steps to see that the carriages are made more comfortable for travellers. They are very often in a dirty state, and on the line in my electorate the carriages are at times in a state of serious disrepair. It is a very common thing to have to ask for assistance to shut a window. The last time I was coming down to Brisbane it was impossible to open or shut one of the lavatory carriage doors, because the hinges were coming off. As there has been this very great increase in rates and freights, the very least the Railway Department can do is to give us cleaner carriages to travel in.

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.