

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER 1924**

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**THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER, 1924.**

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

**QUESTIONS.**

ALLEGED SEPTIC OUTBREAK, LADY CHELMSFORD HOSPITAL, BUNDABERG.

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

“That having read the Bundaberg City Council’s health officer’s (Dr. Thompson) report, the statutory declaration by Mr. Cormack, the certificate and report by Dr. Cameron, the statement by the nurses in the Gladstone district (who were previously associated with the Lady Chelmsford nursing staff), will he make the ‘amende honorable’ by publicly admitting his error in this House, and by apologising to the medical staff, matron, and nursing staff, and the committee of the Lady Chelmsford Hospital?”

Mr. CARTER (*Port Curtis*) replied—

“The statements to which the hon. member refers are not in accord with those received by me, and, moreover, was not the only evidence upon which I based my statement.

“The hon. member himself stated that there was a serious outbreak, which he afterwards said was pneumonic influenza, but on inquiry failed to inform this House of the date of the said outbreak, the name of the person who, suffering

from such a highly-infectious disease, was admitted into a maternity hospital, or the name of the patient who in consequence died.

“There are in Bundaberg six medical practitioners, all of whom are or have been honorary members of the medical staff of that institution. If the Home Secretary will instruct some officer from his department or Brisbane to obtain a statement from each of these gentlemen, and if they are all in accord that there is no justification for anything I have said, I will then, despite the evidence I have from other sources, admit that I have been misinformed; but failing such unanimity amongst the medical officers mentioned, I shall consider further inquiry into the administration of the hospital necessary.”

**AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR LOANS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES.**

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*) asked the Treasurer—

“1. What amount is to be made available for the current financial year for loans to local authorities?”

“2. What are the names of the local authorities that participate in such loans, and the amount to each local authority?”

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

“I beg to lay on the table of the House a statement containing answers to the questions.”

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1924-25 FOR LOANS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE NAMES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT PARTICIPATE IN SUCH LOANS, AND THE AMOUNT FOR EACH LOCAL AUTHORITY.**

£700,000 has been provided on the Loan Estimates to meet anticipated applications during the financial year 1924-25 on account of the available balances of Loans as follows:—

Name of Local Authority.	Original Amount of Loan.	Balance Available for the Year 1924-25.	Name of Local Authority.	Original Amount of Loan.	Balance Available for the Year 1924-25.
<i>Cities.</i>			<i>Shires—continued.</i>		
Cairns .. .. .	£ 48,590	£ 33,990	Herberton .. .. .	£ 600	£ 600
Ipswich .. .. .	20,545	1,615	Hinchinbrook .. .. .	18,820	18,220
Mackay .. .. .	42,000	14,000	Isis .. .. .	8,626	6,626
Maryborough .. .. .	61,500	8,215	Johnstone .. .. .	12,000	11,000
Rockhampton .. .. .	309,054	283,701	Kedron .. .. .	2,250	1,936
South Brisbane .. .. .	5,222	2,241	Kingaroy .. .. .	9,150	8,822
Townsville .. .. .	5,110	3,739	Laidley .. .. .	2,000	141
<i>Towns.</i>			Landsborough .. .. .	450	150
Bowen .. .. .	14,000	14,000	Longreach .. .. .	9,400	9,305
Charleville .. .. .	7,600	2,600	Maroochy .. .. .	1,000	411
Coolangatta .. .. .	1,100	841	Milmeran .. .. .	400	400
Dalby .. .. .	4,200	1,120	Miriam Vale .. .. .	500	500
Gladstone .. .. .	16,486	10,000	Moreton .. .. .	1,100	860
Goondiwindi .. .. .	20,700	8,034	Murgon .. .. .	350	350
Mount Morgan .. .. .	7,100	7,100	Murilla .. .. .	1,000	1,000
Hughenden .. .. .	4,000	3,934	Paroo .. .. .	5,000	2,500
Hamilton .. .. .	3,000	250	Pine .. .. .	1,500	1,500
Redcliffe .. .. .	2,000	267	Pioneer .. .. .	2,500	108
Sandgate .. .. .	7,000	825	Stanthorpe .. .. .	13,500	11,130
Toowoong .. .. .	2,250	1,050	Stephens .. .. .	500	50
Warwick .. .. .	18,200	3,721	Tarampa .. .. .	538	538
Windsor .. .. .	43,040	650	Tinaroo .. .. .	12,393	9,393
Wynnum .. .. .	29,300	5,150	Toombul .. .. .	39,500	9,306
<i>Shires.</i>			Widgee .. .. .	350	350
Balmoral .. .. .	6,350	3,435	Winton .. .. .	6,250	3,541
Balonne .. .. .	4,200	3,200	Woongarra .. .. .	5,000	2,862
Barcaldine .. .. .	9,852	9,420	Woothakata .. .. .	4,500	2,826
Baehnia .. .. .	500	42	<i>Harbour Boards.</i>		
Beenleigh .. .. .	400	400	Bowen .. .. .	165,435	41,403
Boulia .. .. .	3,100	3,100	Cairns .. .. .	62,638	7,331
Bulloo .. .. .	1,500	1,500	Gladstone .. .. .	6,000	676
Burrum .. .. .	22,900	19,468	Rockhampton .. .. .	86,515	65,553
Calliungal .. .. .	3,000	3,000	Townsville .. .. .	15,000	3,000
Chinchilla .. .. .	150	44	<i>Miscellaneous.</i>		
Coorparoo .. .. .	1,900	200	Mareeba Water Author-	800	100
Douglas .. .. .	1,050	1,050	ity		
Esk .. .. .	3,201	1,602	Metropolitan Water	187,885	119,635
Eacham .. .. .	31,675	14,206	Supply and Sewerage		
Flinders .. .. .	2,250	2,250	Board		
Glegallan .. .. .	1,500	525			

## AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*), without notice, asked the Premier—

"Will he give the House any indication as to when we are likely to receive the report of the Auditor-General?"

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

"I cannot give a statement as to the exact date on which it will be tabled, but I understand it will be tabled shortly, possibly within a week."

## CHARGES MADE BY MR. CARTER IN RE BRISBANE SICK CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoong*), without notice, asked the Home Secretary—

"Has the Home Secretary received any information from the Committee of the Brisbane Sick Children's Hospital in reply to the charges made by the hon. member for Port Curtis, Mr. Carter?"

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

"I have been informed that the committee is preparing a reply."

## SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

## APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 2.

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

"That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would otherwise prevent the receiving of resolutions from Committees of Supply and Ways and Means on the same day on which they shall have passed in those Committees; and the passing of an Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day."

Question put and passed.

PROPOSED INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS *IN RE* "GOLDEN CASKET" ART UNIONS.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): I beg to move—

"That an urgent necessity exists, in the interests of the public and hospitals and certain other public institutions, for an immediate and searching inquiry into the affairs of the Queensland "Golden Casket" Art Unions, in view of recent disclosures connected therewith made in this House, and more particularly in view of the fact that I have in my possession definite and irrefutable proof (which I will submit to the House) showing an apparent irregularity in regard to a prize of £100 drawn by a Queensland resident in No. 55 art union."

I regret the necessity for having to move this motion, but, as we are sent here by the public to look after the public interest, I think it is our duty to take advantage of the position we occupy and ventilate anything we consider to be in the interests of the public of Queensland.

The "Golden Casket" is known throughout the length and breadth of Australia, and contributions are coming from all over Australia, and it is in the interests of the public to see that its affairs are conducted in the way that we would wish them to be conducted. The "Golden Casket" is a means

[*Mr. Clayton.*

by which we are financing our hospitals and other charitable institutions, and it is only for that reason that many people are contributing to it. I am not going to condemn the idea altogether—as do some hon. members in this Chamber—because I have from time to time taken tickets in the "Golden Casket." (Laughter.)

Mr. CARTER: You are a bit sore because you did not win.

Mr. CLAYTON: We must endeavour to see that the people who are speculating in the "Golden Casket" get a fair run for their money. The Government are controlling this institution, because on every ticket you will see that it has the sanction of the Queensland Government. The Government give their sanction, and I understand that on every occasion it has been drawn by a Minister of the Crown.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: That is wrong.

Mr. CLAYTON: Well, on almost every occasion.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Wrong again.

Mr. CLAYTON: At any rate, it has been drawn on almost every occasion by the hon. gentleman who is now an Assistant Minister of the Crown. I am sure that the hon. gentlemen must welcome an inquiry such as I ask for because of the many ugly things that are being said outside concerning the "Golden Casket" generally.

I want to deal with this question under the following heads:—

1. The failure of responsible Ministers to give satisfactory information to the House in connection with complaints made by the hon. member for Wynnum and other members of the Opposition;
2. The urgent need for an immediate inquiry in the interests of our hospitals and certain other public institutions into the affairs of the Queensland "Golden Casket" Art Unions;
3. Protection of the public;
4. Refusal to pay prize money to a person holding a ticket the number of which corresponded with the official result slip.

I first want to deal with the failure of Ministers to answer questions that were asked in the speeches made by hon. members on this side of the House when we were discussing the Estimates for the Home Secretary's Department. The refusal of the Minister to give any information in this regard has aroused a certain amount of suspicion in the community. The hon. member for Wynnum made certain accusations concerning the "Golden Casket" people, and he quoted instance after instance where fair play had not been extended to those who held tickets. The hon. member said—

"I am advised that there have been irregularities, and that some men have been dismissed consequent on irregularity in the direction of altering the number of prize-winning tickets that have been read out."

The Minister did not correct that statement. That was an admission that there had been irregularities. Then the hon. member for Wynnum also said—

"They did not give prize money to those who were entitled to it."

That is another statement made, and we know what has occurred recently in the police court. The hon. member for Wynnum must have known that something of an irregular nature was going on, and the Minister did not want to let the House know that he knew of it. There is something in that. On another occasion the hon. member for Wynnum said—

"A particular winner happened to be present at the drawing and heard his number called out, otherwise there would have been no discovery."

Members of this House should be disgusted to think that such things as that could happen in the "Golden Casket" office.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. CLAYTON: This statement was made, and why did the hon. gentleman not deny it at the time?

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: When was it made?

Mr. CLAYTON: In this House during this session.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: When?

Mr. CLAYTON: I cannot give the exact date, but it was made in the House during this session. The Home Secretary, in replying to the remarks of the hon. member for Wynnum, said that there had been only a few cases of irregularity. He said the mistakes had occurred in putting down the numbers, and apparently he is getting behind this irregularity by asserting that it was a printer's error. That is a very convenient term to use—that these irregularities are the outcome of printer's errors. As a result of these irregularities many persons have suffered. The disclosures in the police court recently have shown that the irregularities were not a printer's error, but were the result of direct action on the part of certain persons to deprive persons who were rightly entitled to prizes they had won. The Minister also said that he had been informed by representatives of the "Golden Casket" committee that there was no evidence that the employees had benefited. We know now that they did benefit, and we do not know what is likely to happen in the future. Therefore an inquiry into the conduct of the "Golden Casket" is warranted, and I trust will be granted by the Government who are controlling this art union. When the hon. member for East Toowoomba asked the hon. gentleman whether he did not think it was severe to sack men for carelessness, the Minister said the men were sacked for gross carelessness. That was the reason he gave the House for the action of the committee in sacking those men. I think there is need for an immediate inquiry owing to the discovery of fraudulent practices which have been going on there for some time. It has been said that they have been going on since "Golden Casket" No. 81. I am going to prove that something of a nature which we would not expect in a community like this must have been going on previous to that and as far back as "Golden Casket" No. 55, which I will deal with later. We must realise that, when we have an art union conducted as the "Golden Casket" has been conducted, there is cause for unrest in the community. I can assure the House that throughout the length and breadth of Queensland there is unrest concerning the way in which this matter has been conducted. The average Australian likes a gamble, but he

likes a fair run for his money, and, if he is not being given a fair run for his money, he is suspicious, and rightly so too. There is good reason for arguing that an inquiry should be held into these affairs.

Under the heading of protection to the public, I contend that more supervision is essential at the "Golden Casket" office. It is proved that that is necessary by the fact that a new system is going to be adopted in the near future. It is essential that we should have more supervision than we have at the present time in the interests of the charitable institutions which are benefiting by the "Golden Casket." I contend that we are not going to have the public investing money in the way they are doing in the "Golden Casket" unless effective supervision is exercised as in other concerns of a similar nature. We must protect the investors in connection with the "Golden Casket" if we are going to allow it to be run with the sanction of the Government.

I would like to quote what has been going on in the past concerning these matters. We know that in August, 1922, the then manager, Mr. Lucas, left suddenly for Sydney without the knowledge of the Home Department. He did not resign—he simply left without the knowledge of the department—and the Secretary for Mines, who was then acting as Home Secretary, gave no explanation to the public in regard to the matter. The department did not know his whereabouts a short time after he had left Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I gave a full explanation.

Mr. CLAYTON: The hon. gentleman did not give a full explanation. Other reports on the matter differed from the explanation which the hon. gentleman made here, and I think that at the time the hon. gentleman was about as conversant with the "Golden Casket" as the Home Secretary was when the hon. member for Wynnum asked his question. The hon. gentleman was only acting as Home Secretary at the time, and I do not think he knew very much of what was going on at the time. I am sure that, if the hon. gentleman had thought that anything of a fraudulent nature was going on, he would have been one of the first to stop it. After Mr. Lucas's departure from Queensland the Auditor-General's report came out, in which this statement appears—

"GOLDEN CASKET" ART UNION.

"An amount of £265 12s. was stolen during the year under review. Investigations were made by detectives attached to the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Police Department, but no arrest was made."

I think that inquiry was needed at that time, but there were no arrests or prosecutions of any descriptions, and the matter was allowed to go by default. It is rather strange that this should come out in the Auditor-General's report after what I have said about the absence of the manager from the State.

An article appeared in the Brisbane "Telegraph" on 23rd February, 1922, which I shall read to the House—

"THE 'GOLDEN CASKET.'

"WINNERS' CHEQUES WITHHELD.

"Alleged Administrative Friction.

"At the 'Golden Casket' head office this morning a returned soldier presented the winning ticket of the second

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prize in a recent casket. He stated that he was armed with authority to accept delivery of the prize, but after a slight delay he was informed that the prize could not be handed over, as no cheques were being drawn.

"Further inquiries elicited the information that, although the small prizes were being paid in cash, the large prizes which are paid by cheque—usually signed by Mrs. Theodore and Mr. Archer Lucas, the manager—were being withheld.

"Pressed for a reason for this extraordinary state of affairs, Mr. Lucas absolutely declined to discuss the situation.

"Is it true," asked a 'Telegraph' reporter, 'that there is friction between certain persons connected with the administration of the Casket?'

"I must positively decline to discuss the matter," repeated Mr. Lucas.

"Further inquiries into the cause of the apparent deadlock over the payment of the larger Casket prizes, however, elicited the information that those whose names are generally prominent in connection with the sweep have not for some time at least been a happy family.

"Allegations have been made of attempts at undue interference in connection with the office administration and filling of vacancies, and other administrative matters."

There you have political interference even with the "Golden Casket."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you not think you are going into ancient history?

Mr. CLAYTON: The article continues—

"These are said to have become so unbearable that a determined stand has been taken at the Casket headquarters, and, it is asserted, a plain report has been furnished to the Minister, reviewing the whole position. Relations have become so strained that the deadlock has occurred. Until the difficulty is overcome—in other words, until the cheques are signed—the winners are waiting for their money."

I would like to see hon. members opposite if a bookmaker on a racecourse did not pay up when they were waiting for their money. (Laughter.) There would be some trouble then, and the "Telegraph" would have to put up bigger headlines than it used about the "Golden Casket." The article concludes—

"Mr. M. J. Kirwan, M.L.A., when informed of the position in regard to the cheques, said: 'It's the first I've heard of it!' He declined to discuss the situation."

That has been the attitude all along. When any hon. member has referred in this House to the way in which the "Golden Casket" is being run, Ministers have said that that is the first they have heard of it, or that they know very little about it. I am inclined to think they do not want to know much about it.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Where did you get those clippings from?

[Mr. Clayton.

Mr. CLAYTON: The hon. gentleman has got so many clippings that, if I had "pinched" them out of his room, he would not miss them. (Laughter.) Let me read now an article which appeared in the "Daily Mail" of 22nd August, 1922—

"Discussing the 'Golden Casket' yesterday, the Acting Home Secretary (Mr. Jones) said that the manager (Mr. A. Lucas) had presented a medical certificate, in which, in view of the state of his health, three months' rest was advised by the doctor. Mr. Lucas had applied for three months' leave, but as a meeting of the committee of the 'Golden Casket' could not be called in time he granted the manager temporary leave of a week pending consideration of the application for the three months' term. Mr. Lucas had not resumed duty at the end of his week's leave. However, it was known that he was in Sydney, and talked of taking an overseas trip to recover his health. This led Mr. Jones to the belief that he had decided to relinquish his position.

"I wish to make it perfectly clear," said the Minister, 'that there is nothing wrong with the funds at the Casket office. An audit disclosed that everything was in order. Mr. Lucas, in fact, told me he would wait till the completion of that audit.'"

But when the Auditor-General came along to make the audit he said that £265 had been stolen from the "Golden Casket" funds. That is very peculiar, considering the statement made by the Minister for Mines, who was Acting Home Secretary at the time.

Coming a little further on, we reach what happened in the police court last Friday.

A report appearing in the Press under the heading "Numbers altered" states:—

"It transpired that since January last, Nolan and Lindsay had purchased large quantities of tickets in the various caskets, and always from the one dépôt. High numbers were always asked for, and numbers containing, if possible, the numbers one, six, and nine, these numbers being the most easily altered. Either on the way back to the office or at the office after the drawing, the numbers were altered to correspond with the numbers of tickets held by defendants. In all, they obtained 10 prizes. The first prize they manipulated was a £40 one in No. 81; then followed £100 in No. 82; £100 and £5 in No. 84; £10 in No. 86; £20 in No. 87; £40 in No. 88; and £50 in No. 92.

"The casket authorities," said Mr. Head, did not believe that it was possible to manipulate the figures in that way."

There you have the statement that the manipulation first occurred in connection with a £40 prize in No. 81 "Golden Casket." If they have been clever enough to manipulate the figures since then, probably investigation will prove that prior to No. 81 "Golden Casket" everything was not conducted on straight lines. Inspector Head said:—

"The Casket Committee had since paid in full to those who had suffered through the manipulation of the figures."

I would now like to deal with the case that has been brought under my notice. Although Inspector Head states that these practices have started only since the No. 81 "Golden Casket," I am inclined to think, or I have certain suspicion, that in the No. 55 "Golden Casket" everything was not fair and aboveboard.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Let us have all the facts.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. gentleman said he had certain proof in his possession.

Mr. CLAYTON: I received this letter on 23rd September—

"Dear Mr. Clayton,

"Enclosed I am sending you a ticket and result slip of "Golden Casket" drawing. The ticket is in my daughter's name. You will no doubt remember the occasion when this incident occurred, and on account of recent actions, both inside and out of the House, I thought it might be advisable to send it on to you to make what use you liked with it. I read where Mr. Kirwan stated in the House that the Casket people only paid prizes on official result slips."

Does the hon. gentleman stand up to that statement now? The letter continues—

"You might get him to see that the ticket enclosed is paid—that is, if he stands to his word—or else explain to the public the reason why a result slip is published and the prize number is not paid."

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Why did he not come and ask for it like a man?

Mr. CLAYTON: I am asking for an inquiry into all these matters. I am not here pleading for this one individual, but I am pleading for the investing public of Queensland.

Mr. WEIR: Who signed that letter?

Mr. CLAYTON: The ticket is headed—

"Queensland Golden Casket No. 55 Art Union."

It has the imprint "Golden Casket, Queensland Government guarantee." The number of this ticket is 43953, and the number on the official result slip is also 43953. This person, when he obtained his paper in the morning, perused the list of £100 prizes and compared his ticket with those numbers, and found that he had won a £100 prize. One of the "Golden Casket" agents in Maryborough was paying cash to the prize winners, and this prize winner took his ticket to the agent and compared it with the official result slip that had been received by that agent, who found that the numbers corresponded, and the agent paid over the £100 to the prize winner. The agent then took the ticket to the Commonwealth Bank in Maryborough. He first stamped the ticket and wrote across it in red ink—

"Winner of £100 prize as per result slip attached."

That ticket was then forwarded to the Brisbane head office for collection. [10.30 a.m.] After it had arrived at Brisbane a telegram was received by the agent from the "Golden Casket" office informing him that a printer's error had occurred in the official result slip.

Mr. FRY: What?

Mr. CLAYTON: That a printer's error had occurred in the official result slip. The agent was a friend of the person who drew the prize, and was on friendly terms with him. He met the man to whom he had handed the prize and he returned the ticket to him. On the ticket being returned the following endorsement appeared on the back of it—

"'Golden Casket' office advise results show printer's error for this number. The correct number should be 43593. The holder of this ticket has been advised."

Payment of the money was therefore refused by the "Golden Casket" office. The Assistant Minister has declared that prizes were paid on the official result slip. I have the ticket and the official result slip here in my possession, and, as the numbers for £100 prize correspond, I want to see that this person is not done out of this prize of £100. The ticket and result slip show that the owner of the ticket is entitled to that prize.

Mr. POLLOCK: Are they putting you on a cut?

Mr. CLAYTON: I will whack it with you, if they do. (Laughter.) When I moved this motion, I said that I would produce irrefutable proof that this person was entitled to this prize money. I trust that now that the matter has been ventilated the authorities will see that this prize money is paid. I do not intend to speak any longer just now, as I understand that I have a right to reply. I will conclude with the demand that an official inquiry should be made into the affairs of the "Golden Casket."

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I desire to second this motion moved by the hon. member for Wide Bay. I certainly think he has shown that he possesses sufficient proof to justify a public inquiry being held into the management generally of the "Golden Casket." Not only has he furnished sufficient proof, but we know from what has happened in the past that things have not been conducted in the "Golden Casket" office as cleanly as they ought to be.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is a wrong statement to make. I can make the same statement about your private affairs. You have no evidence to support that statement.

Mr. MORGAN: It has been proved in the police court.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It has not. Do you mean to say that the position of a bark is bad because some of its officers have been sentenced for embezzlement?

Mr. WEIR: They are only cock-and-bu<sup>l</sup> yarns.

Mr. MORGAN: The recent prosecutions in the police court show that the system of management was so lax that two men were capable of conspiring together to divert prizes from going to the rightful persons.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you know how many officials of banks in Queensland were prosecuted last year for embezzlement?

Mr. FRY: Why do the Ministers defend these people?

Mr. WEIR: Who is speaking?

Mr. FRY: Why is the Government sticking up for them?

*Mr. Morgan.]*

Mr. MORGAN: I ought to be allowed to make my speech in my own way, and I do not think I should be subjected to this interruption by the Secretary for Public Lands. If he wants to defend the "Golden Casket," he will have an opportunity of doing so at a later stage.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is pure party criticism.

Mr. MORGAN: We must all admit that the "Golden Casket" cannot be too cleanly conducted. It should be above suspicion, and people who put their money into it should have the knowledge that everyone who invests in a ticket will have an equal chance of winning. It has been proved that is not so. To my mind it has been convincingly proved. The Minister cannot deny the fact that the numbers of tickets have been altered by two men who were prosecuted last week.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No one has suffered.

Mr. MORGAN: These men adopted a very clever system of fraud, and succeeded for some time in defrauding people who put their money into the "Golden Casket."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The people got their prizes.

Mr. MORGAN: A number got their prizes when they discovered they were entitled to them, but there may have been hundreds of cases in which people drew £5, £10, £20, or £50, and who, when looking over the result slip, did not discover their numbers amongst the prize winners and they knew nothing at all about the fact that they had won prizes.

The HOME SECRETARY: That makes no difference. They got the money just the same.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The same thing has happened with banks.

Mr. MORGAN: There is no reason why we should continue a system of fraud after it has been proved to exist. Mention was made by the hon. member for Wide Bay in connection with the late manager of the "Golden Casket," Mr. Lucas, how he disappeared, and how he defrauded the "Golden Casket."

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: No. Don't make statements like that.

Mr. MORGAN: What happened?

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: What did happen?

Mr. MORGAN: We know that the whole thing was hushed up.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: It was not hushed up.

Mr. MORGAN: Everybody in the street knows that the matter was hushed up.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is a deliberate lie.

Mr. MORGAN: It was well known for some time by the man in the street that that person got away with a lot of money from the "Golden Casket."

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: That is not true, and you know it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is a deliberate lie.

Hon. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Is the Secretary for Public Lands in order in stating

[*Mr. Morgan.*

that the hon. member for Murilla has told a deliberate lie?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I say that he stated a deliberate lie.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman knows that his statement is not in order, and I ask him to withdraw the remark.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In deference to parliamentary procedure, I withdraw.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I do not want to get excited in talking to the hon. gentleman. I want to remain as cool as I can. I intend to make my speech in my own way. When I am out of order I expect the Speaker to call me to order, and not the Secretary for Public Lands.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In spite of the humiliation of having to withdraw, I will always say that if you continue the offence.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MORGAN: Yes, and the hon. gentleman will have to withdraw his words.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. MORGAN: There seems to be an organised attempt on the part of hon. members of the Government to try and hush this matter up. Evidently they do not want it to be made public. An endeavour was made, before this motion came before the House, to try and prevent the matter being ventilated. I am pleased to know that the hon. member who brought the matter forward refused absolutely to listen to any arguments advanced to him for the purpose of hushing the matter up.

Government interjections.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MORGAN: I think the hon. member for Wide Bay performed a public duty when he refused to give that ticket even to the Press until the matter was first of all debated in this House. The hon. member has shown that there has been gross carelessness on the part of those managing the "Golden Casket." I shall endeavour to prove that there has been gross carelessness in regard to this ticket.

Generally the system is— and I know a little bit about it—that when a manuscript is sent to the printer to be printed, the proof reader in the printing office reads the printed document and another person checks that reading with the manuscript, reading one to the other. It is almost impossible for a mistake to occur under that system of checking. Supposing a mistake should occur and that it escaped the proof reader, when the official slip is sent to the manager he should compare that with the manuscript sent to the printers. There should be a double comparison. The matter should not be entrusted only to the printer, thus enabling the manager to say eventually that a printer's error occurred. It is the duty of the manager to see that, before the official document leaves his office, it is compared with the manuscript document which is in his charge. The manuscript containing the numbers should not have been allowed out of the possession of the manager so that it could not have been altered or mutilated in any way. It was stated in the case that was brought before the police

court that two employees took the manuscript containing the winning numbers from the place where the official drawing was held to the office of the "Golden Casket," and that during the journey the numbers were evidently altered. Does not that show that gross carelessness has occurred, and that too much reliance is placed on the employees—and employees who were not very highly paid? Immediately the drawing took place and the numbers on the manuscript are compared with the numbers on the marbles drawn, that manuscript should be placed in the possession of a man holding a more responsible position than that of an ordinary clerk. It was proved that, although one of the men connected with the misappropriation had been sentenced previously for some offence, he was holding an important position, which shows that there had been carelessness in the selection of the men employed in the office. The "Golden Casket" should be above reproach, and no person should be engaged in a responsible position in that office unless his character is well known.

The HOME SECRETARY: His character was well known. Do you say that because he had served a sentence he should not be employed again?

Mr. MORGAN: Men who have served a sentence for embezzlement and such offences should not be employed in positions which carry responsibility. I am not going to say that these men were not entitled to work, and that they will not be entitled to work after they have served their present sentences; but they should obtain work where the responsibility is not great and where they will not have an opportunity of misappropriating money for their own purposes. Although the "Golden Casket" has only been running for a short number of years this is not the first occasion on which money has been misappropriated by employees of the "Golden Casket." I would like the Minister, when he replies, to go fully into what happened with respect to Mr. Lucas.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: What happened?

Mr. MORGAN: The whole point is this—

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: You do not know. You would say anything.

Mr. MORGAN: We want to know. The whole thing was obscured, just as the Minister endeavoured to smooth the present matter over. When the matter was raised in the House by the hon. member for Wynnum, the Minister tried to hide what actually had occurred, and it was only because of the perseverance of the hon. member for Wynnum that eventually we discovered what really had happened. We do not know even yet the full amount that has been misappropriated by officials connected with the "Golden Casket" art union.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: That is a reflection on the Auditor-General.

Mr. MORGAN: It is not. Why did not the Auditor-General discover the mistakes, if it is his duty to do so? It is ridiculous to say it is a reflection on the Auditor-General. When it was discovered that Mr. Lucas had left Queensland and that a certain amount of money was missing—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is wrong.

Mr. MORGAN: It was commonly stated in the streets that Mr. Lucas had a system by

which he misappropriated to his own use prize money which had not been claimed for a certain period.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Ah!

Mr. MORGAN: It is all very well for the Minister to say, "Ah!"

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: It is another reflection on the Auditor-General. If you make those statements you should prove them.

Mr. MORGAN: It is quite possible that a number of tickets may be torn up. People who buy tickets put them in their pockets and do not trouble much about them, and it may be possible that a great number of tickets which are lost may have gained a small prize. I am not saying that it is going to be possible to draw a first, second, or third prize, or even a £100 prize, without the prize being claimed; but it is quite possible that a great number of missing tickets may have drawn a £20 or a £30 prize, as the case may be.

The HOME SECRETARY: All that money will be paid.

Mr. MORGAN: I will admit that there has been a big improvement of late, but it has been generally stated in the street by those who are supposed to know that one of the ways Mr. Lucas had of obtaining money from the "Golden Casket" funds was that, when tickets for unclaimed prizes did not come in until after a certain time, he was able to retain the money. Does the Minister refute that?

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: I say deliberately that there is no foundation for your statement.

Mr. MORGAN: I wish to refer to a certain question which was recently asked by the hon. member for Wynnum.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in quoting from "Hansard" of this session.

Mr. MORGAN: In replying to a question which the hon. member for Wynnum recently asked, the Home Secretary stated that the officers who had been dismissed were dismissed for carelessness in connection with the "Golden Casket" office management and work; yet we find that only in this morning's "Votes and Proceedings," in reply to a question asked by the hon. member for Wynnum, the Minister states that no one up to the present time has been dismissed for carelessness. The two replies given do not correspond with each other. The Minister, when he was speaking in connection with this particular matter, led the House to believe that several officers were dismissed for carelessness, and now in reply to a question asked yesterday he tells us that no one has been dismissed from the "Golden Casket" office for carelessness. What is the idea in trying to hide this matter? The Minister should welcome the fact that people who are not receiving the money to which they are entitled are coming forward, and he should endeavour to help those people to clear up anything that is not correct and proper. He should not get annoyed when hon. members on this side raise the important question that everything is not as clean as it should be in respect of the "Golden Casket" drawings. I am not going to say that the Assistant Minister who has been attending those drawings for some considerable time is in any way responsible. So far as he can see everything is clean and aboveboard, but the people

*Mr. Morgan.]*

who are connected with it have evidently been able to institute a system cleverly thought out and successfully worked, by which they have been able to get the money of people who are entitled to prizes in the "Golden Casket."

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Did you ever hear of a bank being taken down?

Mr. MORGAN: I have heard of a great many institutions being taken down.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have heard of the hon. member for Murilla being taken down.

Mr. MORGAN: Yes, and the hon. gentleman himself has been taken down; but this is different altogether from a bank or any other institution. It is something which the people must believe to be above suspicion. The system should be so thoroughly effective that it would be impossible for any individual to rob the "Golden Casket" of a shilling. This is the point I want to make: that we are out to try to improve the position. Some hon. members may want to abolish the "Golden Casket" altogether, but I am not one of them.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Don't say that after your speech this morning.

Mr. MORGAN: I am out to try to create confidence in it. The hon. gentleman is evidently out to hide the dishonest practices that are occurring in connection with it. He does not want to see matters ventilated. He wants to keep people in the dark.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Untrue.

Mr. MORGAN: We are out to give them the information they are desirous of having. We are out—owing to the fact that we can prove that certain systems have been at work for defrauding people out of their money—to get the Minister to institute an inquiry, not only into the drawing of the "Golden Casket," but also into the way in which the numbers are put down and circulated to the people who subscribe. We are out to purify it, to try to make it better than it is, and to endeavour to do away with the loopholes through which people who subscribe can be robbed. So long as we are allowed to send our money to "Tattersall's," in Tasmania, and so long as art unions are permitted in other States, then I believe—and I speak for myself—that it would be wrong to do away with the "Golden Casket" altogether. We wish to give assistance to hospitals and charitable institutions. I have not taken many tickets in it—I do not know whether I have been interested in three tickets in my life—but the point I want to make is that, so long as art unions are in vogue in different parts of Australia to which people send their money out of Queensland, we are justified in conducting the "Golden Casket" for the benefit of those institutions which are in need of money. But we are also justified in seeing that it is so conducted that no robberies can occur, that funds cannot be misappropriated, and it has been proved—and the Minister cannot deny it—in connection with an institution which has been in vogue for only a few years a considerable amount of money has been stolen.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: What do you mean by "a considerable amount"?

Mr. MORGAN: The hon. gentleman will be able to tell us. The fact is that two men

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are already in gaol, and we do not know how many others should be in gaol. (Opposition laughter.) That is the whole point at issue. We know that two are already in gaol, and possibly others should be in gaol. If this debate is going to clean matters up, and bring in a different system for the benefit of those people who subscribe, so that everybody whose number goes into the box has the same chance of winning, it will have done some good. It cannot be denied that there is something very much wrong in connection with the ticket which the hon. member for Wide Bay possesses.

Mr. POLLOCK: What is wrong?

Mr. MORGAN: A person with a ticket is informed by the official slip that he is entitled to a prize of £100. It is paid over, and eventually he is asked to refund the money, and the only excuse that is given is that a printer's error occurred.

Mr. FARRELL: The £100 was paid to the real winner.

Mr. MORGAN: According to the official slip issued by the "Golden Casket" management, the real winner has not obtained his £100. He did obtain it, but refunded it. The point I make is that, if an official slip is sent out with a wrong number on it the management is not as it should be. To say the least of it, it shows gross carelessness. It is all very well to say that a printer's error occurred. I admit that is possible for that to occur, but no official slip should be allowed to leave the office until the manager himself has gone over the list with some other responsible official and seen that the numbers on it correspond with the manuscript document.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN: It shows that the management is not even up-to-date. It shows that gross carelessness occurs. I am not blaming a clerk or an individual; I blame the management generally, because no official slip should go out of the office until it is absolutely proved that the numbers are correct and that a printer's error has not occurred. We know very well that many things are attributed to a printer's error. We know that sometimes members of Parliament find after they have delivered a speech that a mistake has been made, and they attribute it to a printer's error. Printer's errors may occur in a member's speech and in many other things, but I fail to see why there should be printer's errors under a properly conducted system in connection with the "Golden Casket," more especially in connection with the official result slip. The drawer of the ticket in question is entitled to a prize of £100, because the number on his ticket corresponded with the number on the official result slip. No one can deny that he is entitled to £100, and should get £100. I am not concerned so much about whether he gets the £100 or not, but what I am concerned about is, as has been proved by the hon. member for Wide Bay, that gross carelessness has occurred in issuing the official result slip, and owing to which carelessness this person has been deprived of £100. The time is now ripe for a public inquiry to be held into the general conduct of the "Golden Casket" Art Union.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Since the hon. member for Wide Bay gave notice of his motion yesterday I have taken the trouble

to look up the Maryborough "Alert" of 20th October, 1922, which published the happening at the time it occurred. The hon. gentleman has moved—

"That an urgent necessity exists, in the interests of the public and hospitals, and certain other public institutions, for an immediate and searching inquiry into the affairs of the Queensland 'Golden Casket' Art Union."

I do not want to impute improper motives to anybody, but my opinion is that this motion has not been moved "in the interests of the hospitals," and it has not been moved "in the interests of the public," because, if hon. members know anything about the "Golden Casket" they know that the Government get nothing out of it, and the committee get nothing out of it, except that the manager receives his salary, and the employees receive their salaries—and I hope they earn them—and there is nothing to be gained from the "Golden Casket" by anybody excepting the hospitals. How can it be "in the interests of the hospitals" to move a motion which can only have, as its object, the discrediting of the "Golden Casket," the withdrawal of subscriptions from the "Golden Casket," and consequently a loss to the hospitals of the money that they would otherwise get?

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: That is a very poor argument.

MR. POLLOCK: How can it be "in the interests of the hospitals"?

MR. VOWLES: The money should be given direct.

MR. POLLOCK: Nobody has anything to gain by having the "Golden Casket" unfairly conducted. The worst that has happened is that two employees devised a scheme, unknown to the committee, whereby they defrauded the committee of a certain sum of money, for which they were punished by being sentenced the other day. No benefit can be obtained from having a dishonestly conducted "Golden Casket." If the hon. member for Wide Bay had taken the right course, he would long ago have taken the matter to the committee and heard their explanation first, and, if he had done that, he would not have brought the matter up in this House.

MR. CLAYTON: The owner took the ticket there, but he was refused payment.

MR. POLLOCK: If the owner took the ticket there, he knew very well what happened.

MR. CLAYTON: He was refused the money. [11 a.m.]

MR. POLLOCK: The hon. member knew that there was no dishonesty in this matter. Nothing can be gained by the motion except an endeavour to withdraw support from the "Golden Casket." The man who has that as his object is no friend of the hospitals of Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLOCK: I cannot see any reason for dishonesty among the officials of the "Golden Casket," or how anyone could gain by such practices excepting the dishonest employee. The Government, the committee, and the manager could not gain anything. The employees who practised the deception were discovered and have been punished. The committee obviously on the discovery of the dishonesty took some steps

to devise a scheme to avoid the recurrence of similar dishonesty in the future. No one knows better than hon. members opposite that the committee would do that straight away. What object would the committee have in not doing so? What object would the manager have? If he were proved dishonest or of countenancing dishonesty he would lose his job. What object would the Government have? If the hon. member for Wide Bay thought this matter over for two minutes, he would see that no object would be gained in coming into the House with this motion. The Maryborough "Alert" of 20th October, 1922, had this to say on the matter—

"A syndicate of young ladies at Finney's took a ticket in the 'Golden Casket.' According to the local daily and the Brisbane evening Press—"

I want hon. members to note that—

"their ticket (No. 43593) drew a £100 cash prize, and they were naturally as excited as a cage-full of frightened finches. Well—you know—you never know. When the official results came through the lucky number was found to be 43953."

That is merely a transposition of numbers.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: That is wrong.

MR. NOTT: You have struck a mare's nest this time.

MR. POLLOCK: Hon. members wanted the information, and I have given it to them.

The article proceeds—

"so the syndicate got what Harry Lauder put in the collection-box. Then they were as sad and subdued as a cage-full of sick blueys. And no wonder! They could be excused if they joined the Society for Getting D— Wild. They had just settled down to the gloom stuff when they received a notification from the 'Golden Casket' office to the effect that a typographical error had occurred in the official result slips, and their number 43593 was the lucky number after all. The lucky syndicate immediately handed over their ticket to Jim Balkin (the agent who sold it to them) for collection. In the meantime Bill Abraham, who sold ticket No. 43953 (appearing on the official slip as the winning number) had paid out £100 to the holder, our old friend Charley Harris, who, however, immediately handed it back when the mistake was pointed out to him. It goes to prove that it doesn't do to holler until you're a long way out of the wood."

MR. ABRAHAM who sold this ticket and paid out the money has an advertisement in the same paper to this effect—

"Bill Abraham, the 'Golden Casket' King. Winners can draw prizes over the counter immediately after the drawing."

MR. MORGAN: Is that true?

MR. POLLOCK: Of course it is true, because the "Alert" definitely points out that Mr. Abraham paid out the money to the man who produced the ticket with the numbers corresponding to those on the result slip. The "Golden Casket" people took the first opportunity to point out that a typographical error had occurred in the result slip, and it is quite natural that such an error could occur. These facts contradict the statement or suggestion that there was

*Mr. Pollock.]*

any fraud in connection with this ticket, first, because the crowd of young ladies in Finney's who thought they drew the lucky prize could not be connected with any crooked scheme to get £100 out of the "Golden Casket." No hon. member will say that they were. On the other hand, the man who thought he had drawn the prize and who was paid the money handed it back straight away. What harm was done there? The "Golden Casket" committee made the satisfactory explanation that a typographical error had occurred. Are hon. members not prepared to accept that explanation? What object could the "Golden Casket" committee have in telling these young ladies that they were not the winners, or in trying to do the man out of the prize? What object could the committee have in paying the £100 to the wrong person? The persons who actually got the prize were a crowd of girls working at Finney, Isles, in Maryborough. If there was anything crooked, they would have had to be in league with somebody in the "Golden Casket" office. It is absurd on the face of it. Probably they never knew or heard of anybody in the "Golden Casket" office, so that hon. members opposite have struck a "dud" on this occasion.

To me the whole thing appears to be lamentable. I could quite understand the hon. member for Wynnum moving a motion of this kind. That hon. member is against the "Golden Casket." I could quite understand the hon. gentleman doing anything in order to try to relieve Queensland of the "Golden Casket." (Laughter.) I would consider such action consistent on his part. I cannot understand the hon. member for Wide Bay and the hon. member for Murilla bringing this matter forward, admitting that they take tickets in the "Golden Casket," and using the paltry and futile excuse that they are endeavouring to purify the running of the "Golden Casket." (Government laughter.) No one knows better than those hon. members that the "Golden Casket" is run fairly, and, if anything wrong happens, it is due to dishonesty on the part of employees. The "Golden Casket" committee and every hon. member in this House who has seen the "Golden Casket" drawn were previously of the opinion that it was fool-proof. I thought it was.

Mr. VOWLES: Did you ever see the numbers put into the barrels?

Mr. POLLOCK: Yes, and I have seen them taken out.

Mr. VOWLES: Were they counted?

Mr. POLLOCK: Yes. No matter how ingenious a man may be, he could devise no scheme that would make the drawing crooked. The only possibility of crooked dealing was the way in which it did occur. The committee, for their own reputation and for the sake of the hospitals on behalf of which the "Golden Casket" is run, have no doubt ere this taken the necessary steps to ensure that these things shall not occur again. After all, banks and every business man have to trust somebody. As a case in point, the hon. member for Wynnum has to trust somebody with his business and cash while he is in this House. Probably the hon. member for Wide Bay has somebody in a position of trust, and, even if it were his brother, it does not signify that a brother might not do something similar to what has occurred here. I assure hon. members there

is nothing personal in that; it is merely an illustration of how people running a business or any concern at all have to trust somebody at some time or other. The Assistant Home Secretary could not run down to the printing office with the official result slip. The hon. gentleman has to trust somebody to take it down, and I suppose those concerned chose the persons whom they thought most trustworthy. Those persons failed them. A mistake was made, and some of the public were temporarily done out of their money.

Mr. CLAYTON: One of those men had a previous conviction.

Mr. POLLOCK: Did the hon. member never trust anybody who had had a previous conviction? Would members of the Opposition like to say that nobody they had trusted had had some previous criminal record? Lots of people have trusted persons who had criminal records which they did not know of at the time. I am not aware whether these men had or had not a criminal record.

Mr. MORGAN: Do you think an official slip should be issued without the manager himself checking the numbers?

Mr. POLLOCK: I do not doubt that, as an error occurred in this case, no official slip has gone out since without being checked.

Mr. MORGAN: Since?

Mr. POLLOCK: You can only profit by errors made as you go along. Will any member in this House say that he did not make mistakes when he first came here—and made them with the very best of intentions—and that he had to correct them as he went along? We have all been in that position. No one should attempt to discredit the "Golden Casket" because of mistakes made. This motion can have no other object. In my opinion, it is a miserable attempt, under cover of candid friendship, to discredit the "Golden Casket," and consequently make the hospitals of Queensland and the sick people of Queensland the sufferers by it.

Mr. KELSO: Why not have an inquiry by a commission consisting of members on both sides of the House?

The HOME SECRETARY: You can go down to the office at any time you like and inquire.

Mr. POLLOCK: I have heard all the debates in this House; I have listened to every debate on this matter; I have heard all the questions asked and the answers given; and I am a subscriber to the "Golden Casket." In common with everyone else, I take a ticket occasionally, and I am not going to ask any questions. I am satisfied on the face of it that the committee do their very best to keep the thing clean, and I am satisfied that as soon as they ascertained that there was a method whereby fraud could take place they took good care to see that fraud could not take place in the future. Any hon. member with any common sense or any sense of decency will admit that this is true. The hon. member for Wide Bay brought this forward as something in the nature of a scoop. His object was not to purify the "Golden Casket"; it was merely to make capital against the Government. He has been hawking this thing round the House on a string for the last couple of days. Everybody knew about

[*Mr. Pollock.*]

it. I know yesterday that the hon. member had what he called "an official result slip" and an "official ticket," and he did not take the trouble to inquire what truth there was in the construction he put on it. He merely brought it along here as a newspaper man brings along a scoop. That is not a fair thing to do. The people in the west of Queensland—and I am speaking for a good proportion of them—are behind the "Golden Casket," and are behind the Government.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: They are very nervous about it just now.

Mr. POLLOCK: That assertion contains a denial of that on the face of it, for the "Golden Casket" that has been held since these questions were asked filled quicker than any previous "Casket." If it filled in that way the public cannot be suspicious. This motion is only brought forward to try in some way to discredit the "Casket," in the hope that somehow a little of that discredit will be attached to the Government as well. I suppose it is merely the usual Opposition tactics. They are stuck for some sort of an excuse to bring on a motion to discredit the Government, and this is the best thing they could find. It is certainly a very shocking commentary on their intelligence. The public out my way are behind the "Golden Casket," and they, as well as I, resent any effort made to discredit the running of it and to discredit the institution itself.

Mr. VOWLES: You have not seen them since these revelations have been made.

Mr. POLLOCK: I do not need to. I give them credit for having the same common sense as myself. They are in a place where the present Government have established maternity hospitals as a result of the "Golden Casket" funds, and they want a continuation of them. Some of their hospitals are not in the very best financial condition. They were not able to put up many of the buildings they required, but, because of the "Golden Casket," they have been able to do so. They have been able to help in their maintenance and to get maternity wards for the treatment of women at a very trying period in their lives in places where nothing but the "Golden Casket" money would have given them that help. On behalf of those people I very strongly resent any effort of this kind being made to withdraw this money from them, and to force them into such a position that they will not be able to look after their sick in the way they are able to do to-day.

Mr. MORGAN: You are putting up "Aunt Sallies."

Mr. POLLOCK: I am not putting up any "Aunt Sallies." On the very face of it, this motion is nothing but an attempt to discredit the Government, or else an endeavour to ridicule the "Golden Casket," and thus take away from the hospitals the subscriptions which they so richly deserve.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I am in accord with the hon. member for Wide Bay who moved this resolution, notwithstanding the remarks made by the hon. member for Gregory. I think that what has transpired during the last few years has given us sufficient evidence for causing an inquiry to be made into the methods adopted in carrying out the "Golden Casket." There has not

been one single word said against the committee. No one doubts the honesty and integrity of the committee who has had the supervision of the "Golden Casket."

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: At any rate, we believe you when you say that, but I would not believe others over there. (Opposition dissent.)

Mr. TAYLOR: There has been no insinuation of any kind made in connection with the committee. I think the time has come when the "Golden Casket" business should be taken out of the hands of the committee, and run either under the supervision of officials of the Auditor-General's Department or of the Treasury Department. It is all very well to talk about bank officials embezzling money; but, when we consider the tremendous volume of money going through a bank and the very few cases of embezzlement which take place, it shows that there is a very rigid supervision exercised in those institutions. It is not a very easy matter for officials of banks to commit embezzlement and take the banks down. I am giving the committee credit for honesty and integrity, but the time has come when the affair should be taken out of their hands and administered either by officers of the Auditor-General's Department or the Treasury Department. If the Government cannot see their way to do that, then there should be an official of the Auditor-General's Department continuously in the "Golden Casket" office. There are numbers of men who go wrong from the fact that there is not a close supervision exercised over them. If a close supervision is exercised, there is no doubt it prevents many men from committing fraud.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Besides, gambling lends itself to that.

Mr. TAYLOR: Yes, gambling lends itself to that. The strong point of the hon. member for Wide Bay is that tens of thousands of an official list went out with a certain mistake in them. I am not blaming the committee, who are not responsible for that; but I am blaming the management, who by permitting an official slip to go out with a wrong number on it were guilty of gross negligence and carelessness. We have had evidence during the last week or two that men in the office have "faked" figures. How do we know that the figures were not "faked" in this case also? What evidence have we that the figures were not altered in a similar way in regard to those persons in Maryborough?

Mr. FARRELL: You have the evidence of the evening papers.

The HOME SECRETARY: Have you ever seen a drawing?

Mr. TAYLOR: I have never been to see a drawing, but I think that an accurate result should not be dependent on any one individual taking down the prize numbers as they are drawn from the barrel or otherwise decided.

The HOME SECRETARY: There are three.

Mr. TAYLOR: If there are three men taking down the numbers drawn, they should not be sitting near one another at all. Everything should be conducted fairly and squarely. I think the committee want to do that. They get in a considerable amount of money not only from Queensland but also from the other States. Whilst I

*Mr. Taylor.]*

am not a believer in the "Golden Casket," still, as we have it, let us have it as clean as possible.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: I am rather surprised at the attitude which some hon. members on the opposite side have taken up in regard to the statements which have been made. They should be just as anxious as any persons in the community to see that the thing is carried on fairly and squarely and absolutely straight. I do not know whether the employees of the "Golden Casket" come under the direction of the Public Service Commissioner, but, if they do not, it is time they did. The procedure in employing any person in the "Golden Casket" office should be just the same as in any other office conducting work for the Government. We should have complete supervision of all the employees engaged in the "Golden Casket" office. I hope that the outcome of the discussion will be that some method will be evolved by the Government whereby closer supervision and a better check will be placed on the operations of the "Golden Casket." When two or three men can act in collusion, as was proved to have been done in the recent cases they can go on for quite a long time without being found out, no matter what supervision there may be, and, having that knowledge, we should exercise all the greater care to see that collusion is impossible.

Mr. WEIR (*Maryborough*): I heard the word "Maryborough," and, since I am intimately connected with Maryborough, it is natural that I should want to say something on this motion. As a rule, Maryborough people do not worry much about this sort of motion. This case has been dragged into this House at the end of a string for the last two or three days. It reminds me of a practice indulged in by the blacks in the North, called "Bull-roaring." They tie a piece of stick to the end of a string and whirl it round their heads and you can hear the noise for miles. That is precisely the same game as the hon. member for Wide Bay has been playing in this House during the last two or three days. The motion has virtually been brought into this Chamber at the end of a string, and the hon. member for Wide Bay has swung it round his head and made a terrible row. What is there in the motion of "urgent public importance"? That is practically the wording of his motion. It has been of urgent public importance for the last two years, for the case occurred in October, 1922. I could scarcely credit that it was so when I heard the purport of the motion. I never imagined that this was the same case, but in discussing this matter with some other hon. members it suddenly dawned on me that this is the same case that was ventilated through the papers in Maryborough quite a long time back. I thought it was twelve months ago, but I find now that it was October, 1922. Can you imagine an hon. member going back to something which occurred two years ago? Of course the hon. member is always two years behind the times, so that he is consistent in that respect. The hon. member for Gregory put the case very well, dealing as he did with what appeared in the Maryborough "Alert"—and I think the same statement appeared in the Maryborough "Chronicle." It is merely a case of transposition of numbers. I say definitely here

[*Mr. Taylor.*

that I am like the hon. member for Wynnum. I have no personal interest in the "Golden Casket," and I have never had a ticket. Although I do not take up a strict attitude upon morals, I am not favourable to the "Golden Casket"; it is a class of business in which I am not a great believer; but I am in favour of doing everything we can to improve the conditions of our hospitals and charitable institutions, and to that extent and for that reason I am associated with the "Golden Casket." I certainly want to see the "Golden Casket" conducted in a way which is beyond reproach, and I am with anybody in this House who wishes to make its position impregnable.

At 11.25 a.m.,

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

Mr. WEIR: I do not see how this motion is going to do that. I do not see how it is intended to do that. I believe it is raised merely for political party purposes. Let us see what did happen. There was a transposition of figures. Certain girls formed a syndicate and drew this particular number, and an announcement was made in due course through the papers and eventually the amount was paid to these girls on the official slip. What happened? One ticket had been sold to the girls by Jim Balkin, and another ticket had been sold by Bill Abrahams to a man named Harris. When Harris knew that he had no right to the money he did the decent thing and refunded it, and the money went to the girls who were the rightful owners. What could be wrong in that? Then there was a demand from the Harris family asking that they be paid the money. What right have they to be paid? No one can claim that there can be two persons entitled to the same amount of money. The girls, in my opinion, are the rightful owners, and no mere transposition of the figures should deprive the girls of that right. Surely no one can claim that the money should be taken from the girls and given to Harris. Is that the intention? If that is so, then it is highly immoral, because Harris has no right to it.

Mr. FRY: The Minister stated that the committee paid only on the official result slip.

Mr. WEIR: I am not worrying about what they pay on. My facts are definite. Certain people are entitled to the money, and certain other people are not. Who are entitled to it? I claim definitely that the girls are entitled to it. I do not know the girls, but I probably would know them if I knew their names. I was very much struck with the wording of the resolution. It says—

"I have in my possession definite and irrefutable proof (which I will submit to the House) showing an apparent irregularity."

Look at the incongruity, if I might call it such, between the wording of the motion and the position as we find it. The House can now see the matter was merely brought up for political party purposes. I want to say on behalf of the people concerned, and I speak with some authority on their behalf, that this case has been settled long ago. Everybody in Maryborough is quite satisfied that the responsible official in the "Golden Casket" office did the right thing. There was the candid admission of the fact which was conveyed in the wire to the effect that there had been an error in the official list, and

that was all that was wanted. After that the money was paid over, and they did it as quickly as possible after they found that there was something wrong. What more could you do?

Let me now deal with the management of the "Golden Casket." I am one who has made a very definite complaint against certain things in connection with this office, and I say now frankly that at the time I was of the opinion that things in connection with the office were not as they should have been. I do not want to be unfair to Mr. Lucas. I did not know him, except that I knew he was manager at the time. I made certain complaints to the department, but I will admit that they were not very serious. I believed that the "Golden Casket" was not being conducted on the right lines, but I did not make any charge of dishonesty against Mr. Lucas, and I would not do so unless I was able to prove it. I went to the Auditor-General's Department and saw a friend of mine there, and discussed with him whether there was anything wrong in the "Golden Casket" office. I claim to have some knowledge of figures, and my friend has a knowledge of figures, and I was able to discuss with him just what was exactly the position.

I said to him frankly, "How [11.30 a.m.] did you find things? Did you go into the matter with any desire to probe it to the bottom?" He said, "You talk about fraud. When I went there I thought everything was not right in the state of Denmark. I thought the place was adrift financially, and I went there believing I was going to find something. I still believe there was something wrong, and I did not make any bones about it. I spent a considerable time in the audit of this business, but I came away without finding that there was anything wrong."

Mr. KELSO: What more could an auditor do? As an auditor you know that he could only audit what was put in front of him.

Mr. WEIR: Yes, the same as any other auditor. The law could not hold him responsible for anything more than checking what was put in front of him.

Mr. KELSO: We want to find out the things behind that.

Mr. WEIR: That is a bigger job, and I prefer that the hon. member for Nundah should do it.

Mr. KELSO: I do not say that I am capable of doing it either.

Mr. WEIR: I am not going to suggest that you are either. (Government laughter.) I merely made the statement because I wanted to tell the House that I went out of my way to find out if anything was wrong. I have certain beliefs. I do not want to state them, because they are founded on what I saw and on things as I found them.

Mr. KELSO: Give us your opinion.

Mr. WEIR: No; I believe that up to the time that this man audited the books there was something adrift financially. The point is: If it was patched up before the auditor came in, what could he do? It appeared to me—I might as well be frank about it—that, when the manager was refused leave, he was cunning enough to forestall a check and a discovery of his defalcations. Anyone who knows anything about this matter knows that is a common thing, just as a person goes down to the bank, gets some cash, fills up

his cash box, and tears up an I O U that he had put in it.

Mr. KELSO: I do not know that that is done.

Mr. WEIR: I could tell the hon. member of instances where that has been done. The hon. member has a lot to learn. I hope that, when he comes across such instances, he will not be so simple as he wishes us to believe he is now. I still believe that there were defalcations at the time I mention. I would not be so unfair as to say, "Why not prosecute the official?" because it was not proved.

The hon. member for Wide Bay interjected that one of the two men who were prosecuted last week in connection with the dishonest practices in the "Golden Casket" office had a criminal record. I do not know the man.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: It was a conviction when he was a lad of sixteen years of age.

Mr. WEIR: That is what I want to bring out. Is there anything in this business that allows any hon. member to come into this House and trace a man's record back to when he was a boy of sixteen years of age? That was an age when his character was really not formed. Is there one hon. member in this House who would come here and skull-drag a man by taking up that attitude?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Not one.

Mr. WEIR: I notice that even the hon. member for Wynnum does not say anything on that issue.

Mr. FRY: The Government sat back tight.

Mr. WEIR: No one would sit in judgment on a man on what he did when he was a boy of sixteen years of age. Why should an hon. member drag up a conviction secured when he was sixteen years of age after a man has reached the age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight? That sort of thing does not seem to me to get hon. members anywhere. It is certainly not playing the game. I couple with that other things that have happened. This sort of stuff is better kept out of the House. A man should come to the issue at the time an event happened instead of bringing it up in 1924, and the hon. member for Wide Bay knew of this incident at the time. It shows one of two things.

Mr. KELSO: How did he know?

Mr. FARRELL: The Maryborough papers published it two years ago.

Mr. KELSO: The correspondence only took place a few days ago.

Mr. WEIR: I am looking at the case as it is now, because the hon. member for Wide Bay has overlapped figures between the Harris family and the girls in Finney's.

Mr. KELSO: Why blame him?

Mr. WEIR: I am not blaming him for that, but for being two years behind the date on which the occurrence took place. If the hon. member knew his work, why did he not bring the matter up two years ago? If the hon. member does not know his work, why did he not hold his tongue and not show his ignorance as he has done to-day?

On the question of the "Golden Casket" and hospitals, I am associated with the committees of both hospitals in Maryborough, and in one particular case—that of the Lady Musgrave Hospital—the bulk of the women on the committee are rigidly against the "Golden Casket." I have never had a

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ticket in the "Golden Casket" myself because it does not interest me a scrap. I would have a ticket in the "Golden Casket" to-morrow if it interested me—I have no rigid scruples on the matter. If I thought I had a reasonable chance of winning a prize I would take a ticket. (Laughter.)

Mr. KELSO: You understand figures.

Mr. WEIR: Yes, and I do not take the risk. There is a bit of Scotch in me, and I do not take many risks. I am not defending myself on that point and saying I am a Simon Pure. Like a lot of other people in the State, those members of the Lady Musgrave Hospital Committee, while being rigidly opposed to the principle of the "Golden Casket," state that they do not know how the hospitals would manage unless it were for the "Golden Casket." If that is so, let us look at the viewpoint that you yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, developed this morning—the point that, if the "Golden Casket" is essential to assist our hospitals, as I believe it is, then why not give the "Golden Casket" a fair spin instead of trying to ruin the scheme? Do the decent thing. Clarify it if you like; but for goodness sake do not turn it into a political "Aunt Sally"—something that you put up and then knock down, because, if you do you will ruin the "Golden Casket" and spoil its chance of being of assistance to our hospitals.

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): I listened carefully to the speeches of the hon. member for Gregory and the hon. member for Maryborough, both of whom were hard pushed to defend the situation. Those hon. members have endeavoured to twist the issue and to misconstrue it in a lot of ways. The issue before the House is that the Assistant Home Secretary said that the "Golden Casket" pay only upon the official result slips. That was confirmed by the hon. gentleman this morning. The hon. member for Wide Bay produced an official result slip, a ticket which, according to that result slip, won a £100 prize, and also the evidence that the "Golden Casket" office would not pay that money.

Mr. WEIR: Rubbish!

Mr. FRY: It is not rubbish. The position is as I state, and not as the hon. member for Maryborough wishes us to believe. The matter is recorded in "Hansard" to the effect that the Assistant Home Secretary said that the "Golden Casket" office paid only upon the official result slips. The hon. member for Wide Bay produced an official result slip, a winning ticket, and also documentary evidence that the "Golden Casket" office would not pay on this ticket. That is the issue. The hon. member for Wide Bay is justified in introducing the matter into this House this morning. If we are to believe the Assistant Minister, who is a responsible officer of the Crown, that money should be paid to the person who held the winning ticket. That is the position. The public have a lot to be thankful for that this motion has been brought forward. It is useless to argue that the hospitals are going to lose money, because, as was stated by the hon. member for Gregory, the last "Golden Casket" filled very much quicker than any other. That was after the disclosures were made. It is quite obvious to me that the people feel that they can invest their money in the "Golden Casket" with

greater safety, whilst a virile and active Opposition are in Parliament watching their interests.

The fact that this matter has been brought up this morning gives them further assurance that the "Golden Casket" will be a safer investment than hitherto. Nothing can be said against the hon. member for Wide Bay for bringing this matter forward, seeing that quite recently cases have been before the police court, which showed that these irregularities had taken place. The hon. member for Wide Bay proved right up to the hilt that these irregularities have been taking place for quite a number of years, and it is quite probable that some people have been done out of their money. The people in my electorate, the same as people in other electorates, invest or gamble in the "Golden Casket." They are interested in the matter, and they feel that they should have some protection, and an inquiry would satisfy these people that things now are all right, even if they were not all right previously. I cannot see that the Government or members sitting behind the Government have anything to gain by trying to confuse the issue. It is not a party matter. Everybody is interested in the "Golden Casket"—those supporting the Government and those supporting the Opposition. We cannot get away from that fact. At the last election that was one of the issues, and we have to take the decision of the people on that matter. It seems to me that the Government are placing themselves in a very invidious position when they take up the attitude of defending the "Casket" irregularities under the circumstances which have been exposed this morning. If the "Golden Casket" committee had done the right thing, they would have dealt with this matter wisely in the beginning and submitted it to the Home Secretary for his decision. Morally and legally, on the statement made by the Assistant Home Secretary, these people are entitled to a £100 prize. You cannot get away from that fact. If the Minister has made a statement which is not correct, then that is a reflection on himself. We have to accept his statement, which he confirmed this morning, that they only pay on the official result slip.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: What else do you think we pay on?

Mr. FRY: The evidence shows that you paid on something else in this case.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: No, we did not.

Mr. FRY: If you did not, why did you not pay this prize? Are you defrauding these people?

Mr. WEIR: The prize was paid.

Mr. FRY: It was not. The official result slip as well as the winning ticket was presented here this morning by the hon. member for Wide Bay. That is the whole position. The hon. member would like to confuse the issue when the issue cannot be confused.

Mr. CARTER: You are very dense.

Mr. FRY: I am that dense that I am not going to allow the Government to side-track me on a matter like this. It may be the case that many of my own constituents have been robbed of £100 or £5—(Government laughter)—the great majority of my constituents are hard-working wage-earners, and they cannot afford to be robbed through mismanagement. As pointed out by the hon. member for Wide Bay, these things have been going on for two years.

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Again I say, the evidence—particularly the speech made by the hon. member for Gregory—shows that the "Golden Casket" has not suffered. The tearing away of the screen and exposing these irregularities certainly redounds to the credit of the Opposition, because it will mean that the organisation and the supervision will be so improved, and the control will be tightened up in such a way, that it will be impossible for irregularities to occur in the future. What would be the position if the Opposition were to remain quiet in this matter? The recent prosecutions would never have taken place, a veil would have been drawn over the past, and the way would have been left open in the future for this kind of thing to have gone on to a greater extent than it has done in the past. We have come to the position that in order to allay the public anxiety an inquiry should be instituted into the conduct of the "Golden Casket."

Mr. FARRELL (*Rockhampton*): The speeches we have heard from the Opposition this morning show the utter hypocrisy of which hon. members who have taken part in the debate are capable. I do not look upon this as being a case in which the Opposition desire to bring before the public a matter of fraud in the special case of the "Golden Casket." I look upon it as a direct attack on the Government, because the Government are obtaining from the "Golden Casket" large sums of money for the upkeep of the hospitals in Queensland. I find when I look through the amounts which have been raised by the "Golden Casket" since its inception, that there has been raised no less than £767,264 for hospitals in Queensland. Opposition members know that, if the Government did not get this money per medium of the "Golden Casket," they would be placed in the position of having to raise the money by direct taxation. They would be put into the position of having to raise money by other means, and that is what Opposition members desire. They want the Government to be placed in a corner so that they will not be able to get the money for the sick and for the hospitals in Queensland generally. After hearing hon. members opposite, one would almost think that they were here as the emissaries of "Tattersall's" sweeps in Tasmania. We know that when "Tattersall's" sweeps were established in Queensland all the money made in this State was spent in Queensland, and through their own "vowserism," through their own ignorance and lack of knowledge of "Tattersall's" sweeps and their desire to prevent something which they called immoral, they drove "Tattersall's" sweeps to Tasmania, and Queensland's money to Tasmania also. With the advent of the "Golden Casket" in Queensland, "Tattersall's" sweeps have become a dead letter here. One can only come to the conclusion, apart from the other fact I have mentioned, that the Opposition are desirous of having the money invested in the "Golden Casket" in Queensland sent to Tasmania.

Mr. FRY: Do you know any more funny stories, because that is a funny story?

Mr. FARRELL: It would be very hard to tell a funnier story than the hon. member can tell. There is absolutely nothing solid behind the argument of the hon. member. I know the hon. member personally, and there is not much sincerity behind the speech he made this morning.

Mr. MORGAN interjected.

Mr. FARRELL: One does not take any notice of the hon. member. He does not cut any ice.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask hon. members of the Opposition to cease interjecting and allow the hon. member to proceed.

Mr. FARRELL: I am not very much concerned about what hon. members opposite think of the methods by which this money has been raised by the Government, but I am very concerned about it as it affects my electorate. In Rockhampton we have three hospitals—the Rockhampton General Hospital, the Rockhampton Children's Hospital, and the Rockhampton Women's Hospital—and in the four years which the "Golden Casket" has been under the control of the Government, those institutions have benefited to the extent of no less than £22,000. Anybody who lives in Rockhampton knows the acute position in which the committees of those hospitals found themselves, and how greatly they appreciate the assistance which has been given to them by the "Golden Casket" funds. I notice also that the Maryborough hospitals, in which the hon. member for Wide Bay is interested, benefited to the extent of £11,395 since the time when the "Golden Casket" came under the control of the Government. Surely it is not the desire of the hon. member so to discourage people from investing in the "Golden Casket" that his hospitals will not be able to get the benefits which they have been enjoying hitherto? In my speech on the hospital vote during the discussion of the Estimates I made a request that additional sums from the "Golden Casket" funds might be allotted to Rockhampton so that nurses' quarters might be built at the institutions in which I am interested. If the "Golden Casket" is going to be continued, and if the confidence of the people of Queensland is desired for it, let us be honest about the whole thing ourselves. I have absolute confidence in the present manager, Mr. Noble, and in the committee who are running the concern. Anyone who has witnessed the drawing of the "Golden Casket" can come to only one conclusion, that every arrangement is made and every care is taken that it is properly conducted.

Mr. MORGAN: How do you account for the cases which occurred the other day?

Mr. FARRELL: I have looked through the police records for last year, and I find that the number of embezzlements and frauds committed in Queensland for which persons were sentenced was no less than 312. When one takes into consideration the number of defalcations in connection with the "Golden Casket" over the whole period during which it has been under control of the present manager, I think it speaks volumes for his work and supervision.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I want to say first of all that the hon. member for Gregory this morning made a splendid special pleading speech. Anybody who followed the hon. member must have felt that he was building up some "Aunt Sally" and knocking it down again, and I am quite certain that in that regard he succeeded pretty well. I take it that the question is not as to which side of politics we are on, nor whether one believes in the "Golden Casket" or not. My own position has always been well known. I do not believe in the

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"Golden Casket," and I have never spent a brass farthing in connection with it.

MR. BEDFORD: Were you not in the "Bishop Barnes syndicate" which won a prize a couple of "Golden Caskets" ago?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would rather be in a "Golden Casket" syndicate with somebody who might be called "Bishop Barnes" than with somebody who might be called a big sinner, a big company promoter, and, in addition to that, a man who is said to be big in other directions which cannot be named here to-day. (Opposition laughter.)

I have never been associated directly or indirectly with anything that has had to do with the "Golden Casket." I have to extend to every man who does not agree with me the same liberty as I claim for myself. Every man has a right to his own convictions. On one occasion in the city of Brisbane I was held up to ridicule because I had the courage of my convictions in connection with a hospital matter, and in connection with a sum of money that was to be paid from a certain fund.

HON. M. J. KIRWAN: You refused the money and resigned your job.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Yes. I have no right to charge a man who differs with me with being absolutely wrong in claiming for myself that I am absolutely right, but I am entitled to my opinions and my convictions. This question is very much bigger than many of us are prepared to admit, and it has been sidetracked. What is the position? Let us look at it fairly and squarely this morning. Away back in 1922 there are evidences, as disclosed by the Secretary for Mines, who was then acting as Home Secretary, that something had gone wrong with the "Golden Casket" office. I want to quote from "Hansard" for 1922, on that matter. I quote it with a great deal of hesitancy, as I believe that a man may commit a crime, but he has no right to be denounced after he has paid the penalty for his crime, and he has the right to get a fresh start, otherwise what is the use of our saying that we believe in lifting a man up when he gets down? I am not going to make any comment about a recent happening in that regard—it would be very unfair. According to the remarks of the Secretary for Mines, there was something wrong in the office in 1922. In "Hansard" for 1922, are certain remarks by the Minister. There were some interjections by the hon. member for East Toowoomba, and the then hon. member for Pittsworth, and the Minister, in replying to the interjections and dealing with the question under discussion, said—

"If the hon. member wants information, I am quite willing to give it to him; if he does not, I am quite content to sit down. The 'Golden Casket' committee were the proper authority to grant the manager leave of absence. As it was not possible to get the committee together, we granted him one week's sick leave and submitted the application to the 'Golden Casket' committee. The manager went back to the office, drew three months' salary in advance, and on the following morning left for Sydney. There had been an audit inspection within a week of that time, but an auditor was immediately put on to inspect the books. Mr. Lucas's services have been dispensed with for the

reason that he went away without getting leave, and stayed away over the week, and because he had improperly drawn three months' salary—a sum of £175."

The hon. member for Maryborough this morning—I do not wish to misquote him—said that about that time there was in his mind an uneasy feeling that things were not right in the "Golden Casket" office.

MR. WEIR: I did the decent thing and went to the fountain head about it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I want to follow up my argument step by step, to show something more. Certain information came to me in my capacity as a member of Parliament, but I am not in a position to say where the information came from, nor am I going to disclose where I got the information from further than to say that I know that every word told me was correct, and I want to repeat it here this morning. What happened? I asked the Minister certain questions in this House, and I asked him certain questions when we were discussing the Estimates in Committee. I want to say that the Minister was either not seized with all the facts at the time he gave me the answer, or else, for some reason or other, he did not answer quite as fully as he might have done.

THE HOME SECRETARY: I answered you according to the facts in my possession.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Minister will give me the credit of fighting fairly and of always saying what I have to say. What did he tell me? He said that two men had been dismissed, but there was not sufficient evidence to show that there had [12 noon.] been any dishonesty. If the Minister had been furnished with the full information, why did he give me that answer? It was subsequently shown that two persons—I am sorry I have to refer to it—were brought before the court, and it was proved that they not only on one occasion but on several occasions took certain money improperly from the "Golden Casket." It has been asked why the hon. member for Wide Bay has brought forward this motion. How did these men practise their dishonesty? The evidence adduced in court showed that they did it by an alteration of numbers. Is it not reasonable to suppose that, if numbers were altered in one case, they might have been altered in other cases?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Is that not the usual way that embezzlement takes place?

HON. W. H. BARNES: Were not my facts borne out by something that subsequently happened? I did not make the statement I did in this House for the purpose of damaging the Government or anyone else. These two officials were found out in the first instance because the winner of a prize was present at the drawing and heard his number called out. My statements have been proved by the convictions that have taken place.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Could not the same thing happen in any business?

HON. W. H. BARNES: We all know that you might have all the auditors in the world engaged, and if a man is out to "do" you, he will "do" you. I have been done myself, and I shall probably be done again. It is

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very difficult to detect fraud at times; but the point I wish to make is that, if these things have only been found out after someone discovered a fraud had been committed, how many times may a similar fraud have been committed previously? I am not making any charge against the Minister or those administering the department. I would not be worthy of my position if, under the protection of the privileges of this House, I made a charge even against the manager. (Hear, hear!) My information is that the manager is a gentleman, and I will not say a word against him.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member for Murilla did not take up that stand.

Mr. MORGAN: I said that there was carelessness.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: You said worse than that.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The manager could be taken down, just the same as I might be taken down in my own business. The wrong-doing of these officials would not have been discovered excepting through the medium of this House. I believe that, if the whole thing were ferreted out, it would be found that, in addition to the specific instances mentioned in court, things had not been right in the "Golden Casket" office previously.

The HOME SECRETARY: They have been investigated right through.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: We know what investigations come to. Again I say I am not making any charge against the manager.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member is asking for an inquiry, yet he says investigations come to nothing.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: It may be necessary to go deeper. I take it that any man who wants to be cleared of something which is wrong does not mind an inquiry. Is it that the Government are afraid to have an inquiry?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I ask why should there be any objection to an inquiry?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Apply that generally in the public service. Is there an inquiry if a defalcation takes place and is disclosed by the Auditor-General's Department?

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I take it that the gentleman in charge of the public service does take steps to hold an inquiry. I am not going to allow even the Secretary for Public Lands to side-track me. In the case the hon. gentleman cites you have to deal with an individual in the public service who goes wrong; but here we are dealing with a number of people who have been receiving vast sums of money, and there is no parallel at all between the two cases.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: We always love to hear the Secretary for Public Lands. (Laughter.) I hope the hon. gentleman will get on his feet and give some evidence in support of what he says in this regard.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I shall give evidence as to how you treated similar cases in your own business.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: If I found I could put a man on his feet by not taking severe

action, I would do whatever I could to assist him.

Mr. WEIR: You did not even prosecute.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Is that a serious charge?

Mr. WEIR: No; it only shows that you adopted similar action to that adopted by the Government.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The circumstances are quite different. One relates to an individual and the other to the community, whose money is going into this investment largely as a means to assist the hospitals.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You represent a company.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Yes; but if I paid the money out of my own pocket, no one could object. That is what I did.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: A very good action.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: And the man who made the error subsequently made good. Later he gave his life in the great war for the good of the community. (Hear, hear!) I did a right thing, and no one can criticise my action. But this is Government money, and the Government are the custodians. When this motion was first introduced, I even heard a Government member say that it was absolutely wrong to try further to punish a man who had done something wrong—that it was wrong to try and sheet the matter home. That was said by the hon. member for Rockhampton.

Mr. FARRELL: You are wrong.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member stated that it was wrong to sheet the matter home.

Mr. FARRELL: I said that the man was sufficiently punished by losing his job. Why not tell the truth? That man is now behind the bars in gaol eating hominy. You ought to be satisfied. You and your Christian methods!

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I would advise the hon. member, not only to have Christian methods, but moral methods. That would be an excellent thing. (Laughter.) By a strange coincidence I have here a letter which is anonymous. I have another which I shall quote. Like others which I have read, there may be nothing in it, but it shows that there is an uneasy feeling existing. It comes from Longreach.

Mr. WEIR: Surely you are not going to quote an anonymous letter!

Hon. W. H. BARNES: No, I shall give the signature. It reads—

"Longreach, 24th September, 1924.

"W. H. Barnes, Esq.

"Dear Sir.—In the Brisbane 'Daily Mail' of the 19th of September I read a letter which was written to you from a Charleville resident with regard to 'Golden Casket' matters. Now, Sir, as there seems to be something wrong in the 'Casket' matters, I thought it a good chance of writing to you and let you know something of a similar happening to me as my Charleville friend. About twelve months ago three of my friends and myself took a ticket each week regular for about fifteen months and

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called it the 'Four Stiffs Syndicate.' One morning on reading the papers we saw that the 'Four Stiffs Syndicate' had drawn first prize. Much to our disappointment the prize went to Sydney. Of course the numbers were different. I have not the ticket or result slip now, but I think it was somewhere in the forties and I think that I can find the ticket. If the figures could be changed on one occasion, there was nothing to prevent them doing so on this occasion. We trust the 'Casket' office and thought everything was fair."

That is a point I want to stress, because it is known that there was an uneasy feeling with regard to "Casket" matters, and it is also known—rightly or wrongly—that "Smith's Weekly" was asked to try and find someone who was a reputed prizewinner, and he was not found. The suggestion was that something was wrong.

HON. M. J. KIRWAN: "Smith's Weekly" never published that paragraph, and I challenge you to produce it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I have not the extract by me. The letter continues—

"I might also mention that shortly after I read in 'Smith's Weekly' where they were asking for the winner of a 'Casket' drawn about the time I mention."

HON. M. J. KIRWAN: It never appeared.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Minister did not have his glasses on on one occasion and missed it.

"It seems a bit late now for me to write to you on this subject, but our suspicions have been aroused. We would thank you very much if you could find out for us who the syndicate was in care of and if the money was paid over to them. This should be an easy matter for the 'Casket' office to supply. Hoping I have not put you to any trouble, and thanking you for same.

"I remain, your truly,

"HENRY R. BREDHAUER.

"Address—H. R. Bredhauer, Emu street, "Longreach."

MR. BEDFORD: Another "dud."

HON. W. H. BARNES: What is the use of anyone saying the writer is a "dud"? He is a man—a labouring man, I presume—who writes from Longreach, and I want to say further that someone else wrote to me and I replied, and I have received their reply. I have made no charge against any individual. I have been most careful to avoid that in anything I have said, but I do say there has been something wrong in this matter. Here again—

MR. WEIR: You are not going to read an anonymous letter, are you?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am not going to read an anonymous letter, but in this unsigned letter which was handed to me this morning there are suggestions that in some cases the numbers are not filled in. I give it for what it is worth. It says there is an uneasy feeling outside that the numbers are not filled in until afterwards. The reason that I particularly refer to it is that we are asking for an inquiry, and I am sorry the hon. gentleman did not press it because I take it that the Government themselves ought to have a commission to go into the matter. The fact remains that there is an uneasy

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feeling outside in connection with these matters, and I am perfectly certain that something should be done to allay that feeling. I am going to make a statement that probably some members on either side of the House may not agree with. I say the system itself, quite irrespective of the men who are running it, lends itself to all kinds of things that bring about abuses.

MR. MORGAN: That has been proved.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am not referring to any of the men controlling the "Golden Casket"; but the very system itself lends itself to that which is irregular and improper. There is no use our disguising it. That is the position which faces us to-day. The poor old hospitals are made the staking horse in this business. We are told that it is because of them that the "Golden Casket" is being run; but there are other methods of getting money for the hospitals. What are the chances of these people who are spending their money? When you come to analyse the matter and think of the thousands and thousands of pounds put into it, the chance of winning a prize is very remote.

I want to say something more in connection with this. Some of the money that is put into this business is money which, through the very system to which I have made reference, is taken when it should not be taken and used in certain directions, and the whole system is one which makes the community rotten to the very core. (Government dissent.) I am voicing my own opinion—give me credit for voicing my own convictions in these matters. Many of my friends here will not agree with me at all.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Did you not sell a racehorse?

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is a very estimable man by the name of J. H. S. Barnes, who is no relative of mine, and who owns some very good racehorses, but I have none at all. I have lived long enough to know—and the longer I live the more I become convinced of the fact—that men who differ from me as widely as the poles are just as honest as myself. This motion should be carried. I have spoken earnestly in connection with it. I want to say, in closing, that if the Government do not allow it to be carried and do not institute an inquiry, they are helping—I say it deliberately—probably unconsciously, to damn their very position as a Government, because there is no question that outside there is to-day an uneasy feeling, even in the city, and something should be done in the interests of those people who put their money into the "Golden Casket." Something should be done to have an inquiry made into the matter so as to reveal the exact position as far as it is possible to find it out. I very heartily support that portion of the motion which has been moved by the hon. member for Wide Bay, and will vote for it if I get an opportunity of voting.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): Before dealing with the subject-matter of the motion which has been brought forward by the hon. member for Wide Bay, I would like to deal with the letter which the hon. member for Wynnum received from Longreach. I recognise that the hon. member for Wynnum—I will pay him this tribute—has always consistently been against the "Golden Casket." I quite realise that, when a "Golden Casket" was

drawn for the hospital of which he was treasurer, he refused to accept the money and resigned his position. He is entitled to his opinion as to the merits or demerits of the "Golden Casket." (Hear, hear!) If the hon. member, or any other hon. member, would make inquiries at the "Golden Casket" office, or would attend a drawing, or if hon. members asked the agent in their own towns, they would tell them that very often syndicates with similar names are picked by people who have never known one another. In the "Golden Casket" No. 55 in connection with which the hon. member for Wide Bay has levelled charges, there were ten prizes drawn by ten separate "Black Cat" syndicates, the black cat being looked upon as an omen of good luck. Superstitious people take that particular name just the same as people take "Stony Broke," "Hard Up," and "Four Stiffs." It is the experience that, if a horse wins a big race there will be four or five syndicates with that horse's name in the "Golden Casket." No doubt men who have won on a horse think they will be lucky if they adopt that name when going in for the "Golden Casket." The hon. member for Wynnum previously brought before the House a letter which he handed to the Department of Justice, and which he claimed came from Charleville, regarding a "Buckley's Chance Syndicate." Hon. members know that "Buckley's Chance" is a common term here in Australia to indicate a very remote chance, and there are thousands of people who might use it as the name of a syndicate when sending for a "Golden Casket" ticket. I have here the particular "Golden Casket" ticket which won the prize under the name of "Buckley's Chance Syndicate," which was purchased from an agent at Annerley road, South Brisbane, the other ticket was sent direct by the mail to the "Golden Casket" office, and here is the receipt for the prize and a declaration that the winner bought that ticket at Annerley road, South Brisbane. Hon. members may look at them both, if they so desire, and see whether I am right. Here are two other tickets in the name of the "Bishop Barnes Syndicate" in No. 96 "Golden Casket," one in Brisbane and one in the country. (Laughter.)

The hon. member for Murilla in particular said that it was rumoured here, or there, or somewhere else that unclaimed prize money had gone into the late manager's pocket. Hon. members should at least be careful to acquaint themselves of the facts before they make general statements, but the hon. member did not do so. He did not make a definite statement. The manager does not get anything whatever from unclaimed prizes; they are not one bit of good to him. For the benefit of the House I shall read a resolution which was passed by the committee of the "Golden Casket" as far back as No. 7 "Golden Casket," with reference to unclaimed prizes. It was agreed—

"That a special Trust Account be opened in the Queensland Government Savings Bank for the transfer thereto of all unclaimed prize money, and after twelve months from date of deposit the unclaimed balances revert to the fund for which Art Union was conducted."

Mr. MORGAN: Will you answer this question? How long do those prizes remain in the trust fund before they are placed in the funds as unclaimed prizes?

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: Twelve months.

The HOME SECRETARY: I might explain that, if a prize is not claimed within one month, a registered letter is sent to the address on the ticket but notifying the person that a prize of a certain value is lying at the head office, and if he applies for it it will be made available.

Mr. MORGAN: Was that so during Mr Lucas's time?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes. If it is not claimed, it is declared to be an unclaimed prize and is put into the trust fund; but if the winner comes along afterwards it can be dealt with.

Mr. VOWLES: What about the twelve months?

The HOME SECRETARY: I am informed that twelve months is not the period during which it remains in the trust fund. The practice is to hold it in that fund for six months.

Mr. MORGAN: Then the manager will have six months in which to operate on that unclaimed prize money?

The HOME SECRETARY: Then it reverts to the funds.

Mr. MORGAN: For six months—and what is to prevent the manager from getting a ticket and claiming the prize money?

The HOME SECRETARY: I have a certain amount of respect for the attitude of the hon. member for Wynnum, because, as I have told hon. members before, I believe he is honourable and upright in his attitude, but the hon. member who has launched this motion does not stand in that position for this reason. He knew when he gave notice of his motion that it was only a matter of going down to the "Golden Casket" office and getting the information. I said to him when he spoke to me about the matter, "Why do you not go down and obtain the information either from the Home Secretary's office or the "Golden Casket" office?" He replied, "What would you have done if you were a member of the Opposition?"

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Oh! Oh!

The HOME SECRETARY: I want to show hon. members that it might have been wise for him to have gone to the Home Secretary's office and obtained the information.

The hon. member inferred that somebody had been robbed of a "Golden Casket" prize of £100; in other words, that that was the condition of things which prevailed before these unfortunate men were sent to gaol, and that it was in operation when the No. 55 "Casket" was drawn. I want to show the House that that is not so. The No. 55 "Golden Casket" was drawn on 12th October, 1922. I might explain that, as the numbers are called out, clerks transfer those numbers on to a board—there were two boards at that time, but since the recent prosecution there have been three boards, one of which is sealed and brought to the Home Secretary's office—

Mr. MORGAN: Showing that the criticism in this House has had good effect.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am not denying that. Criticism always has a good effect, if it is honest. The numbers are put on the boards and they are then checked. One of those boards is sent down to the printing office—not the Government Printing

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Office—but I think to a firm called Brooks, Limited, who have done the work ever since the "Golden Casket" has been in existence. A proof copy is taken, which is checked, and then result slips are sent all over the country. Not only is a check on the board in operation, but, for the convenience of the "Golden Casket" officials so that payment may be made at the counter or through the mail branch in a speedy manner, a list taken from the board and from the butts of tickets of the names and numbers of the prize winners is compiled, and one goes to the officer in charge of the mail despatch branch and the other to the counter hand who pays the money. A mistake was made in checking the result slip with the board, and, when you see that the numbers confused were 43953 and 45593, it is quite conceivable that such a mistake might occur. The result slips were sent out, and the mistake was detected almost immediately, and immediately the acting manager discovered the mistake he knew that it only applied to two tickets—the one that was wrongly put on the result slip and the one that should have been on it. It is strange and fortunate that the two people concerned were living in Maryborough. The acting manager immediately wrote this letter of 13th October, 1922—

"Miss Mabel Harris,  
" c/- Messrs. Hockleys Ltd.,  
" Maryborough.

"Dear Madam,—

"I regret very much the occasion necessitating my writing to you. An unfortunate printer's error has been made in the result slips with respect to the drawing of the No. 55 Art Union. The list of tickets winning prizes of £100 indicates that ticket No. 43953 issued to you has been successful in securing one of the prizes mentioned. This is not correct and does not agree with the official result card as certified to at the completion of the drawing. The number should have been shown as 45593, the ticket being purchased by 'Let's Win Syndicate,' care E. Bourke, care J. and H. Balkin, Maryborough. You will thus see the ticket purchased by you has not drawn any prize. If you wish further information about the matter I would be pleased to supply same and the official result card could be perused by you or some person appointed by you who could call at the office.

"Again wishing to express my regret at the error that has happened and trusting that you have not been unduly inconvenienced.

"Yours faithfully,

"Acting Manager."

By the same mail another letter was despatched to the other person concerned. The "Golden Casket" people not knowing that the syndicate in the name of "E. Bourke" had been taken out by nine girls, who were working in Finney's business at Maryborough, commenced the letter with "Dear Sir." That letter states—

"E. Bourke, Esq.,  
" c/- Messrs. J. and H. Balkin,  
" Maryborough.

"Dear Sir,—

"With regard to the result slips issued by this office in respect of the drawing of No. 55 Art Union, I wish to point

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cut an error which has unfortunately been made by the printers. The error has occurred in the number of tickets winning prizes amounting to £100. The official result card indicates that ticket No. 43593 has drawn a prize of the amount stated, but the number in the result slip is given as 43953. The winning ticket was issued to 'Let's Win Syndicate,' care yourself, and if you will now forward the ticket to this office payment to the value of the prize will be made.

"Yours faithfully,

"Acting Manager."

That shows that prompt action followed. The unfortunate position is this: In every other centre but Maryborough [12.30 p.m.] no payment would have been made. The "Golden Casket" office did not, as the hon. member for Wide Bay would have us believe, pay certain money to the wrong ticket-holder and then demand its return.

Mr. CLAYTON: I did not say that. I said the agent paid the cash prize.

The HOME SECRETARY: The agent in Maryborough, on his own responsibility, and with a full knowledge of what he was doing, has instituted a system in Maryborough alone, whereby any Maryborough person winning a prize gives him an order on the "Golden Casket" office, and he immediately pays them the prize money. The agent, Mr. Abraham, is in a big way of business. He has a business in Brisbane and one in Maryborough. He is in the habit of visiting Brisbane pretty frequently, and people who lodge money with him secure quick transit for their tickets, because he visits the office in Brisbane, purchases his tickets direct from the office so that there will be no delay, takes them back to Maryborough, and either hands them out to the customers in the shop or posts them to them. The practice of Mr. Abraham in immediately paying over the money to Maryborough prize winners saves them the amount of exchange they would have to pay if the cheque was posted by the "Golden Casket" office in Brisbane to Maryborough. Mr. Abraham called on me yesterday to assure me—and I believe that he also called on the hon. member for Wide Bay to assure him—that a relative of his paid the prize money on the result slip, and that almost immediately after the father of the girl had left the shop the girl, who had received the letter I have quoted from the "Golden Casket" office, telephoned to the shop and said, "If father comes down to the shop to collect the prize, do not pay him the money. There has been a printer's error."

Mr. CLAYTON: That is not true, as the girl left for Goomeri at half-past 6, and the father intended to wire her at Murgon about having won a prize.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am only giving the House the information furnished me by Mr. Abraham in the presence of two officers of my department. He said that the girl telephoned just after her father had been to the shop and collected the prize money, advising that there had been a mistake, and that the money was returned to him about an hour afterwards by Mr. Harris, who did not quibble or question the matter at all.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: The whole of Maryborough knew the circumstances. I have here a statement by Mr. Abraham, who states—

"I conduct a 'Golden Casket' agency at Kent street, Maryborough. Miss Mabel Harris, care of Hockley's, Limited, Maryborough, and daughter of Mr. Charles Harris, of Maryborough, applied to me for a ticket in the 'Golden Casket' Art Union No. 55. Miss Harris's ticket number was 43953.

"I had instituted a system to pay over the counter with my own money, and at my own risk, upon receipt of the official receipt slip, covering myself by obtaining an order from the prize winner authorising me to draw the value of the prize from the 'Golden Casket' Art Union. That endorsement was pasted on the back of the ticket.

"The official result slip showed that No. 43953 had drawn a £100 prize. The result slip in No. 55 'Casket' was received at my shop on Saturday, 14th October, 1922.

"On the morning of that day Mr. Charles Harris presented Miss Harris's ticket, which was paid by my brother-in-law, Mr. P. Quelch.

"Shortly after the amount had been paid Miss Harris telephoned my shop that she had received a letter from the 'Golden Casket' office stating that a printer's error had occurred in the official result slip, and that the number which had drawn the prize was 43593, held by 'Let's Win Syndicate,' care of E. Bourke, care of J. and H. Balkin, Maryborough."

I want hon. members to note that both these tickets were not purchased at Mr. Abraham's shop. The two tickets were purchased from two totally different agents in Maryborough—

"Miss Harris telephoned the contents of the letter, and asked Mr. Quelch to inform her father. Mr. Quelch immediately sought Mr. Harris, who also immediately refunded the money.

"I had left for Brisbane on Thursday, 12th October. My brother-in-law wrote me in Brisbane, with the result that I visited the 'Golden Casket' office on Monday, the 16th October, and personally inspected the official result card. I was perfectly satisfied that an error had been made by the printer.

"I returned to Maryborough and advised Mr. Harris of the result of my inspection.

"Dated at Brisbane this 1st day of October, 1924.

(Sgd.) W. ABRAHAM.

"Witnessed by R. Mackay, 1-10-24."

MR. EDWARDS: Is Mr. Abraham a book-maker?

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not know; I only know that he has a business in Queen street. I asked the Audit Office whether they could remember the particular incident that occurred in 1922 and received this letter, which is dated 2nd October, 1924—

"Sir,—In regard to 'Golden Casket' Art Union, No. 55, and £100 prize paid on ticket No. 43593, I beg to state that I examined the accounts of the 'Golden

Casket' covering numbers 50 to 69, and I have certified to the balance-sheet for the year ended 30th June, 1923.

"In regard to the alleged irregularity in the above payment, I have to state that I cannot remember the circumstances of the case, and, considering the number of transactions in each 'Casket' and the number of 'Caskets' examined by me in addition to the accounts of other important offices, and also that a period of approximately two years has passed since the payment occurred, it is hardly feasible to expect me to remember any particular incident after such lapse of time.

"If, however, an alteration in a result slip came under my notice, I am positive I would have inquired into the matter before passing for payment the voucher relating thereto.

"I have again examined the voucher and official result card of 'Casket' No. 55, and such examination reveals that payment was made to the holder of ticket No. 43593—the person entitled to receive same.

"During my period of examination of the 'Golden Casket' accounts I found that all reasonable care was taken to insure the payment of the required amounts to the proper persons.

Yours obediently,

(Signed) A. W. WOOD,  
"Audit Inspector."

To show that this matter was not closed up, but that it was fully discussed in Maryborough, let me read from the Maryborough "Chronicle" of Saturday, 14th October, 1922—

#### "THE 'GOLDEN CASSET' RESULTS.

"Some excitement was caused in Finney, Isles' establishment yesterday when a syndicate of nine lady employees of the firm saw that the ticket number which they held in the 'Golden Casket' appeared in the £100 list in yesterday's 'Chronicle,' but on the arrival of the Brisbane morning dailies it was found that the number advertised therein was 43953 instead of 43593, as sent to us by our press agency on Thursday evening and which appeared in the Brisbane evening newspapers as being a £100 prize winner. On further inquiries being instituted last night the press agency informed me that the figures they gave us the previous night tallied with the figures given in the Brisbane 'Courier' reporter's statement, but that the figures in the advertisements tallied with the number 43953. The agency advised that the advertisement figures should be taken as the correct results. We regret that an error made in Brisbane should have been repeated to us"

On 16th October, 1922, the Maryborough "Chronicle" had this to say—

#### "'GOLDEN CASSET' RESULTS.

"The figures 43593 and 43953 have figured very prominently in the last 'Golden Casket' drawn in Brisbane on Thursday last. Coincidentally, they both applied to Maryborough syndicates. Our Brisbane agency gave the first number as a £100 prize winner in the 'Casket,' the official advertisement the latter. But after much uncertainty and doubt it now transpires that the original number 43593

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is the correct result. Mr. J. Balkin, Adelaide street, who sold the ticket to Finney's syndicate, receiving an official communication on Saturday morning from the 'Golden Casket' Office, Brisbane, to the effect that a printer's error had occurred in the official printed lists and asking that ticket No. 43593 be forwarded to Brisbane for collection. In the meantime, earlier on Saturday morning the prize money had been paid at Abraham's, where it was purchased, on ticket No. 43953, but the money was subsequently returned, it is understood, when the official verdict was received."

That shows pretty clearly that this great bomb that the hon. member was going to explode is in reality only a "dud."

Mr. MORGAN: You must admit that it shows carelessness in the issue of the official result slip.

The HOME SECRETARY: There may have been carelessness, but the check is so accurate that the result slips had not reached Maryborough before the error was detected. I have here the receipt of the young lady to whom the money was paid.

The hon. member asked for an inquiry. The "Golden Casket" office is open to public inquiry at any time and at all times. What is there to inquire into? The mere fact that two men took advantage of their position to defraud the "Golden Casket," and that checks have been instituted so that such a fraud cannot take place again? No one in the State has lost by it, because the rightful winners have been traced and the prize money paid over, the "Golden Casket" bearing the loss. Has there been one definite charge brought forward in this debate to show that there is anything wrong with the working of the "Golden Casket"? The drawing is subject to inspection at any time, and I venture to say that, if anyone paid a visit when a drawing was taking place, they would be convinced that it is absolutely above-board. There is an inquiry going on all the time. The "Golden Casket" is under a continuous audit by the Auditor-General's Department. It is not an audit of to-day, and none for a month or two months. They carry on a continuous audit. Inspectors visit the office whenever they deem it necessary for an inspection to be made. In 1922 the officers in charge at that time had a complete investigation made into the "Golden Casket" by the Public Service Commissioner. The inspection was made by Messrs. Staines and Simpson. It was a very thorough inspection, and covered the whole operations of the "Golden Casket," and the recommendations of the Public Service Commissioner were carried out in their entirety by the committee. Almost every time the committee saw an opportunity of improving the conduct of the business they have done so. I have no objection to any hon. member getting up in his place and making any accusation he likes, provided he has been denied the right to get facts to support his case before he comes into the House. We have to realise that last year alone from the "Golden Casket" funds the hospitals of Queensland—largely country hospitals—received £130,000 by way of grant and subsidy. Is it a fair thing that the "Golden Casket"—which even if you disagree with it like the hon. member for Wynnum, is the accepted policy of the Government of the day and is supported largely by the public of the State—

is it a fair thing that the whole of the benefits that go to the country residents—to the sick, the weak, and the afflicted—should be jeopardised merely for some political propaganda when the information could have been obtained by a simple request? The hon. member for Wide Bay would have deserved support if he could have shown that he had asked for the information and that it had been denied to him. If that had occurred, he still would have had the opportunity of bringing the matter before this House. I do not think there is any need for an inquiry. The "Golden Casket" has the confidence of the people, because, in spite of everything that has been asserted in this House and outside, the last "Golden Casket" filled more rapidly than ever previously.

There was a letter in the "Courier" of yesterday, in which a person said that he had been a contributor to the "Golden Casket," getting as many as five tickets at a time and spending up to £50, but that he had never won a "bob." He belongs to the great family of anonymous people—to that numerous large family one of whose original ancestors was swallowed by a whale, and I am one of them also. (Laughter.) I have been subscribing since I was sixteen years of age to "Tattersall's" sweeps, (Laughter.) I have bought as many as three tickets in the "Golden Casket," and I am very glad to say that I have never won a prize. (Laughter.) I have never won a "bob" from "Tattersall's," but what would be the good of my saying on that account that there was something "crook" in "Tattersall's"? I have been down to the races and lost £2 or £3—I have backed—not "Four Stiffs" but "Eight Stiffs." (Laughter.) We can quite realise that there are plenty of people who think they have a copyright to some particular syndicate, and, when a similar name draws a prize in another portion of the State, they hold up their hands and say, "That was my prize; I was defrauded of it," in spite of the fact, as I have told the House, that in the No. 55 "Golden Casket" there were ten prizes won by ten different "Black Cat Syndicates." Taking the number of investors as 100,000, there should have been at least 1,250 "Black Cat Syndicates."

In view of the explanation I have given, I think that the hon. member will admit that he has not got any case requiring inquiry. The Auditor-General has been right through the "Golden Casket" results, and has dealt with every portion of the subject, and hon. members will have every opportunity of seeing his report when it is laid on the table of the House.

At 12.48 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. KELSO (*Vundah*): I think the discussion this morning emphasises the fact that it is still more necessary since the last debate took place that in the interests of the public there should be an inquiry into this matter. What object can the Government have in refusing to consent to an inquiry by a committee composed of members from both sides of the House? It would show the public that Parliament wants to sift the matter to the very bottom; and, if such a committee presents a favourable report, the public will be satisfied. I do not take any interest in the "Golden Casket," but this particular institution has gone into such large figures that, in

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the interests of the public, the charges should be inquired into. The proposed committee should be charged with the power to inquire into all the possibilities for leakage. It is quite true, as the Minister says, that an auditor is constantly in attendance, but it is absolutely impossible to find things that are not put down there. An auditor can only audit what is put in front of him. His audit might be on a certain line, and from that he might follow things up and find out whether there have been any leakages, but an auditor, as a rule, can only audit the matters put before him; that is, as to the actual cash passing through. This discussion shows conclusively that, in the interests of the "Golden Casket" itself, and in the interests of the committee which is running the "Golden Casket," there should be an impartial and independent inquiry. The Home Secretary said a few minutes ago that an inquiry by public servants was instituted some time ago, and those officials made certain recommendations. I am not going to say that those gentlemen did not make a searching inquiry—I am not going to find any fault with their recommendations—but things have come out which have caused a feeling of unrest on the part of the public who patronise the "Golden Casket." It seems to me that the simplest way of quieting that unrest—if the arguments put forward by hon. members on the other side, including the Minister, are correct—is to have an independent inquiry by a committee, consisting not of representatives from one side of the House only, but of representatives of both sides. Then we shall get finality.

There is one question I would like to ask on that matter. I have made inquiries, and I believe I am correct in saying that what is known as a balance-sheet—really a statement of receipts and expenditure—of the "Golden Casket" funds has not been published. I have not seen it.

Hon. M. J. KIRWAN: It is given in the Auditor-General's report.

Mr. KELSO: I am not talking about the information which is given to this House. Since this is a public matter, one cannot have too much publicity on the doings of those who are running the concern. If there is nothing to conceal, there is no reason why such a statement should not be published; but I think I am right in saying that it has not appeared in the metropolitan press. From time to time we hear people saying, "It is a funny thing that a balance-sheet is never published in the press." If the "Golden Casket" people wish to allay public suspicion—and the matter has arrived at that stage where there is suspicion—then this should be done. The committee should publish a statement of receipts and expenditure from time to time.

The suggestion has been made that it is a terrible thing to criticise the "Golden Casket" because the whole of the Hospitals vote and the Maternity Hospitals vote hang on the "Golden Casket." To say that the people of Queensland would not be in a position to attend to the sick poor of the community if the "Golden Casket" were to go out of public favour and the people did not take tickets in them, is one of the poorest arguments I have ever heard. Prior to the establishment of the "Golden Casket" money could be found for that purpose, and I

believe that, if the "Golden Casket" were wiped out to-morrow, the people of this community would cheerfully find the money to keep the hospitals going, and other humanitarian legislation which is from time to time introduced into this Chamber.

I am not interested in the "Golden Casket," but I am not finding fault with the class of people who favour it as a means of finding money for the hospitals. The majority of the people are in favour of it. The majority of members of this House are in favour of it. Seeing that it has such widespread ramifications, the best thing for all concerned is that a committee should be appointed of representatives from both sides of the House to go into the matter, and I am certain that, when their report came out, it would show any loopholes which are possible.

I want to take this opportunity of referring to a statement by the Home Secretary on the last occasion when this matter was discussed. It just shows that all the information we get is not reliable. The hon. gentleman was asked if the prizes referred to by the hon. member for Wynnum had been paid twice, and he said that there had been irregularities but that there was no suspicion of defalcation. The Home Secretary was perfectly right in saying what he did. He only gave hon. members the information which was handed to him. What I want to know is why that information was given to him. It was evidently not correct, because certain prosecutions have since taken place. These facts show the tone of the answer conveyed to hon. members by the Home Secretary. They show that the management must have known at the time of these defalcations. Two men were subsequently prosecuted, and I want to know why the management told the Home Secretary, when the Home Department's Estimates were under discussion, that there was no suspicion of defalcation at all when these men had at that time been detected of fraud and were afterwards prosecuted. The public are getting a little bit restive about the "Golden Casket." The Government would be well advised to have the inquiry as suggested.

Mr. BEDFORD (*Warrego*): The elaboration by the hon. member for Wide Bay on this motion is about as ridiculous as its presentment. A certain part of the motion contains the words, "I have in my possession definite and irrefutable proof"; and the hon. member goes on to say that the "definite and irrefutable proof" shows "an apparent irregularity." This motion only serves to provide a sample of the combined literary ability of the Opposition, and that in itself defeats the motion in its own terms. The hon. member for Wide Bay has neither proved the irrefutability of the apparent, whatever that may be—nor has he proved the apparentness of the irrefutable—whatever that is. (Laughter.) The attacks on the "Golden Casket" can be answered in two lines—that £2,500,000 have gone through the "Golden Casket," and the total irregularities amount to only £700. We have no objection on this side to the Opposition bleeding its pups and exercising its colts in "dud" attacks on the Government, but we have at least to ask them, with the few shreds of reputation they have left, to have some facts behind them when they make such attacks.

Mr. Bedford.]

Mr. EDWARDS: You did not leave much behind you when Carrington scared you at Mount Isa. (Laughter.)

Mr. BEDFORD: The morning has been taken up by foolish statements and ridiculous interjections by soldier politicians, whose low intelligence adds another horror to war.

Mr. KERR: Don't get annoyed.

Mr. BEDFORD: I am not annoyed.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. BEDFORD: I will obey your order, Mr. Speaker, and address my remarks to you, because I am assured of some intelligence in that quarter, and the same cannot be said of hon. members opposite. This discussion on the "Golden Casket" is generally based on the idea of making another attack on the Government—a variant of hypocrisy, which is the political stock-in-trade of those hon. members opposite who have spoken. Everybody knows that gambling is so inherent in the community that it is inseparable from almost every act of life. The farmer who deals with Roma street takes on the greatest gamble of his life every time he sends produce there, not knowing how much he is going to get out of it; so it is in most happenings of life. Opposition members who are directors of "dud" insurance companies are asking people to take a gamble on insurance, mostly an impossible gamble when it comes to payment of benefits as compared to the terms of the State Insurance Department.

Mr. CLAYTON: Sit down, and let a vote be taken.

Mr. BEDFORD: We are not going to take a vote on a ridiculous thing like this. (Opposition interruption.) There is no "definite and irrefutable proof showing an apparent irregularity." This is the great literary stuff—

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move—

"That the question be now put."

The SPEAKER: Mr. Bedford.

Mr. BEDFORD: This is the great literary stuff of which the tremendous ability of the combined Opposition is capable. They can in no case point to one particular in the conduct of the "Golden Casket" which shows it to be badly conducted. The irregularities amount to £700 on a total sum of £2,500,000. Almost every financial institution in Australia would be glad of such a record, and to have such slight irregularities.

Mr. CORSER: Sit down and let the motion go to a vote.

At 2 p.m., the House, in accordance with Sessional Order, proceeded with Government business.

## TULLY SUGAR WORKS AREA LAND REGULATIONS RATIFICATION BILL.

### INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

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

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to declare the validity of certain regulations dated the thirtieth day

[*Mr. Bedford.*

of May, 1924, purporting to have been made under the provisions of the Sugar Works Act of 1922, and for other consequential purposes."

These regulations were the subject matter of a discussion on a previous occasion. The leader of the Opposition took exception then to the issue of these regulations, and stated that we were governing by regulation. I went to some pains during that discussion to point out that the regulation which had been issued could have been legally issued by the Treasury, as the Sugar Works Act governing the Tully Mill area contained all the powers to issue regulations such as were issued. We found it was unwise to set up two land settlement departments. I have been making an attempt since I have been in charge of the Lands Department to bring all matters that rightly belong to the Lands Department under it. (Hear, hear!) I have now approached the Mines Department, so that we shall not have two or three departments dealing with land settlement and actually giving different tenures. (Hear, hear!) That is a very necessary thing to do. I cannot understand why these departments were ever allowed to carry on the business of the Lands Department under other Acts of Parliament. We find ourselves in difficulties by having two selectors side by side under different tenures and under different administrations. That is not good. In this particular instance we desire to vest certain power now possessed by the Treasury in the Lands Department. The regulations will then be valid. They were not valid—and the hon. member for Aubigny mentioned that fact—as issued by the Lands Department, although they were quite valid if they were issued under the Sugar Works Act, which governs the Tully River area. The advantages of the Bill are that the Lands Department will have complete control of this area, as it should have. The regulations give a little more power in dealing with the basis of rental than is contained in the Land Act. As I previously stated, the department thinks that this Bill is necessary because the State, as a whole, was spending £750,000 of public money in this particular area. The values that were recently secured for land sold in the Tully sugar works area have amply proved that those values do exist. We believe that the law applying to other areas should not apply to this particular area, because there is a great public benefit put upon the land in that district; and to meet that increased value we propose to make the rental 5 per cent. of the capital value instead of 1½ per cent., or instead of 3 per cent. as exists under the present Act. It might be argued that we could inflate the land values to get the same income. No doubt we could; but it is not a wise thing for the Government, the owners of this area, to inflate the values for the purpose of getting what is considered a fair return. If we inflated the value to double its present rating, we would be imposing a considerable obligation, and so I think the better method will be the one now proposed.

We also desire to use our land officials. That will save expense. We do not want to create new departments. One of the curses of Governments is that there are too many departments. You give a man a designation, and soon he wants a typist and a clerk, and if you do not watch him you will have a sub-department before you can say

"Jack Robinson." Branches of my department work under the Prickly-pear Board, which saves the creation of new sub-departments. The Land Court will also have jurisdiction under the Sugar Works Act. At present the Land Court has no power to deal with reassessments, but the present regulations give power to the Land Court to operate in that area the same as it does in any other.

There is only one other matter—and I am at some pains to explain this regulation because of the motion moved recently by the leader of the Opposition—that is with regard to local authority rating. I am taking the value of similar land, freehold land, in that neighbourhood, and taking the valuation of that land as the value of the land in this area for local authority rating purposes. Under the Sugar Works Act there is no provision for local authority rating at all. Of course, that was an omission in the original Bill. We are correcting that omission, and adopting what we consider a fair valuation, viz., the average value of freehold land in the neighbourhood, and saying that that is the value for the purposes of this Act.

Mr. TAYLOR: And you collect rates?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No; the local authority collects the rates. This is only for the purpose of the valuation. The usual system of valuation, of course, is to fix the capital value at twenty times the annual rent.

Mr. MOORE: You have altered that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes, that was the original law under the Local Authorities Act. That did not give satisfaction.

Mr. KING: The system which prevails now is the system you propose.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The councils have not adopted that. We had a difficulty at Southport because of the values on the leasehold.

Mr. KING: You fix the values yourself?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That slipped my mind. I was in touch with the Chairman of the Local Authorities' Executive, and I had to admit that the principle of adopting twenty times the annual value as the capital value did not work out equitably.

Mr. KELSO: In the South Coast district I think it worked all right.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: On two or three occasions I have had to approach local authorities because these troubles have cropped up in connection with perpetual leases. Enormous prices were paid for land at Mount Isa, but the purchasers did not pay cash for the land. They pay for the land on a basis of 3 per cent. on the auction prices. That is not the freehold value of the land. If you put that land up as freehold, the purchasers would have to pay the whole of the money, but under present conditions if the mine is a failure or if it does not turn out as expected, then these men will only pay a few years' rental and then throw up the land. For that reason it is unfair to take the capitalised value of the perpetual leases as the value for rating purposes. That is what has been done by some local authorities.

Mr. KELSO: In the South Coast district they took one and a-half times the value.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They did after we interfered, because it was affecting the sale of the land. The people told us that, if the local authority rared really on what was a fictitious value, they threatened to throw up the land. That is the substance of the regulations, and I am only asking the House to validate under the Lands Act what is already in operation under the Corporation of the Treasurer.

Mr. MOORE (*Lubigny*): I was very pleased to hear the remarks which fell from the Secretary for Public Lands. When the regulations were laid on the table we took exception to certain portions, and at that time the Minister agreed to bring in a validating measure for the reasons he has just given. One of the points he mentioned in particular was this very question of rating. The point I took in regard to the regulations as issued was that they were going back to the old principle of fixing the value at twenty times the annual rent. The Minister has now declared that he is going to adopt the principle in the amended Act, which provides that the value of freehold land of similar quality in the same district shall be taken as the value for rating purposes. That is only a fair thing. It was the policy adopted by the Government when they introduced the perpetual lease system which necessitated the alteration in the method of valuation. At that time the Government put the very low rental of 1½ per cent. of the capital value on blocks of land and then they got the amount they required by inflating the value of the land. That principle has caused an immense amount of trouble in different parts of the State for the reasons given by the Minister. That is to say, it created a disparity in value between the lands in the perpetual lease area and the lands outside. I am pleased to see that the Government have adopted the new principle, and are putting what they consider an equitable value on the land, and are getting the money required by charging 5 per cent. instead of 1½ per cent. That policy should have been adopted from the very beginning, because we have inequitable valuations in many other parts of the State which have been brought about by the practice which has been followed. I am also pleased to know that it is the intention of the department, when a large amount of public money is spent in any area, to see that the people who live in that area pay for the advantages they get. That is a definite principle that we on this side strongly approve of. The idea of spending a large amount of money in a certain area for the benefit of that area, and then asking the taxpayers to make up the amount of money required, instead of allowing the area concerned to be self-supporting, is a wrong one. I have nothing to complain of about the principle which has been introduced in the Bill. The objection I took when the regulations were published was not with regard to the principle which it was attempted to establish; but to the principle of government by regulation instead of by Act of Parliament. Our protest on that occasion has been justified by having got a clear statement on the question and having this validating Bill brought in. The Bill will make for the better government of the State, as the Government will have the whole of the administration of the various lands of the State under the Department of Public Lands. I think that is a good departure. I only hope that the system which is inaugurated in this Bill will

Mr. Moore.]

be followed in future land settlement schemes, so that we shall not have any discrepancy of valuations, and will have an effective system—making the settlements in which public money is being expended self-supporting, rather than allowing large amounts of money to be found by the general taxpayer. I am pleased that the Minister has seen the wisdom of bringing in a validating Bill and altering the principle which we said was a wrong one.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

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

The resolution was agreed to.

#### FIRST READING.

The 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.

#### COTTON INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Kacham*): In moving the second reading of this Bill, I desire to say that the principal object of the measure is to remove the embargo against growing ratoon cotton in accordance with the decision of the Government, and to lay down the conditions under which ratoon cotton shall be grown, as agreed to by the representatives of the cotton-growers. The other principle involved is that of taking power to make regulations to bring about a co-operative control in the industry by making a levy for the purpose of acquiring or erecting cotton ginneries, provided that 75 per cent. of the growers are in favour of that course, as shown by a poll.

I do not think it is necessary to make a long speech on this Bill, because it has been fully discussed already. The question of whether the Government should allow the growing of ratoon cotton or not was debated on the vote of censure motion and on the Address in Reply, when the cotton industry received the prominence which it undoubtedly merits. On the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, we had a further discussion, and on the initiation of this Bill speeches longer than usual were made on this question. I shall therefore content myself by saying that the justification for the Bill is the unfavourable seasons which we have in Queensland for plant cotton and the price which cotton has been bringing. I must admit that this year both of them have been favourable to those who advocated the growing of ratoon cotton. Hon. members opposite have been open and consistent and frank in their hostility to the measure which was introduced some twelve months ago, whilst other hon. members of the same party were just as emphatic in their expressions of opinion at the time that we were taking the wise course in preventing the growing of ratoon cotton. I repeat that the seasons, particularly in Central Queensland, and the abnormally high price of cotton have been favourable to those who

wished to grow ratoon cotton, and have to a large extent led the Government to review their decision. Whether it is a wise step or not, as I have already said, can only be determined by experience; but the Government propose to allow first ratoon cotton to be grown under clearly defined conditions set out in the regulations. Those regulations are necessary for two reasons. First—and more important—the Government of Queensland, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, are guaranteeing a price for cotton which involves considerable risk to the taxpayers; secondly, the majority of cotton-growers in this State are growers of annual cotton. On the initiation of the Bill I gave figures to show that only a small percentage of the cotton-growers have grown ratoon cotton during the last two seasons.

Mr. EDWARDS: It could not be otherwise.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not going to say that it will be so when this Act passes, but I am going to say that prior to the embargo only a small proportion of growers grew ratoon cotton. I have already said that I believe a majority of the cotton-growers will do the same as the sugar-cane growers, that is, grow both annual and ratoon cotton. I make no secret of the fact—and I have said it before when I introduced the previous measure—that from the growers' point of view, pure and simple, I recognised that there was a good deal to be said for the growing of ratoon cotton, and that I was in sympathy with the cotton-grower in that respect, because, as in the case of sugar-cane, practically the whole of the cost of clearing land, ploughing, and planting the crop was absorbed in the first year's cutting, whereas, the first ratoon cane crop—which of course was the best—was the one which returned the profit, or, in other words, was the payable crop. Afterwards deterioration takes place in sugar-cane, and I am informed that it takes place also in ratoon cotton, and that is why we have agreed to permit the growers to grow only first-year ratoons.

With regard to the removal of all restrictions I want to say that the guarantee comes to an end so far as I am concerned at the end of the 1926 season. The Commonwealth and State Governments have agreed to guarantee a price for the next two years, and the price has been fixed for the cotton crop now being planted.

That price has been agreed to by the Commonwealth and the States, and for the following year it will be a matter for determination. A guarantee has been promised for two years, and when that guarantee comes to an end, if the majority of the growers say they want the legislation repealed, and they want to be allowed to do absolutely as they like with their own, and desire to carry out an individualistic policy, I for one will be prepared to listen to their claim: but, while that guarantee exists and the taxpayers of this State and the Commonwealth are involved in a guarantee of a price which is almost certain to cause a certain amount of loss to the Governments, then there is justification for a certain amount of control.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Is the hon. gentleman of the opinion that a loss will still be incurred from now on?

[Mr. Moore.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The price agreed to by the Cabinet as recommended by the conference in Melbourne a few weeks ago, and ratified by the Queensland Government a few days ago, may possibly involve a further loss. It will be necessary to incur that loss because the farmers have to be encouraged to establish the industry, and at the present time we are not able to supply a sufficient quantity of the better quality seed to enable all the farmers to grow what we believe to be the best quality cotton to ensure the best price. In an endeavour to get the farmers properly established the Governments are justified in taking a reasonable risk. The risk will not be great, and if the present price of cotton prevails, there will be no loss at all. The loss to date is, roughly, £69,000.

Mr. TAYLOR: By Queensland alone?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No, that is the total loss. The Commonwealth Government have agreed to share the State's loss for last year, which is more than half that sum. It is interesting to note the world's cotton position to-day. Owing to the fact that America is now largely using her own raw material to keep her own machinery moving and owing to the depredations of the boll weevil there, there is a world shortage of cotton, and because of that world shortage the Queensland Government are determined to take a certain amount of risk in encouraging the farmers in Queensland to go in for growing cotton. I believe that, if the industry is properly established and prices remain anywhere near where they are at present, the farmers will be able to carry on the growing of cotton, if not as a principal industry, as a continuous side line, without any Government subsidy or guarantee. Mr. Himbury, one of the officers of the British Cotton Growing Association and one of the leading Lancashire cotton authorities, in a paper read at a textile conference at Wembley on 10th June, 1924, makes a very interesting statement about the world's position of cotton. He mentions what has been done in Australia, and also touches on the anti-ratoon cotton legislation. He apparently was rather pleased it had been passed; but the most important part of his statement, in my opinion, is that dealing with the position in America, which is the most important cotton-growing country in the world. Mr. Himbury points out that thirty years ago America grew 7,000,000 bales of cotton annually, when cotton was one-third of the present-day price, and he also pointed out that American consumption has so increased that America to-day requires 61½ per cent. of the cotton produced. I read the paper through last night, and took out some rather important figures, which I think I should use on this occasion to emphasise the seriousness of the position from the British spinners' point of view. These figures show the extent of the commercial crop of American cotton, and the percentage consumed by that country—

	Amount Produced.	Percentage Consumed in America.
	Bales.	
1901-1915 .. ..	11,087,000	36·2
1921-1922 .. ..	11,496,000	55
1923-1924 .. ..	11,091,000	61½

Those figures show that the utilisation of the raw product in America has been gradually increasing. We also find that, while the consumption of the raw material is going up in America from year to year [2.30 p.m.] to keep their own machinery moving, the boll weevil has been reducing the crop. The boll weevil in 1912 caused a deficit in the crop produced in America of 3.36 per cent., while in 1921 the total destruction by the boll weevil reached the alarming figure of 30.93 per cent. of the total crop. The figures for 1921-22 are also illuminating because they show that, while the acreage is increasing, the harvest of raw cotton is not increasing in proportion, particularly because of the operations of the boll weevil, as will be seen by the following figures:—

Year.	Acreage.	No. of Bales Harvested.
1921-1922 .. ..	31,678,000	8,375,000
1922-1923 .. ..	34,016,000	10,338,000
1923-1924 .. ..	39,224,000	10,200,000

I think I should mention that more recent confidential reports from America show an improvement on the figures quoted by Mr. Himbury. The increase is due to the fact that the boll weevil is not so active, and because drastic measures have been carried out to prevent the spread of that pest. This action has to some extent been effective. The farmers are going into other crops because of the depredations of the boll weevil, and it is possible that the area under cotton in America will not increase to considerably more than 40,000,000 acres.

When it is recognised that the world's requirement of cotton was about 20,000,000 bales, and that America is the greatest cotton producer in the world, but that their own local requirements are ever increasing, and the depredations of the boll weevil are so great, it makes the cotton people of the Empire sit up and take notice, because it is a very serious position. Mr. Himbury, in the course of his address at Wembley, said—

“It is this problem which has so seriously alarmed thoughtful students of the situation.”

It gives us a unique opportunity to establish the industry in Queensland on sound lines before the boll weevil has been controlled and America again becomes a big exporter of the raw material. Other countries such as India, which produces about 5,000,000 bales of cotton, and Africa are taking advantage of the high prices and cheap labour—which we do not have here—to establish the industry on sound lines. Irrigation is being carried out in some parts of Africa to promote the growth of a better quality of cotton. All the evidence points to the fact that, if we only establish the industry wisely, and endeavour to settle it on a sound basis and produce the very best quality which will command the very best price, an industry will be established in Queensland of which we shall have some reason to be proud. With regard to the general charge made against the Government of attempting to control the cotton industry by inducing the farmers to adopt the best methods of farming in order to produce the very best article, I wish to say that all

Hon. W. N. Gillies.]

Australia has suffered by reason of the policy that "Anything is good enough to export." It is pleasing to note a general change in that attitude, not only among the general public, but with all producers. The Fruit Marketing Committee in Queensland have now determined that only the best bananas shall be exported to the south. That is a very wise precaution, because it is the southern people who determine whether we shall be protected against the black-grown bananas of Fiji. Other industries are following that example. Only the other day in Melbourne the Federal Government passed an Act dealing with the dairying industry, and a conference representing the producers of Australia has determined on a national brand for our butter.

Those things indicate that other industries that have been established for many years—particularly those industries that export a large quantity of their products—are recognising that anything is not good enough, that the consumer on the other side of the world cannot be fooled all the time, and that he will wake up to the fact that other countries are properly classifying, grading, and inspecting their exports. If we are going to keep our markets and cause those markets to extend, we must be very careful that we export the best and nothing but the best.

I wish to say a few words regarding the grading and classifying of other products to justify the anxiety and the efforts of my department to try and encourage the growing of the very best quality of cotton for export. It is more than twenty years since the people of Queensland started out to grade butter, not only for local consumption but for export. At the present time there are six grades—super-fine, first, choice, second, third, and pastry. The butter producers realise that their product must be fully protected and properly graded. There is no difference of opinion about that. The people of New Zealand are in advance of the people of Australia, and the Massey Government during the last two years have passed two pieces of legislation, and have set up two important boards, one dealing with the meat industry and the other with the butter producers, and power is put into their hands to prohibit the export of anything likely to injure the good name of New Zealand. The time has arrived when we should take similar action. No man, no matter how much we may talk about liberty and individuality, has a right to do anything to injure the liberty of someone else. When that liberty interferes with the liberty of the people, it has to be curtailed and called by some other name such as license. That is why we believe we should endeavour so to control the cotton industry as to see that nothing but the best is exported.

With regard to wool, I have heard the statement in this House more than once that the wool people are able to carry out and determine their own destiny without passing a special piece of legislation. I admit that they are, and that Australian wool is the best in the world. That success is because of the great demand for wool, and because of the fact that our wool is the best in the world. We are thereby able to get the almost fabulous prices that are being received at present. The wool people do grade their wool, and there are 847 grades of wool. Three factors are taken into account—

1. Percentage of clean scoured wool.

[Hon. W. N. Gillies.

2. Quality in spinning counts may range from 16's to 100's.
3. Length of staple.

The main factors are yield, spinning quality, and length of staple.

With regard to the grading of sugar-cane I can speak with a good deal of feeling because when we have all this talk about doing what you like and about ratoonists not being able to ratoon, I remember that on one occasion I and my partners, at the suggestion of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, planted 40 acres—the largest area of its kind in New South Wales. The type of cane was recommended by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and was known as "New Guinea No. 14." After we had planted that cane and worked on it for two years, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company discovered that it was something below 5.5 c.c.s.—I may say there were no check chemists in those days, and we were told that they would not take the cane. That meant that we would have to allow it lie on the ground and rot. It was only because of a bit of a bluff and a flaw in the agreement that we got the crop taken. Now the mills insist upon a certain density in sugar-cane, which is quite right. As times went on and as regulations came into force the farmer was paid not so much by the tonnage, but for the quantity of sugar in the cane. Practically every bit of cane grown in Queensland is now paid for on an analysis basis. Therefore we have grading in sugar-cane and payment according to the c.c.s. of the cane.

As a result of the cane prices legislation the farmers have been induced not to grow for tonnage alone. Some of the low density canes yield the highest tonnage, and while the farmer was paid by tonnage there was no encouragement for him to grow sweet cane. But to-day, when the farmer is paid on the analysis and not on the tonnage of the crop, he has been induced to grow the very best quality of cane.

The same thing applies to wheat. Wheat is graded. We have "prime milling wheat" and "f.a.g. wheat." The same thing applies to copper. Copper is graded into several grades—electrolytic, best selected, standard, and blister copper. The same thing applies to gems. So that to-day there is a tendency to encourage the people engaging in primary or secondary industries to produce the best and to pay according to value.

I wish to say one or two words in regard to the provision in the Bill which enables a levy to be made for the purpose of co-operatively controlling the industry. I do not think I need make any declaration in this Chamber about my belief in co-operation so far as the farmers are concerned, because all my life, or, at any rate, since I reached manhood, I have been an advocate of co-operation. I recognise, as was said by Emerson, that there are three attitudes which you can adopt towards your neighbour. One is to co-operate with him, another is to compete with him, and the third is to ignore him. In these days you cannot ignore him. You have either to compete with him or co-operate with him. There is a good deal to be said for healthy competition so long as it is competition. Some people call it competition when there is no competition at all. To my mind, the best thing is co-operation, so far

as the primary producers are concerned. As I have repeatedly said to people who talk about co-operation, the passing of resolutions to the effect that the farmer should control his own industry does not get you anywhere. It must be borne in mind, in regard to the cotton industry, that before complete control by the farmers can be brought about the farmers have to assume a very large and a very important responsibility. Co-operation cannot be brought about by passing pious resolutions or by a magic wave of the hand. It can only be brought about by the farmers themselves making certain sacrifices. I believe that a majority of the farmers who grow cotton will be prepared to make these sacrifices when the time comes. If they are, the change can be made. I intend to take power under this Bill to make the necessary levies on their crops to enable co-operation to be brought about. John Stuart Mill said—

“There is no more accurate test of the progress of civilisation than the progress of the power to co-operate.”

I agree with him, and I agree that co-operation is making great strides. When we hear the complaints of the cotton-growers about not having co-operative control, and look at other industries, what do we find? Thirty-seven years ago, after the sugar industry had been in existence nearly half a century, the people engaged in that industry determined to make an effort towards co-operation, and the Government of the day passed an Act of Parliament to enable central sugar-mills to be established. The position to-day is that, after thirty-seven years of effort on behalf of the growers, only eight mills out of the thirty-seven in the State are co-operative mills, and there is no co-operative refinery. The cotton-growing industry has only been established for about five years, yet the cotton-growers have complained because they have not co-operative control of their industry. I admire their efforts at co-operative control from the start, but I am just pointing out the difficulties that other industries have had to go through before they achieved co-operative control.

What is the wheat-growing industry doing? The wheat-growing industry is essentially a farmers' industry, yet there is only one co-operative wheat mill in the State of Queensland out of the nine mills gristing the farmers' wheat.

We come to the wool industry—the most important and valuable of all industries. What have the woolgrowers done towards co-operation? What have cattle-growers done? I admit that the cattle-growers have missed a golden opportunity, because when cattle were bringing a big price that was the time to establish co-operative meatworks and co-operative abattoirs, but they missed that opportunity, or at least they have not embraced it so far. The meatworks are not controlled by the cattlemen, as they should be in my opinion, nor have the woolgrowers, with all their fabulous wealth, established woollen mills in this country.

Then we come to the dairying industry, which has made the most rapid strides in the co-operative movement: but even the dairying industry is not linked up in one State-wide co-operative association as it should be. I think the next step in the dairying industry is to see that every ounce of

butter which is made in this State is made under co-operative control, and that the factories are linked up in one association, and after linking up as one association in the State of Queensland, they should endeavour to make it an Australian-wide association. I have had something to do with co-operation in the dairying industry, not only in Queensland, but in New South Wales, where I managed a co-operative concern for a time. I did a good deal for such institutions at Byron Bay, and when I went to North Queensland one of my first jobs was to assume the position of secretary of the Atherton Tableland Co-operative Butter Company, which is now a great success. When I went there there was only a small co-operative butter factory turning out a few cwt. of butter a week. With many others who were interested in co-operation I got busy, and we established on the Atherton Tableland what is one of the finest co-operative concerns in Queensland, or Australia, to-day. In Queensland 93 per cent. of the butter and 90 per cent. of the cheese is manufactured by co-operative concerns.

The bacon industry has not made the same strides. We started co-operation in 1912. There are now four proprietary factories and four co-operative factories in this State.

In the fruit industry one of the most democratic steps has been taken by farmers towards co-operation in this State, and that was taken without any raising of capital, because it was a marketing scheme. Although there was some hostility from the fruitgrowers at the first, that hostility is gradually dying down, and the fruitgrowers are beginning to realise that the compulsory marketing of their fruit is a good thing for the fruitgrowing industry. Not only is it a good thing for the industry, but it is a good thing for the fruit-consuming people, because the middlemen are cut out and the producer and consumer brought together.

I repeat again that I am very glad that the farmers are making a move towards co-operative control of the cotton industry. I was very pleased that the directors of the British-Australian Cotton Association recognise the spirit of the times and are prepared to meet the farmers in a reasonable way. I feel sure, from the spirit evinced by Sir Owen Cox and Mr. Baillau at the recent conference in Melbourne, that it will not be the fault of the directors of the association if they do not either take the farmers in as partners for the time being, or make some arrangement whereby the farmers can ultimately get control not only of the ginning but of the manufacture of by-products of the cotton industry. I believe that can be brought about. It may not be brought about in one or in two years, but I think that the spirit evinced by the directors of the association is very laudable. I want to say that the association has done good work, and that some of the suggestions and statements that have been made by hon. members in this Chamber and people outside with regard to a monopoly are not justified. The association came here bona fide, and put a large sum of money into a Queensland industry, and in my opinion the deal which was made by the Queensland Government on behalf of the farmers with respect to ginning and the sale of the seed was the best for the farmers which was obtainable at the time.

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This is the opportunity for the farmers to show whether they can do better. My advice to anybody is, "If a man is not doing your job properly or cheap enough, do it yourself." If the farmers can do better and make a greater profit out of the industry by controlling the ginneries and oil mills themselves, the sooner that change is brought about the better. Whether the farmers can do that or not I do not know. They think they can, and if they are prepared to back their opinion by imposing levies on themselves, I think they will be doing the right thing. If a cab driver wants to charge you too much to take you to a railway station, my advice is to walk. If a tailor wants to charge you too much for a suit, my advice is to buy a ready-made suit or wear last year's suit, and he will probably come to terms. That is my argument with the farmers. "If you think you are paying too much or are being robbed by the ginners or middlemen get busy and do the job yourselves." If they think they are paying too much for the ginning of their cotton, by all means let them get control of the industry and gin it themselves.

Just one or two words about the argument which has been put forward with regard to compensation to growers who destroyed ratoon cotton. There is in this Bill no provision for the payment of compensation to people who obeyed the law. In fact, the whole idea is novel, and in my opinion suggests a new ethical code—that people who obey the law should be compensated. Suppose an hotelkeeper found that his rival across the way was selling liquor after hours, should he approach the Government and ask for compensation because of unfair competition? If a man dodges income tax should the man in competition with him who pays his income tax ask the Government to refund a portion of his tax? The idea of paying compensation to people because they obey the law is, in my opinion, an unreasonable proposition, and one put forward by people who have no responsibility whatever, but who seem to have the old antiquated Tory idea that, if the Government are asked to pay compensation the people are not required to find the money. What section of the people should be asked to find compensation for the people who destroyed ratoon cotton?

Mr. KERR: You said you would consider the reasonable claims for compensation.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said that before the embargo was lifted, before which harvesting of ratoon was not permitted.

Mr. KERR: You made that statement, and you have gone back on it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This is the position with regard to compensation. Just before the embargo was definitely lifted the Press published articles and reproduced photographs showing large areas of ratoon cotton where the bolls were just bursting, and declared that the Government were going to allow this national wealth to go to waste, and would not permit it to be harvested. A few days afterwards the Cabinet met, and in view of all the circumstances—including the high price for cotton ruling on the other side of the world—we thought it was unwise to allow that national wealth in cotton to be wasted, so the embargo was lifted. What was the result? The result

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was that, notwithstanding the statements about thousands and thousands of acres of bursting bolls and ratoon cotton waiting to be harvested, when we immediately lifted the embargo and allowed the growers to harvest ratoon cotton, only eighty-two growers made application—they had to send in statements that they wished to harvest ratoon cotton—for permission to do so, and the area involved was only 1,670 acres.

Mr. EDWARDS: It was all wasted. You know that Mr. McConnell had over 1,000 acres of ratoon cotton himself.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The total yield was 52,091 lb., or an average of about 32 lb. to the acre. Of course, we know that it was not really ratoon cotton, that is to say, it was not cultivated properly. It was stand-over cotton merely allowed to grow till the embargo was lifted, and then it was harvested. The real point with regard to compensation is that two years ago, when Mr. Crompton Wood was here, the Government made a declaration that ratoon cotton would not be allowed, and that so soon as the House met legislation would be passed to prohibit the growing of it. Accordingly a number of growers took their cotton out or fed their stock on it to keep them alive during the drought. The majority took it out and put in a crop which was under a guarantee of 5d. or 5½d. a lb., whereas the ruling price for ratoon cotton was only about 3d. a lb. They either planted cotton and harvested that crop of plant cotton, or they planted some other crop, or their crop failed. We are not responsible for the failure of crops; we cannot help that. We know that very often crops do fail. Sugar-cane fails, maize fails, and wheat fails. Last year wheat failed to such an extent that there was only sufficient wheat grown in the whole of Queensland to supply the requirements of farmers with seed for the present year. Because of the adverse season the Government had to guarantee £24,000 to the Wheat Board to enable them to supply seed to those growers who could not buy it. The same thing is done from time to time for the sugar-growers. On many occasions when the sugar crop absolutely fails the farmers are assisted to get cane sets for the following season.

Unfortunately some farmers have suffered because they obeyed the law, but almost every man who obeys the law obeys it very often with some inconvenience to himself; but there would be no occasion to pass a law if everyone was unanimous in doing the thing without law. The object of the law is to compel certain sections of the people—admittedly a minority—to do something in the interests of the majority. The people who obey the law should not be compensated for so doing.

Mr. KELSO: What did you do to the people who broke the law?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If the hon. gentleman wishes the people who broke the law to be prosecuted, let him be man enough to say it now.

Mr. EDWARDS: You are not man enough to prosecute them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Does the hon. gentleman wish me to prosecute them?

Mr. EDWARDS: You are not game to prosecute them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member is not game to say that he wishes them to be prosecuted. I am not concerned about prosecutions, because I have no desire to prosecute anybody.

Mr. EDWARDS: Mr. McConnell lost over 1,000 acres of ratoon cotton. Why do you not be truthful?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not want to hear anything about squatters just now. The Bill is to give effect to the promise of the Government to remove the embargo on ratoon cotton. It contains other principles, one providing that, if the farmers so wish—this must be approved by the farmers before it can be effective—regulations can be framed providing for the imposition of a levy for the co-operative control of the industry. There are one or two other minor matters that can be explained in Committee, but the main object of the Bill is the removal of the embargo. It will be necessary to make consequential alterations in the Cotton Industry Act by legalising the growth of ratoon cotton, as the Act now only refers to the growth of plant cotton. The Bill also deals with the condition under which ratoon cotton shall be grown. Some hon. members may consider that the conditions attached to the growing of ratoon cotton in the way of the registration of growers, etc., are a little bit hard.

Mr. EDWARDS: The conditions certainly are hard.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The conditions provide a minimum of safety for the majority of the growers, who for the time being wish to grow plant cotton. Those growers are in the majority and must be protected, and the Queensland Government and the Commonwealth Government, who are guaranteeing the price to these growers, and represent the taxpayers, must also be protected. I beg to move—

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

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): This Bill serves to some extent to end the persecution of the cotton-growers in Queensland, and to do away with the injustice meted out to them by the Bill introduced last year by the Minister and supported by the Government.

[3 p.m.] The Minister has not justified the introduction of this Bill. He did not deal with the cotton industry, but he wandered through the cattle industry, the sheep industry, and dealt with wool, and only very lightly here and there touched on the cotton industry and his reasons for introducing the Bill. We know that only a year ago the Minister who introduced this Bill said that the ratoon cotton controversy was only the result of the advocacy of a few political bigots.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not say “only”; I said “largely.”

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman said that ratooning was urged and desired by a few political bigots.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are one of them.

Mr. CORSER: I thank you for that compliment. We are going to win. The hon. gentleman has had to admit that a conference of cotton-growers suggested the necessity for this Bill. The Minister has

probably received a mandate from the Premier to introduce this Bill. Through the action of the cotton-growers and the return of the Premier we are now likely to have an amendment of the Act, and a relaxation of some of the extreme penalties and disabilities which were placed in the Cotton Industry Act against the growers of ratoon cotton. The Minister might have said, as he did say to the deputation that waited on him not so long ago to ask for a relaxation of the ban on ratoon cotton—that all growers of ratoon cotton would have to be licensed or registered.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Or apply for exemption.

Mr. CORSER: He also told them that the guarantee would not apply to ratoon cotton. A provision of the Bill provided that a reasonable advance might be made from time to time. I want to know whether the cotton-growers who advocated ratooning throughout Queensland are prepared to accept the administration of this Bill and have advances made from time to time by one who has decried ratoon cotton and has said that it is of no value. There will have to be greater advances made than in the past. The growers will demand it as they have demanded this amendment. The markets throughout the world show that ratoon cotton is of a much higher quality than this House has been led to believe, and that it is worth more than 2d. or 3d. a lb. The Minister also told the deputation that ratoon cotton must be ginned and marketed separately, and that there will be a penalty for mixing ratoon with plant cotton. A good deal is wrapped up in that statement, and we have had only a small amount of information on the subject from the Minister.

I would have liked to deal with the probable outcome of this ratoon legislation. The Minister has stated during the present session that the embargo on ratoon was brought in on the advice of experts who were brought to Queensland to advise us on the cotton industry. That was a very necessary and usual statement to make. On page 1579 of “Hansard” for last year we find the Minister laying in regard to Mr. Crompton Wood, who was in Australia with the cotton delegation, that he handled the commandeering of the Egyptian cotton crop during the war for the British Government and that a profit of something like £2,000,000 was made. The hon. gentleman also stated that a Bill had now passed the House of Commons legalising a grant of £1,000,000 from this profit to encourage the establishment of the cotton industry throughout the British Empire. That merely introduced Mr. Crompton Wood to the Queensland cotton-growers. That gentleman was a member of a corporation which made a profit of £2,000,000 on cotton. That is the man who guided the destinies of the department and the Minister, as I am going to prove, and not the experts. On page 1584 of “Hansard” of last year the Secretary for Agriculture stated—

“The Premier is keeping his promise now in bringing in this ratoon legislation. He told Mr. Crompton Wood that he would introduce legislation to prevent the growth of ratoon cotton.”

That promise was given before Mr. Wells, the cotton specialist, or Colonel Evans, the Empire Cotton Corporation's expert, arrived in Australia. There is the evidence—the

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statement of the Minister himself when introducing the ban on ratoon cotton last year. The hon. gentleman shows by his own words that the Premier had made a promise to Mr. Crompton Wood—the gentleman who was then the British Cotton Growing Association's representative, and who is now the representative of the British-Australian Cotton Association, Limited—the man who made a profit of £2,000,000 out of the growers of cotton in Egypt during the war. That is the man who advised the Minister as to how to make a profit on this occasion. He urged the Minister to put a ban on ratoon, and to grow a special class of cotton to suit a special class of specialists who wanted to deal with and make money in Britain out of the cotton-grower.

It has taken some amount of trouble, and certainly some expense, at the hands of these supposed political bigots, to break down this ban and to counteract the determination of the Secretary for Agriculture to assist Mr. Crompton Wood to the detriment of the cotton-growers throughout the State. The achievement has been brought about to no small extent by the cotton-growers of Queensland making possible the securing of valuable evidence through Mr. Daniel Jones when in Britain. That has made it possible to show the Minister the erroneous stand he had taken, and to prove that Mr. Crompton Wood's advice to the Government and their promise to that gentleman have been detrimental to the industry and a restriction adversely affecting the growers of the State. "Hansard" records of the Minister's speech in 1923 further state—

"Mr. Wood was so impressed on the subject that he wrote when at Rockhampton the following letter to the Premier—'After conferring with Mr. Gillies we are requesting him to transmit to you our unanimous opinion concerning the steps which we think should be taken to overcome the danger of having ratoon cotton associated with the Queensland crop.'"

There we have set out some of the arguments which were later transmitted to the Cabinet for Mr. Crompton Wood by the Secretary for Agriculture, who, acting with Mr. Crompton Wood, did the persuasion that was necessary and was instrumental to a great extent in bringing about the ban.

We know that it is going to be very difficult on this occasion to get a bite from the Secretary for Agriculture. We know that whatever proofs we bring forward on this occasion the hon. gentleman is going to be a very milk-and-water advocate of this Bill as compared with the way he fought us when we were advocating the rights of the growers when the principal Act was under consideration. Although we were subjected on that occasion to the abuse of the hon. gentleman, and although it had been broadcast throughout Australia that we were acting to the detriment of the industry, the hon. gentleman is not now man enough to stand up and acknowledge that his statements on that occasion were not justified, and to answer our condemnation on this occasion. The hon. gentleman got right away from his Bill and dealt practically with every other product that he could think of at the time.

Before proceeding further, I must answer a statement made by the hon. member for Oxley to the effect that I should be more

[*Mr. Corser.*

certain of my information before criticising his actions in Britain. I made two statements. One was that I had evidence that the hon. gentleman left for Great Britain for the sole purpose of investigating the ratoon problem, and I gave the Secretary for Agriculture as my authority for making that statement. The Minister's statement in "Hansard" this session reads—

"I might mention when that Cotton Industry Bill was before the House last year it was supported by the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Taylor (who generally supports the Government) and by the hon. member for Oxley."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He generally supports anything that is right.

Mr. CORSER: In fairness to the late leader of the Opposition, Mr. Taylor, I want to say that, if there is one thing that we are subjected to in the country, it is the venomous and vicious attacks of Ministers on the hon. member for Windsor. They claim that he is a middleman making his livelihood out of the primary producers; that he is sucking at their earnings, and that his living is taken from the wives and children of the producers because he is a Roma street middleman. Those are the expressions used by the Secretary for Agriculture and other Ministers when they are in the country. They cannot deny it. The Minister claims that we are one in this House, but why does he condemn the hon. member in the country and supports his opinions in the House?

Mr. WINSTANLEY: You are making an attack on the hon. member for Oxley.

Mr. CORSER: I am not making an attack on the hon. member for Oxley, I am speaking of the hon. member for Windsor.

Mr. CARTER: It is a veiled attack.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It is not an attack like you made on the hon. member for Bundaberg.

Mr. CORSER: It would take a pretty big "veil" to cover up some of the statements of the hon. member for Port Curtis.

So valuable is this statement in proving the correctness of my contention that I will read it again—

"I might mention when that Cotton Industry Bill was before the House last year it was supported by the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Taylor (who generally supports the Government), and by the hon. member for Oxley. The latter gentleman went to the old country with the one intention of finding out all about ratoon cotton."

"With the one intention of finding out all about ratoon cotton." That was my statement, it was on that statement that I made the remarks I did.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: "All about cotton" I might have said.

Mr. CORSER: Never mind what you might have said, that is what you said, and you continued—

"and has cabled out that the ratoon cotten embargo should be maintained, and he has now changed his view in that regard."

That is the statement of the Secretary for Agriculture, and it was that statement that I referred to in my remarks. The other remark that the hon. member for Oxley

may have reason to question is my statement with regard to his having addressed the Oldham Chamber of Commerce. I claimed that he addressed that meeting, and I say now that I have the newspaper cutting to prove it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What is wrong with that?

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member for Oxley questioned my statement.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are always wrong.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman has never been able to prove me wrong or found that I could not prove any statement I have made, and I am able to prove any statement I make to-day. The "Queenslander" of the 14th June, 1924, has the following—

"ADVICE AGAINST RATOONS.

"At the last meeting of the Oldham Chamber of Commerce, at which Mr. Elphinstone delivered an address, the question of ratooning cotton was independently raised, and a resolution was unanimously passed strongly approving of the action of the Queensland Government in prohibiting ratooning as being in the best interests of the cotton planters. Mr. Elphinstone found the opinion general in the trade that ratooned cottons are distinctly shorter and weaker in staple, more wasty, and harsher than annual cotton. They also contained a large number of short, immature fibres, the defects becoming more pronounced in succeeding years."

He evidently addressed the meeting, instead of being addressed himself.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why didn't you settle that in caucus?

Mr. CORSER: Because I think it is quite fair for the hon. gentleman to show that some of the statements, if misleading, have come from the Minister himself, and appear in "Hansard." (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. EDWARDS: That is right. He deserves to be exposed.

Mr. CORSER: Whatever the members of the Oldham Chamber of Commerce may have thought, I have proved here that every chamber of commerce in Britain thought otherwise, but that does not enter into the controversy I have with the hon. member for Oxley. That is a matter between the Secretary for Agriculture and myself.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You had better clear that up now.

Mr. CORSER: I will clear the Minister up. The Minister would probably like me to get on with that before I deal with another little matter, but I will get down to what the Minister has termed a little matter, as if it were too small to mention. We know that in the agreement with the British-Australian Cotton Association seed cotton was to be dealt with. The growers had made representations to the Minister that they should handle the ratoon cotton themselves and not through the Association. The Minister claimed that he is going to handle it, or that he is arranging under the agreement for ratoon cotton to be dealt with in the ginneries. If ratoon cotton was not anticipated when that agreement was signed and was to be banned, why should the British-Australian Cotton Association have the advantage of ginning this ratoon cotton?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Will it be an advantage?

Mr. CORSER: It will be an advantage in this way—that they are going to get the whole of the seed for £1 or £1 10s. a ton. That is a very great disadvantage to the grower. If the Minister is going to admit—as no doubt he must admit—that it was a wrong policy to sell the seed at £1 a ton, is it not equally erroneous to extend the possibilities of profit to the Association by now giving them something which was not anticipated then—that is, a tremendous crop, with heavy seed at a price which is too low and provides no return to the grower?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The indications are that the farmers will come to an agreement with the British-Australian Cotton Association before the present agreement expires.

Mr. CORSER: We are dealing with the Bill, and whatever Senator Massy Greene is able to do in the matter of the agreement, it cannot influence us at the present moment. We can only deal with the Bill as we find it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is just as well to bear it in mind.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister has no evidence to guide him as to what the farmers may do, because we know that the conferences which have been arranged have not yet taken place. Certain resolutions which have been come to by the Central district growers have not yet reached Brisbane, so that we are at some slight disadvantage with regard to the immediate desires and promises which are being brought about with the assistance of that Nationalist champion, Senator Massy Greene.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are trying to introduce politics into it.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman did that last year. He referred last year to the agitation for ratoon cotton as a political business that only a few politicians wanted. I have with me quotations showing what he said. The Minister is not proposing to finance this scheme to take over the ginneries—he has not the money—but in the past we know that he has financed assistance to the consumers in the city. The Minister has established quite a number of State enterprises, and was always able to find the money for them; but he says he is not going to make these ginneries a State enterprise or find the money for purchasing them; so that, whatever agreement the growers come to, and whatever the outcome of the conferences referred to by the Minister may be, I am going to stand as an individual representing the largest cotton-growing district last year for seeing that the grower gets fair value for his money. I do not know that it would be a wise thing to take over these ginneries at par or pay for them the money which has actually been put into them. I think that a very careful business investigation of the whole financial position and the cost of these ginneries as compared with others which could be erected by the farmers should be made before any agreement is come to to purchase them and find the money to pay for them. I think we should look to the interests of the producers first, and not be hurried into any agreement until they are fully informed of the financial position.

Mr. FARRELL: They have agreed to accept it as a basis.

*Mr. Corser.]*

Mr. CORSER: The Cotton Growers' Union have agreed to a meeting with certain associations interested.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Rockhampton paper says that the Cotton Growers' Union have accepted the proposals of the Association as a broad basis for negotiation.

Mr. CORSER: They have accepted the proposal as a broad basis for negotiation between the three bodies I have spoken of. I am quoting from yesterday's Brisbane papers, and the latest Rockhampton paper which has come to hand by post cannot contain any later news. I may say that the Premier, in a letter to me, dated 21st April, 1923, indicated that he was prepared to place money at the call of the producers for any reasonable development of the industry that they wished. He said—

"With effective organisation, you farmers now have in your own hands the means to solve your own agricultural problems. You will initiate your own proposals for co-operative handling, marketing, and manufacture. The Queensland Government has given an assurance to the Council of Agriculture that it will finance all sound undertakings put forward in the interests of agriculture in this State."

It may be a sound undertaking for the Government to finance the acquisition of ginneries by the farmers, and since the Premier indicated that provision had already been made for such a purpose, there is no excuse for him when he says that the farmers should find all the money.

I am not going to speak at any great length in an endeavour to prove the value of ratoon cotton, but in answer to the statements of the Minister, it is perhaps just as well for me to make a very short statement in the interests of the article which we propose to grow under this Bill.

I hold that we should obtain the full market value for ratoon cotton. It has been claimed that there is no market available for ratoon cotton. On that question, Mr. Bond is reported thus in the "Industrial Australian Mining Standard" of 11th September, 1924—

"Mr. Bond (of Messrs. Bond and Co., Ltd., Sydney) spoke favourably of ratoon cotton and gave instances where spinners employed by his own firm were unable to distinguish between ratoon and annual cottons, or even between ratoons and 'A' grade annuals. His firm last year bought 400 lb. of ratoon cotton from New Caledonia and found it rather better than 'A' grade. He had been unable to discover that it was particularly subject to attacks from insect pests."

At 3.25 p.m.,

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

Mr. CORSER: Before proceeding, Mr. Nott, I must congratulate you on your elevation to the high office that you now enjoy. (Hear, hear!) I take this opportunity also of pointing out, as many other hon. members realise, that it is a stepping-stone to the highest position in this House, and we feel sure that your personal characteristics amply fit you to fill such a position, which

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may be your lot before long. At a conference in Melbourne not long ago, where the various Ministers representing the Commonwealth were present, Mr. Bond made that statement, and at the close of the conference Senator Pearce read a cable—this is a point that I want to impress upon the Minister—that he had received from the High Commissioner in London to the effect that, although the 1922 crop had been satisfactory, the reputation established for Australian cotton had been prejudiced by the inferior quality of the 1923 cotton. When we had an opportunity of growing plant cotton we prejudiced our cotton reputation.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a funny construction to put on it.

Mr. CORSER: That is a construction that the Minister would not put on it. According to Senator Pearce's information it was a pity that the 1923 crop had been subjected to certain restrictions, and had not been allowed to contain a certain amount of ratoon cotton. This annual cotton had prejudiced the market and had affected our cotton reputation on the other side of the world. Mr. Bond is reported in the press of 12th September, 1924, as follows:—

"In his mills they had failed to detect any evils attributed to ratoon cotton. In fact, Mr. Bond, when speaking before the conference, maintained strongly that ratoon cotton had in his experience proved to be equal to 'A' grade annual."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He would not pay the same price for it.

Mr. CORSER: We also have evidence that the New Caledonia cotton realised the highest price in the French markets last year, and in New Caledonia they grow up to the fourth ratoon, but they must destroy their plants at that stage. This Bill is going to permit the growers to grow first ratoons only, but that will not satisfy the desires of the growers or assist to extend the industry in Queensland. We have several other authorities to prove the value of ratoon cotton. The Minister claims that this Bill has been introduced at the whim and wish of certain growers' representatives. In the press of 26th July, 1924, he is reported to have said—

"He would not hear any discussion regarding the sale of cotton and the British Cotton Growers' Association. There was a legal agreement between the Government and the company that would last until 1926, and the question therefore could not be opened."

Mr. McDonald, from Central Queensland, said—

"A great injustice had been done to the growers of Central Queensland."

The Minister said—

"I will not hear any more."

Yet the Minister has stated that he met a delegation of certain growers, and as the result of that conference he has introduced the Bill that they desire.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not that conference.

Mr. CORSER: This is the conference that sat on 25th July, 1924. The hon. gentleman announced to the conference the policy of the Government. He made that [3.30 p.m.] statement, and we know that another gentleman associated with the Minister as Director of the Council

of Agriculture said that, if certain previous suggestions of his were not accepted and the farmers wanted war, well they could war alone. There are several other authorities who could be quoted. Mr. Daniel Jones stated, "Daily Mail" of 18th August, 1924—

"That after forty years' practical experience he was convinced that in Queensland ratoon cotton was more disease-resisting than annual cotton, and that ratooning, quite apart from the economy of labour costs, was the best method under the conditions of soil and climate. It was grown on bushes up to eighteen years of age."

Mr. Heron, the expert from Peru, said in same issue—

"I consider ratoon cotton is a practical commercial production. It has been my experience that a better quality and a higher yield of cotton is obtained from first and second year ratoons than is gained from the original plant crop. But the crops must be looked after and intensely cultivated.

"Egyptian cotton will not suit Queensland at all, and Caravonica, which has been grown for some years in Queensland, has been a complete failure throughout Africa and in South America. The varieties which are most suitable for ratooning in Queensland are any of the acclimatised varieties of American long staple and the wonderful Tanguis cotton of Peru"

Those are the statements of certain experts throughout the world which could be set up against other authorities that might be quoted. It is only in the interests of the case, and in the interests of the whole-hearted support that I give to this Bill that I produce evidence showing that we shall be justified in allowing second year ratoons.

Mr. EDWARDS: And third year ratoons, too.

Mr. CORSER: According to a French authority, New Caledonian ratoon cotton last year brought from 545 to 585 francs; Soudan cotton averaged 510 to 540 francs; American 510 to 540 francs, and Syrian cotton 480 to 510 francs, the rate of exchange at the time being 82 francs to the £1. I merely give those figures to show that in this cotton-growing country of New Caledonia they believe in growing fourth ratoons and that they topped the market last year in France. I want to say further that samples of cotton were sent to Mr. Atkins, the eminent Egyptian expert, who was brought here by the delegation, and he has informed us that the samples were good ones. He stated in reference to the sample of third-year ratoon cotton, and quoted by me in "Hansard" for 11th October, 1923—

"The sample of white cotton, on the other hand, is an ideal one for Queensland, and is almost identical with the Durango variety of Upland cotton that we intend to grow in this country. It has a good bloom and colour, good texture and strength, and has a fibre length of 1½ in. There is an unlimited demand for this quality of cotton on the markets of the world, and it is a very desirable one to grow. We would certainly advise you to keep the seed from this cotton and plant it out separately, at least half a mile from any other cotton."

Mr. Atkins, along with Mr. Crompton Wood,

condemned ratoon cotton. The Secretary for Agriculture, in answer to our representations after learning of all these things, referred to us as "calamity howlers," and said that our action was that of half-informed authorities who endeavoured to furnish information on a subject about which we knew nothing. That was the answer we received from the Minister to our repeated representations on behalf of the ratoon cotton producers, although our representations have been borne out by these experts whom I have quoted.

Then we hear of the commercial value. This is shown absolutely by a cable from Britain, and appears in the Maryborough "Chronicle" of 30th June, 1924—

"Mr. Daniel Jones, of Queensland, who is in England in the interests of the ratoon cotton-growers addressed the Cotton Association on behalf of the ratoon cotton and the Queensland legislation thereon.

"He said the President of the Association, Mr. Thorpe, declared that the only defect in the Upland ratoon was the irregularity of the staple. Samples were by no means uncommercial. Mr. Jones explained that the irregularity was due to the many varieties used. The growers at present were selecting a uniform staple. Mr. Jones claimed that none of the lint was of low quality, and he exhibited fifteen samples of ratoon which, he says, the spinners considered were all suitable to the needs of Lancashire. During the discussion two spinners opined that Queensland cotton legislation was too restrictive."

Those are the opinions of spinners in Lancashire. After defending the Government's embargo, the Secretary for Agriculture admitted that the Government were carrying out field and laboratory experiments in connection with ratoon cotton. He claimed that these experiments were being carried out at Melton and Monal, and also in the Callide Valley, but the results for the year were not completed. I wish to ask the Secretary for Agriculture the meaning of that statement, which was given to the press and the people of Australia. No ratoon was grown at Melton and Monal when that statement was made, so that the hon. gentleman could not have been waiting for the results of the experiments that he stated had been promised to the House. There was only annual cotton on those areas. I deny that any one of them was growing ratoon cotton. During the last few weeks the crops were pruned for the first time. No attempt was made last year to carry out the experiments that were promised to Parliament.

We know that in addition to the so-called "political calamity howlers" asking for information, which the Minister should have been able to give and which the Government should have looked for, quite a lot of growers repeatedly made representations in 1923 to the Minister in the endeavour to secure the Bill we are getting to-day. Mr. J. Ivory—

"regretted that the Minister could not see his way clear to accede to the request made at the conference by Mr. Boyd for a referendum among cotton-growers for the purpose of ascertaining whether they desired a continuance of ratoon cotton. Mr. Boyd was firmly of the opinion that a referendum would

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disclose an almost overwhelming majority in favour of ratoon."'

Mr. Boyd, by the way, is a grower in the Burnett district.

Those statements were made by growers to the Minister, yet he states that a few political bigots and calamity howlers are responsible for this controversy. For our own protection I think it is only fair to disclose these facts. We have not access to the press, as has the Minister.

I shall give one example of the value of ratoon cotton, because I consider it is going to play a big part in our industry. At the present the Minister is going to deal with ratoon cotton in a way quite different from plant cotton. The hon. gentleman is giving no guarantee under this Bill. An advance is proposed, but there may or may not be an advance. Mr. Daniel Jones, according to a cable appearing in the Brisbane press of 27th June, 1924, states—

"Liverpool Cotton Association reports having sold two bales of Queensland ratoon cotton at 17½d. per lb. bearing out valuation of sample at 1d. to 2d. above American middling. American middling quoted Thursday at 16.95d. a lb."

With these proofs in our hands we must take this opportunity still further to strengthen the case for the growing of ratoon cotton which nature has made possible in Australia. It is an asset which Providence has given us. We must impress again and again on the Minister the justice of preventing producers securing the reward made possible by our climatic conditions. In all the statements that the Minister has made he refers to the uneven staple of ratoon cotton. It is just the same in the case of plant cotton because of the bad seed we are using, and this will continue until we secure Durango seed. In support of that statement I wish to quote what Colonel Evans said, as reported in the "Gayndah Gazette" of 4th May, 1923—

"The only variety we have which is likely to give 1¼-inch staple is Durango, and it is not proved that this variety will give 1-inch staple year in and year out over the whole cotton belt. Regarding the ordinary Queensland seed: A few plants will give a staple of 1¼ inch, but the great proportion is very much lower than this, and sometimes is ¾-inch and even less."

All the opponents of ratoon cotton state that it is not of even staple and there is Colonel Evans, the representative of the Empire Cotton Corporation and paid by them, advising the Australasian Government—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He is not paid by the Empire Cotton Corporation, but by the British Cotton Association.

Mr. CORSER: I repeat he is paid by the Empire Cotton Corporation. Colonel Evans points out that cotton grown from seed provided by the Government will not grow a staple of more than ¾-inch—probably less, and the guarantee is for cotton with a 1¼-inch staple.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The guarantee does not specify any length now.

Mr. CORSER: That is so. The Minister has claimed credit to himself and his Government for the establishment of this cotton industry. He says the industry is due to the

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State Government alone, and we should not abuse them. I claim that the cotton industry has been established in Queensland because of the shortage of cotton in the world. It has been established in countries where a Labour Government has never been in power.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Without a guarantee?

Mr. CORSER: Without a guarantee. The Minister claims that his Government are responsible. I claim that the conditions are responsible. "The Cotton Farmer and Dairyman" has this to say—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Who runs that paper?

Mr. CORSER: The growers of cotton. This is what that paper of 1st July, 1924, says—

"The possibility of a federation of cotton growers in Australia with members of the co-operative cotton marketing associations in the United States of America was suggested by W. M. Hughes, who was Prime Minister of Australia during the world war and who recently visited the offices of the American Cotton Growers Exchange in Dallas, Texas.

"No Government can go on for ever with this plan. However, according to Mr. Hughes, he thinks that growers' organisations should take over their own industry.

"Former Prime Minister Hughes was responsible for the introduction of cotton-growing in Australia at the time he was Prime Minister of the Country. —'Cotton Association News.'"

They claim that W. M. Hughes was the first to advocate cotton-growing in this country.

The Rockhampton "Evening News" claims that it is a calamity that Labour happened to be in office when the cotton shortage obtained and gave Queensland the opportunity of getting in. Had Queensland been administered by another Government during this shortage, we would have had an opportunity of introducing a Bill which would have meant a vast expansion of the industry as compared with that which has been brought about.

Then we have the prospectus of the British-Australian Cotton Association, which claims the necessity, and the Australian Prime Minister has recently emphasised it, of growing cotton within the Empire in order to make the Empire more self-contained. That shows that the Commonwealth has played a part in the matter, but the Minister is loath to give credit to anyone else. It is only fair on my part to have read these opinions of cotton-growers, which will show the Minister that there are some considerations for them as well as for the Government of Queensland.

Mr. FARRELL: The Rockhampton "Evening News" is no great authority.

Mr. CORSER: The Rockhampton "Evening News" has been helpful in the matter.

Mr. FARRELL: The Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin" is the morning paper.

Mr. CORSER: The "Morning Bulletin" is the morning authority and the "Evening News" is the evening authority.

Now we come right back to the agreement, which is one of the great factors contributing to the loss to the primary producer. It is unfortunate that, when the

cotton-grower has sent in his cotton, he has lost all right to the stock foods which are contained in the offal after the lint is extracted, and also to the oil. That is the reason why there should be complete control by growers themselves. If the Minister will honestly consider the desires of growers—even without this Bill—for control by themselves, so that they may handle their product, as advocated by us when the Bill was introduced last year, then and not till then shall we get the satisfaction among cotton-growers in Queensland which is essential in the interests of the industry. As we have more competition it will be necessary for us to create a greater confidence in those who are engaged in the industry. In travelling through a great part of the State with Messrs. Crompton Wood, Parker, Harding, Crawford Vaughan, and other members of the delegation, it was very disappointing to a large assemblage of cotton-growers in my district when Mr. Crompton Wood made known that ratoon cotton-growing was not to be permitted in Queensland, and that he had it on the authority of the Premier and the Secretary for Agriculture that a Bill was going to be introduced to prohibit ratoon cotton-growing in the State. It was a very dark night to those people, and it meant a very much reduced yield of cotton in that area as well as a great set-back in the industry.

Mr. Atkins, the Egyptian cotton expert who is employed by the Government, gave a strong opinion against ratoon cotton. He had previously been against the growing of cotton in white countries, but had relinquished that opinion.

It is not fair for the British-Australian Cotton Association to claim that Messrs. Crawford Vaughan and others were wrong in objecting to the growing of ratoon cotton, because the Association brought them here and they spoke on behalf of the Association. I say, from my experience and the evidence which I have heard myself, that Mr. Crompton Wood and his Association, which followed his opinions, are to blame for the ban on ratoon cotton; and the Government blundered in allowing themselves to be bulldozed by people who came here from abroad and knew nothing about our conditions. Over-anxious they may have been, cotton spinners as they were. They got hold of our Minister, who sided with gentlemen from abroad and threw over the interests of the producers here. Now the Government want to get out of the difficulty by saying that they listened to experts—experts who were paid for the advice they gave, but who we know represented the interests of middlemen on the other side, the biggest men on the Liverpool Cotton Exchange; and Mr. Crompton Wood and other members of the delegation and their representatives here and the Minister are guilty of the trouble which has eventuated from the ban imposed on ratoon cotton by the Act passed last year. I am pleased to see this amending legislation—pleased to know that even a few political bigots, as the Minister would term them, who were alleged to know nothing about ratoon cotton-growing, have the farmers behind them, and that together those parties have been able to induce the Government to amend the law and give ratoon cotton the chance which it deserves.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): I am glad to have the opportunity which this second reading debate affords of giving a few impressions with regard to this question gained as a result of investigations which I was privileged to make in Lancashire. I want to say at the opening of my remarks that I have at all stages on this cotton business taken up an attitude which is not dictated by party consideration, and just to remind the House what my attitude was when the cotton legislation was originally introduced I propose to read a short extract from my remarks on that occasion—

“I have endeavoured to throw what I believe to be a few additional lights on this question because I should be intensely vexed if it developed into a mere party question that would tend to stop the development of such an important industry. The question should be capable of solution, and, if the grower, who is seized with the advisability and necessity of growing ratoon cotton, were able to view the question from the broad Empire point of view, I think it could be solved. If his contention is correct, the time will undoubtedly come when his arguments will be substantiated; but seeing that we are on the threshold of what promises to be one of our most important primary productions, this is not the time to indulge in party arguments of a conflicting nature which are going to destroy the confidence of our prospective buyers.”

That makes the position clear, and the only difference to-day is that we have had twelve months' experience of what can or cannot be done in Queensland. If it has been demonstrated by that experience that Queensland is unable to grow annual cotton in any quantity that is worthy of consideration, of course the whole position must be regarded from an entirely different viewpoint; but personally I am by no means yet satisfied that Queensland cannot grow annual cotton in the quantities which are required. That has yet to be proved. Nevertheless I think that an important work of this nature can be carried on successfully only with the co-operation of the growers, and it is no use for the growers to be in conflict with the Government, the one working against the other. The only prospect we have of making cotton production of the importance which we anticipate it will reach lies in the possibility of placing before all concerned the arguments which are available from different parts of the world, so that we may digest and benefit by them.

I am not a party in any shape or form to the attacks which are liable to be made and have been made on the British-Australian Cotton Association, or on Mr. Crompton Wood, or Mr. Harold Parker. What I have heard in other parts of the world absolutely confirms, in my mind, the wisdom of the remarks which they made, and which have been acted upon by the Government in regard to a country which is setting out to achieve for itself an important position amongst the cotton-growing countries of the world. It may be that our recent experiences of local conditions cause one to modify that advice to a certain extent. I presume that is what we are doing in introducing this measure; nevertheless I do contend that the advice which our experts have tendered to the Government, in view of their experience of cotton-growing in other parts of the world,

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is well founded. Nothing is easier than to work up an agitation at this end, because an Australian does not like being compelled to do anything. We like to be a law unto ourselves, and therefore, when legislation is introduced which is compulsory or mandatory, there is the natural resentment by the person to whom it applies, and it is very easy to work up an agitation on that account. But that does not assist us at all in establishing our case. The outstanding question of importance seems to be whether we are simply going to repeat Queensland's experience of years ago, and take advantage of the temporary shortage of cotton, as was the case during the American Civil War, when conditions there absolutely dislocated the supply of cotton to the world, and which gave us an opportunity of entering the field as a serious cotton-grower, or whether we are going to frame a policy that will establish us in the world as a permanent cotton-growing country. All the arguments have to be studied with those two possible positions in mind. In determining our policy we have to study one or the other of those two objects, because, as the Minister points out, if the success is only to be temporary, there is no justification whatever in calling upon the taxpayers to continue to make contributions to the establishment of cotton-growing in Queensland. The only justification that we have for spending this £69,000—that is the amount expended to date—is by impressing upon the taxpayers that by this early assistance in the difficult problem of production there will be established what is going to be a very profitable primary production. But if this is only going to be temporary, and we are merely going to repeat what we did under the conditions operating during the American Civil War, I argue that the Government have no justification whatever in spending this money. Another very important point is this: Cotton-growing has been seized upon by many of us as a means whereby we can give intending settlers in Queensland an opportunity of earning a livelihood. Most of our productions here are curbed so far as their development is concerned by reason of the fact that we cannot go beyond the internal consuming powers of Australia. Cotton is one of those productions that provides us with an opportunity of looking to the world's markets; and, if that is so, as we believe, then we must determine what our policy is going to be, because we propose to spend large sums of money on land developmental work, in connection with which cotton-growing is going to play an important part.

I made very exhaustive inquiries whilst I was in England, not in regard to any fulfilment of what has been described as a mission, but simply because this matter struck me as being so important that,

[4 p.m.] if one was privileged to visit parts of the world where knowledge so far as the consumer is concerned was available, it was incumbent on me to take advantage of every opportunity of learning what was the viewpoint over there. Amongst the gentlemen and bodies whom I had the opportunity of discussing this matter with were—

The Chairman of Liverpool Cotton Association;

Mr. Hugh Calvert, of Calvert and Sons, the Egyptian cotton brokers;

Ashton Brothers and Co., Ltd., one of the biggest cotton-mill owners in Oldham;

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Manager, Mutual Mills, Heywood;  
 Lord Emmott, who has big interests in the cotton industry in Oldham;  
 R. H. Jackson, Chairman of the British Empire Cotton Corporation;  
 Sir G. Needham;  
 E. Platt, whose name is associated with cotton machinery;  
 Sir Edward Stockton;  
 Sir Chas. Macara;  
 Sir Arthur Howarth;  
 President, Manchester Chamber of Commerce;  
 T. Garnett, who was the representative of the cotton interests in Lancashire, and visited Queensland in 1911 and exhaustively reported on the possibilities of cotton-growing in Queensland;  
 W. M. Howarth, Fine Spintlers;  
 J. Thorpe, Manchester Cotton Association;  
 Mr. Himbury, Managing Director; and  
 Mr. Oldfield, Secretary, of the British Cotton Growing Association.

These are a few of those with whom I had the pleasure of coming into active personal contact and seeking their advice in regard to extending cotton production in a young country like Queensland. My meeting those gentlemen and bodies was not simply to bolster up the contention that ratoon cotton must of necessity be eradicated entirely from our programme, but to find out whether we, as a responsible body of public men, were justified in condemning ratoon cotton absolutely, or whether we should listen to the arguments which the growers had so forcibly advanced as to the necessity and advisability of growing ratoon cotton. I did not in any speech that I delivered ever attempt to direct attention to or make any definite statement in reference to ratoon cotton.

In the speech which I made to the members of the Chamber of Commerce in the Oldham Town Hall I did not mention the subject of ratooning. I purpose placing on the table of the House a copy of my speech on that occasion so that any hon. member who is sufficiently interested can read exactly what I did say; it is too long for me to read now, as it runs into two columns. Those who are sufficiently interested to study and read it will do me the justice of saying that my one object in meeting that body was to advocate Queensland's cause as a cotton-growing country. During my speech I did not make the slightest reference to ratoon cotton, but after my speech certain questions were asked. Amongst the speeches then delivered was the one by Mr. R. H. Jackson, Chairman of the British Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. That gentleman is thus reported—

“Mr. R. H. Jackson spoke of ratoon cotton which was inferior cotton. It was necessary that such cotton should not be sent out. The cotton belt should be properly cleaned up each season. He admitted Queensland cotton was good and was well worth the extra 2d. per lb. The whole matter, however, turned on what the world's price was going to be, and could the quality be kept up to pitch. He hoped that cotton would be maintained at a high standard, because Queensland was a promising field.”

An outcome of that was a discussion amongst those present in which I did not take any part, and the chairman and secretary were instructed to prepare a resolution with a request that it be forwarded to the authorities in Queensland expressing an opinion of what undoubtedly was a representative meeting of cotton spinners on the question of ratoning.

At 4.5 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That resolution was the one that was cabled out. I did not even see the resolution. I had no hand whatever in the making of it. It simply happened that after my speech those people recognised that Queensland had some promise with regard to its cotton production, and therefore they as old hands, knowing what cotton was needed, thought they were justified in giving some advice to a young country as to what should and should not be done.

The general information that one gleaned from all one's investigations was that Queensland should grow only the best.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That was the outstanding inference that one gathered. The advice was really unnecessary to one coming from Queensland. What better example could one have than Queensland wool, which, by the application of investigation, money, and science, has now reached a level that causes buyers from all parts of the world to come and meet in strenuous competition, and that has given us the exceptional market we are enjoying at present? They stated that should be our objective in regard to cotton. Here again I want to be quite candid, and state that I am not in a position to say whether Queensland can or cannot grow annual cotton profitably. I am simply saying that these are the impressions gleaned from conversations with those representing the consuming end of the proposition. We know there is a shortage of cotton, and the Minister has given us evidence as to the present position with regard to cotton supplies throughout the world. I do not intend to weary the House by repetition. I merely want to show that tremendous efforts are being made to overcome the world's shortage in the production of cotton.

In England, as most of us here know, there are two bodies whose main mission, and practically whose sole mission, is to encourage the growth of cotton within the Empire. One is the British Cotton Growing Association, who are enabled by legislation that was introduced in England some years ago to levy 6d. a bale on every bale of cotton coming into England. They utilise that 6d. a bale, which amounts to a big sum, expressly for the purpose of encouraging the growth of cotton within the Empire.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I wish we could get some of it here.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: We should be able to, and I believe we could if we could only alter the impression prevailing among the authorities at home as to the importance of Queensland as a cotton-growing country. I want to tell the gentlemen who are defending the case of ratonement so strongly that I think they are rather militating against the obtaining of assistance from these bodies,

who have deeply rooted in their minds the idea that ratonement cotton is not going to be a permanent success.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The other body is the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, which, as we know, is of recent origin and was created by the Government of Great Britain to encourage cotton-growing within the Empire and they have placed at their disposal some three millions of money, representing the profit that was made by the Government out of the handling of the Egyptian cotton crop during the war. The Empire Cotton Growing Corporation are to-day spending large sums of money in the development of cotton-growing in other parts of the Empire.

I must admit that, from the many conversations I had with individuals associated with those two bodies, I gathered that neither body regards our efforts here in Queensland seriously. They extend to us the hospitality and consideration which is so characteristic of the English people; but, when you seriously tackle them on the question of applying to Queensland some of those moneys which have been entrusted to them for the encouragement of cotton-growing within the Empire, you cannot get them to take it seriously, because they do not look upon Queensland at the present moment as a serious prospective producer of cotton in any large quantity.

To support that argument I have here the April number of "The Empire Cotton Growing Review," which is the official organ of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. In that number there is a leading article headed "Cotton Growing within the Empire," which gives a survey of what is being done in the Empire by the Corporation and other bodies to encourage the growing of cotton. You can read this article through and there is not a single reference to Australia made in it, supporting my contention that at the moment Queensland or Australia is not taken seriously in regard to the growing of cotton. So much did I think that this called for comment that I wrote to the "Manchester Guardian" calling attention to it, and saying that it was rather unfortunate that in these times, when the doctrine of Empire was being paraded so forcibly in England, the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation was evidently more concerned about the growing of cotton by black labour than it was about encouraging the growing of cotton in Australia by white labour. That is the impression that struck every Australian, and it led to a certain amount of correspondence in the papers, which gave a slight encouragement that the claims of Australia in this regard may at some time or other be recognised. The next article in this official organ of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation is one dealing with the extension of cotton-growing within the Empire, and the moneys that are being spent in that direction, and I intend to read three or four extracts which are most enlightening under existing circumstances. It is headed—

"EXTENSION OF RAILWAYS IN TROPICAL EAST AFRICA.

"Reference was made in the editorial to the great importance of the provision of suitable means of cheap transport, without which it is useless to engage

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seriously in the cultivation of any product such as cotton, which cannot be consumed upon the spot where it is grown. The great importance of this matter, especially in tropical Africa, which, apart from India, bids fair to be the chief Empire source of supply, has long engaged the attention of the Corporation, and it is very gratifying to be able to record that steps of the utmost importance have been taken towards the construction in East Africa of lines of railway which will not only make the existing cotton fields more accessible, but which will open up new territory suitable for the crop."

Another paragraph in this same article reads—

"Towards the end of last year the Corporation prepared, at the request of the President of the Board of Trade in the late Government, a memorandum setting out the several means whereby in their opinion cotton-growing within the Empire could be considerably and rapidly developed. In this memorandum they stated that they attached special importance to increased facilities for transport in tropical Africa, and emphasised particularly the need for a railway giving Jinja in Uganda direct access to the sea at Mombasa, and the desirability of repairing the light railway at Lindi in Tanganyika. They also suggested that the possibilities of developing the Mwanza area in Tanganyika by means of a railway to Tabora on the Central Railway, and also of opening up the potentially rich cotton area of North-West Nigeria, should be carefully explored."

Africa all the time! You never hear of Australia in this regard—

"At their meeting this week, the Executive Committee of the Corporation learned with the greatest satisfaction that the Colonial Office had informed the Governors of Kenya and Uganda that Parliament would be asked to sanction a loan of £3,500,000 free of interest for five years, to be repaid in thirty-seven annual instalments, and to be secured on the revenue and assets of Kenya and Uganda. The greater part of the loan will be devoted to extending the present railway from Uasin Gishu in Kenya to Luzinga, a station on the Busoga railway north of Jinja. This railway will not only greatly facilitate the movement of the Uganda cotton crop, which is expected this season to exceed 100,000 bales, but will develop the industry in the North Kavirondo country through which the railway will pass.

"The grant of a sum of £50,000 to Tanganyika has also been approved by the Imperial Government for the purpose of reconditioning the light railway at Lindi and extending it to the coast with a view to assisting the cotton-growing industry in that area.

"This intimation was given before the change of Government, but it was understood that the present Government have endorsed the scheme in both cases.

"It was further reported that the Corporation's suggestions of a railway to Mwanza in Tanganyika and another in

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Nigeria had been referred by the Colonial Office for examination by the local governments.

"The Executive Committee of the Corporation passed a cordial vote of thanks to the members of the late Government for the ready and sympathetic consideration they had always given to the proposals of the Corporation, and for their recognition of the importance of developing cotton-growing in the Empire."

The whole of that shows that the whole object of these two bodies is to encourage the growing of cotton in districts where black labour is available. In no case could one get serious attention when reference was made to cotton-growing in Queensland. It is rather deplorable that the Government and these two bodies at home have not as yet devoted to Queensland the attention in regard to its cotton-growing possibilities which it deserves.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: We are rather militating against our prospects so long as we cling to ratoon theories, which, in the minds of the deep thinkers at home, do not give us that prospect of developing into a cotton-growing country that some of us would like to see.

Another point is this: In going through the Wembley Exhibition, I think I am right in saying that in fully 90 per cent. of the pavilions which represented the colonies and mandated territories, raw cotton was displayed as a prospective line of production, clearly showing that every section of the world to-day where cotton-growing is possible are recognising the opportunities which the present shortage gives.

The obvious deduction which all these investigations lead one to is that before many years are passed the present shortage will be amply provided for. There is a great field for expansion in Africa—in the Soudan, where they are putting 500,000 acres of land under cotton, in Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya Colony, and in South Africa; and, as we have seen recently, in Persia. All these places are being opened up as cotton-producing countries of the world, and therefore the present shortage of raw material cannot, in my judgment, last for any great length of time.

The point I now want to make is this: When the condition arises that cotton production comes back to normal once more, what is the position of Queensland going to be? Are we simply going to be as we were in the days of the Civil War, and enjoy a temporary spin in regard to our cotton production, or are we going to face the facts fearlessly and appreciate that it is only by growing the highest quality of cotton that we can maintain our position as a cotton-growing country?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: In Lancashire, the position to-day is such that anything in the form of cotton will sell. It does not matter whether it is annual, ratoon, or bolly cotton, you can find a market for it in Great Britain to-day, because the market is so absolutely short of the raw material that everything which looks like cotton finds a ready sale.

That, in my judgment, has caused Mr. Daniel Jones to come to certain conclusions, which, to me, are absolutely unconvincing. If he had gone over there to discover whether there was a market for ratoon cotton to-day at a profitable price, undoubtedly the answer would be "Yes," and that is the answer he has given. But anyone could give that reply. If anyone had sent me a cable when I was in England asking me that question, I could readily have said, "Yes, you can sell anything in the shape of cotton; but the point is whether that condition of affairs which obtains to-day in England is going to exist for any length of time." My answer is, "Certainly not, because the great efforts which are being made and the millions of money which are being expended to extend the cotton-growing areas with black labour in Africa clearly show that the demand which exists in the market for anything in the shape of cotton at a profitable price cannot last for any length of time." I do think we would be extremely unwise if we induced our growers to go in extensively for ratoon cotton-growing as a new form of primary production of a profitable nature when some of us can see, or think we can see, that with the passage of a few years the conditions which prevail to-day are going to be entirely altered.

The reason why cotton of an inferior quality is fetching such a high price on the English market is that cotton of high quality is so dear that those spinners who have hitherto used nothing else but what they call the high counts find that they cannot manufacture articles from it at prices for which they can sell them; and, therefore, they are buying a cheaper article to mix with the good cotton, thus reducing the average cost of their raw material. The result is that there is an abnormal demand for cotton of low quality and a rather reduced demand for cotton of high quality, so that the prices have tended to approximate one another. The price of high quality cotton is not so great comparatively to-day as it used to be, the spinner not being able to buy it, whilst the price of low quality cotton has increased considerably by reason of the abnormal demand. That is just a temporary state of affairs, and I argue that it is not right to lead our growers to imagine that that condition of things is going to last indefinitely, because, as I have endeavoured to show, that is not likely to be the case.

The only people whom I interviewed in Lancashire and who favoured the ratoon cotton question to any extent—even enthusiastically—were the Manchester Cotton Association. Mr. Daniel Jones had interviewed the directors prior to my going there, and Mr. Thorpe, the president, hearing that I was back in Manchester, invited me to come round and see him and discuss the matter, and to hear what views I had to express on the subject. They had been convinced by Mr. Jones's arguments—I want to be quite fair and state the case from all points of view—that Queensland's policy should be the growing of ratoon cotton. I endeavoured to get from them exactly on what basis they grounded their opinions, and I could not get any convincing argument, except this: The Manchester Cotton Association is practically run by Oldham, which is that part of the cotton-spinning area which deals almost exclusively in cheap cotton goods, and therefore must have cheap raw cotton. The

directors of this Manchester Cotton Association are also to a large extent directors of the Manchester Ship Canal, their interest therefore being to get Manchester plenty of cotton from these parts in competition with Liverpool, of which they are extremely jealous. Therefore it seemed to me that the desire of the Manchester Cotton Association was to get as much cotton as they could, and get it as cheaply as they could, so as to keep the canal busy, and also give Oldham that cheaper cotton which has been the basis of its manufactures for so long. As I was leaving, the president of that body sent me a pamphlet known as the Manchester Cotton Association's pamphlet, on reading through which I noticed this paragraph, under the heading, "Opportunity for the Colonies to Supply Lancashire"—

"Those in the colonies interested in cotton-growing are asked to realise how vital it is that the greatest care should be exercised to secure cotton crops of even running qualities (that is, grade and colour, strength and fineness of fibre, rough or smooth, etc.) and the same character year after year. For the bulk of the trade the staple should be 1 to 1 3.16 in., and longer staple for finer numbers. Should each season's crop differ in characteristics it would simply drive the mills away from these cottons."

That seemed to be so contradictory to the remarks which the president had made to me personally, that on the 12th July I wrote to him this letter—

"Dear Mr. Thorpe.—Your secretary was good enough to send me the pamphlet which your Association issues and I have very carefully perused it and am most interested in that valuable production.

"There is one paragraph which I would call your attention to and that is the last paragraph under the heading 'Opportunity for the Colonies to Supply Lancashire' where you deal with the need of securing cotton crops of even running qualities.

"All that I hear about ratoon cotton leads me to the opinion that it is impossible to obtain this quality and that only annual cotton can supply such, and it is on that account that some of us have felt so strongly the importance of insisting upon the growing of annual cotton only.

"In view of the conversation which I had the privilege of having with you on Tuesday last, I should appreciate it very much if you will kindly reconcile in my mind the question of our growers producing ratoon cotton, and yet fulfilling the conditions which you stress in the paragraph under review.

"With kind regards,

"Yours faithfully,"

On the 16th July, the Secretary of the Manchester Cotton Association wrote me this reply—

"Dear Sir,—The president, Mr. Jêsse Thorpe, directs me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 12th July, addressed to himself in relation to cotton cultivation in Queensland and to state that he notes your remarks. Mr. Thorpe, however, is convinced that it is in the interests of Queensland to grow ratoon cotton, for not only would it enable

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Queensland to grow a much larger crop, but would enable Australia to more successfully compete, in the matter of price, with other cotton-growing countries.

“Yours faithfully,  
(Signed) H. ROBINSON, Secretary.”

That is a very lame reply in support of his contention, because we have no hope here of competing with other cotton-growing countries in the matter of price. Once Africa comes into its own in regard to cotton-growing we have no chance of competing with that country in the matter of price. Lancashire and Manchester in particular want cheap cotton, and the interest which they have is to get cheap cotton, and the arguments which are advanced in that reply to my letter are inconsistent with those which appear in the pamphlet I have quoted, and, therefore, all the advice to Queensland on growing ratoon cotton must be considered in the light of the facts that I have disclosed.

Whilst referring to Mr. Daniel Jones, I would like to say that I met that gentleman twice whilst I was in England, and he gave me the opportunity on both occasions to talk cotton, and we had two long discussions on this question, and I was tremendously impressed with his enthusiasm and earnestness in the cause that he espoused.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: He is entitled to every credit for living in what I might call third-class hotels and doing everything to save money. He was suffering from an intense cold, which made one think he would be more at home in a hospital than fighting the battles of the cotton-growers of Queensland. He exhibited the most intense enthusiasm which made one readily appreciate—whether one agreed with his deductions or not—the wonderful pertinacity with which he pursued his object, and that which he believed to be in the best interests of the cotton-growers of Queensland. No matter what might be the result of the cotton controversy, we shall never forget the good work that man undoubtedly has done in calling attention to the possibility of cotton-growing in Queensland. The “Manchester Guardian,” in referring to the speech by Mr. Jones before the Manchester Cotton Association, made these remarks—

“One of Mr. Jones’s samples from a shrub in its seventeenth year, was described by Mr. Jesse Thorpe, President, as cotton which Lancashire could do very well with, and of another he said that, while it did not appear to be as even in staple as annual, it could not by any means be called uncommercial. Mr. F. Tomlinson, also expressed the opinion that the Colonial Government’s regulations are too strict. All the cotton of which Mr. Jones had brought samples, he said, could be readily marketed in Lancashire. The question, of course, is one for experts, but for our part we rather like the idea of the ‘Australian Cotton Grower’ that Queensland should grow only the best, assuming that the best can be cultivated in large quantities.”

In passing I wish to touch on the question of cotton-growing in Egypt. I went to Cairo and saw some of the Egyptian cotton fields, and made it my business to find out, so far

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as my limited time permitted, all that was possible to be ascertained of the history of cotton-growing in Egypt. It is remarkable to see those small tracts of land of about three acres or five acres intensely cultivated by the Egyptians. Land is available for selection on freehold conditions. They have not got a Labour Government in power to prevent a man from owning his own land, but they buy it, enjoy it, and develop it thoroughly, and, if one wants an object lesson in the benefits permitted by the freehold tenure, one can see it in the cotton belt in Egypt. These men were cultivating this land in a most intense form.

They are paying as much as £200 per acre for that land. Rates and taxes amount to quite a considerable sum. The water rate every year is also considerable.

[4.30 p.m.] In spite of all this, these men are making handsome profits out of growing cotton in Egypt. This is due to the fact that they are growing a high-quality cotton for which they get high prices. The figures I got there showed that from 1902 to 1914 the average yield was 453 lb. of lint cotton per acre; from 1915 to 1919, 374 lb. of lint cotton per acre; and from 1920 to 1923, 348 lb. of lint cotton per acre. Each of these growers contracts for his supplies with merchants who come along in the early stages of the cotton crop. The contracts last year ranged from £6 to £10 per 315 lb. seed cotton, delivery of which was taken at the farm. The average yield last year was 1,063 lb. of seed cotton per acre. This showed an average contract return of £29 per acre, but above this contract price the grower received additional emoluments. Good cultivation yielded up to 1,600 lb. of seed cotton per acre, and even more. The enhanced price for extra-quality cotton might easily reach £50 an acre net. I have a letter which I have received from Mr. H. Carver, of Carver Brothers and Company, Ltd., Manchester, the brokers who deal exclusively with Egyptian cotton. This firm has ginneries in Egypt, and enters into contracts with the growers for the crops. Mr. Carver in this letter says—

“As regards cultivation, some lands are sown on the three-year rotation, and others on a two-year rotation. The former is considered preferable, but the native is naturally influenced by the current market price as regards the area he puts under cotton. It is customary to plant the cotton in ridges about 2 feet apart; the plants being 16 inches apart in the ridge, though it is maintained that a better yield would be obtained by giving the plants more room. As regards marketing the cotton, a great number of the cultivators sell their crops in the seed, but if they wish to, they can always send their cotton to one of the numerous ginning factories, who charge them a standard rate for ginning (at the present time I believe 4s. or 5s. per 100 lb. lint). The cotton and seed are then disposed of by the owner in the Alexandria market, or in some cases the cotton is consigned to Liverpool brokers.”

There are one or two points in that letter worthy of passing attention. These Egyptian cotton-growers only pay 4s. or 5s. per 100 lb. lint cotton for the ginning. That is considerably less than the grower in Queensland pays for the ginning of his cotton. The cotton-grower in Egypt also remains the owner of

his seed and disposes of it as he thinks fit. That letter might contain some information which would be of some use to the cotton-grower in Queensland.

There is one fact in regard to cotton-growing in Egypt to which I want to call serious attention. When I was in Cairo I had the rather unhappy experience of seeing the conduct of Egyptian affairs handed over from the British Government to the Egyptians themselves. The crowning of the King and other events took place at that particular time. Through an interpreter I tried to find out from the under dog in Cairo exactly what the general impression was as to this change of Government. One felt that great apprehension was evidenced by the poorer classes of the community as to what effect the change was going to make. The expressions which they used were all to the effect that they would much rather be under the control of the British Government than under the control of their own high-caste Egyptians, who undoubtedly would practise again, as they did in the past, those methods of extortion which did not give the rank and file the opportunity to live comfortably.

Mr. GLEDSON: That is not peculiar to Egypt.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It is not. When returning to Egypt I had an opportunity of discussing with an officer of the Bank of Egypt the development of matters during the five months which had passed since my first visit. He told me that, unfortunately, the forecast as to the retrograde step taken when handing over Egypt to a native Government was fully justified, because the cotton-growers had already experienced great difficulty in getting supplies of water which, of course, is essential to their crops. There were also all kinds of extortions being made with regard to rates, taxes, and cotton rates. I shall give a simple illustration of how the native growers intended to overcome the difficulty in one particular settlement. They conceived among themselves the idea of contributing towards a general fund with which they could buy a piece of land in the midst of their settlement. They intended to make a present of this to the head man of that particular district, because he would then require water himself to grow cotton there, and they would have water themselves. That shows how the spirit of "graft" exists when the control of a country is handed over to Orientals. I hope we shall take a lesson from it.

If those people in Egypt are going to be subjected to this interference in the matter of cotton-growing, it will undoubtedly have a marked effect on the Egyptian cotton production. Here again is an opportunity for Queensland to step in and occupy the position held by Egypt to-day, and to supply Liverpool and Manchester with its highest quality cotton.

On the Liverpool Exchange there are two rings which control the cotton market. The big one, of course, is the American ring, but alongside it is a small ring with about twenty or thirty operatives. That is confined solely to the marketing of Egyptian cotton. There we have that small area of cotton production commanding for itself a corner of that great Cotton Exchange where its products are dealt with exclusively, solely on the basis of excellence of production. And when one saw the prices being put up minute after

minute as deals were effected, one saw that Egyptian cotton was 6d., 8d., and 9d. per lb. higher than American cotton. It seems to me that the one hope for Queensland, if she looks to cotton to become one of her important primary products, is to produce only the best. If the grower could be permitted to have just a sight of that particular Exchange and the circumstances surrounding it, he could get all the inspiration needed to induce him to concentrate on the production of quality cotton. (Hear, hear!)

Although Lancashire is greatly depressed at the moment in regard to cotton-spinning, those districts which confine their operations to fine quality goods are busy all the time. At Bolton and Bury, where the highest grades are treated, there is no slackness, but in the Oldham district, where poor quality cotton is manipulated, there is a great shortage of work and much unemployment, clearly showing that where quality is insisted on one can rely at all times on a constant market.

I just want to make a few general comments before closing. One thing that impressed me on all sides was that, as it costs just as much to pick, carry, gin, bale, handle, and ship medium quality cotton as high quality we should not attempt to grow anything but the very best. It costs no more to pull, handle, and market than inferior cotton.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Therefore I argue that in a country where our standards are high, we should at all times aim at quality, because the cost of marketing is so great in proportion to the gross returns the grower receives. I do not think we exactly understand here the huge consumption of cotton in Lancashire. Ashton Brothers' mill, which I visited at Hyde, was using 600 bales of cotton per week, or 30,000 bales of cotton per annum. When you consider that this is four times Queensland's total production last year which is consumed by one mill, you see what big ideas one has to assume in regard to this cotton question.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Our crop is just a drop in the ocean.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Exactly. I spent a week-end with the managing director of this mill, and he said to me, "I would like to give your Queensland cotton all the encouragement possible, but I want 600 bales of cotton per week, and when you can give me 600 bales of standard cotton of the staple and regularity that I require. I, in common with other millowners, will take your efforts seriously; but to-day we cannot dislocate our arrangements for a few bales. Let Queensland give us quality and quantity and we will talk to you.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Another point the manager of the Mutual mills at Heywood impressed upon me when arguing in favour of annual cotton. One heard a great deal about the twist in the cotton fibre, which the average grower and layman does not understand; but when you see the cotton being spun you do understand it. This fine Egyptian cotton is subjected to 40,000,000 twists in the operations before it is made into yarn of high quality, and that is made possible by the highly-developed twist in the annual cotton associated with the Egyptian production. The poor quality

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cotton can only be twisted 40,000 times, because beyond that the twist of the cotton cannot stand the strain. As all these mills are run on piecework conditions, the mill operatives being paid according to the results, the operatives themselves have a great objection to using these poor quality cottons, because, if they do, they are continually running about up and down the rooms mending broken strands, which interferes with the production from which they get paid at the end of the day or the week, as the case may be. Another important point is this: Lancashire wants cotton in July and August. It was pointed out to me on several occasions that at this time cotton can secure a price perhaps in excess of its quality because there is a great shortage of cotton in Lancashire in those two months. Therefore, if we can land cotton in England in those two months, we shall enjoy an advantage perhaps a little in excess of what the quality justifies.

Many of the spinners and many of the brokers take great exception to Queensland cotton being confined to one or two houses in Lancashire at the present time.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): I beg to move—

“That the hon. member for Oxley be granted an extension of time.”

Question put and passed.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I thank hon. members for granting me the concession. As I have said, the cotton spinners and brokers in Lancashire take strong exception to our Queensland cotton being handled through one or two firms. It creates a corner, and that creates a certain amount of dissatisfaction and prejudice against Queensland cotton. I therefore urge those who are responsible for the marketing of Queensland cotton in future to see that it is given an open market, because competition will undoubtedly give us an advantage in that regard. We see how we benefit from the sale of our wool by the keen competition which exists among the buyers who come from all parts of the world to secure it from us.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You have not got to ratoon wool.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am talking about cotton generally. I argue that it would be wise for us to bear this fact in mind, and see that as open a market as possible is provided for our cotton as soon as it reaches Manchester or Liverpool.

One other point is this—and it is quite an important one: The Egyptian baled cotton is a picture to look at. In the first place, it is much more densely-pressed than the American bale. The American bale contains approximately 500 lb., and the Egyptian bale approximately 700 lb.; yet these two bales appear to be the same size. We can see the advantage of the closer packing. The Egyptian bale occupies no more space, is better to handle, and yet it contains 200 lb. more cotton than the American bale. Then the American cotton is prejudiced by reason of the fact that poor material is used for covering the bales. The Egyptian uses high-quality hessian or canvas, with the result that the bales are unbroken; but the American bales are not so satisfactory, and the

cotton gets discoloured, which means loss. Therefore I think that those who are to be responsible for the marketing of Queensland cotton in future should bear that in mind.

I do not intend to trespass on the good nature of the House any longer, except to say that any remarks and investigations I have made have been prompted with one desire only—that is, to give the grower, upon whom, of course, devolves all responsibility in this matter, sooner or later, all the information that one's independent investigations can provide. The growers have not paid me for the investigations I have made, neither have the Queensland Government paid me. What I have done has been with a desire to find out the truth. I have placed my impressions before the House, and I hope that they will be useful to Queensland in working out its destinies as a cotton-growing country.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. COOPER (*Roswood*): I have listened very attentively to the hon. member for Oxley, and I congratulate him upon making one of the best speeches in regard to advice to the cotton-growers of Queensland that could possibly be delivered. (Hear, hear!) He has expressed opinions which I myself, not so elaborately, have expressed in the Committee of Supply, and also when the Cotton Industry Bill was passing through the Chamber. I realise that what the hon. member has said is absolutely correct, and that, if Queensland is going to be a cotton-producing centre, we must produce the best cotton, so as to enable the British manufacturer to manufacture the best cotton fabrics. The hon. member for Oxley also pointed out that the danger to Queensland is from the introduction of methods whereby the cotton-growers of Queensland may be able to compete with the cheap black labour employed in Africa. I regret that the British cotton spinners and manufacturers are taking the stand that it will be to their interest to purchase from nations who employ black labour for the growing of cotton in preference to Queensland, where we are endeavouring to preserve a “White Australia.” That is why I object to the methods adopted by the British spinners, who will endeavour in the near future to procure cotton at the cheapest possible rate. At the same time I quite agree with the hon. member for Oxley that it is very apparent to anybody who has thought at all upon the cotton industry in Queensland that it is absolutely necessary for us to produce the very best quality of cotton. If we are going to do that, as experts have pointed out time after time that ratoon cotton is not of the best quality, we must grow annual cotton. It has been shown that it is even possible for the cotton industry to be put out of existence altogether by the growing of ratoon cotton. This being so, I regret the advent of this Bill. I believe that a minority of the cotton-growers of Queensland—not the majority of them—are asking for permission to grow ratoon cotton. In my opinion, ratoon cotton will cost a good deal more to grow than annual cotton. Anybody who knows anything at all about agriculture will know that a great deal more labour is required to produce ratoon cotton than annual cotton, and I am going to endeavour to show why I say that. Take a piece of scrub land with a great number of stumps. The cotton-grower has to go along with a hoe or a mattock or some other cotton-planting

[*Mr. Elphinstone.*]

implement after the scrub is burned off and plant his cotton. On every piece of scrub land—I do not care where it is—weeds start to grow with the first rain. The cotton-grower has to keep that cotton clean by hand-chipping. After he has grown it, if he is a mixed farmer or a dairy farmer—and, after all, the cotton industry is essentially a small man's industry—he turns his cattle into it because it is necessary to remove the herbage that grows between the rows, and he must reap some benefit from that piece of land. His stock trample the ground down so hard that it is almost impossible to get it free again; or cultivate it to any extent or make it a profitable plot for cotton.

Then we have to consider the harvesting. The regulations provide that a man shall cut off his annual cotton within 6 inches of the ground. Anybody who knows anything about cotton-growing knows that, when you do that, the next year's cotton plant does not grow up straight like annual cotton, but spreads out, and whether it is harvested by day labour or by contract, the cotton-pickers have to go down almost on their hands to gather it.

Mr. MORGAN: You have to do that with plant cotton.

Mr. W. COOPER: I beg to differ from the hon. member. You have not to go down on your hands to harvest annual cotton, but many of the bolls of ratoon cotton are lying on the ground. Annual cotton grows straight up.

Mr. MORGAN: You are wrong.

Mr. W. COOPER: The hon. member may say what he likes; I know something about what I am talking of. I can bring a report of the evidence of a man who appeared before the board appointed by the Arbitration Court to investigate the cotton industry preparatory to considering the claim of the Australian Workers' Union. This man, who grew cotton before hon. members opposite were out of short trousers, stated that it was impossible, without going down on one's hands and knees, to harvest ratoon cotton.

I have seen as much cotton grown as the hon. member for Murilla. The hon. gentleman has seen cotton growing on land that would not be fit to grow "stinking roger." Annual cotton grows straight up, and the branches grow almost straight out, and there is no necessity for you to get on your hands and knees to pick that cotton. The only reason I can see why the growers in Central Queensland have agitated for permission to grow ratoon cotton is because they have large areas there, and they think it is the right thing to grow from 50 acres to 1,000 acres of cotton, and allow it to ratoon, or allow what is known as stand-over cotton to grow with all its dead branches lying about. That is a very improvident way of producing cotton. It appears to me to be the lazy man's system. While the Government have given way to the cotton-growers of Central Queensland, I am firmly of the opinion that they have done something—I pointed this out during my speech on the Cotton Industry Bill—that will be detrimental, and may react in a few years on the cotton industry, and probably cause it to go out of existence. What we have to consider is the market which we can supply in Great Britain, and what the British spinners have to consider is the procuring of the very best material so as to maintain the quality of

the fabrics they are manufacturing. The hon. member for Oxley pointed out to-day that practically none of those spinners advocate the policy of ratoon cotton. This country is a branch of the British Empire, and it is our duty, as far as possible, to preserve an industry for the Empire. What are we doing? We are practically working into the hands of a few spinners who produce shoddy articles, and they send out their stuff for colonial use, and ask the Australian people to pay a very exorbitant price for very poor material that is being produced in the old country.

Mr. CLAYTON: Why do we not manufacture it here?

Mr. W. COOPER: Because hon. members opposite belong to a party who would never permit us to borrow sufficient money for that purpose. We have such a deplorable Opposition that they prevent us from borrowing sufficient money. (Opposition dissent.) While the Government have given way to the cotton-growers of Queensland, I hope that what I predict will never take place; but I am afraid that what the hon. member for Oxley has said will come only too true, and that within the next few years the spinners of Great Britain will say to Queensland, "You are producing an inferior class of cotton. We cannot maintain the quality of the article that we have been producing for many years, and we are not prepared to take your cotton."

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): After hearing the Minister and the hon. member for Oxley one would almost be forced [5 p.m.] to come to the conclusion that there does not appear to be any hope of ever establishing the cotton industry in Queensland, and that we might as well allow it to die out.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are trying to introduce politics into the question.

Mr. DEACON: My opinion is that there is not a great future before the cotton industry in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are a pessimist.

Mr. DEACON: I am not a pessimist, but I like to look facts in the face, and, when you consider the difficulties of seasons and marketing, as outlined by the hon. member for Oxley, which confront the growers, it is impossible to see any hope for the permanent establishment of the industry.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Oxley made an optimistic speech.

Mr. DEACON: The hon. gentleman might think it was optimistic.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I simply state the fact.

Mr. DEACON: The Minister said that there was no future for ratoon cotton, but the cotton-growers themselves have said that there is no future for anything but ratoon cotton. The growers know what it has cost to grow plant cotton, and, if they go on persevering with plant cotton alone, they will never make it pay. If they do not get permission to grow ratoon cotton, they might just as well get out of the industry. The Minister and the hon. member for Oxley are in agreement that only plant cotton must be grown to suit the market. As time advances and more cotton is grown in the black-labour countries of India and Africa,

*Mr. Deacon.*]

nothing but the highest quality cotton must be grown, according to the opinion of those gentlemen, and to attain that high quality nothing but plant cotton must be cultivated. The trouble in Queensland in regard to plant cotton is that the seasons will not allow the cotton to be planted at regular seasons. It is necessary to plant the seed in spring, but it is a well-known fact that last year, owing to the season, very little was planted before Christmas. That occurs almost every second year. Those conditions would not be profitable to the growers, as the cotton planted at Christmas would be of little use at all from a crop point of view. Then there are the labour conditions. We as a Country party are not in favour of low wages. The cotton-growers here have to compete with countries where labour is obtainable at a low rate and in unlimited numbers. It is absolutely hopeless for any white man to compete with those conditions. The hon. member for Oxley pointed out that cotton in every black-labour country is going to increase in production. The American farmer also has had the advantage of cheap labour.

Mr. CARTER: It is dearer than ours.

Mr. DEACON: It was not always dearer than ours.

Mr. CARTER: It is dearer to-day.

Mr. DEACON: It might be just as dear as ours to-day, but it cannot possibly be dearer, and it was not always dear. Notwithstanding the fact that the industry there had the advantage of more regular seasons than in Queensland and a regular supply of certain labour, yet the crop from one cause and another was nearly ruined, and the cotton-grower had to give up the struggle of growing cotton at a cheap price. The American cotton-grower now realises that the boll weevil was his salvation. He has taken up mixed farming, with cotton-growing only as a side-line. That is the way we must regard the crop in Queensland—just as a side-line.

We must get some aid from outside to establish the industry in Queensland. We know now that our efforts are not being taken seriously by those overseas, and that we are not going to get much aid from outside. Up to the present what aid we have received from that source has not been very helpful. Those concerned did not take into account the difficulties with which the growers of Queensland are faced. They did not take into account the fact that the only possibility of success, as shown by Mr. Daniel Jones and practical growers, was with ratoon cotton. Mr. Daniel Jones has lived the whole of his life growing cotton, and really knows more about Queensland and the difficulties facing cotton-growers than any of the imported experts. These visiting experts did not take our difficulties into account at all. They set out judging the country from their experience of other countries, and any advice they gave was not helpful; if anything, it set the country further back. We are not going to get much of their money. We have not received much help or advice from them, and the present indications are that we are not going to get much further help from them. It seems to me that these people are anxious to sell out, and, while on that point, I think the growers will be well advised to act warily before taking over the gineries. They should not take this step until they

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are quite sure that they can grow cotton as desired by the market; that ratoon cotton will find a ready market; and that they can get labour and grow in competition with other countries. Until they are confident on those points they should leave the question of buying gineries and setting up expensive plants to other men who have more money to risk. Those other big men can bear the loss if there is going to be a loss, and I think there will be a loss.

Mr. DASH: That is good advice to the farmers.

Mr. DEACON: The growers would be much better advised to let these gineries remain with the banks for the present. We made a great mistake, or, if we did not, why are we going back on our action? All hon. members on this side of the House, whether they knew anything about cotton-growing or not, were prepared to back the growers—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: For political purposes.

Mr. DEACON: And they stated that growing ratoon was the only hope. They did not act thus, as the Minister states, merely for political purposes, because some hon. members on this side of the House sided with the Government. We were not unanimous, but every hon. member who has anything to do with the land, and who is a practical grower of other crops, was convinced that the contention of the ratoon growers was correct. We could see that there was some hope in ratoon, but there was not much hope in annual cotton. We wanted the Government to give these men a free hand to solve their difficulties for themselves, and bring about their own salvation. That was the mistake we made last year, and we are rectifying it now. If we made a mistake last year in not permitting first-year ratoons, it appears to me that in this Bill we are continuing the same mistake in not making provision for more than first-year ratoons. If you can ratoon cotton one year successfully, you can ratoon it for more than one year. Mr. Daniel Jones and the growers are satisfied that with good cultivation you can ratoon cotton successfully for several years. This Bill does not make any allowance for that.

Mr. DASH: You are not sure whether they want ratoon or stand-over?

Mr. DEACON: The hon. member who interrupts me is never quite sure of anything. He has not had the experience on the land that hon. members on this side have had.

Mr. DASH: I am asking you for advice.

Mr. DEACON: What the growers are asking for is the right to ratoon. They are making their position quite clear that they want to be allowed to grow cotton for as long as they like so long as they can grow it successfully, and in this Bill we should give them all they ask for.

Mr. COLLINS: You are a very dissatisfied crowd.

Mr. DEACON: I am not dissatisfied. I am on the side of the grower every time. I think he should be considered first. From my experience of the man on the land I am quite sure that he knows best.

Mr. DASH: Are you a cotton-grower?

Mr. DEACON: I think I have made it quite clear that I am not a cotton-grower

and that I have no faith in the future of cotton in Queensland; but I am backing up the opinions of the men who do grow it. I consider that the growers are in a position to know more about the actual growing of cotton than anybody else.

The hon. member for Oxley and the Minister are in agreement in one respect, and they were in agreement last year on the same matter. Last year they were agreed that you must coerce the grower. It did not matter whether he wanted to do it or not, he must be made to grow what the British cotton spinners wanted, and he must not have any liberty whatever. This year they have both made it clear that they believe that the cotton-grower should be allowed a free hand. I congratulate both hon. members on their change of opinion.

I cannot congratulate the Government on the Bill, but I do wish to congratulate the grower on having been able to force the position in order to get what he wants. I also wish to add my congratulations to Mr. Daniel Jones on the great service he has done to Queensland in regard to cotton. In the Act passed last year heavy penalties were provided for breaches of the law. I do not wish to go into details, but I hope the Minister will remember that he has left these things untouched. A grower can still be fined heavily for a mere trivial breach of the law. Last year, in spite of all these penalties, there were growers who refused to obey the law, and they did what they liked. It is impossible for any Government to go all over the country and frighten free people into doing something they do not want to do. As the Minister said, you have to work with the growers. We should not introduce the element of friction. "Work with the growers" is the best advice that I can give the Government, and I hope they will follow it.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): There is a great need in Queensland for productive industries to help us to bear the very heavy financial burden which is imposed on us. We require something which will minimise the unemployment which prevails at the present time, and any industry that tends to do away with the difficulties in that direction is worthy of our keenest attention.

We have been told a great deal regarding this industry. I may say at once that I have never been directly connected with the cotton industry, but at the same time I know something of the districts where its chief home will be and have practical general knowledge. Therefore it is a matter of great interest to me, and I can speak about it as one who has some idea of the difficulties and possibilities in regard to it. We know what the sugar industry has done for the coastal areas of Queensland, and we are told that the cotton industry can do just as much for the big areas in the inner West which are separated from the coastal lands by the Dividing Range as the sugar industry has done for the coastal areas in Queensland.

The cotton industry will have to depend on the world's markets. We know that one of the chief drawbacks in connection with some of our agricultural industries is that they are dependent on the local market and cannot successfully compete in the world's market; but the growing of cotton will give relief in the direction I have indicated, as it is a commodity which the world wants. We

understand that, if there is a dearth of one commodity more than another at the present time, it is cotton; therefore we have a great opportunity. Hon. members on this side have discussed the matter from that particular aspect, and in whatever we have said we have been actuated wholly and solely by a desire for the welfare of the cotton industry.

We had an Act passed last session of a very drastic character in certain directions. With our knowledge of agricultural conditions we on this side strongly objected to the passing of the measure without further consideration being given to the representations of growers of ratoon cotton. In doing that we were simply performing our duty. In justification of the attitude we then took, we have the present Bill introduced to undo the work of the Act which was passed against our wishes and in spite of our protests last session. The question now largely hinges upon ratoon cotton. We know that with our variable climate any plant from which we can get more than one crop without having to resow and run the risk of non-germination of the seed through dry weather and so on possesses very great advantages over a crop which you have to sow annually. That is the reason why we made the stand we did in regard to ratoon cotton.

I give the Minister all credit in regard to his attitude in this matter in desiring to do the best for Queensland and the cotton industry; but in reading the history of what took place it seems to me that the hon. gentleman was rather stampeded into the action he took—that one crowd got hold of him, and once they got hold of him he refused to listen to any suggestions from the other side. When we look back upon what happened, it becomes apparent that very strong arguments were advanced as to why the Minister should stay his hand, or at any rate give a little more consideration to the requests of the growers of ratoon cotton. Seeing the hon. gentleman had such strong testimony placed before him as to the mistake he was making, he should have taken the advice which hon. members on this side offered him at the time.

It seems to me that on this question of ratooning there is room for a good deal of investigation, more particularly with regard to the variety of cotton to grow. I have here an article in "The Cotton Farmer and Dairyman," written by Professor S. C. Harland, on this point, in which this appears—

"In regard to Upland plants grown in the tropics, it must be concluded that only under exceptional conditions will the quality of the ratoon cotton be up to the standard required by the spinner from good grades of American cotton.

"It must not be forgotten, however, that a great deal of ratoon cotton is grown in the tropics, particularly in Brazil, and in the Grenadines of the West Indies. Ratoon cotton has been grown for 100 years or more of such quality that it brings a better price than Upland. Microscopic examination of the second and third year plants shows that the quality of the staple is no worse, and indeed is often better than that produced in the first year. It is clear then that the quality of ratoon cotton depends on the breed of cotton grown, and that bad quality is not a necessary corollary of ratooning."

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At the termination of the article he says—

“A final reference may be made to the entomological aspect of the situation. Each tropical cotton-growing country will have to decide whether insect pests exist in it which prevent the growth of perennial cotton. So far as the West Indies is concerned, leaf blister mite effectually prevents the ratooning of Sea Island cotton, but the perennial types are immune to this pest. Neither pink boll worm nor cotton stainers are to be feared if the necessary cleaning up is given to the fields at the end of the season.”

I understand that our ratoon cotton is cut down and all old growth burnt level with the ground and then next season the new growth starts for the next crop. That article bears out what I say—that the success of ratooning or otherwise is largely a question of variety. That is the common-sense way of looking at it. It seems to me that ratooning is so peculiarly fitted for the Queensland climate, especially that of the Central District, that it is up to us to decide what are the best varieties, that is, the varieties most likely to adapt themselves to our conditions.

The cost of production is a great factor for consideration if we are to compete in the markets of the world, and, therefore, if we can successfully ratoon cotton and thus largely reduce the cost of production, we are likely to be so much further advanced.

I would also like to point out that there is such a thing as plant breeding. It is quite possible that by cross-propagation and hybridisation we may produce a variety of cotton that will suit our conditions better than any we have at present. We have strong evidence that ratoon cotton is payable. We have been told that it has realised as much as 1d. and 2d. a lb. more than American middles. We have also evidence to show that spinners have not been able to distinguish between ratoon cotton and annual cotton. I do not say that is always likely to be so, but it has happened.

The Minister may try to minimise the agitation on the part of the growers for permission to grow ratoon cotton, but, in view of the deputations which waited on him and the large mass meetings which have been held in various districts, he must realise that the majority of the cotton-growers are strongly in favour of growing ratoon cotton. These men are just as anxious for the future welfare of the industry as the Minister or any other man in this House. They are not fools. They would not so strongly urge the growing of ratoon cotton unless they were satisfied that they had a good case, and that there were possibilities of success in that direction. They can experiment so as to ascertain the best varieties of cotton, the same as has been accomplished in connection with wool-growing in Australia. The wool-growers were allowed to work out their own salvation, and now see the successful stage they have reached in their industry. They have evolved a type of sheep that now returns to them the highest price in the world for wool. Australia stands alone in connection with the wool supply of the world. No other country can compare with it. If the same thing is followed in connection with cotton, we shall probably be able to produce a plant which will enable us to obtain the highest price for our cotton. If

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it is found that a certain type does not realise the highest price, then the inferior type will be dropped, and the grower will concentrate on the type which is the most valuable; but it is a mistake to be governed in this matter by advisers whose knowledge is solely acquired in other climates.

We have the same conditions operating in the sugar industry. Every year certain varieties of sugar-cane are dropping out, and only those varieties which return the best price to the grower are retained and grown.

That is what we have to do in the matter of ratoon cotton. There is no doubt that there is a great advantage in growing ratoon cotton, and many handsome cheques have been received by growers for their crops. Many of those cheques would not have been received if the growers had had to depend on annual cotton. A case came under my notice when passing through Rockhampton where one grower received £400 from ratoon cotton and £100 from his seed cotton. If he had destroyed his ratoon cotton, he would have only received £100 from his crop. We have had Commissions visiting and reporting upon the electorates of Dalby and Murilla as to their suitability for growing cotton.

The House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.