Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 1924

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

QUESTIONS.

COMMISSION PAID TO STATE INSURANCE AGENTS OR CANVASSERS.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*) asked the Treasurer—

"1. Are the State district insurance agents or canvassers or defined area agents or canvassers under a definite agreement with the Insurance Commissioner in regard to 'over the counter' commission being payable when transacted within the district or area?

"2. Does this agreement exclude commission being paid on local authority business?

"3. Has such agreement been recently departed from in any particular?

"4. Is it a fact that discrimination is now made between local authorities—that is, commission paid on the business of one and not on another?

"5. If so, what is the explanation?"

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

"1. Yes.

"2. The Insurance Commissioner has given a decision that Government business referred to in clause 6 (iii.) of the agreement is regarded as referring to the business of certain local authorities.

"3, 4 and 5. See answer to No. 2."

CHARGES AGAINST QUEENSLAND AND OTHER STATES FOR LEAVE PASSES TO RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. What amount was charged against Queensland for the twelve months ended June, 1924, by the railway authorities in each of the other States of Australia in connection with leave passes to railway employees?

"2. What amount was charged by Queensland to each of the other Australian States for the same purpose and period?"

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

"1 and 2. Nil."

ALLEGED WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION IN RE TOOWOOMBA UNEMPLOYED.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

"1. Re Toowoomba unemployed. Has he seen the paragraph appearing in the 'Toowoomba Chronicle' of 4th October under the above heading? 'Yesterday afternoon a "Chronicle" representative called at the Toowoomba Labour Office to ascertain the number of unemployed in the city and the number who have been found jobs during the month of September. The bureau attendant stated that he had been instructed not to supply the Press with any unemployed figures for the month of September at least. These instructions were definite.'

"2. By whose authority was such instruction given?

"3. For what purpose is such information withheld?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. No instructions were given about the September or any other figures.

"3. See answer to No. 2."

LAND TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

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

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Land Tax Act of 1915 by extending the operation of the super land tax until the close of the financial year ending on the 30th day of June, 1925."

Question put and passed.

TRUSTEES AND EXECUTORS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Trustees and Executors Act of 1897 in a certain particular."

The object of this Bill of one material clause is to enable trustees to invest funds under their control in debentures issued by the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board by authorising their investment therein under the Trustees and Executors Acts, 1897-1906. As hon. members are aware, those Acts cover a very wide ground, and authorise the investment of trustees' funds in the debentures of local authorities. The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board has authority to issue debentures, but we have had a definition of "local authority," and we find that the Board does not come within the ambit of that definition.

Mr. KING: That is under the Trustees and Executors Act?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes. It is held that the Board is not a local authority under the Act, and the question therefore involves the security of investments in the Board's stocks and debentures. The Commonwealth Bank has been in communication with the Board with a view to having its stocks and debentures made an authorised investment. When the loan of £500,000 was being raised in the early part of the year the bank was pressing in its request, and pointed out that, had the Board's stocks and debentures been an authorised investment and placed in the same category as other stocks, it would have materially assisted in raising the money, because the stocks would have been more attractive. Therefore there can be no reasonable objection to the passing of this Bill, as it will remove

the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board from the anomalous position in which it is placed. Nobody can justifiably say that the municipality of Brisbane should be able to issue debentures as an authorised investment whilst the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board having the same security should not be able to do so.

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

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

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

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Public Service Act of 1922 in certain particulars."

The main object of the Bill is to remove the embargo from a certain class of public servants in respect of the Arbitration Court All members of the public service will now be permitted to have access to the Arbitration Court. Opportunity has also been taken to make certain other amendments in the Public Service Act, which I shall explain at the second reading stage.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I would like a little information before we proceed any further. The Public Service Commissioner in his last report states—

"A development which may have far-reaching effects upon public service administration, not only in Queensland, but in the other States, is the formation of an association called the Australian Public Servants' Association and its registration in the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration.

"An appeal against such registration was made by the Governments of South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales, but South Australia and Victoria subsequently withdrew. The appeal has been referred by Mr. Justice Powers to the High Court for an opinion.

"The constitution upon which registration was originally sought and granted provides that the association shall consist of an unlimited number of persons employed in the public service of any State (excepting persons employed in the teaching, railways, and tramways services), or employed in any State instrumentality or other undertaking carried on by public authorities, commissions, or corporations under any State charter, statute, enactment, or proclamation, together with such other persons, whether employed in the industry or not, as have been appointed officers of the association and admitted as members thereof."

"The position in regard to Queensland is that the General Officers' Association has decided to affiliate with the Australian Public Servants' Association and that other State Associations may also decide to link up with the Australian Association. The '£300 embargo' still prevails in Queensland; it is embodied in 'The Public Service Act of 1922,' and before the embargo can be lifted it will be necessary to amend the Public Service Act. If the State Associations join the Australian Association and thus secure admission to the Commonwealth Court the purposes of the embargo may be defeated.

"It is noteworthy that the Commonwealth Government have so legislated that Federal public servants have not the right of admission to the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, but that a special public service arbitrator has been appointed to deal with the question of salaries and general working conditions.

"The question as to whether State employees should have access to the Commonwealth Court of Industrial Arbitration notwithstanding that a State court exists is a matter of Government policy. I duly advised the Chief Secretary of the circumstances."

It appears to me that the State public servants, by giving notice of their intention to link up with the Australian Public Servants' Association, have forced the Premier to introduce this amendment to remove the £300 embargo. The question is: "Is the taking off of the £300 embargo going to make any difference, or are we to have the public servants going—first to the State Arbitration Court and then to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court?" If that is going to be the case, we are going to be put in a very awkward position. The Queensland Government has not made any protest against the registration of the Australian Public Servants' Association in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

The PREMIER: The public servants have a right to go to the Commonwealth Court, whether the embargo exists or not.

Mr. MOORE: Most decidedly, but it appears to me as though we are going to have a system of double-barrelled arbitration, and that the Federal court will overlap the State court. That would be an embarrassing position. If the State Government are going to amend the Public Service Act to allow the public servants to go to the State Arbitration Court for what is said to be justice, then it is the duty of the Opposition to protest against the public servants linking up with the Australian Public Servants' Association and being registered in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. I would like to quote what the Premier said on this matter some two years ago—

"I have to point out that the High Court's decision to render State instrumentalities subject to the Federal Arbitration Court is undemocratic and likely to lead to pernicious results . . . . A

single Federal Arbitration Court award might impose an extra charge on a particular State of any amount up to £1,000,000 per annum."

The State has provided an efficient Arbitration Court, and, if we are going to have the State public servants linking up with the Australian Public Servants' Association to gain access to the Federal Arbitration Court, I do not know what position the State is going to be placed in. Surely when the question has been referred to the Premier by the Public Service Commissioner, the Premier should have let the House know what attitude the Government intended taking up in regard to the question. Is the Premier prepared to accept the position under which public servants will have the right of entry to the Federal Court and also entry into the State Court and then be able to take the award which suits them best? Surely, before Parliament is asked whether it is desirable to introduce this Act or not, hon. members are entitled to some information from the Premier in regard to the attitude he takes up on what I regard as a very important question, so that we shall know exactly where we stand.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*): My own attitude on the question is well known. I do regard it as unfortunate that the Federal Arbitration Court should have jurisdiction over the State departments—at any rate in those States in which the public servants have access to an adequate State Arbitration Court. It may be argued that the entire industrial jurisdiction would be more wisely or effectively administered by a central authority than it is by the State authorities, as at present; but that is a different question entirely. Under the present distribution of powers of administration I do think the State ought to have control over the industrial matters affecting their own public servants, but the High Court has ruled otherwise. I referred to that decision as undemocratic in the sense that it was in effect an amendment of the Australian Constitution made by the High Court and not by a referendum of the people.

In regard to Queensland I do not apprehend any great difficulty, for although State public servants have the right to go to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, I do not believe the Commonwealth Arbitration Court will make an award where a State public service is under a satisfactory system of arbitration, and is working under awards conferred in their own States. I do not think the Commonwealth Court will willingly take on the very invidious and thankless duty of supervising a State public service which is already well controlled.

Mr. MAXWELL: Cannot the public servants create a dispute extending beyond the boundaries of one State?

The PREMIER: That applies to all classes of workers. I am not denying the right of State public servants to go to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. The High Court has removed all doubt on that score; but, as I have said, I do not think the Commonwealth Court will willingly take on the very invidious duty of making awards where awards already exist for the State public servants, especially where they are made and are comprehensive, and have been confirmed year after year in all their manifold details, dealing as they do with classifications, allowances, and the whole gamut of industrial conditions applying to the public service. It is not likely that the Commonwealth Court will act hastily and take over the duty of supervising all these details, therefore, I do not think there will be any great difficulty. When the public servants have the right to go to the Federal Arbitration Court, no doubt they will find it more advantageous to remain under their present industrial control.

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

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

Question put and passed.

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

ANIMALS AND BIRDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): When the Secretary for Agriculture introduced this Bill, he said he did so having due regard to the reservation to bring about the proper control and reasonable limiting of the industry. There is no question that the industry has not been properly controlled or reasonably limited, because we have large portions of the State in which these unfortunate animals and birds have been practically exterminated. Political considerations have been allowed to creep in as against the welfare of the native fauna of this State.

We have had close seasons proclaimed, but, when pressure has been brought to bear, the season has been opened, although it was well known at the time that there were many districts in the State where these animals had been practically exterminated. The number given by the Minister when making his second reading speech of the opossums and bears destroyed was rather an eye-opener. No matter what Acts of Parliament may be enforced prohibiting the use of cyanide and of flash lamps, we know those Acts are practically a dead letter. The method of exterminating these animals has become so scientific that in a large number of districts they have been practically wiped out. It is a very uncommon thing in a large part of the State to see a native bear, and it is rather an uncommon thing to see an opossum. Certainly to endeavour now to make them a revenue-producing asset to the State is not going to lead to a proper control or to a reasonable limitation as regards the number destroyed. Certainly the money raised in this regard is going to be paid into a trust fund, but we know that, if one fund shows a debit balance, the credit balance of another fund is used to bolster up the fund in debit. I am afraid that the native fauna of this State is going to be sacrificed to political expediency in an endeavour to secure an amount of revenue that otherwise would not be available.

The Minister stated that this State was not alone in its desire to secure funds from the native fauna, and he instanced Western Australia, New Zealand, Victoria, and South Australia. Western Australia does impose a royalty on skins sold, but it does not go as far as this Bill in declaring all native animals to be the property of the State, and it does not go so far as to permit trappers to trap on private property. They are only allowed to trap on Crown lands unless with the consent of the owner of the property. In New Zealand there is no royalty at all on skins such as the Minister led us to believe. The Government grant a license to people to shoot a certain number of deer, just as they grant a license to people to fish for trout. They also impose a license on people who sell game, but there is no license fee, as far as I have been able to discover, in any New Zealand Act, in the nature of a royalty on fur animals. As a matter of fact, there are practically no such animals in New Zealand. The license fee imposed in New Zealand is for a totally different purpose. It is not for the purpose of acquiring revenue. The license is only issued in respect of imported game, and only a certain bag is permitted. Any man licensed to shoot deer is only permitted to shoot a certain number.

Mr. FOLEY: The license fee proposed to be imposed here is only for the purpose of producing revenue to protect native fauna.

Mr. MOORE: I am afraid the anxiety of the Government to secure revenue is not going to protect our native animals, but is rather going to have the opposite effect, and is rather going to lead to their extermination. The methods adopted of securing these animals by lamps and poison have taken away practically every chance the unfortunate animal has of escaping. When it was merely a question of snaring, there was a certain number of escapes. In my district I do not suppose you could find half a dozen opossums in the whole of the district. Although they used to be reasonably plentiful, they are now practically wiped out. There is one thing that does give them a little protection. That is the prickly-pear. Where it is so thick that the trappers cannot get into it, the opossums are afforded a little natural protection. What is needed is a close season for two or three years to give these animals an opportunity of breeding up, and not have any open season. The present practice of opening the season at irregular intervals gives an opportunity to people to trap these animals all through the year, and then hold the skins until the open season. We know that dozens of people do that.

Mr. FOLEY: That is what we are trying to prevent.

Mr. MOORE: I do not see that it is likely to be prevented under this Bill. The Bill is of a very drastic nature. It embodies two distinctly new principles, neither of which, to my mind, is going to be for the benefit of these unfortunate animals. In Victoria and South Australia there certainly has been no public announcement as regards getting a royalty in respect of the native fauna. They may have considered it privately, but nothing has been done, and [10.30 a.m.] Queensland and Western Australia are the only two States which have taken action. The Minister estimates that he will have a revenue of about £50,000 from this source, but I cannot see where it is going to come from for more than a year or two. I cannot see the expediency of endeavouring to secure such an amount of revenue from these animals, which are going to be sacrificed in a way they have no right to be sacrificed.

The main portion of the Bill to which I object, is the matter of giving permits to trappers to go on to private holdings and leaseholds, irrespective of the wishes of the leaseholder or the owner of the property. I quite understand that in the case of pests such as dingoes, if a man will not protect his neighbours and protect himself in the way of combating the pest, some measures are needed to compel him to carry out his duty; but as regards opossums, bears, and other native animals, there is no such reason for trespassing on private property. The Minister himself said that he thought the man who had to pay the rent and who owned the stock on the land should be the first consideration. The first consideration is that that man is paying a rent to the Crown for a leasehold property to the use of which he is therefore entitled, in the same way as a freeholder purchases a block of land and pays the Crown for the freehold tenure of it, and the Crown has no right to give permits to people to enter and trespass on his property, and to do whatever they like. We should not allow undesirables, as many of them are, to go on these properties. They have no right to go there. It is not only a question of the damage they will do, but there is a large number of men who have to leave their wives and children at home, and the fact of giving permits to trappers to go on to a property while a man is away creates a very nervous feeling. I know of very many cases where a man would feel very doubtful about leaving his home to go away on business if he thought that there were people authorised to go on his property during his absence. It is not a question that they will do anything, but there is a large number of people—women in particular—who dislike to have strangers prowling about the place at night, as it upsets them and makes them nervous. I do not see that the Government have any right to allow people, unless with permission of the owners, to go on to the properties, for which the owners are paying rent or which they have purchased, for a certain class of business. We know that for health reasons or for the purpose of combating a pest it is necessary at times that drastic action should be taken; but there is no necessity for such action under a Bill of this sort. It is not merely a question of doing damage to stock or upsetting stock. We know that very often a flashlight from a lamp and shooting have had a very disturbing effect on cattle which are fattening in a paddock. There is no protection, apparently, to be given to the stockowner at all—he has no say. A Board is to be formed, and it will have power to give permits to trappers.

Mr. FOLEY: The stockowner will have representation on the Board.

Mr. MOORE: He will have representation on the Board, but as there will be a Government representative and a representative of the trappers, he will be outvoted by two to one.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Where will he be outvoted?

Mr. MOORE: If a man pays a license fee, he can get a permit for trapping. That

is what the Government official is there for, and what the Board is appointed for—to give licenses to trappers.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: To refuse them, possibly.

Mr. MOORE: To refuse an altogether undesirable individual, but there is nothing in the Bill to show that they are going to refuse permission to go on any holding in the district where the trapping is to take place. It is merely a matter of giving a license. It does not stipulate where a man can go or where he cannot go.

The Bill gives enormous power for making regulations. The whole constitution of the board, the election of it and the voting for it, is left to regulation, and to my mind it is only right that we should prepare amendments to make it more definite, because I strongly object to the far-reaching conditions which may be imposed. It seems to be that the Bill is to be entirely administered by regulation, and Parliament is to have no right to object to regulations very often until months after they are put into effect throughout the State. I do not object if trappers like to camp on Crown land, but to allow them to go on to the property of a private individual, who should have a prior right to all other individuals, is entirely wrong. There is no justification for it. There is also apparently no suggestion in this Bill that certain portions of the State may be declared close and open in others. It is necessary sometimes to have a long close season to enable native birds and animals to breed up, and, if we are going to give permits to trappers and others, we are going to have difficulty in controlling them. A man who gets a permit to trap and to go on to private land for that purpose may use that permit for other purposes altogether, and it will be quite impossible to control him. A man who has taken up a holding should surely have a prior right to trap on it, but the Bill gives other men the right to go on to that property and do just as they like. There are many men in this State who do not want to make a lot out of their property by shooting and trapping the animals and birds on it. They like to keep the property as sanctuaries. I know several properties the owners of which would not allow anybody to go on them to trap at all unless they were forced. They want to give the animals a chance to breed up. Some people keep kangaroos. These trappers get permits, and they can go all over those properties. Why should an individual who has protected the animals on his property for a number of years have the results altogether nullified by individuals who have no earthly interest in his point of view at all, but a very great interest in getting every valuable skin they can?

Mr. CLAYTON: They have votes at election times.

Mr. MOORE: I know that it may be expedient from the point of view of votes to give these permits. It is all very well to say that, because a certain number of men are out of employment, they shall be allowed to go out trapping, but outside influence should not be allowed to interfere. We have to consider whether these animals should be sacrificed in this way, and apparently, if the Government can get revenue from them by means of royalty, they are going to be sacrificed even to a greater extent.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The royalty will be on a sliding scale.

Mr. MOORE: During the last few years the skins have been valuable, and now the Crown is going to step in and take a portion of the money that is secured. I do not know whether that is going to be of any very great advantage to anybody but the Crown. It is certainly not going to be of any advantage to the animals, and I do not think that it is going to be of any advantage to the trappers; and unquestionably it is going to be a great disadvantage to the private individual on whose holding trapping is to be allowed to take place. The Bill seems to be an attempt to get at individuals who have leased country from the Crown, and who in a few instances have made a little money, by giving permission to approved trappers to go on to their holdings. If the Bill allowed the person who owned the property to select the person he would like to have on his holding as a trapper, and did not give indiscriminately the right to unknown individuals who desire licenses as trappers, the position would not be so bad. Very often a landholder would not mind giving permission to a person who he knew would not do any damage to his property or cause any uneasiness in his household if he happened to be away; but that is a totally different thing from having a board issuing permits to all and sundry.

The Board will not have very much opportunity of inquiring into the character or the class of men seeking permits. One knows that some very undesirable characters follow the occupation of trapping—it is such a free and easy sort of life. There are many people in my district who are strongly against this proposal. They feel that the Crown is not justified in interfering with their rights by giving permits to people to come on to their land. They are satisfied that there is an element of risk in connection with fires, disturbing of stock, and in causing anxiety to their households by this proposal. If a man is allowed to nominate a person whom he wishes to be the holder of a license permitting him to trap on his property, then the objection to this proposal is not so great; or, if the holder objects to anybody going there because he has reserved that area to enable the animals to increase and that objection is recognised by the Board, then a good deal of the disagreeable portion of this Bill will be eliminated. The landholders are strongly opposed to the proposal to allow permits to be issued to all persons. They claim that the Crown has no earthly right to accept rent from one man and give him the right and title to that land and allow him to prosecute trespassers, and then allow trappers to go on to it. The landholder is the sole owner of the land so long as the lease holds good, and he is the sole owner of freehold land so long as he holds the title to that land.

Mr. FOLEY: The hon. gentleman could apply the same argument in connection with timber.

Mr. MOORE: The same argument does apply in connection with timber. A man has no earthly right to cut timber on another man's freehold property.

Mr. FOLEY: The hon. gentleman was speaking of leasehold.

Mr. MOORE: Except during later years, where it was specifically stated in the lease that a person could enter the land for a certain purpose, no person had the right to go on to a leasehold. It is only when the Crown embodies in the lease the right to reserve the timber that any person is allowed to go on to the land to remove timber. The persons who are now complaining have taken up their land without any reservation in the lease, and without any reservation in the case of freehold tenure. Now the Crown comes along with an Act of Parliament by which it is going to allow other people to go on to this property, and the landholders will have no right to object to such entry or to turn them off, even though the landholders may be put to serious loss and inconvenience.

Mr. FOLEY: They have the right now to go on to land to destroy pests.

Mr. MOORE: It is not a question of destroying pests. The Government have no right to allow any man to go on to any property to destroy pests if the owner or occupier is effectively carrying that work out himself. It is only when that work is not being carried out that a permit is issued allowing a trapper to go on to the land to destroy those pests. If a man refuses to clean up his yard, or to destroy pests on his land, then the authority concerned has the right to put people in to do that work. This is not a case of that kind at all. These are not pests, but revenue-producing animals.

Mr. FOLEY: The same thing applies.

Mr. MOORE: I do not think that the same thing applies at all. The principle is entirely wrong. If the Crown inserted a clause in the terms of its leases that it could permit trappers to go on to those holdings, there would be nothing more to be said; but, when a man buys a freehold or takes up a leasehold, then it is his property for the purposes he is going to put it to during his occupancy or tenure of the land, and the Crown has no right to step in and alter the conditions of the freehold or leasehold tenure of that land. The principle is wrong, and may lead to a great deal of trouble and anxiety.

The clause giving power to issue regulations is absolutely wrong, because the powers appear to be unlimited. A suggestion was put forward by the Minister when introducing the Bill that the Board possibly might consist of one trappers' representative, one stockowners' representative, and one Government servant. He gave no indication as to whether there was to be a Board for each portion of the State—whether there was to be one central Board for the whole of the State, what power this Board was going to have except in regard to the issue of permits, whether it was going to be able to specify the distinct localities in which trapping was to take place; whether local Boards were to have a voice in the declaration of the close seasons, whether a central Board was to do this, or whether the power was to be left in the hands of the Minister. The working of the Bill is left vaguely expressed in one long clause, which states that everything is to be done by regulation after the Act is passed. The principle is absolutely wrong, and I want to see definitely set out in the Bill what position the boards are going to hold, who are going to elect them, who can sit on them, whether there are going to be several districts, what size these districts are going to be; whether they are to be like the present marsupial and dingo boards districts or smaller or larger; or whether one board is to control the whole State. The Bill is rather unsatisfactory, and, if left in its present condition, regulations may be brought in at any period during the year, when we shall have no opportunity of protesting against them except, perhaps, when the House meets seven or eight months after their issue. We have had experience this year of two or three classes of regulations being brought in which, in my opinion, were outside the scope of the Act under which they were issued. Those regulations were supposed to assist in the working of the Act under which they were issued; but in one instance it has been found necessary to introduce a Bill to validate them.

The Bill we are considering has a dragnet clause at the end. It is a long clause and under it regulations can be framed for everything possible in regard to the administration of the Act. It leaves everything so vague that practically no protest can be made when the regulations have been issued, and possibly not until months afterwards when the season has been closed and the damage has been done.

I object to the principle of the Bill altogether. I would be strongly in favour of a Bill brought in for the purpose of protecting these animals and giving them a reasonable chance of recovery; but a Bill such as this is brought in with the obvious intention of securing a revenue of £60,000 or £70,000 a year for the Government, and with the intention of over-riding the rights of individuals who have already purchased land. I think it is altogether wrong in principle, and the Opposition will object to it as much as we can right through. The whole thing seems to be brought in in the interests of a few individuals, and for the purpose of militating against the rights of a few men who happen to be securing a sort of royalty for allowing persons to trap over their property. The Bill seems to be brought in to take away the opportunity from some people of legitimately making a little money and to give to others the right to go on to the land of people who do not want them.

Mr. FOLEY: The board will not give permission to undesirables.

Mr. MOORE: How are the board to know? They will have no means of knowing who the men who apply for permits are until after they have received their permits and have done something undesirable.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: And because of these difficulties do you suggest that we should continue a policy of drift?

Mr. MOORE: No, but we should follow the Act already on the statute-book. If that Act were properly administered, we would not have the present scandal in connection with this industry and the extermination of the unfortunate animals. If the Act were administered properly, the Government would not open the seasons improperly merely for political expediency. There is no necessity for this Bill. It is merely for the advantage of a certain class of individual, and to secure more revenue for the Government. It is not for the protection of the animals themselves. It is a question of how the Crown can get something out of an industry that has so far escaped taxation.

Mr. COSTELLO (*Carnarvon*): I listened with a great deal of interest to the Minister when he made his second reading speech. This Bill is really introduced to bring in more revenue and not for the protection of the animals. The Government also desire to assist some of their political friends. In face of the definite knowledge we acquired during the last election we know that our unfortunate animals have been dragged into the dirty mire of political party politics. The Bill will be an excellent means of providing very good organisers on behalf of the Government—organisers who will have to be paid by the trappers in the industry. We have a very efficient Act already on our statute-book and it should be properly administered. It is all nonsense for the Government to say that they have no control under the present Act. The Government control the railways over which the skins are carried; they may prevent skins going over the border to other States; they may prevent skins being sold during the close season; and, in fact, they control the market.

Apparently the Minister is hoping to gather in a revenue of between £60,000 and £70,000. This must come out of the pockets of the unfortunate trappers, and those who are as well acquainted with the trapper as I am know that he has a very hard life. The season is short, and he has to go his hardest night and day. The trapper is no eight-hour-a-day man. Sometimes he is a twenty-four-hour-a-day man; and for the Government to turn round and take 1s., as the Minister suggests, for every skin he secures is a little over the fence. The inspectors employed will simply be political agents for the Government. It is not a question of employing people to protect opossums and bears. These are the animals which are most valuable for their skins, and these animals are becoming almost extinct. In the south-east and south-west districts the opossum is almost extinct now, and the bear is practically extinct. In Southern Queensland the native bear should be protected for the next ten years, and the opossum for at least five years. According to the figures given by the Minister, during the 1923 open season 1,200,000 opossums were trapped. I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of the amount of cyaniding that took place during that 1923 season. The Government made practically no attempt to protect the stockowners against the indiscriminate use of cyanide. Cyanide can be purchased practically anywhere in Queensland to-day, and trappers have been using it freely. The result has been that much valuable stock have been lost. The Government pretend they are the friends of the new settler, yet the man starting with a small flock or herd has to put up with the inconvenience caused by these trappers, and with the danger from the use of cyanide. If the Government were to protect the landowners against the indiscriminate use of cyanide by these trappers, there would be more sense in it than in introducing this Bill.

I should like to enter a protest against the power contained in the Bill to make regulations permitting trappers to trap over all freehold and leasehold properties. As the leader of the Opposition pointed out, the owner of a leasehold is paying rent to the Crown. He is endeavouring to make a livelihood out of stock, and he should be protected. Many settlers who live in the far distant parts of the State have taken their families with them, and the living conditions out there are not always of the best. I am speaking of the grazing selector who has taken up a 5,000-acre block. In many cases the families are left for practically the whole of the week with just the protection of the mother, and they will have no protection from trappers who will have authority from the Government to go on these properties. These trappers take their vans and pack-horses, and set up their camp right alongside the selector's home. There is no need to give a week's notice, or even twenty-four hours' notice, that they are going on to the holding. They just march on and practically take possession of the property. There may be a nervous woman with youngsters living at the selection, and she will have no protection. I do not say that she will need protection from many of the trappers. Many of these trappers are decent fellows, but, unfortunately, some of them are not, and they will take advantage of this privilege. They will take advantage of the opportunity to secure their own meat on the holding. It is well known that these trappers, with their dogs, are much too far away from butchers to bother about butcher meat.

[11 p.m.] Where there is no man on the spot there is no protection from the trappers for an unfortunate woman with a small family in case of need.

This is practically a tax which is being placed by the Government on the lessees by allowing people to go on to the holdings without proper control. I hope that the Government will see their way clear in Committee to amend that provision.

We must admit that there are noxious animals, such as the rabbit and the dingo, as well as the inoffensive animals. If the Government took some definite action in dealing with the dingo and rabbit pest, they could be doing something for the man on the land and for Queensland generally, but they have not been manly enough to face the dingo problem this session. They promised two years ago to introduce some legislation dealing with the dingo pest, but they have not carried out their promise, and have not been fit to introduce any legislation this session for eradicating the dingo, which is a terrific curse to the man on the land and to the State generally. I would suggest that if they are going to collect a bonus from the trapper of inoffensive opossums and bears, that bonus should be used for the eradication of noxious animals, not only of rabbits and dingoes, but of birds. We have birds which are a terrible pest to people in the prickly-pear area. The taxpayers there are compelled to contribute to the cost of the eradication of the crow.

Mr. CLAYTON: It is an asset in the sugar districts.

Mr. COSTELLO: The hon. member can have all the crows in my district, together with the bonus. We are paying a bonus to assist in doing away with the crow from the districts in which prickly-pear is spreading. If prickly-pear was spreading in the districts of those hon. members who favour the crow, they would find out that it is not their friend but their enemy. The crow is a pest to people in pear-infested areas.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: Hear, hear!

Mr. COSTELLO: If we are going to collect a royalty in connection with the

opossum and bear under this Bill, I think the money should be put aside for destroying pests such as dingoes, rabbits, and emus, and bird life, such as the crow. The emu at present is the worst of all. It eats very freely of prickly-pear, and travels long distances through dry belts of country. I can assure hon. members that if there were emus on their properties and there was prickly-pear 20 miles away, the emus would bring the pear on to the property. A bonus of 5s. a head would be only a fair thing for the destruction of emus. I suggest to the Minister that the revenue from inoffensive animals, which are really a profit to the district, should be used to protect the landowner by using it to eradicate pests.

If we are going to have one Board operating all over Queensland, it will be an unfortunate thing for landowners and the community in which the trappers are working, because the board will have no knowledge whatever of the trappers. I suggest that the boards be limited to similar areas to the marsupial boards or even shire councils, so that the landowners' representative will have a knowledge of the people who are trapping in the district. I suggest that the trappers who are resident in the board's area should have priority. By so doing the board will have one sort of control over them, and if trappers do not play the game or are unscrupulous, the next time they apply for a license—which is to be granted annually—the board will have an opportunity of refusing their applications. By having a reasonably small area the expense will be a little greater, but it will give better control and will be more satisfactory to the people we are interested in—that is, the trapper and the landowner. We must have trappers, especially in the South-west, where they are generally men who are struggling on the land, and are forced to go away from their holdings because of bad seasons or other cause to make a living. Many of the men on the land got a start by trapping and shooting, thus getting a cheque together to enable them to stock and improve their holdings. These are the people—small landholders who are not in a position to start on their own blocks—who should have priority when applications for licenses are being dealt with by a board.

Then, again, who will be the landowners who will have votes for the election of these boards? The Bill is very indefinite at the present time, and the Minister should accept some reasonable amendment in Committee to make it possible for the landowners who understand the matter to have sufficient control to enable them to say whether doubtful or unsatisfactory trappers should receive licenses. If the landholders are not able to select the men to go on to their own areas, it will cause discontent. There are many men of bad reputation floating about the country without any means of employment, and they should certainly not have priority to the small landholders I have mentioned. The contention of the Minister is that men who have no other employment should have priority, but I think it is unnecessarily worrying to create boards to select the people who should be allowed to trap. At the same time, I think my suggestion will make it possible to select the best men; but, on the whole, I think that the measure is unnecessary at the present juncture. The Government have experts at the present time to find out what is necessary without introducing this measure, which is apparently brought in to tax the unfortunate trapper to provide revenue for the Government or to gain political support for hon. members opposite. I protest against the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): It seems to me that, under the pretence of protecting native animals and birds, the Government are going to get revenue at the expense of certain persons in the community who can ill afford to pay the heavy dues which will be collected. I have gone very carefully into the speech delivered by the Minister, and more particularly the figures which he gave. It is interesting to know that the amount of money which has been received from the sale of pelts of opossums has sometimes been considerably higher than the value of the gold yield, and in one year reached the total of £750,000, and perhaps it is necessary to have a Bill to put the industry on a proper basis. In my district and the adjoining districts there is a good deal of trapping, and, from what I know of it, it seems to me that a big mistake has been made in recent years in this business under the Act already on the statute-book, and, if we adopt the principle suggested by the Minister, we shall be going from bad to worse. Fancy in a business yielding a product of £750,000 a man being prevented from obtaining a permit to carry on employment to which he has been accustomed merely because of the fact that he is in work at the time of the opening of the season! We shall probably be giving preference to unemployed who are of an undesirable character. Surely the time has arrived when we should make the strongest provision for seeing that every protection is given by the trappers to the animals according to the regulations to be issued, and that they will play the game and properly respect the conditions applying to the landholders and the animals. Let us see that the trappers carry out the true spirit of the present Act. We should see that they do not carry out their work by poisoning, which means that where they obtain one skin two are lost. I regret that this Bill is merely a skeleton, and that the most important principles which should be contained in it will appear later in the "Government Gazette" in the form of regulations. From reading the Minister's speech I know it is only intended to apply the regulations to areas which exceed 2,560 acres. Whether that applies to Crown land only or to freehold as well I do not know, but there is an innovation here. The board which is to be constituted will have power to give permits to persons to go on to freehold property, as well as on to leasehold property. I do not like the way the board is to be constituted. There will be a trappers' representative from the district. The Government representative will possibly be the clerk of petty sessions, who in the past has been accustomed to receiving fees for the issue of permits to all sorts of individuals, or he may be an officer of the Lands Department, whose office is adjacent to or possibly in the same building as the clerk of petty sessions, and that officer has possibly been accustomed to dealing with trappers in the locality, whether desirable or undesirable, and those officers, for personal reasons, or possibly because they do not care who gets a permit or who does not, may grant permits for the purpose of the

revenue which is going to be received, and for the purpose of bolstering up the receipts at those offices. The third member of the board should be some person of stability and some person with a knowledge of individuals; and for that purpose I would suggest that some responsible person from the shire council—possibly the chairman—should be a member of the board in addition. In the past, if a landholder had not the necessary trapper or trappers on his land to destroy the animals that were declared by the local authority to be a pest, the marsupial board had the right to allow any person to go on to that property because the landholder was not carrying out his duty. If we are going to issue permits indiscriminately to persons to go on to property, then there is every prospect of doing a very serious injury to the rights of individuals. Experience has told us that, when trappers go on to country—particularly on the big holdings which are remote from ordinary centres of population—they have to be watched. In areas of the size—some of them 100 square miles in extent—where these men carry out their work valuable stock are often left practically unprotected; and, when you obtain the history of the actions of these men from the holders of those properties, you find that it is not an uncommon thing to have a beast slaughtered by them. The whole of the beast is not used, but only that portion which is necessary for the time being is taken, and the rest is allowed to rot. That is rather the practice than the exception. If a man is carrying out all his duties in the destruction of pests, or killing those animals for the purpose of revenue, he should have the first right—if we are going to force this on to him—to decide who is to go on to his property. He may decide to allow nobody on to his property, but to carry out the duties himself, which he should be entitled to do.

There is another aspect in connection with the issuing of permits to go on to private land, and that is the disturbance of the stock. If these permits are to apply to all classes of property, including freehold, you will find men claiming the right to go at uncertain times on to property where sheep may be lambing. Fancy men with their pack horses and lights going at night time on to country where sheep are lambing! Surely the owner of that land should have the right to say, "You shall not go in there at certain times. I am going to decide the time when you are going to come in amongst my sheep." It all comes back to the class of person to whom the permit is issued. If he is a person who is not thrifty and who has no fixed abode, and this person is entitled to a permit as a matter of right, then we are simply catering for undesirables and for those rolling-stones going about the country who are prepared to make a cheque in the quickest way possible and then move on. We should not cater for those persons. We should establish an industry, and have it worked by persons who are likely to keep to it and live in the districts which will be proclaimed.

I would like to refer to a matter which was mentioned by the hon. member for Murilla in the early stages of this debate. I refer to the rabbit freezing works that have been established at Yelarbon, in the Goondiwindi district, where two men have been enterprising enough to establish a factory to deal with one of our worst pests—the rabbit. They have converted the rabbit to a commercial use, and are making a little out of the skins. In dealing with pests of that sort special consideration should be given to persons who are turning a national pest into a national commodity.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no intention to impose a royalty on the rabbits treated there.

Mr. VOWLES: I am very pleased to hear the Minister say that, because every encouragement should be given to those persons.

Mr. COSTELLO: It might be necessary for the Board to give permits to trappers to trap rabbits on the roads and adjacent lands.

Mr. VOWLES: Sanctuaries have been established in the past by private individuals for the protection of our native fauna. These sanctuaries should be carried on in the future, and no man should have the right to destroy the native fauna on them. Perhaps it might be thought that is a far-fetched suggestion, but I do know—and, if the Minister takes the trouble to inquire from the officers of his department, he will find the truth of my assertion—that even in the sanctuaries in the Bunya Mountains trapping goes on, more particularly with respect to opossums. It has been suggested that some of the worst offenders in that regard are the persons whom the Government have in charge of the sanctuaries. I know that this is going on from the officials there. If persons are going to get a permit to go where they like to trap native animals for a fee of 5s., what is going to happen in regard to these sanctuaries, where it has been thought desirable for sentimental reasons to protect the animals to prevent their extinction? Last year the total amount received from these fees was about £1,600 sterling. This shows that a large number of persons engage in trapping. Trapping for marsupial skins in some of our western townships has been a godsend to the population during drought times. It was the only thing they had to look forward to to keep their families and themselves.

For those reasons, if we are going to deal with this matter, we should deal with it effectively, and grant permits only to persons who are known to be of good character, and who are living in the district. If, in the opinion of the Government, it is necessary—and I say it is highly undesirable that it should be so—that any person should have the right to violate the rights of property owners and to carry on trapping on another man's property, every safeguard should be taken to see that the persons going on such property are desirable, and every possible protection should be given to property owners by the Cabinet when framing the regulations by which they will authorise such action.

Hon. J. G. APPEL (*Albert*): Perhaps I view this measure from a somewhat different angle of view to that adopted by hon. members who have already spoken. In my district there are very few holdings that will come within the ambit of this measure, which exempts holdings under 2,560 acres. My point of view is governed by the fact that under present conditions it has been the habit of persons in my district who are shooting opossums and bears without any authority to go upon the property of the different selectors and, without any regard for the rights of the freeholders or leaseholders, to trespass on that property and take whatever

opossums and bears they could secure. They go further. Even where a freeholder may have had his property proclaimed a sanctuary that sanctuary is not respected. In my own case I applied for the purpose of conserving the native fauna of my district, and the Department of Agriculture and Stock proclaimed certain portions of my property a sanctuary. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that those who have been after that fauna have an absolute disregard for those sanctuaries. They pay no attention to the fact that they are sanctuaries. One large sanctuary—Stradbroke Island—was respected by all good sportsmen after its proclamation, but we now find persons taking advantage of the proclamation of the sanctuary and of the consequent increase in the fauna, and are destroying the fauna in that area. I term this disregard of sanctuaries a scandal, because in many instances these people do not even take away the skins or the meat of the kangaroos or wallabies. They are simply shot and left, and it is possible almost every day for anyone on the heights of Stradbroke Island, to the north of what we term the Break to hear guns going all day. That is the way the rights of sanctuary are respected.

This Bill provides for the registration of all those engaged in this industry, because, having regard to the amount of money realised from the sale of skins—£750,000—it is an industry. So far as my district is concerned that is distinctly an advance, and will cause the rights of those who are endeavouring to preserve our fauna to be respected.

I take it that the Bill, more or less, is introduced for the purpose of securing revenue by requiring all those engaged in the industry to pay a registration fee. It would be very difficult to find a person engaged in any business to-day who is not required to pay some fee or other, and, having regard to that, I take it that the Government are quite justified in obtaining some revenue from those engaged in the industry. We have to realise that no individual rights can exist in the fauna of the country. As ferae naturae they are the property of the Crown, and I think the Crown is quite justified in obtaining some revenue from that source. In that respect I confess that I differ from my colleagues. As I have already pointed out, practically every person engaged in this industry will have to pay a registration fee, and, as a result, there will be a certain amount of control exercised over those so engaged. I take it that the department will see that that control is exercised, because I am quite sure that in such a district as my own, at certain periods of the year, it is a positive danger to have persons without any control going all over your property, and having no regard for your improvements or for your homestead. On different occasions I have had the iron on my roof perforated by persons shooting in the home paddock, and I confess that I welcome any control of those engaged in that industry. Of course, every Act can be administered in a way which will inflict hardship upon the individual landowner, but I take it that it is not proposed that trappers shall be allowed to go on to these properties at periods of the year when the business carried out by the owner would be in any way affected. I take it, furthermore, that certain conditions will be laid down in connection with the trappers' quarters and outfit, so that those engaged in the industry will have certain restrictions placed on them as to the depasturing of their animals and the situation of their camps, and so on. If they are to be allowed to take an outfit of horses and other stock on to a property, unquestionably under certain conditions, it will be a very material interference with the rights of those who are paying a rent to the Crown or who have purchased the freehold of the property.

The clause which makes provision for the creation of a board is one that should be put into operation, because, if those acquainted with the local conditions have the granting of permits and all the conditions which are to be attached to the granting of permits, I take it that very little injustice can possibly accrue to the owners of property. There is one point which has not been touched upon—that is, that the trappers have already been operating on properties which will be affected by this amendment of the Act, and operating, except in the instance I have mentioned in my own district, apparently with the consent of the owners of the properties, who have received a bonus on the animals that have been taken.

I would point out in that connection that, according to the law, no person has any right of property in either an opossum or a bear. To a certain extent, the argument that damage is caused to the stock of the owner or lessee is a valid one. I assume that the department will see
[11.30 a.m.] that proper supervision is exercised in these matters. The department will have the control, by means of registration, of the person who receives the bonus. I take it that, if any trapper having such a permit wilfully disregards the conditions under which the permit is granted, or acts in a way which is contrary to the regulations, the department will take action to cancel the permit. We pride ourselves upon being what we term a free people, but no people are free—certainly not the people in Queensland or in the other parts of the Commonwealth. We are all more or less under control. In the electorate which I represent, as I have previously pointed out, probably about 5 per cent. of the property which will come under the measure will be affected in regard to persons trespassing without permits, or by conditions of that nature. I rather welcome the fact that the nuisance from which we have suffered for many years will cease to exist, and that no person, unless he is the holder of a permit, will be entitled to operate so far as these native fauna are concerned.

Just one word of appeal for our fauna. It has been pointed out by previous speakers that practically the whole of the native bear—certainly in South-eastern Queensland—have disappeared. At one time, although they were never particularly numerous, relatively to opossums, it was usual—I speak now from my knowledge in connection with the vicinity of my own homestead—to see two or three native bears almost at any time. It is not possible to see one now. We had quite a little family of opossums at one time; in fact, the ladies of my family tamed them to such an extent that they used to feed them regularly every night. There is not an opossum to be seen now.

The provision by means of which a person who trespasses on your property will be disciplined is one which will meet with my approval. We should consider the question

Hon. J. G. Appel.]

of preventing the wholesale destruction of these interesting animals. I admit that in some cases a certain destruction of crops takes place through them. At the same time, in my own case at Beech Mountain, where the scrub practically surrounded my property, the destruction of crops by these animals was very inconsiderable indeed. To me—and I know to a vast number of other persons—they form a very considerable attraction of our country-side, and the wholesale destruction which has gone on, whereby these interesting animals have been almost wiped out, amounts to a sin. A native bear with its young on its back is a most interesting sight, especially to persons from the towns who have never seen these little animals; and to see opossums moving about after dark is also a very interesting experience to persons who have rarely seen them. But you can go through the greater portion of the Albert electorate, where a considerable amount of scrub still exists, and I venture to say that they are now a very rare sight. You probably will not see a native bear at all, and but very few opossums. At the risk of repeating myself, I trust that these interesting fauna will receive a chance to increase, and that steps will be taken to prevent their indiscriminate destruction—that it will at least be kept under control. As practically every member of the community engaged in business is required to pay a license fee of some kind, and having in mind the value of this particular industry, I am certainly of opinion that those persons engaged in it should not escape from contributing something to the revenue. Furthermore, this native fauna being the property of the Crown, the Crown is entitled to receive some portion of the value of the skins for whatever marketable commodity exists in it.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): To my mind, this Bill is only another form of taxation. We see other Governments reducing taxation very materially, but in Queensland we have the Government increasing it in almost every measure they introduce. We have the Government posing as the friends of the man on the land, but in this amending Bill they are introducing legislation which will harass the freeholder. We are going to allow a trapper to go on to freehold land, and on the other hand we are going to tax him in the earning of his livelihood. In the issue of permits, I think any board which may be established should take into consideration the question of whether the applicant is of a reliable character or otherwise, because it is a most serious matter if you are going to allow trappers to go all over freehold land just as they like in the pursuit of opossums and other marsupials for a livelihood. It will go a long way towards causing anxiety in the homes of the people concerned if such persons are allowed to go all over the country and do just as they like.

I believe that some of them will abuse the privilege, and will do certain acts on the properties which will not be to the interest of the owner. We know that many landowners do not reside on some of their properties. They have what we know as outside paddocks, which they go and work occasionally in connection with their sheep or cattle. If you are going to allow these trappers to roam over the paddocks as they wish, then there will always be a danger of fire, because the trappers will not be so careful with regard to fires as the owners would be, and probably paddocks will be burnt out. There will also be trouble in connection with laying poison, although I know that is not allowed. When these trappers get out in remote country districts where they are under no supervision, they will lay poison because it ensures a heavier catch. The trappers will abuse the privilege of being allowed to go on to freehold land, and will go in for the laying of poison.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: How will that affect the small man?

Mr. CLAYTON: Anything that I say about poison frightens the hon. gentleman, because he has it in his head. I know that some time ago a restriction was placed on trappers with regard to the use of spot lights, because they were a menace to stock-owners, but I know they have been used since that time, and will be used in the future. Trappers will take advantage of being away from centres of population, and will use these spot lights. The persons who follow the occupation of trapping are generally men who are not in a very good financial position. In many instances I know of persons who have had to seek a living in that direction because of adverse circumstances. The Government are going to impose a tax upon those individuals. I am not opposed to the granting of permits for trapping on Crown lands, but I am opposed to trapping being allowed on freehold land. We have these persons, who cannot get an opportunity to earn the basic wage in the city, forced to go out into the country and endure hardships in earning their living, and we have some hon. members opposite taking advantage of the opportunity to penalise those men by taxing them. That is unjust. One section of hon. members opposite pose as friends of the man on the land, and another section want to assist the industrialists. Many industrialists, through lack of employment because of the actions of the Government, are forced to go out on these trapping ventures, and, possibly because they may not have a vote in any plebiscite, they do not count, and the Government take the opportunity of taxing them to get more revenue. I am opposed to this form of taxation being imposed on people who go out to earn their livelihood in this way. Prior to the last elections the Government had decided, and the Minister had stated, that the opossum season would not be opened for that year. What happened? An election was sprung on us, and, owing I suppose to certain hon. members opposite bringing pressure to bear, the season was immediately opened so as to pacify some persons and get votes.

Mr. FOLEY: It was opened after the elections, and not before the elections.

Mr. CLAYTON: The season was opened, notwithstanding the fact that the Minister had said that the country was being depleted of marsupials.

Mr. FARRELL: You know that is not so.

Mr. CLAYTON: I trust the Minister will be firm in regard to the applications made to him, and that he will see these marsupials are protected. So far as opening the seasons are concerned, I would suggest that the Minister should consider the cutting up of Queensland into districts, because in some districts the marsupials may not breed up to the same extent as in others. If the Minister used his judgment in this matter, it might lead to an increase in the number.

When the hon. member for Carnarvon was speaking I interjected that the crow was an asset in the sugar districts. The hon. member was under the impression that I said the crow is an asset in my district. I want to contradict that impression. I contend that the crow is an asset in the sugar districts, but is a pest in the maize or fruit districts. I have seen a great amount of destruction committed by these birds in the maize and fruitgrowing districts. I do not want the statement to go abroad that I favour the existence of the crow in my district, because I do not.

I trust that the Minister will accept reasonable amendments from this side of the House when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. On almost every occasion when measures dealing with primary production or the land are under consideration, amendments which have been brought forward by hon. members on this side, who have had practical experience on the land, have, when accepted, improved those measures very considerably. I hope that the Minister will see the justification for the amendments that will be moved and will accept them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eucham*), in reply, said: I appreciate the suggestions which have been made from hon. members opposite, and the difficulties they see confronting the administration of this Bill. The leader of the Opposition in his remarks would lead the House to believe that a great number of difficulties confront us because the law is evaded, and because some undesirables may want to get permits. If that argument holds good, then it also holds good about many other measures. These difficulties can be got over. In reality, this is a belated measure.

I, first of all, want to correct an impression that has got abroad in the country and in this House—possibly through my own fault—that the royalty is going to be fixed by the Bill at 1s. per skin. I desire to correct that impression. What I intended to convey to the House when I introduced the Bill was that a royalty based on the royalty in Western Australia would yield £60,000 to £70,000 to the people of Queensland. There is no intention to fix the royalty in the Bill itself, neither is there any intention on the part of the Government or myself to fix a royalty which would be an undue tax on the people engaged in this important industry.

The object is to raise sufficient money to see that the animals are properly protected and to see that the State gets what is undoubtedly its share for that purpose. When I point out that during the five years I have been Secretary for Agriculture and in control of the legislation dealing with native animals there has been an open season for bears of only six months in 1919 and a close season since, and that on two occasions only have there been open seasons of two months each for opossums, I think it will be admitted that I have done my duty. Compared with previous years that shows that an attempt has been made to protect native animals in this State. The power for the declaration of close seasons will still obtain in the principal Act, and will be observed rigorously, because we desire to preserve the native animals of this State, and also to develop the commercial side of the business. There is no doubt from the figures I have quoted that large sums of money have been made from the industry. As the hon. member for Albert rightly declared, these animals are the property of the people; there is no difference of opinion on that question. No one declares that the native animals of the State belong to any particular individual; they belong to the people, and the Government are the trustees of the people, and are justified in looking after their interests. It is their duty to protect the native animals and to use revenue derived from those that can wisely be slaughtered to foster the industry and protect those engaged in it, and also to collect sufficient revenue to carry on the administration of the Act.

That is really the object of the Bill, and there is no intention of imposing an undue royalty on the people connected with the industry. While skins are bringing only a reasonable price a reasonable royalty will be imposed. The royalty will be fixed on a sliding scale, according to the value of the skins.

Mr. TAYLOR: According to the value only—not a flat rate?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I take it the skins will be graded, and the royalty will be imposed on the grading. It would be unreasonable to impose a flat rate, and place the same royalty on skins worth 2s. as would be placed on skins worth 10s. or 12s. Therefore the royalty will be based on the value of the skins, and will not be unduly hard on the industry. Those engaged in the industry may rest assured that there is no intention on the part of the Government to impose a royalty which will be unduly hard on the trapper.

With regard to the statement made about the man who owns a freehold or a leasehold for the purpose of raising stock being harassed, I may say that I have every sympathy with those individuals. The idea is to give the owners of the land a say by giving them the right to elect one member of the board; the trappers will elect one member; and one member will be appointed by the Government. I think I said during my second reading speech that it might be desirable to appoint an officer from the Lands Department, because the Lands Department is the landlord of the people, and naturally should provide an ideal and sympathetic representative for the owners of land. Landowners will be safeguarded in every possible way, and permits will not be given to undesirables. There is a class of people, of course—a kind of nomad—who go upon properties with little regard to the rights of other people. It is in the interests of the trappers and of the trappers' representative on the board to see that there are no complaints with regard to undesirable actions, because those complaints will reach the Minister in due course, and the regulations will be tightened to prevent a recurrence of such complaints. It is hoped by this democratic method of electing a board from the interests concerned, with an impartial chairman—a public servant with no axe to grind, but only a desire to do the right thing—that permits will be issued to men who will not abuse their privileges. If the privilege is abused, it will be taken from them.

I may mention that the intention is to cut the State up into districts. Probably the districts will be based on the present marsupial board districts. That will be a matter for future consideration and for the

convenience of the people concerned. Every district will have a board elected on the lines I have mentioned. These boards will have power to allocate to the various trappers the runs on which they may trap, and it will be in the interests of the trappers themselves to see that too many permits are not granted. Of course trappers want to go to those places where there are sufficient animals to enable them to make a reasonable wage, and naturally they will gravitate to those districts where the animals are most numerous. The board will have power to allocate to the particular holdings a certain number of trappers. It will have power likewise to refuse permits to people who are undesirable, and to refuse further permits if they think a sufficient number of permits have been issued in a particular area.

The hon. member for Dalby referred to abuses. Of course, we know abuses will occur under all laws. It does not matter how drastic the law may be, or how anxious the Minister may be to carry out the law, people will break the law from time to time. The hon. member for Dalby mentioned a case where an honorary ranger on one of the sanctuaries in the Dalby district had been one of the greatest offenders against the law. The hon. member did not bring it under the notice of the department. That was left to someone else to do. Evidently someone had sufficient interest in the protection of the native fauna of this State to do so. I find on making inquiries that that honorary ranger was relieved of his duties, and the same thing will be done again under similar circumstances. My desire is to give every protection to our native fauna. The fact that during my tenancy of office of five years only four months have been allowed within which the shooting of opossums could take place and for six months just prior to my taking office, indicates, as compared with the attitude of previous Governments towards our native animals, that I have had some sympathy for and some desire to protect these native animals.

I do not know how many sanctuaries have been created since I have been in charge of the Department of Agriculture, but I know to-day that there are probably 1,000,000 acres set apart as sanctuaries. The hon. member for Albert mentioned that he had made representation, like many others, to have part of his holding declared a sanctuary, and the department is always sympathetic towards such requests. Of course, when no royalty was paid there was a tendency on the part of some people owning a large holding to apply for their holding to be made a sanctuary in order that no permits to trap could be issued in respect of that holding, and they kept it to themselves. Under a royalty system there will be no gain in a case such as that, because the owner of the holding will not be exempt from a royalty if he takes native animals, and once the place is declared a sanctuary the owner himself will have no right to take native animals. He will be just as big an offender as anyone else if he destroys native animals on his holding. As I have said, 1,000,000 acres have been set apart as sanctuaries, and although I have not the figures here, I am satisfied that the great bulk of this area has been set apart during my tenure of office. Since I have been in the Department of Agriculture such properties as Blue Mountain holding, Mackay; Eurimbula holding, Gladstone; Moray Downs Station, Clermont; Reeves Lake (Eumara and Gainsford holdings); Rewan Stud Farm for breeding police horses; and the Valley of Lagoons holding, have been set apart as sanctuaries. I was only reading the other day in a Northern paper where a traveller made a trip through the Valley of Lagoons, and he described the wonderful picture of the wild fowl on the lakes there and the wonderful evidence of native fauna in that district. Those are a few of quite a number of large holdings that have been set apart as sanctuaries during my term of office. That policy will be continued from time to time. The Opposition need have no fear that this Bill is an attempt to wipe out our native fauna, or that it will have that effect. I desire that our native fauna should be preserved, but we know that some measure of control is necessary, and in my opinion that control can only be brought about successfully by the system which I am putting before the Chamber.

With regard to the use of cyanide, that was forbidden in the measure which I introduced in this Chamber in 1923—the principal Act. The use of cyanide was made a criminal offence, and heavy fines were imposed. We know, however, that cyanide is in use. It is most difficult to prevent its use, but the health regulations have been tightened up to such an extent that it should be most difficult, if the police do their duty, for anyone illegally to use cyanide.

[12 noon] First of all, before any person can get permission to buy cyanide he has to get a permit from the local policeman, who makes inquiries and has to be satisfied that the cyanide is going to be used for some proper purpose. That is the first safeguard. Then we have heavy penalties imposed on those who are found guilty of using cyanide. In the first place, we confiscate the skins. Quite recently we confiscated £30 or £40 worth of skins from a man because we discovered he was using cyanide. Then there are heavy penalties which a police magistrate has power to impose. We can only make laws, provide penalties, and issue regulations under Acts of Parliament, and do the best we can to see that those Acts are carried out. There is every desire and sympathy on the part of the Government for the preservation of the native animals, and, when the industry is developed on a commercial basis, to protect and encourage the trappers who are engaged in the industry, and to take every safeguard possible to see that the people who pay rent to the Crown for the land will not be unfairly interfered with.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): Mr. Speaker——

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has no right to speak after the Minister has replied. I should only be too glad to allow hon. members to speak if the rule of debate permitted me to do so, but I would point out that some time elapsed after the hon. member for Wide Bay concluded his speech before the Minister rose to reply. Hon. members desiring to speak had ample opportunity of rising and addressing the chair before I called upon the Minister to reply, and I emphasised the fact that the debate would be concluded by the speech of the Minister by saying, "The Secretary for Agriculture in reply."

Mr. CORSER: This is only jockeying us out of our opportunity to speak.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will have to withdraw that expression.

Mr. CORSER: I do not see why I should withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to withdraw it. The hon. member must know that that is the proper thing to do.

Mr. CORSER: An hon. member on this side was on his feet before you called on the Secretary for Agriculture.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is not true. I waited several seconds after the hon. member for Wide Bay resumed his seat before I rose.

The SPEAKER: Order! The discussion is a reflection on the Chair, and it must be withdrawn. I hope the hon. member will withdraw it.

Mr. CORSER: The policy adopted by the Speaker is a reflection on the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to be harsh, and I hope the hon. member will not continue his attitude, but will withdraw in deference to the authority of the Chair.

Mr. CORSER: If I may for one moment——

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw. No one regrets the necessity for it more than I do. As Speaker, I desire to see hon. members speak who very seldom do so, and I am always pleased to listen to them, but the position is quite clear. Some time elapsed between the time the hon. member for Wide Bay resumed his seat and the Minister rose to speak. There was ample time for hon. members to rise to address the Chair, but that was not done, and then I called the Minister, and announced that he was speaking in reply.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: As a matter of fact, I waited for several seconds before I rose.

The SPEAKER: I regret the incident, but I cannot allow reflections to be made on the Chair.

Mr. CORSER: The Opposition have some rights.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw the expression that the Opposition have been jockeyed out of their rights.

Mr. CORSER: I am sorry for the incident, and I am sorry that the rights of the Opposition have been denied on this occasion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must withdraw unreservedly. He is now adding to the offence. He must withdraw the remark. I hope the hon. member will withdraw it.

Mr. CORSER: I reluctantly withdraw.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): Mr. Speaker, I rose to speak before you called on the Minister. I wished particularly to speak.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member certainly did not address the Chair.

Mr. CORSER: I saw him rise.

The SPEAKER: It is not sufficient for an hon. member to rise without addressing the Chair. It is necessary for him to address the Chair.

Mr. CORSER: There were four members to speak, and the hon. member for Murrumba was to be the next.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): Mr. Speaker——

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

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

COTTON INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): It is rather difficult to resume a speech part of which was delivered last Thursday. On that occasion I drew attention to the drastic nature of the Act of which this Bill is an amendment, and also pointed out that the original Act was founded on false data. I also advocated cross-breeding or hybridisation of the varieties of cotton we now have with a view to improving them or making them more suitable for our conditions. I also urged that the opinion of the growers who had protested in the first place against these very drastic provisions was worthy of some consideration, and that it was quite wrong and unfair to say that they were actuated by any but the best motives. In many cases everything they had was in the industry, and they had given the question a great deal of attention, and their opinion should have carried a great deal more weight than it did. I am under the impression that the Opposition had good grounds for complaint in this respect, because of the abusive attitude of the Minister towards those who differed from him. I find that in July last the Secretary for Agriculture, in reply to a deputation protesting against the Act which was passed last session, said—

> "That admission is somewhat tardy. It is a grave pity that those interested in the ratoon question allowed vicious, disgruntled politicians to lead them into a campaign which has done the industry a lot of harm."

I take the attitude, the correctness of which the Minister has himself admitted to some extent, that anybody who follows the working of the original Act must realise that everything which the Opposition urged on that occasion has been borne out by facts. They were actuated solely by a desire for the good of Queensland. They put their case forcibly and advocated amendments in directions in which it has since been found necessary to amend the measure. In fact, our best justification is in the Bill before the House, and I think the reflections which the Minister made on the Opposition were uncalled for. However, it is his nature, and he cannot help it, and we shall have to excuse him. A large amount of national wealth has been lost to Queensland because of the hon. gentleman's action. It is one of many instances which show the loss Queensland is suffering through the holding of office by the present Administration. It indicates how much better off Queensland would have been if there had been a Government formed by hon. members on this side. Many hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum would have been saved in our interest bill if there had been a Government formed by hon. members on this side. (Government laughter.) I could go on giving irrefutable proof of that, but I would be out of order, so I must confine my remarks to the Bill. When ratoon cotton was banned we urged that it was being done on insufficient

grounds, and up to the very last moment we pleaded with the Minister to hold his hand and wait a few months until more information was available, but all we got in answer to questions was offensive replies and quibbles. I remember that at the very last moment some information regarding the sale of ratoon cotton came to hand, and I asked the Minister if, in view of that information, he would agree to hold the matter over for a few months until Mr. Daniel Jones had returned from the old country; but, in reply to that question, the Minister referred me to his previous speeches on the subject made two or three months before, as if they had any bearing on the question in view of the recent information. His previous speeches were an obstinate repetition of an assumption that has since been proved to be false. The Rockhampton "Bulletin" of 25th August last reports:—

> "A distinctly illuminating address was delivered by Captain Rhodes, supported by an interesting speech by Mr. T. B. Ross, representative in Queensland for Messrs. Ashleigh and Co., England, who are prepared to buy all the ratoon and plant cotton that growers in Queensland can produce, the price to be based on world's parity and payments made either by cash against documents in Queensland ports, or advances against consignments."

There is an instance showing the demand for ratoon cotton. Again, the Brisbane "Courier" of 27th September last had this article by Mr. Daniel Jones, under the heading—

> "RATOON COTTON.
>
> "QUEENSLAND SAMPLES IN LANCASHIRE.
>
> "It was the writer's good fortune to get in touch with all these organisations, either in a corporate or individual capacity. Thus I was enabled to place the case for the Queensland cotton-growers before the highest cotton authorities in the Empire, with the result that the value of properly-grown Queensland ratoon cotton was established beyond cavil. At a meeting of the Manchester Cotton Association some twenty samples of ratoon-grown cotton were examined, and in every instance high commendation was passed on each. These represented Upland, Sea Island, Egyptian, Caledonian, and Peruvian varieties, one or other suitable for the ordinary medium quality for Lancashire trade, others suitable for the fine spinners, or the Yorkshire demand, which is for an article adapted for mixing with wool, for which some of our perennial sorts are eminently suited, and which bring good prices. These samples now remain with the association, and can be inspected by anyone interested in the question of the expediency or otherwise of ratooning cotton crops. The opinions as to values of this cotton, tendered by practical spinners, show the samples to be worth from one penny to fourpence more, or even more, than the present value of American middling."

A penalty was placed by this Government on the growing of such valuable cotton in Queensland. The article continues—

> "One millowner on the floor of the Manchester Cotton Exchange averred his willingness to give two shillings per lb. of lint for a corresponding bulk sample of cotton of the Pima variety raised at Petrie terrace, Brisbane. The Liverpool Cotton Association, on whose verdict the whole issues depended, very carefully handled the ratoon samples, placing them in each instance in the hands of leading cotton brokers of wide experience. In each case the values given were from one penny to twopence per lb. in lint more than the then ruling value of American middling, always taken by the trade as standard. The samples were sent to them as Queensland-grown ratoon cotton, so that even the ever-present prejudice against ratoon-grown crops had full opportunity to express itself, which it did, as given in some of the reports."

The article continues for another half-column on similar lines, pointing out the absolute fact that there is, and always has been, a demand for this variety of cotton, which, under a heavy penalty, the Queensland farmers only last year were forbidden to grow.

The opponents of ratoon cotton appear to have based their case and conclusions on the Upland variety. I am quite prepared to admit that there has been a certain amount of evidence against ratooning the Upland variety. I will admit in this instance the strongest evidence against ratooning and quote the following prices, taken from the Brisbane "Courier" of 14th July last, in this connection:—

	Lint. Per lb.
"American middling	17.67d.
Durango plant	19.87d.
Durango ratoon	18.5d.
Upland ratoon	16.75d."

If there is any reason on which to base any doubts in respect to ratoon cotton it is in connection with the Upland ratoon cotton. Yet here we see it only about a penny below American middling, which is the standard of values.

I have maintained all through that the evidence shows a huge mistake was made, and, if that mistake had not been made, there would have been no necessity for our time to be taken up on this occasion. I hope that the Minister, even at this late hour, will recognise that he is not infallible, but that he does make mistakes, and will in future amend the error of his ways.

There are other features in connection with the matter we have before us that call for consideration. I am not going to touch on one matter at any very great length, because I intend to move an amendment on the subject when we reach the Committee stage of this Bill. That is with respect to the proposed co-operative ginneries and the disposal of the crop. I notice that it is not intended to do that on the commodity basis that is being urged at the present time throughout the farming districts. The Council of Agriculture is largely composed of interests other than cotton interests. There are many delegates on the Council who have no interest whatsoever in any single branch of agriculture. To give the Council of Agriculture partial or complete control, or the power to dispose of any single article, is unnecessary, and very often would result detrimentally. We are far more likely to get sane effective management if the matter is left wholly and solely in the hands of those concerned. I am not going to enlarge on that

subject now, because we shall have it before us again in Committee.

I notice in regard to the disposal of our cotton seed that a great deal of doubt exists. Under the agreement the cotton growers are only receiving 1d. per lb. for it, although it is worth infinitely more. The question arises, Why was the whole control of the crop placed in the hands of only one body of buyers? It seems more than passing strange for a Government who all along have shown their hostility and antagonism to anything in the shape of a combine, and who used to rail against the Colonial Sugar Refining Company—calling it an octopus and so on—when the time came to organise the cotton industry, to place the control of the industry in the hands of a huge company. Instead of allowing the industry from the very beginning to be established on a co-operative basis managed by the growers themselves, with the aid of the advice of competent officers employed by the Government, they have taken this inconsistent action.

When a previous Liberal Government set about the encouragement of the sugar industry in the "nineties" they did not hand over the whole control to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, but established central mill companies, and handed over the management to the growers. Nearly every one of those companies has turned out a success. I think only one out of the nine established proved to be a failure, and during the twenty-five years they have been established they have been entirely controlled by those directly concerned, and have furnished about one-third of the total Queensland sugar output. Even recently the Government handed a sugar-mill over to the growers to manage.

We know that our great dairying industry has attained its present dimensions under the control of co-operative action. In the first place it may have been partially controlled by private individuals, but it is now almost totally controlled by co-operative concerns consisting of those concerned in the industry.

Why do we not take similar action in regard to cotton? The Government should say to the growers, "Here is your opportunity. We are prepared to assist you with capital just the same as previous Liberal Governments assisted the sugar-growers with capital. We shall help you with advice, but the management shall be in your own hands, and the opportunity is there for you to take advantage of it." Instead of that, the Government allow the big outside company to control our cotton industry. I am not saying anything against that company, but the attitude of the Government is inconsistent, and I think events have shown it to be unwise. Regarding the disposal of the seed under this arrangement, the following reference was made in the Rockhampton "Bulletin" of 20th May last:—

> "To hold that the Theodore Government has developed an incurable aversion to the cotton-grower would be the most charitable construction to put on some of its actions. The usual tendency is to be indulgent toward the incurably stupid person and to head him off from positions of responsibility, just as it is customary to regard the first error broadly, and credit its perpetrators with at least good faith, however bad their judgment might have been. But when one untoward happening follows another and the last one is always more fatuous than the one before it, and grim unfathomable silence is observed about it until the grower inadvertently stumbles over it for himself, ordinary rules are apt to be suspended.
>
> "It is hard luck for the cotton-grower, that in addition to the inevitable vagaries of climate and season, the voracity of insects, the stupidity of officialdom and other calamities incidental to getting a living out of the soil he should also be afflicted with a band of happy experimenters who have power to give his produce away and then pretend that they thought he did not want it, and it was of little use to him anyhow if he did."

This article continues—

> "In June of last year the Central District Council suggested that the British Australian Cotton Association might be asked to pay as much for seed it purchased from the grower as the grower paid to it when he wanted it to feed his perishing stock."

It describes how the matter received increasing attention, and we find that the Minister admitted that the company had been getting the seed for next to nothing. It is also significant that at that time the company asked for a continuation of the agreement.

Then we come to the question of values. The first time a local estimate was made the seed was assessed at a value of £2 17s. a ton. That was a long way below the true value, because later on a couple of tons were sent to London by the "Demosthenes." While the seed was on the water various estimates were made as to its value. Before it reached London the Auditor-General was asked to make an estimate on figures supplied to him. These figures were afterwards proved to be incorrect in many instances; but, on the figures supplied, the Auditor-General fixed the value at £8 per ton in London. The paper "Tropical Life" at the time assessed the value at £13 5s. per ton. There was a large discrepancy there. After particulars came to hand it was found that—

> "The seed that had gone forward by the 'Demosthenes' had realised £9 10s. per ton in London, or 30s. more than the price given to the Auditor-General, while he gave the freight and expenses at £4 10s. per ton, or £4 1s. 2½d. less than the Auditor-General was told they were."

It turned out that the seed was worth a great deal more than the estimate that was formed here. Those who lost by that were the growers. That is the sort of thing that has been happening all along. Under the agreement they have not received the value of their seed. The evidence is that a huge mistake has been made, and, when we get into Committee, I hope we shall be able so to improve the Bill that in future the growers, and only the growers, will be allowed to control the handling of their crop and the ginning of the cotton.

With regard to ginning, another peculiar feature occurs. I find that the cost of ginning has been infinitely greater in Queensland than the cost in the United States. All this information has come to hand since the Minister refused to listen to the request of the Opposition that he should delay matters

for a few months until he knew more on the subject. The Sydney "Bulletin" of 17th January, 1924, gives the cost of ginning a bale of cotton of 500 lb. as—

	s.	d.
America	18	9
Queensland	52	1
Difference in favour of American grower ...	33	4

America is not a country where labour is cheap. We know that the wages paid in the United States compare favourably with those in any country in the world; yet there is this huge difference of 33s. 4d. per ton in the cost of ginning in Queensland as compared with the cost of ginning in the United States. I should not have made the remarks I have were it not for the attitude adopted by the Minister towards members on this side of the House. Although last session we told the hon. gentleman things that have since turned out to be absolutely true, he has always been abusive in his attitude towards hon. members on this side.

That is the sort of thing I object to. I hope that in future the hon. gentleman will change his attitude and recognise the rights of hon. members on this side when they speak on these matters, and, [12.30 p.m.] furthermore, that we on this side have a practical knowledge and experience in agriculture which is not possessed by hon. members opposite. Therefore I think that what we say on these matters should carry a little weight. When we come to the Committee stage, I only hope that we shall be able to make improvements in the Bill.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): The introduction of this Bill is certainly an illustration of the correctness and soundness of the arguments of the Opposition on the Bill which was brought in previously. It also goes to show that, in spite of the tremendous efforts put forward by the Secretary for Agriculture and the Government to coerce the growers of cotton along certain lines, by refusing to listen to reason they have failed to achieve success, and therefore they have recognised the necessity of repairing the damage they have already done by introducing this measure. We know that the coercion which the Government endeavoured to use was backed by threats of prosecution, and the imposition of very large penalties was threatened when the Bill was going through last session.

There were also misleading statements made as to the reports on the quality of the cotton, and also misleading reports as to pests. Amongst some of those misleading reports I would like to quote a statement which was made in the "Queensland Agricultural Journal." To my mind, the reason for that statement was simply an endeavour to boost up the ratoon legislation by which the Government were trying to coerce the farmers. The statement is contained in a leader or sub-leader of the "Queensland Agricultural Journal"—

> "Boiled down, the first preventive measure means that cotton ratooning should not be practised."

When I read that statement I knew it was not correct. That evidence, which was supposed to have been obtained so that the editor could make that statement, was assumed to have come from a conference of the American Cotton Growers' Association held, as the "Queensland Agricultural Journal" said, in October last. I called on the editor, and asked him if he would make the evidence available to me. He said he could not do that, because at the present time it was held by Mr. Mark Harrison, of Toowoomba, but he said he would endeavour to obtain it. I have not yet received it from him. I have written to America for it, but I have not been able to obtain it up to the present. He agreed that the paragraph was misleading, yet he did nothing to rectify the misstatement in subsequent issues. Not only was misrepresentation made about the quality of the lint, but a good deal also as to the value of seed. Later on a certain amount of that seed was sold back to the growers and to people as feed for starving stock during the subsequent dry weather, and the British Australian Cotton Association, Limited—which had held that the value of seed cotton was not very much—charged £5 per ton at least for it. In many cases it was difficult to obtain, and obviously for the purposes of oil manufacture and other by-products it must have been worth £5 or more, or they would have been very glad to get rid of it for less.

The great harm which has been done by this legislation is the steadying up of the industry, or the preventing of it from increasing to anything like the dimensions to which it should have grown. The Minister himself anticipated that a very great deal of cotton was to be exported; and no doubt that would have happened had the growers who had planted and harvested a fair amount from their first year's crop been allowed to ratoon it. They certainly would have had the ratoons plus the next year's planting, whereas they were compelled to destroy the ratoons or market the crop from it as plant cotton, and that action alone reduced the yield very considerably.

The other day the hon. member for Cunningham and the hon. member for Oxley expressed the opinion that a very few years hence very little cotton would be grown in Queensland. I also am somewhat of that opinion. I am afraid that the chance of establishing a good sound cotton industry in Queensland has been jeopardised by the action of the Government in endeavouring to coerce growers into growing only plant crops. The hon. member for Oxley gave us very valuable information about what the people of England thought of cotton-growing in other countries of the world as compared with cotton-growing in Australia. There is no doubt that the inference from his remarks—although he did not say it—is that people there look upon Queensland as more or less of a joke as a cotton-producer. He also gave a good deal of information about the value of land for cotton and other crops in irrigated areas in Egypt. I would like to remark that the areas of which he was speaking are under what one might call intensive cultivation. I am prepared to put the yield higher than the hon. member for Oxley put it, and say that in some cases—I do not say these are average crops—they produce cotton to the value of £70 per acre. That land is valued at £200 an acre.

At one time they grew up to the twelfth ratoon in Egypt, and did so for quite a long time. Ratoon cotton was grown to the

twelfth ratoon in India. The first thing that ruined the quality of the cotton in India was the establishment of ginneries and forcing the people to send their cotton to those ginneries, which ginneries distributed mixed seed, whereas prior to their establishment each district produced the seed which produced the best cotton in that district. During Lord Cromer's time as Administrator in Egypt a great deal of attention was given to the extension of irrigation. It was found with many of the areas in the Nile basin that the soil was particularly deep and required a very considerable volume of water, and the engineers conceived the idea of raising the drainage level in some localities in those areas from 6 feet to 18 inches from the surface, which would save a tremendous amount of water from the reservoirs. That work was carried out, and it was found that the first year's crop of cotton was of very good quality, but when an attempt was made to ratoon, as had been done in previous years, the roots of the cotton plant reached the drainage level which had been artificially raised, and the plants became unhealthy, and instead of producing healthy bolls, which had been the case heretofore, many of the plants dropped their bolls, and they did not mature. That to a great extent ruined the quality of the ratoon cotton in Egypt, and was eventually the means of driving the Egyptians out of ratoon cotton-growing into growing plant cotton. The conditions in Queensland are very different from the conditions in Egypt or any other part of the world generally spoken about as a cotton-growing country. Quite a lot of cotton is grown in Algeria, in some of the islands in the vicinity of New Guinea, and in New Caledonia. In New Caledonia they look upon ratoon cotton as a necessary evil. They are only too pleased to recognise that, because they make all their money and obtain their best cotton in some areas from ratoon cotton.

The quality and variety of cotton seed which is distributed to the growers will have the greatest bearing upon the quality of cotton in Queensland. Experience has proved, not only in India and Egypt in particular, but also in America, that the best quality cotton is obtained by mass selection of seed. The seed that is being obtained from the Department of Agriculture at the present time contains probably seven or eight varieties of cotton, and in some cases twenty varieties of cotton. How can a farmer produce a staple of a certain length when everyone of those varieties will grow a staple of different length and character? That is what we have been doing.

To a very great extent mass selection was brought prominently before the people of the United States by Mr. J. L. Leaming in 1825. He drew attention to the benefits of mass production, and in South Carolina mass production was practised with the sole idea of producing a quality of cotton that would suit the locality. They produced an early maturing variety that gave increased length of staple and greater productiveness. Not only have they used this mass selection and production of seed to secure these desirable characteristics in cotton, but it has always been used successfully to combat insect pests and fungoid pests. It has been used very successfully in connection with the wilt pest, which is looked upon in America as doing as much harm as the boll weevil. The boll weevil has been frequently mentioned in connection with the cotton industry in Queensland, but the people in the United States are more afraid of the pink boll worm than the boll weevil. One of the soundest books that have been written on the genetics of agriculture was written in America by Babcock and Clauson. They have given many years of study to the production of varieties of all crops, so far as American conditions will allow. They say—

> "Cotton-growers generally are advised to secure locally-grown seed, provided it is properly selected and handled."

If we are going to produce a cotton of quality in Queensland, the growers must be supplied with seed which will give that quality, and the seed must be properly handled. In endeavouring to enforce this ratoon legislation, the Government should have found out what varieties of cotton were suitable for the different parts of Queensland with its varying conditions and soils. If they had adopted that course, we possibly would now have had the nucleus of a sound industry. Instead, we have an industry that is looked upon very unfavourably by a big percentage of the growers who have already made one attempt at growing cotton.

One of the reasons why Queensland will possibly lose all opportunities for establishing the cotton industry is the fact that in a few years other countries which have embarked on the cultivation of the crop will be able to produce such quantities as will fully supply the market. This will have the effect of reducing the price of cotton to a level which will make it unremunerative to grow it in Queensland. There has been some cotton grown in Queensland for the last sixty years. Small quantities of cotton have been grown in my electorate for the last twenty or thirty years, and sold to stuff pillows and mattresses. The cotton industry is, therefore, not as new to Queensland as it is to the countries I am about to quote. These countries contain large areas of fertile land, much of which has yet to be brought under production. These countries also possess a tremendous supply of cheap labour. The cotton boom was started in Uganda about the same time as the endeavour was made to start the industry in Queensland. Last year in Uganda and the adjacent country for labour alone they paid £3,000,000 sterling to the growers and harvesters of cotton. This gives us an idea of the extent to which cotton is being produced in some of the other countries that up till quite recently have been looked upon as minor factors in the matter of cotton production. Under those circumstances it will not be long before they produce cotton in such tremendous quantities that it may reduce the price we receive for our cotton.

To get back to quite recent happenings in regard to the cotton industry in Queensland, I would just like to mention the proposal that has been started by Senator Massy Greene and Mr. L. R. Macgregor, Director of the Queensland Producers' Association. They stated, and I think it is the Minister's intention, that the British-Australian Cotton Association, or a so-called co-operative company, was to handle the cotton. It would be more desirable if ratoon cotton could be handled by people who would be more sympathetic to the growers. I hope that the Minister will prevent the growing and handling of anything that is not first-class ratoon cotton. I quite

realise that a large amount of ratoon cotton that is not first-class may be labelled ratoon cotton, thus detrimentally affecting the name of ratoon cotton.

Last year the Primary Producers' Co-operative Associations Act was passed by the Government, in which it was provided that shareholders investing money in such co-operative enterprises should not receive more than 5 per cent. as dividend or remuneration for the money so invested. In connection with the proposal recommended by Senator Massy Greene and Mr. L. R. Macgregor, it is stipulated—

> "(1) A valuation of the physical assets in Queensland, as a going concern, such valuation to be made by a tribunal of which the growers would have one representative and the British-Australian Cotton Association one representative, these to agree upon an umpire before commencing the valuation."

That is quite all right, but paragraph No. 2 shows a departure from the usual Government policy. It reads—

> "(2) The growers to form a co-operative company to take over the existing ginneries and to issue to the shareholders of the British-Australian Cotton Association debentures for the full amount of the valuation as fixed by the tribunal, to carry 8 per cent. interest."

And that when the Primary Producers' Co-operative Associations Act distinctly states that nobody shall receive more than 5 per cent. for money invested in co-operative cotton concerns.

Before closing I would like to reiterate what I have stated previously, that in Queensland we have our orthodox wet season, and when that arrives the cotton-growers will meet their Waterloo. When the Minister introduced this Bill he stated that the two previous years had not been altogether satisfactory for cotton production. No doubt we may expect a better quality of cotton in Queensland in comparatively dry years—certainly better than we may expect in years when we experience our orthodox wet season. At that time the growth is so luxuriant that a good deal of the strength goes into wood. Owing to the season of the year when cotton is usually planted in Queensland the bolls are formed during the wet season. That being so, much of the cotton falls to the ground as it ripens, and is not harvested. Again, during a very wet season you will not get the same crop on the bushes. Experience has proved that the best crop from plant cotton is obtained in a dry year, so that in an average wet season the growers will be up against a number of difficulties.

I also object to power being given in the Bill to limit the growing of ratoons to the first year. No limit should have been placed in the Bill in this regard. The farmers should be allowed to ascertain for themselves how many ratoons they can grow with success. I am quite certain that in some localities it will be found that they will be able to grow third and fourth year ratoons which will produce a cotton of equal quality to the first ratoon or plant cotton grown in other districts. When growing sugar-cane it is not the practice to grow ratoons over a great number of years, but in some districts ratoons can be grown very much longer than in others. For instance, in the Burdekin district they do not grow very many ratoons. Many years ago they adopted a system of growing one ratoon, while in other places they have grown five and six ratoons. When I was growing sugar-cane I always advocated that it did not pay to grow too many ratoons. The same thing will occur in regard to cotton. The man growing cotton ought to be the best judge as to how many ratoons he should grow. I know one instance where sugar-cane was ratooned for twenty-two years, and it produced a greater tonnage per acre than is obtained in Queensland to-day from plant cane. That certainly was an exception, but it illustrates that there are exceptions. If a grower has a stand of cotton that is likely to be an exception to the rule, why should he not be allowed to take advantage of it? Why should he be compelled to plough in what might turn out to be a valuable crop?

In Queensland we are not limited, as is the case in many other countries, to a small geographical area, nor are we limited to a few varieties of soil. We have a very widely distributed cotton-growing area with a very wide and varied climate, and I suppose we have as many degrees of variation in our soils as there are in any country in the world. Seeing that is the case, why do the Government not allow those men who are endeavouring to make a living on the land an opportunity to take full advantage of our conditions, and allow their cotton bushes to grow so long as they will produce a commercial crop?

In countries where ratoons are not grown it is because they are not able to grow ratoons. The reason why they are unable to grow them, as I have pointed out in the case of Egypt, is that the water
[2 p.m.] is too near the plant roots, or that the seasons are too severe on account of frosts. I think that any country which can grow ratoons would do so. There is a great deal of argument as to what ratooning really is. You will find some people growing sugar-cane who will talk about ratoons as the plants which have been planted in the previous year or several years previously. There are some people who do not apply the term to the plant at all, but to the operation of cultivation. There are some men in Queensland to-day who talk about ratooning as being the operation of ploughing the soil away from the cane plants on each side of the row, and then throwing it back again. If information is obtained from New Caledonia, Algeria, and other parts of the world, it will be found that the bulk of the cotton grown in those places is ratoon cotton, and it is preferred to the other class of cotton, and sells at a high price in the European markets. Those ratoon crops are mostly used by the French manufacturers. At the inception of our cotton legislation I stated that I did not think anybody would claim that material manufactured by the French manufacturers was in any way inferior to cotton manufactured by any other nationality.

In regard to the fear of insect pests, I think the most effective system of controlling the pink boll worm, or various other worms which are very injurious to our cotton crops, will not be by means of cutting or burning the brambles so much as by turning cattle into the cotton field on the advent of the first frost. If you turn cattle

in at the appearance of the first frost, they will eat all the worms and the larva left in the stalks. If the cattle are not turned in at the first frost, and the leaves begin to wither, and the bolls fall, the pupae remain in the ground and come out as perfect insects with the next crop; whereas, if you turn in the cattle and let them eat the bolls off before they drop, the worms are all killed. The prevention of pests would be more complete if cattle were allowed to eat the bolls and the young shoots on the cotton plants.

In that way a man who is a dairyman as well as a cotton-grower may gain some extra advantage over and above the production of cotton for lint. I think, too, that in this way you would prevent the increase of the pink boll worm far more effectively than if you cut down the brambles first. Of course, if you cut the brambles down with the bolls on them, and destroyed them, you effectively destroy the worms; but every farmer knows that, if he has any plant to eradicate, he leaves that job until the last; so that before he will destroy his cotton he will plough his land and plant oats or barley, or whatever he is growing for winter feed. Consequently, to depend on cutting down the plants seems to be a case of locking the stable door after the horse has been stolen. In many cases it will be quite useless, because, when the brambles are dry—and the cotton bolls dry quickly—most of the mature insects have gone. Then again, when you are collecting them by hand, or raking them up, the boll will fall to the ground, and the worm or the crysalis it contains will not be destroyed.

Whilst I am speaking of the pink boll worm I am reminded that, in addition to having to face the antagonism of the Secretary for Agriculture, we had a statement from the Premier when in England which, I think, was particularly foolish. We often hear hon. members on the other side saying that hon. members on this side are very prone to say things which damage the credit of Queensland. Is it not more likely that a statement made by the Premier, who was on an important financial mission, and meeting cotton people and financial people, would have a far more damaging effect than anything we might say in Queensland? He said that the pink boll worm had settled the ratoon question.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: How do you know he did?

Mr. NOTT: We have read it in the press, and the Premier has not denied it. I should be only too pleased if he would deny it, although his denial would not undo the harm caused by what he is supposed to have said. In talking about cotton production in Queensland he quoted some figures, and added—

> "In some cases the growers have had to pay for adult labour, while child labour is equally efficient. Where a man has been able to employ his own family the cost of cotton production will work out at about half the figures shown."

I think that these statements which the Premier is reported to have made in England are particularly damaging to the industry. Not only have we the Secretary for Agriculture doing all he can to wreck the industry—I admit that he may not have thought he was doing so, but the trouble was that he would listen to nobody else—but we also have the Premier making statements which have been particularly damaging to Queensland and the industry here.

On the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture I stated that we had some wonderfully good experts in the department, but that we did not always take advantage of their ability. It seems to me that we have an Administration who do not know how to employ a number of these experts.

Many people have tried, and are trying, to produce something which will be for the benefit of mankind. In this case, Dr. Bancroft has endeavoured by crossing one variety of seed with another to evolve a good variety of seed like Dr. Thomatis did in the vicinity of Cairns many years ago, when he produced Caravonica cotton. Many of these scientists do their work without remuneration at all. Their heart is in their work, and they are carrying it out at very great expense and with a considerable degree of patience. These plant-breeders are not made, but born. Usually scientists get an idea, and they endeavour to work out that idea so as to produce something for their country's good. If by certain cross-breeding they can establish something better than that which existed heretofore, as Dr. Thomatis has done and as Dr. Bancroft is attempting to do, great good will eventuate. Instead of the Government encouraging those men to do all they possibly can, they have gone out of their way to insult them, as they did in the case of Dr. Bancroft.

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

Mr. LOGAN (*Lockyer*): I have no doubt that the Minister feels somewhat humiliated in having to go back on his legislation of last year.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not a bit.

Mr. LOGAN: The Minister should at least have some regrets for having introduced legislation which has had a serious effect on the primary producers. It is pleasing to note that at this late hour the Government have seen fit to amend their legislation, and no doubt they are doing so because of the pressure that has been brought to bear by the cotton-growers. After the speech delivered by the hon. member for Stanley on the second reading of the Cotton Industry Bill last session and his speech on this Bill, one feels that there is not much left to be said on the cotton industry. The hon. member has had considerable experience in travelling in different parts of the world, and he has given to the House the conditions which obtain in other countries, and the opinions of those who have had experience in cotton-growing in those parts. Hon. members will agree that the knowledge he has imparted is sound advice, and well worthy of every consideration.

It has been rather depressing for members in country constituencies where cotton is grown to be constantly coming in contact with growers who have been seriously hit by this anti-ratoon legislation, and to be requested to make representations to get some measure of redress on behalf of those growers. Some hon. members on this side have suggested that it would be quite a fair

proposition to pay compensation to those farmers who have obeyed the law, and I want to support those hon. members in that respect. When I spoke on the Cotton Industry Bill last session, I stated that I stood behind the cotton-growers. The Minister on that occasion interjected that I stood behind the small Queenslander. I was very pleased to hear that come from a Minister of a Labour Government. I shall at all times endeavour to stand behind the small Queenslander—the man who desires assistance—and I hope my efforts in this regard will at least on some occasion be successful.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You want a first-class price for a second-class article.

Mr. LOGAN: On the question of compensation, on different occasions I have heard the Minister, when speaking at different functions, and particularly at the opening of the cotton ginnery at Whinstanes, state that the Government had no intention whatever of ever going back on the ratoon legislation. To-day we find the Government somersaulting, as it were, in this matter, and I hope that the new policy will be beneficial to the growers of cotton.

Mr. CORSER: They abused us for advocating it.

Mr. LOGAN: We have been abused for advocating the very legislation which is now introduced in this Chamber.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What are you squealing for now?

Mr. CORSER: We are not squealing; we are only bringing you to task.

Mr. LOGAN: The Government preferred last session to be advised by people who did not know Queensland conditions. These are the people who say that at all times they are Australians, that they stand up for Australians, and have always so much to say about Queenslanders! On that occasion they preferred to take the advice of people who were neither Queenslanders nor Australians, against the opinions and interests of the growers of cotton in Queensland. Therefore I say that the Government are not standing behind nor are they the friends of the farmers that they pretend to be. I have in my possession letters from numerous constituents asking me to endeavour to have some measure of compensation meted out to them for destroying their ratoon crops. They are people who not only desired to, but did obey the law. I regret the Minister cannot see his way clear to meet those people in any way.

The hon. gentleman in his second reading speech remarked that it was a sorry position when people had to be compensated for obeying the law, and that it would be right and proper if people were punished for disobeying the law. We can show that the Government disobeyed the very law that they passed. We had the privilege on the trip to the Castle Creek irrigation works of seeing a little of the country which is being opened up for settlement in the Callide Valley. On the run down to Callide we passed through areas previously cultivated for cotton which had been resumed for railway purposes. The old cotton plants were still growing on the land. Here was evidence that the Government themselves were not serious in their legislation, as they did not endeavour to carry out to the letter the legislation which they had passed. We also saw, whilst passing through that area, the prospects of the early cropping of ratoon cotton as against plant cotton.

I have no doubt quite a lot of Labour members were interested as we passed through that area. At that early time of the spring there was quite a strong shoot, and the old ratoon plants stood there, while in most parts of the State the seed for the early planting of annual cotton had not been put in the ground. That points to the fact that early in the season—possibly shortly after Christmas—where the ratoon crop was growing there was a possibility of reaping a very good harvest, not only early in the season but right through until winter came on again—that is, of course, provided a wet season did not interfere.

I have already stated that you get more than 50 per cent. more cotton from a ratoon area, and I proved that from an experimental plot in my own area. Seven acres of ratoon cotton were contrasted against a similar acreage under annual cotton, both under Government supervision. The production of ratoon cotton was something between 7,000 or 8,000 lb. as compared with 5,000 lb. from the annual cotton block. When returns were received for the two blocks it was found that the value of cotton per acre from the ratoon block was £27 10s., as against £17 10s. per acre for the plant cotton. In the matter of cotton production, everything depends on the season, and this season having broken well early in the spring, it bids fair to give the ratooner a very fair chance of getting an early crop and a good long market. Instead of selling during one or two months in the latter part of the season, as he has to do if he cannot get his annual cotton up early, the grower is selling from Christmas right through the winter with a ratoon crop. That crop is continually coming into boll, consequently he must get a bigger yield.

A lot has been said during this cotton controversy since the revival of the industry in Queensland. Many people—especially our advisors from overseas, and I think the Cotton Delegation—have made a great point about the fact that everything depends upon the length of staple. From tests made in California and other places, it is found that the greatest length of staple does not necessarily return the best yield per acre. From analyses made in test plots it is found in many cases that a ⅞-inch staple or a staple up to an inch has returned well over 600 lb. per acre, while a staple of 1-3/16 inch to 1¼ inch has returned less than 400 lb. of cotton per acre. It is true that the price for the longer staple might be better than that for the shorter staple, but, when you consider the extra weight and the extra production that one receives from the area under shorter staple, the price is practically the same in each case at the end of the year. I have never seen any argument that has led me to believe that a staple ⅞ inch has been detrimental. So long as it is strong, it is just as good as the longer staple.

It is regrettable to think that we have again to go over the whole question as we did last year and remodel this legislation; but I hope that, when it is fixed up, the cotton industry will be placed on as profitable a footing as we all hoped it would be when it was revived some little time ago.

Numerous misstatements have been made about the Government being responsible for the growing of cotton in this State.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Who said that?

Mr. LOGAN: It has been said repeatedly.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Who said it?

Mr. CORSER: You said it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said the Government were responsible for reviving the cotton industry.

Mr. LOGAN: Anyone has only to read the reports in the West Moreton and Brisbane papers of from twenty-five to sixty years ago to know that cotton was produced in Queensland in pretty large quantities in those days. Boonah and other districts around there were sending large quantities of cotton into Ipswich for treatment as long as from twenty-five to sixty years ago.

The Minister told us that experimental plots have been carried on in certain areas. For my own part I do not think that is the case. The "Daily Mail" of 28th June, 1924, in their "For the Man on the Land" column, had this to say—

> "The Acting Premier and Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Gillies) made an important statement on the ratoon question yesterday.
>
> "After defending the Government's embargo he admitted that the Government was carrying out field and laboratory experiments in regard to the ratoon system, and that ten bales of ratoon cotton had been sent to London to test its spinning qualities and consequent market value.
>
> "Field experiments at Melton and Monal Creek, in the Upper Burnett country, also on several farmer plots in the Burnett and Central districts, were being carried out, but the results for the year were not yet complete."

The Secretary for Agriculture said these experimental plots had been established in those areas. That is not the case, and that statement is misleading.

It was stated during the passage of the Bill through this House last year that if the Government, after having given ratoon cotton a fair trial, could prove that it was not in the best interests of the industry, the Opposition as a whole would be only too pleased to assist in passing legislation prohibiting the growing of ratoon cotton. But, after having sent a trial shipment of ratoon cotton overseas, we are convinced more than ever that there is nothing against the growing of ratoon cotton. When Mr. Daniel Jones, who does know something about cotton, addressed meetings in Lancashire and in other places in regard to ratoon cotton, the spinners generally complained about the unevenness of the staple in ratoon cotton. It is quite possible that, owing to the variety of seeds planted, we have grown cotton of an uneven staple, which is not the best for spinning. Consequently I would suggest that the Government adopt a uniform class of seed that will produce cotton of the length of staple required, and enforce the growing of that variety. If that were done, I have not the slightest doubt that cotton with an even staple will be grown. If the only objection that the spinners in Lancashire have against our ratoon cotton is unevenness of the staple, that objection can be very easily overcome. Take any other agricultural product. If you grow two separate varieties of maize, you are not going to get an even length of grain. If you grow "four months corn" and "horse-tooth" corn side by side, you will get grains of an uneven length. It is the same with cotton. If you grow different varieties of cotton, you will get staples of different lengths.

[2.30 p.m.]

If the Government enforce the growing of the Durango or some other cotton which has been proved by experimental plots to be the best, they will eventually grow an even length of staple, which, in my opinion, will be very acceptable to the spinners in England. The Rockhampton "Evening News," in dealing with ratoon cotton, states—

> "It is significant that the Government in this matter insists on taking advice from everybody except Queenslanders. Any outsider—as long as his address is somewhere beyond the State—can get a hearing and a following. But no Queenslanders need apply. The man who has had valuable experience of Queensland conditions, and who knows something of the requirements, has no more hope of persuading the State Government that he knows anything about cotton or anything else than he has of flying to the moon. Yet any outsider, with no local knowledge whatsoever, can lead the Government about like little children."

This paper even suggests that it is a pity that Labour happened to be in office when the shortage arrived which has given Queensland an opportunity of getting in.

The opinion has been expressed that the Government have been too ready to listen to outsiders. Possibly that is why the Rockhampton "Evening News" is not a Labour paper to-day—because the Government are not giving effect to the wishes of the people by getting people from overseas as advisers in matters of this kind.

There are several growers in my district who complain bitterly about the loss in weight after consigning their cotton from various places in the district to Whinstanes. When consigned the bales are weighed by the local foreman in charge of the station, and, when they got to Whinstanes they are always a bit short in weight. This has been brought before me very often. On numerous occasions you will find that in a small consignment of perhaps eight or nine chaff bags of cotton there is a shrinkage for some reason or other. I do not know why, in the weight of the consignment. When the local weight is compared with the weight at Whinstanes the loss is sufficient to have paid freight on the consignment. I know that the British-Australian Cotton Association or the Government are paying 5½d. per lb., but, when you total it up, you will find the money is paid on the weight of the consignment as delivered at Whinstanes. It would be wise for the Government to look into this matter.

Mr. CARTER: That was always the case with sugar-cane. The weight at the mills never agreed with the weight of the cane when it left the growers.

Mr. LOGAN: I have here a paper showing that a certain consignor sent half a ton of cotton to Whinstanes.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you suggest that pilfering goes on?

Mr. LOGAN: Yes.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think it is pilfering—I think it is due to the evaporation of moisture.

Mr. LOGAN: The consignor sent seven bales or 728 lb. of cotton, being an average of 104 lb. a bale, and he was paid for six bales, representing a weight of 604 lb. There is a big loss there of 124 lb. The consignor has the railway slip showing that he sent 6½ cwt. That loss has to be borne by the unfortunate producer, and the Minister should see if something cannot be done. The grower is told that he is to be paid on the amount delivered at the railway station, and I contend that he has the right to stick out for that payment. He has to pay for the cartage of the crop, and very often the loss is sufficient to pay the whole of the freight.

The Minister the other day said that America produced 61 per cent. of the world's cotton. If that is so, with the present high price of wool, it does seem possible that the cotton industry in Queensland is likely to survive and be carried on with every satisfaction. There is no doubt that the high price of wool is largely responsible for bringing about a high price for cotton, which will enable those who have to grow it by white labour to keep going. If by any chance the price of wool should drop, there is no doubt that people would go in more for woollen goods than they do to-day, and we have to face that possibility. It is interesting to know that the world's cotton crop is worth nearly three times the output of the three minerals—copper, silver, and gold—and from that fact we get some idea of the wonderful prospects of the industry if the Government do not do anything to retard its progress, but everything to make it remunerative. The amount of interest which has been lost in this industry since the introduction of the anti-ratoon legislation is, however, very noticeable. Personally, I have advised the farmers to stick to cotton as a crop and try to grow it as a side line, because I believe that there are times when other crops fail, and cotton being a crop which can be grown without much rain, it may be a good standby. In my area many of the farmers would have had large areas under cotton if it had not been for the anti-ratoon legislation, which compelled them to destroy their plants after the first year. In that way a damper has been put on the industry. Many of those people who were growing 5 to 10 acres are to-day so fed up that they will not try it any more.

The Secretary for Agriculture told us the other day that only eighty-two farmers made application for permission to be allowed to keep their ratoon crops, but I would remind him that a great number of farmers destroyed their ratoon crops, and that is why an apparently small number made application to be allowed to harvest it. It is all very well to say that the farmers do not take much interest in ratoon cotton because only eighty-two of them asked for permission recently to harvest it. The Minister must remember that the farmers had not long previously been told that they were debarred from growing it, and had been compelled to destroy huge areas, which would have returned them many hundreds of pounds.

I know that many people lost £200 to £300 last year through not being allowed to harvest their ratoon cotton. If they had been allowed to receive 3d. per lb. for it, they would have obtained £200 to £300. To-day they are getting no compensation. Some of the farmers were led by the inspectors to believe that compensation would be forthcoming, and of recent date the inspectors have harassed certain growers merely for the purpose of frightening others into doing certain things. That is very regrettable, because the farmers concerned were men who could ill afford to be harassed and compelled to do the things they had to do. They did those things, and did them without a murmur, and it is reasonable to compensate them to some small degree.

This brings me back to the question of cotton seed. According to the agreement between the British-Australian Cotton Association and the Government, the British-Australian Cotton Association are entitled to all the cotton seed after supplying the needs of the farmer. That was a very unwise provision to make in the agreement. It is well known that cotton seed is valuable as feed for stock. Last year, because of drought conditions, it was difficult for the farmer to produce any cotton seed for feed purposes. I had considerable difficulty in getting small lots through for various farmers in my district, but I was successful in the long run. It is very depressing to note that the British-Australian Cotton Association can buy cotton seed for £1 per ton, and, when the farmer wants seed to feed his stock, he has to pay £5 10s. per ton to the State Produce Agency. The Government should compensate the farmers in some tangible way, and it is quite reasonable to supply free seed this year to those farmers who were compelled to destroy their ratoon cotton plants. It is true that the cost of the seed is only one half-penny per lb; still that is something, and many farmers who have had no return for months and months would be pleased to obtain their seed free. I hope the Government will see the wisdom of helping these farmers, and will compensate them in some small way so that they can keep an important industry going.

After listening to the eloquent address by the hon. member for Stanley it is difficult for one with less experience to speak on the matter. I feel very keenly on this important agricultural industry, in which I have had some experience, and I hope the Government will do all in their power to foster the industry so that those concerned will be placed in a satisfactory position. Not only have we to view the industry from a national standpoint, but we have to view it also from the point of view of the individual; and, unless the interest of the individual who grows this commodity can be aroused and stimulated, then the industry will come to an end. I hope that this amending legislation will produce the very best results for the cotton industry.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I also wish to compliment the hon. member for Stanley on his very learned and instructive address. I would like to say before I proceed that I believe the Minister has seen the necessity for broadening the cotton legislation in the interests of the growers. I hope that the hon. gentleman will profit by the experience of hon. members on this side of the House when the Bill is in Committee. It is a pity, and almost a disaster, that that experience

was not profited by when the Bill went through the House last session.

I quite agree that this is not a personal matter with the Minister. I understand that he took the advice of experts on the matter, but those experts had no data to work on. They might have known something about the cotton industry in other parts of the world, but they certainly knew nothing of the conditions under which cotton has to be grown in Queensland. Several factors have to be taken into consideration in Queensland in the cultivation of cotton. The hon. member for Oxley, in the course of a very eloquent speech during the debate, told us of the millions of acres of land which were being brought under cotton in other countries. In every place that he mentioned wages were cheap. There was not one dear-wage country mentioned by him; and we are making a mistake if we think we can successfully build up an industry in Queensland after stripping it threadbare, as is proposed under the rural workers' log.

The hon. member for Rockhampton, who has given this subject intelligent consideration, by interjection made reference to the proposal that the growers should take over the plant of the British-Australian Cotton Growers' Association. I am going to be candid in my opinion on this matter. If the growers are going to be saddled with this plant, they will have such a burden placed on them that it will throw them further back than they are to-day. Anyone who advises them to do so is only making their lot worse, and making their chances of building up the industry less bright.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The idea is to take over the ginneries at an independent valuation.

Mr. WARREN: I understand that. I believe that the interests of the growers will be safeguarded as far as possible. Cotton production is more profitable in America than here, because they work it more effectively. They have seed suitable for the different localities in which cotton is grown. Seed is one of the most important factors in the production of cotton. One of the most important men connected with the British-Australian Cotton Association informed me that the cotton industry in Queensland was doomed because we did not pay any attention to breeding seed. He said we were hopeless. We know that in 1891 seed wheat in Australia was so run out that you could find six different varieties or early and late ripening varieties in the one paddock. We are practically in the same position to-day with respect to cotton as we were with regard to wheat in 1891. If this is so, what should our first business be?

Many people claim that Queensland is going to be a cotton-producing country, and I quite agree with that to a certain extent, because cotton has been produced in Queensland with more or less success for nearly seventy years. To make it a success we must start on the very lowest rung of the ladder, and we must adopt right methods. At the present time, through the excessive price of wool and through the cotton reserves being used up during the war, a high price for cotton prevails, but the same thing may happen to cotton that happened to copper. The low price is at present killing the copper industry.

Mr. CARTER: Do you place copper beside cotton?

Mr. WARREN: No, but a low price for cotton is going to face us again as sure as the sun rises, so soon as the world's reserves reach their normal figure. The black cotton-growing countries of the world will produce enormous quantities of cotton. Thousands of acres are being cultivated in Egypt, and the amount will be greatly increased on the completion of the necessary irrigation works. An enormous amount of cotton is also being grown in Mesopotamia where they have cheap labour. Of course, in Egypt land is much dearer than in other black cotton-growing countries, and that must be taken into consideration; but in that country cotton is produced by labour for which they pay only 1s. a day. These people on 1s., or five piastres a day, have to provide themselves with food. Against that we have to take into consideration all our regulations governing wages and cost of living, and we must consider whether it is possible and right to try and force people to go in for cotton-growing in Queensland. Only a little over a year ago we had different speakers throwing out their chests and talking about cotton values coming up to our wool values. The whole thing is absolutely absurd, because we went on wrong lines altogether. If we are going to make our cotton industry equal to our wool industry, it will have to be along quite different lines to those we have so far followed. I believe the British-Australian Cotton Association did all they could merely to catch our industry. They induced us to grow the particular cotton they wanted, and endeavoured to make us working slaves who would follow their directions. Fortunately people with British ideas of justice kicked against that, and the Minister in his wisdom gave in to what was absolutely a right proposition. I compliment the hon. gentleman on seeing that he was going the wrong way and on effecting a change.

If we are to do anything for cotton in Queensland, we have to start at bed-rock and build up. Some people—even farmers who have grown ratoon cotton—have been told by imported experts that they cannot grow ratoon. Cotton-growing has been going on in the Dalby electorate for something like twenty years, yet those people destroyed their crops this year and said, "We are not going to grow cotton any more, because we are not able to ratoon."

These people have had a set-back, and, while we are so far behind in the selection of seed we are not going to make any progress. From my experience and from what I have seen, I believe that cotton can be grown in Queensland successfully so long as good prices are obtained and provided good seed is supplied. The wheatgrowers did not go to the Government for assistance, although I must say that in Queensland we have one of the best wheat breeders in the world in Mr. Soutter of Roma. He is doing wonderful work in connection with the breeding of wheats. If the same results were obtained in regard to cotton, we would have no complaints to make. In that event the Government would be in a position to say to the producers: "Here is seed. If you are willing to work your land you are certain, if you plant that seed, of producing a decent article."

Complaints have been made that ratoon cotton is not of even staple. I am game to

say that no cotton grown in Queensland has been of even staple, and I venture to say that the authorities would have been glad to class as ratoon cotton a good deal of the plant cotton grown. The hon. member for Stanley made a very good point when he raised the question of stopping this poor plant cotton from being classed as ratoon cotton. It is our business to establish the fact that good quality ratoon cotton can be grown in Queensland. That is the only way by which we can succeed as producers of cotton. If we can show the world that ratoon cotton is something that is good—if we can show that it is better than something else—we shall be in a similar position to those countries that are growing ratoon cotton to-day, and are successful in selling it in France, where it is made up into an article that is all right and fetching good prices. If we can do the same thing in Queensland it will be our salvation so far as cotton growing is concerned. We can only hope to succeed by making a good selection of seed. Some of the men who have been growing cotton are absolutely disheartened. A good deal of our country lends itself to mixed farming, including the growing of cotton. Some time ago, when I was in what is called the brigalow country on the Northern Downs, I saw giant cotton of wonderful growth, but one often finds that these overgrown plants do not produce as much as plants that are not overgrown. Had those growers the right to ratoon that cotton, the next crop would have been all right. It was the excessive heat and wet of the previous summer that caused the excessive growth, and, if they had had the right to ratoon, we would have had a much greater production this year.

I saw a good deal of cotton while in Egypt. I know that quite a number of men who went over to Egypt took a great interest in watching the growing of cotton. There are miles and miles of cotton grown there, and it is mostly hand-tilled. It is beautiful work under old methods. It is
[3 p.m.] claimed that the methods used in the times of the Pharaohs are used to-day in Egypt. I saw a donkey and a cow yoked up to a plough, not once but many times. The people have not the up-to-date ploughs that we have, but have wooden shares—and these two animals, which are so totally opposed to each other, were pulling this plough along. The whole thing was primitive. They used to carry the cotton bound between staves on camels' backs in a sort of large pig-net. There was not a place that I saw of more than 10 acres in extent, and the areas were mostly from 3 to 5 acres. A lot of people tell you that you require three Egyptians to one European, but I differ with that to a great extent. Their methods were very old in regard to the cultivation of cotton, and so they are in carpentry and other things. I think they are very conservative people, and not Labour people. (Laughter.) Those people could do their work fairly well in their own primitive fashion.

It is all very well for us to talk about becoming a great cotton-producing country, and about our cotton exports eclipsing our wool and other big exports, but we have to consider that those people with their primitive methods occupy a country of large area which is ideal for cotton-growing. With modern methods they are going to be the cotton-growers of the future. I said before that the reason why America was able to produce cotton was because of their up-to-date methods, not only in cultivation, but also in the secondary work of the industry. They are up to date in the sale of their cotton, which is not undertaken by individuals, but by big co-operative concerns. What we have the chance of doing now is to establish better concerns than they have in America. We have a chance of not only ginning our cotton, but of handling the export of it completely. The Government should give encouragement to the growers, and if we use the best methods and have the best seed, that is the only way of becoming a cotton-producing people, though even then I do not think we are going to be the chief cotton-growing country in the world.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): This is a Bill to amend the Cotton Industry Act of 1923. The ink can scarcely be regarded as dry upon the old Bill before we are engaged in the consideration of an amending measure. However distasteful the bringing in of an amendment so very early may be, yet I think the Minister should be complimented upon having responded, as he seemingly has done, to a large extent, to the representations made by hon. members on this side, as well as to the representations of the growers, who are the persons mostly concerned.

It is unfortunate that the Minister did not give more attention, when he brought in his first Bill, to the representations of the growers regarding ratoon cotton. However, one must be thankful that there is a degree of relief in the measure before us to-day. Personally I do not think the hon. gentleman has gone by any means far enough. One hears that the Bill is not going to be of very much service, but it will be of some service in meeting the needs of the people who wish to grow ratoon cotton. We may hope that, in the event of the serious consequences which seem to be a bugbear with the Minister being proved to be infinitesimal or altogether non-existent, he may come down later with another Bill to allow ratooning to go on as in other countries for at least two years.

I am sure that the Minister's feelings, in introducing the Bill, must have been very mixed. However, he has risen superior to his prejudices—they must have been great, because we know how he stuck to his guns on the introduction of the previous Bill—and to have yielded and offered to the growers of cotton some little remedy shows that he is fairly magnanimous, after all, and that he is prepared to reconsider the position. I think that he failed at the outset, in listening to the opinions of the experts from the old country and in altogether turning down the opinions of the experts who were here. If he had given more consideration to the advice of Mr. Daniel Jones and many growers with experience extending over years, the result would have been very different, but he was evidently unfortunately only too ready to ban ratoon cotton. He was so impressed by the representations made by the experts from the old country that he yielded all along the line. It is no use minimising the result, which is that the industry has been damaged to an alarming extent. I do not think we can yet see the measure of the injury done to individual men or generally to others who were otherwise ready to embark upon cotton-growing in

this State. It is one thing to strike the iron while it is hot; it is another to let it get cold. It is one thing to go forward with a movement while the people are on fire, and when an idea of producing a certain article seems to seize and consume them with enthusiasm; but to throw cold water upon or do injury to it is another thing. Then it is very hard indeed to bring back into the movement the same life which was evident in it before. So it will be difficult to infuse into the cotton-growing industry the vigour which would have been displayed had the movement been allowed to go on, and had the men engaged in the industry been permitted to carry out their ideas of revolutionising Queensland to a very large extent in some respects.

I am not altogether in agreement with some hon. members on this side, who seem to be a little pessimistic regarding the extent of the value of this crop to Queensland, but I respect their feelings in the matter. Once the cotton crop is placed on a thoroughly sound and good footing we cannot overestimate the worth of the cotton crop to Queensland, but that will never come about unless we liberalise what we are about to do to-day. I am hoping that, as a result of the first move in the direction of greater liberality towards the growers, it will bring about a further movement which will ensure the development of an industry which is so fraught with moment to the whole of our State. Once you establish the cotton industry on a firm and sound basis, what follows? Immediately, or at an early date after the establishment has taken place, there will follow the establishment of secondary industries, and everyone knows that there is not a man, woman, or child in the community who does not use cotton in a manufactured form in one direction or another. There is no article of apparel so much used as that which requires cotton in its manufacture.

The removal of the ban may only affect the growing of ratoon cotton to a limited extent in Southern Queensland. In my district cotton is not grown to any great extent. I believe that about twenty-six growers made an attempt to grow the crop, and I have been informed by some of them that in that district cotton has gone out. The cotton-growers there informed me that the moment the embargo was placed upon ratoon cotton they would give up the idea of growing cotton.

In the South we labour under disadvantages which do not belong to or overtake the North. I refer to the frost period. On the Darling Downs you never know when an early frost is coming, nor are you quite sure when the last frost has taken place; consequently the cotton-growers are interfered with to a very large extent. I am very glad indeed that the Minister has at last decided to meet the wishes of the growers. He under-rated not only the views of the experts, but of our own people. In speaking on the Cotton Industry Bill last year, he said—

> "If we allow ratoon cotton to be grown in districts where we are growing annual cotton—and we must bear in mind that there are only a handful of growers in Queensland who are growing or desire to grow ratoon cotton—there would be a danger of allowing the cross fertilisation of the pure varieties grown by other farmers."

The Minister evidently formed a wrong estimate of the number of people who were objecting to the ban on ratoon cotton, and, seeing that he had the very best opportunity of gaining the fullest information as to the minds of the people and as to the number of growers who desired to grow ratoon cotton, he should not have come to this House and made a statement like that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That was quite true at the time.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I believe the Minister thought it was quite true, but it is quite evident that it was not quite true. Why did hon. members on this side fight this question as they have fought it, if they had not been persuaded that they had the growers of ratoon cotton behind them? We could not have done it for an idea. Hon. members on this side were as loyal to their country and just as anxious as the Minister with regard to the establishment and development of the industry. We on this side just represented what we knew. The Minister unfortunately was carried away by a paucity of information. I feel sure that, had his information been fuller, he would not have made the remarks or taken the stand that he did on the previous occasion. I say it was unfortunate, because it has created a feeling that very much greater respect was shown to the opinions of imported experts than those of men who were connected with the industry.

The strangeness of the whole position is that the Minister had evidently read a good deal on the subject; but I cannot understand why he should only have read one side of the matter. Opinions are coming from everywhere, and they were obtainable last year as well as in other years, as to the experience of growers of ratoon cotton. There is the opinion of Mr. E. H. Heron, M.H.A.C., F.R.G.S., a cotton expert now residing in England. He expressed himself in very clear language and gave his views very clearly. He is an Australian who has had very wide experience in East Africa, South America, and later in Peru and elsewhere. His views find expression in the following quotation:—

> "It must be remembered," he said, "that the conditions in Peru are similar in many respects to places in Australia of corresponding latitude. And being himself a native of Australia, his outside experiences of Peru should be of value to Australian cotton-growers."
>
> "Those of us present who know Australia as I do realise at the same time that her problems are unique. In Peru for the last one thousand years, when in the time of the Incas cotton cultivation first began there, ratooning has been the general practice. I have, in Peru, had control of over 5,000 acres of irrigated cotton lands. We invariably allow the plants to yield four annual crops. After the fourth crop we generally find that the quality of the cotton begins to deteriorate and then it is advisable to replant. Our method after taking off a season's crop is to cut the plants right back to within 4 inches or so of the stump, for regrowth the following season. The most important point is for this cutting to be skilfully done. The ground itself must be cultivated and recultivated so that native pests have no

chance to breed in the cotton fields; also spraying must be regularly done. Under this system we find that the second and third years' crops are generally a better quality and more prolific; also the plants themselves being hardier are more disease-resisting and of greater root development."

Mr. A. H. Fountain, now of Fiji, also remarks—

"Finally, all present were agreed that given proper conditions, and their being carried out, ratooning was advisable for Australia. And it was at the same time agreed that expert evidence and experience proved that ratooning would be fatal to Egyptian and Indian cotton-growing, owing mainly to native pests and diseases that would not exist in Australia or Peru unless fostered by wilful neglect."

It is a very good thing to have evidence of that nature and class forthcoming. The real fears of the Minister were evidently not regarding the staple but largely regarding the pests that ratooning or careless cultivating might develop. I think there is evidence, and an abundance of it, to prove that there is no such risk, and that under careful treatment pests can be kept down. Undoubtedly it is satisfactory to find—though it is late in the day and the industry has received a check which is going to take a long time to overcome—that the Minister has listened to good advice, and has been sufficiently courageous to amend the Cotton Industry Act. We still claim that this amending Bill does not go far enough, but it is an instalment, and a further instalment may be forthcoming at another period.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): With the hon. member who has just resumed his seat, I also congratulate the Minister upon having seen fit to introduce legislation to amend the Cotton Industry Act. Had the hon. gentleman listened to advice given by hon. members of the Opposition last session, there would have been no need for the introduction of this Bill. With the exception of one or two hon. members, the Opposition advocated ratoon. I do not know whether the Minister now believes in allowing cotton to be ratooned. If he does not, it must be rather hard on him to have to introduce legislation of this sort. With all due respect to the hon. gentleman, I think that last session, when he was an opponent of ratoon, he was acting on advice received from experts. I understand that is the reason for the hon. gentleman's attitude on the matter. The Opposition are defending ratoon cotton on information derived from a practical source—from practical growers. It is only right that we should listen to the representations of the growers in connection with the amending of the Cotton Industry Act.

We know that the growers have been put to considerable expense and inconvenience to prove their case. They have gone so far as to send a representative overseas in the person of Mr. Daniel Jones, to gain information as to whether ratoon cotton was of commercial value or otherwise, and also to ascertain whether there was a market for ratoon cotton. I think Mr. Jones's mission has proved that there is a market for this cotton, and that it is in the interests of the growers that they should be allowed to grow and harvest ratoon cotton. The present law provides that any person harvesting ratoon cotton is breaking the law. It seems rather strange that the men who defied the law were allowed to harvest their crops, while others who obeyed it were allowed to suffer. I trust that the Minister is not going to allow that sort of thing to prevail, and that even at this late stage he will see that the men who eradicated their ratoon crops to comply with the law are compensated. No compensation has been paid as yet. I have spoken before in connection with this matter, and have given instances where men have suffered very considerably through the eradication of promising ratoon crops. I reiterate what I said, and trust the Minister will give some consideration to, and compensate these men for, the action they took.

I am not speaking on behalf of my party, but I am not one of those who are sufficiently enthusiastic over the cotton industry in Queensland to say that it is going to reach enormous dimensions.

I am inclined to think that, owing to the better conditions in Queensland, we shall not be in a position to compete with cheap-labour countries. I had a long interview quite recently with a representative from India, who dealt very fully with the labour conditions over there. My discussion with him was of a very interesting nature, and, after listening to the remarks of a man who has had practical experience in other countries, it is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that we are going to have a very difficult task to establish the cotton industry in Queensland. I do not know whether the Secretary for Agriculture thinks that a farmer in Queensland can engage solely in the production of cotton. I am inclined to think that he agrees with me that cotton-growing will only be a success in this State as a side line.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I have always advocated that.

Mr. CLAYTON: I think the hon. gentleman formed that opinion on his practical knowledge of the land. I would like to quote what the Premier, when discussing the settlement of the Upper Burnett lands, had to say in regard to cotton, as reported in the "Daily Mail" of 25th May, 1923—

"COTTON BOOM.

"We are quite satisfied about cotton. Even this year, which has been the driest for forty years, and quite abnormal, our farmers have harvested 40,000 acres of cotton worth to them about £450,000. And we have gained much valuable experience. For instance, we have learned that the men who sowed their seed early in October, and caught even only occasional thunderstorms, secured a profitable harvest. The amazing thing about cotton is that it will give a satisfactory yield on so very little rainfall. It has been common this year to see fair crops of cotton taken in districts which were entirely without grass, and where the live stock was almost starving. So satisfied are our people about the industry that this year we anticipate having 260,000 acres under cotton."

That is the estimate the Premier formed in May, 1923, but if he had estimated that we would have about 26,000 acres producing

cotton instead of 260,000 acres, he would have been much nearer the mark. When the Premier wants a little kudos he throws out his chest, talks about the Burnett lands, says he has room for 15,000 settlers there, and that he is going to settle men there to grow cotton. That is the sort of boom he puts up for Queensland. I only wish that it would eventuate, because it would be a great thing for Queensland. You can see in "Smith's Weekly" where the hon. gentleman got on to the cotton industry and made statements which are not borne out by fact in order to gain an entry into Federal politics and make a hit down in the Federal arena.

Hon. J. G. APPEL: That is very hard on him.

Mr. CLAYTON: You cannot be too hard on some of them. We know that legislation is to be brought forward to compel cotton fields to be cleaned up by a certain day each year in order to prevent the spread of pests. That is a move in the right direction, because it is necessary to deal with those pests, otherwise they will do serious harm to our cotton. In Queensland we are likely to suffer more from pests than in some other places because we shall be putting large areas under cotton, and will not go in for intense cultivation such as is the case where people hold much smaller areas. It is only right, therefore, that we should have a period during the year when we can deal with the eradication of these pests. Instead of having a date fixed for the whole of Queensland when we must cut our cotton down, I think it would be as well to take into consideration the climatic conditions and allow different districts the longer time which is necessary to harvest the crops. In the North we may have an early rainfall, and the climatic conditions may be such that the cotton will ratoon early and the harvest be much earlier than in the South, where perhaps we may not have such early rains. If the Minister can see his way in Committee to amend the Bill in that direction, it will be in the interests of the cotton-growers.

We have been working under proprietary concerns in connection with our ginneries, but I would like to see a co-operative system brought about so that the farmers can own their own ginneries, in the [3.30 p.m.] same way as the butter factories are to a great extent owned by the butter producers. The Government should encourage the cotton-growers in that direction. I know the Council of Agriculture has taken the matter up in the interests of the growers; and, if this is brought about, it will be a move in the right direction. No doubt it will mean a little expense on the part of the Government in the first instance; but we should bring about a system under which the suppliers of cotton to the ginneries would be induced to take up shares. We could deal with the matter as they deal with butter factories in New Zealand. As a man increases his production of cotton from one year to another, he might be compelled to take up a certain number of shares in the ginneries. When a man is enjoying a good harvest, and getting a good income from his cotton production, he will not be penalised by being called upon to devote part of his income to building up a larger capital in connection with the ginneries. We may be able to go further. When we have our farmers owning their co-operative ginneries and building up the capital in connection with them, as they will be able to do by adopting the method which obtains in New Zealand in regard to butter factories, we shall be able to move in the direction of manufacturing our cotton instead of sending it overseas to be manufactured, as we have to do at present. I look forward to the time when the conditions in Queensland will be such that we shall be able to turn our cotton into the finished article and provide sufficient cotton fabrics for the requirements of the people of Queensland. Cotton manufacturing may be in its infancy at present, but we must look forward to its development in the near future.

It is unfortunate that the door was closed so long in regard to the ratoon question. I do not often congratulate the Minister, but I must congratulate him on giving way to the pressure which has been brought to bear through the organisation of the cotton-growers. Men like Captain Rhodes and members of the Opposition have been able to bring such pressure to bear that at last the growers are going to get a fair deal in connection with the cotton industry.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CLAYTON: I want to go further. We have the prospect of the Industrial Arbitration Court award being extended to the cotton industry. If we are going to impose such conditions on the cotton-growers that they will not be able to make a living, it will be detrimental not only to the future producers of cotton but to those who are employed in the cotton fields at the present time. Unless you are going to ensure to the farmer a fair return for the cotton he produces, he is not going to be able to pay labour. We must look to the future and consider whether the world's markets are likely to be such that we can profitably engage labour for the production of our cotton crop. I do not think we are going to be in a position to employ labour in our cotton fields unless the price remains as it is at present, and, of course, we can get no guarantee that the world's market will not fall.

I trust that the Minister in Committee will accept amendments from this side of the House. If he had seen his way to accept them in 1923, there would have been no need for the legislation with which we are now dealing.

HON. J. G. APPEL (*Albert*): This amendment of the Cotton Industry Act to a considerable extent reverses the policy of that Act. I realise that the Minister must have himself in a very delicate position. In the first instance, there is no doubt that there was a reason for the provision in the principal Act that only annual cotton should be grown, and that any grower who ratooned his cotton committed an offence. I have been at pains to endeavour to arrive at the reason for that provision. What is the reason for the demand which has arisen in Queensland for cotton? The history of cotton tells us that it has arisen because of the failure, owing to parasites, of the crop in the United States of America, where the greater part of the cotton used for manufacturing purposes was grown. Undoubtedly, also the price of cotton has been increased by the high price of wool. Australia has an opportunity now to establish herself as a cotton-growing country.

To enable her to establish herself upon the world's markets, it would be necessary to produce cotton of the finest and best quality.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. J. G. APPEL: That is the opinion expressed by experts in the industry, who tell us that we have a golden opportunity—that is the way in which one of them expressed it—to establish our reputation as growers of cotton. I can understand that, just as burry wool and tops can be sold, so can ratoon cotton be sold; but I understand that the object was that Queensland should establish such a reputation that she would always be able successfully to enter the markets of the world as a producer of cotton.

These experts informed those who were interested in the matter that the authorities in the United States were entering upon a campaign to deal with the pests which were affecting the cotton to the extent that they had done and which had given cause for the present demand, and they were carrying out experiments, and, with all the money which the authorities were prepared to expend within a period of five years, unquestionably a means would be found to eliminate those pests, and under those conditions the United States would once again enter into competition in the markets of the world as a producer of first-class cotton, therefore Queensland had five years in which to establish her reputation as a grower of cotton. It seems to me that the Minister in dealing with this matter probably accepted that opinion and in order to establish the status of Queensland as a cotton producer of the first order, provisions were enacted which did not permit of ratoon cotton being grown or marketed. The fault to my mind is that we failed to realise that it would not be possible to grow annual cotton only, particularly in these areas which under favourable conditions could produce the finest staple of ratoon cotton suitable to secure and ensure a market; and to a certain extent the growers were led to believe that they could embark the whole of their energies in the growing of cotton, whereas—except in certain favoured localities and in countries such as Egypt where, owing to the annual flooding of the lands upon which the cotton is grown, a yearly crop is secured—from some little experience that I had in connection with the growing of cotton in the early days, cotton must be grown simply as a side line, or only as a portion of the agriculture which is carried out on the farm. Areas in the Central district are producing very fine cotton in every respect. That cotton is grown—I will not say under ordinary conditions, but under conditions which ensure the necessary moisture at the proper time. It frequently happens that moisture is not present at the time when it is required to ensure a crop. Those selectors who undoubtedly embarked a large amount of capital in preparing the ground and carrying out this form of agriculture found themselves in this position: Unless they were permitted to ratoon cotton they would suffer a very severe loss indeed. Naturally we were bound to have a considerable amount of sympathy with men who found themselves in that position, and, owing to the campaign which was conducted on their behalf we have this measure before the House. It is to a great extent a reversal of the legislation that was previously before us, and will permit the growth of ratoon cotton under certain conditions. I would like some information from the Minister as to how it will affect the reputation of Queensland in the cotton markets of the world. We realise from the inquiries of Mr. Daniel Jones that there is undoubtedly a market for ratoon cotton, just as there is a market for burry wool and tops.

MR. W. COOPER: I think it will affect the price of Queensland cotton.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I want the information from the Minister; I do not want it from anyone else. If this legislation is going to affect the reputation of Queensland as a producer of cotton, I want to know why the Minister is introducing this measure. I believe that the statement which was made to me—and which I have made in this House—is a correct one, and I would like to know whether, when the authorities in the United States succeed in eliminating cotton pests and re-enter the markets of the world as a producer of first-class cotton, our position as a grower of cotton will be affected or not by the proposed amendment.

It is nothing new for Queensland to produce cotton of a first-class quality. In the Albert electorate, on the plains of Canara, there were acres and acres of cotton cultivated by the Manchester Cotton Trading Company. That was while there was a scarcity of cotton during the American Civil War. Through the influence of the Rev. Dr. John Dunmore Lang a large amount of capital was expended in taking up land along the Nerang River. At Townsvale near Beaudesert there were also acres and acres of cotton grown. Most of our old settlers had areas ranging from 5 up to 20 acres under cultivation. There were many acres of land under cotton cultivation close to Brisbane, on the Redbank Plains, and the cotton was excellent and of first-class quality. As a youngster, when I was spending my holidays at my grandfather's homestead, I thought it a treat to be permitted to assist in picking cotton, and many a bale of cotton I assisted to pick in those days. That cotton was of first-class quality, and so long as the competition from the United States of America remained in abeyance our cotton found a market and it paid the growers to grow it. When the civil war was over and the United States again entered into competition the price of cotton fell, and it no longer became a payable proposition for our selectors and farmers in Queensland to grow this product.

What I would like to arrive at is what will be our position if the United States again enter into competition and our market is not thoroughly established. Granted that the conditions to-day are different, owing to the increased price of wool and the increased demand for cotton materials; but what will be our position when the United States once more enter the market as huge producers of cotton? The greater portion of the cotton grown in the United States is grown on the share system, the share farmers being American negroes who, of course, are not receiving the same standard of wages as are paid in the State of Queensland. I therefore want to know what will be our position when the United States become again a producer of first-class cotton and Queensland may be able to produce only cotton of second or third quality?

MR. GLEDSON: What is your opinion? You are advising the House.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I am asking the Minister the question. We have to realise that the Minister has better sources of information than I have. Naturally, I have an interest in the matter, because it involves a very considerable amount of prosperity to those who are settled upon the land of our State, and it may mean that by cotton cultivation the continued and increased settlement of land in Queensland may take place. I want to know from the Minister, who is in direct touch with those who are experts in the matter, what the effect is going to be upon the reputation of cotton grown in Queensland if, by means of the provisions of this amending Bill, ratoon cotton is to be grown?

Mr. GLEDSON: Give us three years' notice of the question and it will be answered.

HON. J. G. APPEL: We shall not be controlling the Bill for three years. The Bill has to be passed now, and I take it the Minister's opinion is what I have stated—that to make the reputation of Queensland as a producer of cotton it will be necessary to produce cotton of the finest and best quality.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: My watchword is, "The best, and nothing but the best."

HON. J. G. APPEL: That is so.

Mr. GLEDSON: Is the hon. gentleman opposing the Bill?

HON. J. G. APPEL: By no means; but I want to know what has caused the Minister to change his opinion.

Mr. GLEDSON: The Ministry told you on the second reading that he had not changed his opinion, and that we had to grow the best to secure a market.

HON. J. G. APPEL: We all have a very deep sympathy for the growers of cotton who have invested a large amount of capital in the industry, and who find themselves in a very unfortunate position at the present time.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are a man of deep sympathy yourself.

HON. J. G. APPEL: I am like other hon. members. I had the opportunity when in New South Wales recently of coming into contact with the men who were engaged in the industry, and they gave me their views. When I put to them the side of the question that is agitating our minds in connection with ratooning, they said to me, "If you are going to establish such a reputation that, with the return of United States as a grower and producer of first-class cotton, you will still be able to grow cotton successfully, then you will have to grow only annual cotton." I am not an expert, and I am not in a position to say whether that is correct or not. That is why I want the Minister to enlighten hon. members. I am going to vote for this Bill, but I am going to vote for it purely out of sympathy with the growers, and I want to know from the Minister whether, in introducing this reversal of his previous policy he is doing it out of sympathy for the growers, or whether he honestly believes that this measure is going to increase the chances of Queensland cotton being established in the markets of the world. I am going to vote for this measure because I am in sympathy with the men who have invested a large amount of capital in the industry. However, the Minister controls the position. He is in direct touch with the men who know what is required, and what is necessary to make the reputation of Queensland, and to establish that reputation so firmly that cotton will always be a crop which may be grown in this State.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If the thing turns out badly, you want to be in a position to say, "I told you so."

HON. J. G. APPEL: I do not want to take up that position. Any hon. member who takes up such a position is not acting in the best interests of the State. I realise the difficulty the Minister is in. I feel satisfied that in placing the present legislation on the statute-book, he acted on the advice of the men who represent the manufacturing industry, and who told him, "If you wish to establish the industry in Queensland, you can only do so by producing first-class cotton." I certainly would not take up a position so that afterwards I could say, "I told you so"; but I want to know why the Minister is doing so.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I told you in my second reading speech.

HON. J. G. APPEL: Close to my homestead on the Nerang River a very large shrub of ratoon Sea Island cotton grew for twenty-five years to my personal knowledge. It grew splendidly and bloomed every year. The shrub was covered with pods, and people used to come and take the pods away in small bags and use the cotton for cotton wool. The man who is manufacturing the article and who knows the price that can be realised for different classes of cotton, is the man who must be allowed to define the position and the quality of ratoon.

[4 p.m.]

Our wool, for instance, is used in manufactures, but the price hitherto received for the articles manufactured from such wool is not equal to that which will be received for the articles manufactured from the wool which the other day realised 68½d. per lb. It is that valuable wool which has established our reputation. It is quite possible that, if Queensland is producing, say, 50 per cent. or 70 per cent. of first-class annual cotton, she will still hold her position as a cotton-growing State, even if the balance of the cotton produced is ratoon cotton. Every man who has the interest of Queensland at heart, and all those who are settled on our land and producing cotton, will be anxious to hear whether by this proposed legislation our cotton crop is simply going to be a matter of a few years only and then it is going to pass out. There is no doubt that we can produce cotton of a high quality. We are establishing a reputation for the production of cotton. Just as our wool has established a reputation so will our cotton, but we should know whether the conditions which caused an agitation for the reversal of the previous policy, and in regard to which we are sympathetic, are going to affect us to the extent that that reputation will not be maintained. If it is going to jeopardise and ruin our reputation, let us know the position. If that is going to be the case, would it not be possible by some means in the case of those who have invested their capital in the production of cotton, and who, owing to adverse weather conditions, find it impossible to grow annual cotton, if the industry is of sufficient value to Queensland, for the Government to consider the problem of compensating them and insisting upon the growing of annual cotton only where

such is possible? Let us realise that there is a larger number of areas in Queensland suitable for the cultivation of cotton than in any other State of the Commonwealth, but that, owing to weather conditions, it is not possible to grow annual cotton in some of these areas. Let our settlers know that it is impossible to grow annual cotton in certain areas, and let them undertake that form of agriculture which will give them a return. These are all matters which must give every hon. member who has a bonâ fide interest in the State much food for thought. If we are going to vote for the Bill because we are sympathetic with the growers, it is just as well before we cast our votes to consider the position and decide whether, if we give a sympathy vote, it is going to enhance the reputation of Queensland goods and assist in the establishment of Queensland as a grower of first-class cotton in the markets of the world, which, we understand, she can only be under certain defined conditions.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): I believe that in this debate on the amendment of the Cotton Industry Act of 1923 this House has witnessed something which has not been paralleled in political history before. It was most strange that the Minister, when moving the Bill last session, was told definitely by practically every hon. member on the Opposition benches that he would have to make the alteration which he is now making. The growers took up the agitation in a very definite way, and now we have the Minister—who I am sure long ago decided that it was necessary to alter the Act but still hung on to the ban on ratoon cotton—at last giving way. Not that he did not know that he had made a mistake—because I am satisfied that he did—but he stood solid against the growers in Queensland simply because the Opposition almost to a man pointed out when the Bill was going through the House last session that he was making a mistake.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a ridiculous statement.

Mr. EDWARDS: He stood by his argument when it was proved definitely that he was wrong, and the result is that the cotton-growers of Queensland are at a loss of many thousands of pounds over the matter. I am satisfied, and I am quite sure that the Minister is satisfied, that a huge mistake has been made. Not only has the Minister made a mistake, but the Premier and the Government, as well as Mr. Crompton Wood and Mr. Harold Parker, who visited Queensland as members of the Cotton Delegation, also made a mistake and really did not know what they were talking about. I am convinced, and I believe the Minister is convinced also, that they were confusing ratoon cotton with what is known in America as "bolly" cotton.

The arguments that were used against ratoon cotton in Queensland were really the arguments that are used in America against what is known as "bolly" cotton. Long ago it was proved by the first expert we had that ratoon cotton could be grown in Queensland. This expert was appointed in America by arrangement with Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Crawford Vaughan, and was taken to Great Britain, and attended a meeting at which Mr. Crompton Wood and Mr. Harold Parker were present, but the question of ratoon cotton was never mentioned. Unfortunately, that gentleman arrived in Australia four or five days too late to correct Mr. Crompton Wood and Mr. Harold Parker, and, unfortunately, he was too late to correct the Queensland Government in the mistake they were making. He arrived in Queensland too late to prevent the arguments in connection with the growing of ratoon cotton being put forward by the Government, as the Government, and the Secretary for Agriculture in particular, had made the definite announcement that no ratoon cotton was to be grown in Queensland. Immediately this gentleman arrived in Queensland he told the Government that they had made a huge blunder, and he also told them that if ratoon cotton could be successfully grown in Queensland it would be of the greatest advantage in connection with the industry. I am sure the Secretary for Agriculture will not deny what I have stated. If my memory serves me aright, when this ratoon cotton question was becoming a contentious matter, a gentleman arrived in Sydney, and immediately on leaving the boat informed the Press reporters that if the people in Australia could grow ratoon cotton successfully it would be one of the greatest advantages they could possibly obtain.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Who said that?

Mr. EDWARDS: Mr. Wells, I understand. Mr. Powell—the first expert I referred to—on coming to Australia attended a meeting which was held in Brisbane, and said that Mr. Wells was quite correct. He was taken to task, and told that he must inform the farmers of Queensland that they must not under any considerations grow ratoon cotton.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Who took him to task?

Mr. EDWARDS: Mr. Crawford Vaughan.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the first I have heard of it.

Mr. EDWARDS: This gentleman was then politely asked to get out as an expert, so far as the British-Australian Cotton Association were concerned, and resign all interest in connection with the cotton industry of Queensland. That gentleman showed the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Crompton Wood, and Mr. Crawford Vaughan how entirely wrong they were in placing this ban on ratoon cotton. He proved to them that what the spinners of Great Britain were concerned about was cotton that would not ripen as ordinary cotton should, and which is known in America as "bolly" cotton. So far as I can learn that is caused in many different ways. It is caused by droughts, late planting, and by getting frosts before the cotton is ripe. Those who have had practical experience in the growing of cotton will know that the same thing applies to almost the best cotton fields in our State. No matter what quality cotton you may have, or how good it may be, you will always find a certain percentage that has to be discarded as not being of first-class quality. That is the cotton which confused the Government and the British-Australian Cotton Association in connection with the growing of ratoon cotton.

Mr. HARTLEY: No, it is not.

Mr. EDWARDS: I say without hesitation that, had the Opposition, with the practical

experience that the members of the Country party have in connection with primary production, been in charge of the Treasury benches when the Cotton Industry Bill was going through, they would not only have established the cotton industry, but they would have saved the producers thousands of pounds.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: When your party were in power they did nothing for the primary industries.

Mr. EDWARDS: The interjection of the Minister shows how hopelessly he is lacking in argument. My party were never in power before.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They were in power for many years.

Mr. EDWARDS: There is no doubt that under the previous Government land settlement went ahead at a far greater rate than it is doing at the present time, and the producers were not in the bad financial position they are in to-day.

Mr. COSTELLO: He does not like that.

Mr. EDWARDS: The Minister wants to take me off my line of argument, as he knows how true it is. When the hon. gentleman, with all the evidence before him, discovered that he had made a mistake, he should have said, "I made a mistake, and I am prepared to rectify it at once." I would have given him credit for doing so. But what did he say? He first of all said that the Government were going to stand solidly by the Act passed in 1923. The hon. gentleman cannot deny that he made that statement many times in Queensland. After the Government had broken down in connection with this question and decided to give way and remove the ban on ratoon, the Minister, to let himself down lightly, brought the Council of Agriculture into the matter. The Council of Agriculture had to appoint a deputation to present the case to the Minister. When the deputation waited on the hon. gentleman the first thing he said was it was a great pity that political bigots had taken up the position they had.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS: The Secretary for Agriculture says, "Hear, hear!" but I will tell him what he said to the deputation before they went out of the room. He said that, in order not to waste his time and their time, he might inform them that the Government had decided to remove the ban on ratoon cotton. What about "political bigots" now? Did he do it for them? No. He had to do it because he was absolutely forced to do so by the cotton-growers, who would have gone out of the industry if he had not given way.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What do you mean by "forced" to do it?

Mr. EDWARDS: The growers of Central Queensland, through their determination, compelled the Government to remove the ban. The ginneries of Queensland would have been closed had the Minister not given way.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If you had your way, they would be closed.

Mr. EDWARDS: I say without hesitation that, if the Minister had only dropped his political bias and taken notice of the speeches delivered when the Bill was going through in 1923, he would not have had to introduce this amending Bill. I am sorry that the Minister has come along with this milk-and-water measure, because I am as sure as I am standing in the Chamber to-day that the Government will have to lift the ban on ratoon cotton altogether.

Mr. HARTLEY: Nonsense!

Mr. EDWARDS: I am convinced that no other remark could be expected from the hon. member. If the Minister took a trip into some of the country districts and saw how the cotton-growers were cleaning up their cultivation paddocks, he would say that it was necessary not only to allow the growers to ratoon for one year but as long as they liked.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: One year is all the farmers asked for.

Mr. EDWARDS: I say definitely that the farmers have asked for nothing of the sort. I am satisfied that the Minister will eventually have to lift the ratoon ban altogether. I hope that when the Bill goes into Committee the hon. gentleman will accept an amendment to that effect, because by so doing I am sure he will help the cotton industry in Queensland.

The biggest argument that I can see against the growing of annual cotton, apart from the matter of having the root system of the ratoon plant ready to grow in the early spring months, is the difficulty in raising plant cotton. I have had a good deal of experience in this, and have had several "goes" at it. There is a great difficulty in many of our dry districts in getting the plant cotton aboveground. First of all, there is the uncertainty of rain. I admit that we have just had a season whereby, if seed had been put in early in the season, plant cotton could have been successfully raised. We must consider that in most of our districts we need the whole of the season if we are to grow cotton successfully. Cotton cannot be grown successfully after September if the rains come as they did last season. That brings us to the fact that we must have the plants ready for growing in the early part of September. If we do that, we have a big possibility of getting not only one good picking, but two or three good pickings. That is a matter that deserves the serious consideration of the Minister.

The matter of grubs is another factor needing consideration. From my experience of plant cotton in its very early stages—sometimes almost before it is through the ground—I know that it is attacked by a small grub, and all the foliage above the surface is cut off. On one occasion, I had 4 acres of cotton cut off in that fashion, and I do not believe I could have counted a hundred plants on the whole 4 acres. That is another reason why the Minister should allow ratoon cotton to be grown, not only for one year, but for as many years as it possibly can be grown successfully. If the cotton bushes are pruned, the paddocks decently cultivated, and the cotton picked under similar conditions to those employed in picking plant cotton, ratoon cotton is preferable from the point of view of quality and from every other point of view. In many instances last season ratoon cotton was preferable to plant cotton. That was admitted even by our experts.

Mr. DASH: You have to get a good striking plant before you get ratoon, have you not?

Mr. EDWARDS: I do not quite understand the hon. member. I should like to give him a lesson if he will come up to my electorate. (Laughter.) My sympathy goes out to those people who have suffered loss through obeying the law in regard to ratoon cotton. I do not think we could find anywhere in history such a spectacle as we have before us this afternoon in connection with this amending Bill. The Government themselves were the first to break the law they passed in 1923, and those men who stood solidly behind the law and were determined that they would carry it out regardless of cost, are very big losers indeed.

The other day I mentioned the case of Mr. McConnell, of Marshlands. Mr. McConnell made a special effort to prove that cotton could be grown with success in Queensland. On the first occasion he planted 1,000 acres of cotton, and last season Colonel Evans, who was up at Mr. McConnell's place, said he could see nothing wrong with the ratoon cotton standing in Mr. McConnell's paddock. Everyone in this Chamber must deplore the fact that Mr. McConnell had to destroy that ratoon cotton. Because of the legislation passed by this Government that splendid pioneer in connection with cotton was forced to turn his stock into what would have been a very profitable crop.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It saved his stock from starvation during the drought.

Mr. EDWARDS: That shows show much interest the Minister takes in this matter. Mr. McConnell did not turn his stock into that cotton until well into the spring after the rains had come. He did not want the cotton plant as fodder for his stock.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A number of farmers kept their stock alive during the drought on the cotton plants.

Mr. EDWARDS: I do not know of one farmer who kept his stock alive on the cotton bushes, and it is time the Minister learned a little bit about it.

Mr. F. A. COOPER interjected.

Mr. EDWARDS: I do not want anything from the circus clown of the Chamber.

The SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark.

Mr. EDWARDS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member for Bremer to cease interjecting.

Mr. EDWARDS: Those men who have been victimised through keeping the law should be compensated. I do not know that compensation could be paid straight out, because I do not know how it could be estimated; but, if it is possible to give them any preference in connection with the ratooning of plants at the present growing on their farms, then that preference should be given. When the Government themselves failed to keep the law they should give every assistance possible to those growers who obeyed the law. I am one of those who believe that the Government will have to lift the ban on ratoon cotton altogether. I do not think there is any need for it. If we are going to pay experts, then it should be the duty of those experts to go round amongst the cotton growers in Queensland and see that certain conditions in regard to cultivation are carried out. They should not interfere in any shape or form as to what crops shall be grown or how they shall be grown so long as they are properly cultivated. I am one of those who believe that there is a great future in Queensland in cotton, if the industry is established on proper lines and is not interfered with by the Government. I do not think the industry can be successfully established if it is interfered with by the Government in the way proposed in this measure.

[4.39 p.m.]

I want to say a word in connection with the ginning of the cotton. I believe that the time has come when the growers of cotton in Queensland should receive the financial assistance of the Government in regard to ginneries. I do not say they should take over the present ginneries, because I believe they are over-capitalised. I think that the growers would be well advised to consider the possibility of building co-operative ginneries, if they cannot get the present ginneries at a reasonable rate. I believe that is essential in the best interests of cotton-growing in Queensland, because cotton is a crop which will be largely grown as a side line. Many of the mixed farmers in the scrub areas of the Southern Burnett and Dawson Valley and in many other districts of Queensland will grow it as a family crop on an area of 10 or 15 acres each year. That system should be encouraged, and financial assistance given to cotton-growers to control the ginning of cotton. I think it is the duty of the Government to give every assistance possible to the manufacture of cotton goods in our own country. I notice that in America they are very jealous of their position in connection with the manufacture not only of cotton goods but of everything else. I have here a pamphlet issued by the National City Bank of New York which contains this statement—

> "The cotton-goods manufacturers and the labour organisations of that industry have asked for an increase of protective duties to keep out foreign goods."

That shows that they are alive to the importance of the industries in their own country. I am sure that every hon. member will agree with me that we should make a special effort to see that as much as possible of our cotton and woollen goods is manufactured in our own State. Cotton-growing has come in at a time when there is every possibility of a market being found for it for some time to come. I think we have been fortunate in that regard. The pamphlet I have just quoted from also states—

> "The land planted to cotton this year is estimated by the 'Commercial and Financial Chronicle' at 41,018,000 acres, which compares with the Government estimate for 1923 of 38,709,000 acres. The crop, however, has a late start, which works against it in various ways. Opinion in the trade is that chances are against getting over 12,000,000 bales, which is less than the annual consumption. The carry-over is so small that this amount will afford a scant supply. The price is close to 30 cents per lb. for the July delivery, but 4 or 5 cents per lb. less for the new crop deliveries."

That proves that America has only sufficient cotton for its own consumption, and that we have a very big possibility in front of us if the cotton industry in Queensland is handled in a right manner, first of all by

the Government, and then by every assistance being given to the growers so that the ginning of cotton will not be too costly. We should then make a special effort to establish as soon as we possibly can the manufacture of cotton goods in our own State. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. DASH: Would you be in favour of prohibiting child labour?

Mr. EDWARDS: That is a matter for the Government.

The SPEAKER: Will the hon. member confine his remarks to the provisions of the Bill, which deals principally with the question of ratooning?

Mr. EDWARDS: I have certainly dealt with that question, and I shall deal with it again. It is a most important matter to Queensland, and the growers of cotton have been greatly harassed by the legislation passed last year.

In conclusion, I hope that the Minister in the future will not be prejudiced against the opinions of practical men on this side of the House. He will in that way not only save himself a good deal of trouble, but will also save the cotton-growers and the primary producers generally a lot of inconvenience in connection with his legislation. If he listens to the opinions of the Opposition he will not lose so much sleep at night, and I am sure that he has a great deal of worry about this matter. If not, he certainly must be pretty hard, so far as the primary producers of this State are concerned. I hope that he will not disregard the amendments which the Opposition will move, but will remove the ban on ratoon cotton in Queensland entirely.

Mr. COSTELLO (*Carnarvon*): I must congratulate the Minister on introducing this Bill, which is a fulfilment of the argument of the Opposition and of the cotton-growers. Now one may feel satisfied that ratoon cotton or the cotton industry generally is going to get a trial at last at the hands of the present Government. Like myself, the growers did not like the introduction of force. Last session the Government forced through this House legislation whereby a fair trial was not given to the cotton-growers. You will remember the arguments we used. We said that the growers had been found guilty without having their case heard, and the Minister described the hon. member for Burnett and the cotton-growers in the Central District as agitators. I say they were agitators in the best sense of the word. Many growers in the hon. member's district and in the Dawson Valley went there with the sole idea of growing cotton, and it is very unfortunate that any farmer in any part of Queensland should depend on cotton alone. The idea that we can compete to any extent in the markets of the world is only a myth. However, we are out to give the Government every encouragement this time, and if ratooning is a failure they can blame the farmers and the Opposition for having advocated it. They can say that the responsibility is on the farmers and the Opposition because they demanded permission to grow this class of cotton. We, on our part, can stand to our guns and show that plant cotton is not going to be a success, or, at any rate, anything like the success the Government expected.

The farmer has no control over the climatic conditions, which can very considerably affect the prospects of success. This measure is an important one, and should have a hurried passage through the House. The people are anxiously waiting to see the Bill put into effect. I do not intend to debate this matter any longer, as the Bill has been discussed almost threadbare. I hope that it will result in the success that we look forward to.

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

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

APPRENTICESHIP BILL.

RECOMMITTAL.

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

On new clause inserted to follow clause 25, reading—

"Every employer shall be entitled to employ at least one apprentice"—

on which the ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*) had moved the following amendment:—

"At the beginning of the clause insert the words—

'Subject to any award of the Court,'"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): When this Bill was recommitted on a previous occasion I was absent from Parliament owing to an attack of influenza, and on going through the Bill in the office it was found that something additional was necessary to the new clause that was agreed to in Committee. An amendment was moved by the Attorney-General on my suggestion over the telephone. I understand that there was some objection to the proposed amendment moved by my colleague, as it was felt that it was not desirable to give the Arbitration Court that additional power. I take it that was the basis of discussion. I am prepared to withdraw that amendment, with a view to substituting another. I propose to substitute the words, "Subject to this Act." The clause will then read—

"Subject to this Act every employer shall be entitled to employ at least one apprentice."

It is necessary that that amendment be inserted to make the conditions of apprenticeship generally applicable. If hon. members will turn to clause 17 and clause 23 they will see the necessity for the amendment. Clause 23 sets out the mutual duties of the employer and the apprentice. It reads—

"The employer of every apprentice shall teach such apprentice or cause him to be taught the trade or industry or process only, or portion of such trade or industry, in relation to which he is bound apprentice."

Clause 17 provides for the indentures of apprenticeship and the conditions of apprenticeship. Subclause (3) provides—

"The group committee concerned, or if there is no group committee, the Director of Labour, shall have power to transfer an apprentice from one employer to another either temporarily or permanently—

(*a*) If the employer does not provide

the necessary facilities for the apprentice to become proficient in his trade; or

(*b*) Upon the application of the employer or the apprentice for good cause shown."

It will be seen that it is necessary to have those safeguards made applicable to all forms of apprenticeship indentures. If the new clause were allowed to remain as it now stands, it would mean that an employer would be entitled to an apprentice, whether he had the conveniences to train that apprentice or not, and would not be subject to the conditions of the indentures in relation to the subjects he should be taught. There would be no control over him with regard to training the boy at the Technical College in any subjects that might be deemed necessary. That is the reason for the addition to the clause that I propose. I ask leave to withdraw the amendment moved by the Attorney-General with a view to inserting before the word "Every" the words—

"Subject to this Act."

Amendment (*Mr. Mullan*), by leave, withdrawn.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): I beg to move the following amendment to the new clause inserted to follow clause 25:—

"On page 11, at the beginning of the new clause before the word 'Every' insert the words—

'Subject to this Act.'"

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): In the few minutes that I have had an opportunity of looking into the amendment it would appear all right, but there is just the possibility that we may discover after we have looked further into it that it is not what we desire.

Mr. MAXWELL: Hear, hear!

Mr. ROBERTS: Is the Minister prepared to say that any tradesman carrying on a trade or calling will be enabled under this amendment to engage an apprentice? If that is the position, it will then rest with the authorities set up under the Bill to say whether that person is carrying out his obligations faithfully in the interests of the apprentice. If the Minister answers my question in the affirmative, I shall have no objection to the amendment. If the question as to whether an employer can take an apprentice or not is left to some board, then the position is not as we desire. It was stated by hon. members on this side of the Committee both on the second reading and during the Committee stage of the Bill that there were a number of men, particularly in the country, engaged in various occupations who were fully capable of taking an apprentice, and we want provision to be made whereby such men can enter into a form of indenture with an apprentice.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If you do not put in the amendment that I suggest, there will be no obligation on the employer to enter into any indenture whatever.

Mr. ROBERTS: As the law stands at present, no matter how desirous that person may be to impart his knowledge to a lad, or how anxious the parents of the lad are to have him apprenticed to that person, he cannot take on an apprentice. We desire that every person engaged in a trade or calling who can take an apprentice shall be permitted to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is difficult to get people to take their quota of apprentices now. For example, the hon. member for Toowong has not any at all.

Mr. ROBERTS: I do not know whether I cited this when the Bill was in its second reading stage, but I know there are men who say—and they have some justification—that through want of interest on the part of some of the employees, they are not prepared to accept apprentices. They are prepared to have competent men and pay the prescribed wage. Again, if the Arbitration Court award is made too high, if there is not going to be some inducement for the employer to take apprentices, he will not do so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Are you arguing that an employer should have one apprentice and ignore the award which prescribes the wage of the apprentice?

Mr. ROBERTS: No.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then what are you arguing?

Mr. ROBERTS: A business man is naturally out to make his business pay, and if he has to pay a competent man a high wage and also has to pay to the apprentice a wage which is too high, he cannot afford to allow the competent man to spend his time training the apprentice. There is no inducement for the employer to take on apprentices. The employer is not like the Government when they run an enterprise and have the whole wealth of the State at their back. An employer must be in the position to pay his wages.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I admit that no one is in business for the good of his health.

Mr. ROBERTS: That is so, and I take it there must be some inducement for the employer to take on an apprentice. It would be a very fine spirit, and some men desire to do it to-day, to take on apprentices and train them for the good of the State, but a business man must show a profit. If the wage of the apprentice is made too high, there is nothing in it for the employer.

I understand that if a man has employees, he will probably be compelled to take apprentices, whether he desires them or not. That will be most unfortunate. If a man is running a business and is quite prepared to pay the wages prescribed for competent men rather than take apprentices, he should be allowed to do so. However, that does not concern me at the moment under this clause.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The amendment that I propose makes the employment of apprentices subject to the other provisions in the Bill.

Mr. ROBERTS: If I were working at a trade, could I take an apprentice without making application to some board, provided I took the responsibility of teaching that youth my trade? The board, of course, would have the right of entry and of testing the apprentice, as is provided by the Bill. If that is so, I have no objection.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No one dictates what apprentices you are to take now.

Mr. ROBERTS: The law at present says that a number of trades cannot have any apprentices at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is nonsense.

Mr. ROBERTS: When the Bill was before the Committee on previous occasions, and when discussing the Estimates of the Department of Public Works, hon. members of the Opposition pointed out that there are some sixteen or seventeen industries in which an employer cannot under any circumstances have an apprentice unless there is a journeyman working in the place as well as the employer.

Mr. HARTLEY: What trades are they?

Mr. ROBERTS: There are a number of trades, one in particular that comes to my mind is the saddlery trade.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Under this Bill a saddler will have the right to employ an apprentice.

Mr. ROBERTS: I was asked what trades they were, and I instanced the saddlery trade. The jewellery trade is another. The one I have experience of is the saddlery trade, where a master saddler wanted to take on an apprentice, but he was not permitted to do so because under the Industrial Arbitration Act the saddlers of Queensland had agreed that, unless a master saddler was employing a journeyman, he could not take on an apprentice. If the Minister is prepared to assure hon. members on this side that that person will have the right to employ an apprentice under this Bill and be subject to all the conditions that employers are subject to under the Bill, we shall have nothing further to say on the matter.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): To my mind the amendment proposed by the Secretary for Public Works is exactly the same as that previously proposed by the Attorney-General, except that the wording is a little different. I do not see the object of putting in the words "Subject to this Act." It must be "Subject to this Act." The whole Bill deals with apprentices, and there is no occasion to put in those words at the beginning of this clause. Clause 1 reads—

> "This Act shall be cited as 'The Apprenticeship Act of 1924,' and shall be read as one with 'The Industrial Arbitration Acts, 1916 to 1923.'"

As I understand it, the Arbitration Court will decide as to whether an employer can employ an apprentice or not, or whether the employer is going to be under the old conditions, and the court will decide how many journeymen must be employed before an apprentice can be employed. The amendment moved by the Opposition when the Bill was going through Committee, and which was accepted by the Minister, took away from the Arbitration Court the right to say how many journeymen shall be employed before an apprentice may be employed, and it gave every employer the chance to employ an apprentice even if he did not employ any journeymen at all. The amendment moved by the Attorney-General to make it subject to the Arbitration Court did away with the whole object of the amendment moved by the Opposition, and which was accepted by the Minister. The Minister has now withdrawn the amendment moved by the Attorney-General, and wishes to substitute another which is exactly similar in effect although a little differently worded. This Bill is for the purpose of regulating apprentices, and the new clause inserted after clause 25 on which this amendment has been moved reads—

> "Every employer shall be entitled to employ at least one apprentice."

The very next clause says—

> "The Minister . . . may apply to the court to make such investigation and order as may be deemed necessary to permit or require any employer to employ such further number of apprentices as may be directed."

That makes it perfectly clear. Now the Minister wants to put in the words "Subject to this Act."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: In order to make it clear that it is "Subject to this Act."

Mr. MOORE: It makes it subject to the Arbitration Court rather than "Subject to this Act."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Of course in regard to hours of work and wages apprentices will be subject to the awards of the Arbitration Court. Is that what you object to?

Mr. MOORE: I am not objecting to that. I am objecting to making the number of apprentices who shall be employed in any trade dependent on the number of journeymen, which would make this clause inoperative. Since this clause went through and the suggestion to alter it was made, I have had sixty or seventy letters asking me to do everything I could to see that the clause went through in the way in which it was accepted by the Minister. It was what many people had been looking for—people who had been endeavouring to get their boys apprenticed to one-man shops, and who desired the matter to be left in that position.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You say you have received sixty or seventy letters?

Mr. MOORE: Yes; I have five letters from men employed in the Toowoomba railway district who were particularly interested in the matter. The first thing I was asked when I went home at the week-end was "Did that clause about the number of apprentices go through?" They were watching the matter intently, because it was a vital question and one in which they were deeply interested. It seems to me that the Minister is endeavouring to secure what the Attorney-General moved for, but in another way. I know that pressure by one or two
[5 p.m.] organisations has been brought to bear, in order that this clause should not be allowed to go through in the way in which it was accepted by the Minister. We heard hon. members opposite objecting to the clause going through in that form, because it was said it would be breaking agreements that were already entered into. I think the clause is perfectly clear as it is. It is in this Bill, and, being in the Bill, it must be "Subject to the conditions of this Act." The board which is to be appointed must have jurisdiction to see whether an employer is training his apprentice properly and whether he has the proper machinery for that purpose. I think the clause is effective without putting in the additional words desired by the Minister. I am afraid the extra four words are going to destroy the object we had in view in moving

the new clause, which I was glad the Minister accepted. It is not a question of the Minister's personal opinion, but of outside pressure from organisations.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What outside pressure could there be when I was at my own home?

Mr. MOORE: Letters from different organisations who objected to the clause going through.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you think no one has any right to write to me?

Mr. MOORE: Not at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You say you got sixty or seventy letters. I received no letters in connection with this matter.

Mr. MOORE: I received two letters from organisations in Brisbane which stated that they had communicated with the Secretary for Public Works.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I received none whatever.

Mr. MOORE: I suppose your Under Secretary opened them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No. I told you definitely that I had no letters from anyone at all about this clause.

Mr. MOORE: They notified me that they were communicating with the hon. gentleman about the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They may say anything to you.

Mr. MOORE: They objected to the clause going through as it was, and thought it still should be subject to the Arbitration Court.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Did the letters say that?

Mr. MOORE: I say that. The two letters I got from organisations outside expressed definite opinions with regard to the number of apprentices and journeymen which should be allowed, and stated that, if this clause went through as it was, it would operate harshly, and that they did not want to see it go through.

We wanted to establish the right of the individual employer to employ an apprentice. I am afraid that that privilege is going to be jeopardised by the words which the Minister seeks to insert. The Minister was very indefinite when he was bringing in this amendment. From my point of view it is useless to put these four words in if it is only for the particular purpose the hon. gentleman mentioned. If the amendment is made, the apprentices employed under the clause must come under other provisions of the Bill. The board will have complete jurisdiction without the words desired by the Minister being put in. If it is necessary to put those words in this clause, it is necessary to put them in other clauses. The principle which was established giving the right to an employer to take an apprentice, is going to be jeopardised by the four words the Minister wishes to put in. I would like a legal opinion on the point or a definite assurance from the Minister.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): I agree with the leader of the Opposition regarding the meaning of the amendment. I think the words "Subject to this Act" are surplusage.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Are you giving a legal opinion or a political opinion?

Mr. KING: Both. (Laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They often do not mix. (Laughter.)

Mr. KING: The Minister in explaining the amendment said that its object was to secure the due observance of clause 23, which deals with mutual duties of employer and apprentice, and for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of clause 17, which relates to indentures of apprenticeship. I want to know whether those two matters are the only ones which induced the Minister to move this amendment. I think there is something else behind the whole thing.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There may be something else behind the opposition to it.

Mr. KING: Oh, no! I am just debating the matter as it appears to me, without any ulterior motive. I have no special interest in it. What other Act can an apprentice be bound by than this? None. Therefore I say that the words "Subject to this Act" are surplusage.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They are not.

Mr. KING: No apprentice can be engaged except under the provisions of this measure, so what is the use of putting in those words?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: A pharmaceutical apprentice comes under the provisions of the Pharmacy Act, and there are also apprentices under the Railway Act.

Mr. KING: I am only speaking of apprentices governed by this Bill, and this particular clause can deal only with them. What is the use of having the words when the Act cannot apply to anybody else but the apprentices engaged under it? I want to find out the object of the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Were you not in the Chamber when I spoke, and did you not hear what I said?

Mr. KING: Yes; but there was nothing definite in what the hon. gentleman said. There must be something else, and I would like to find out what it is. If the Minister knows, he can tell us. Anyhow, his argument about these words falls to the ground, because this Bill applies only to certain classes of apprentices, and the apprentices to whom it does apply can be engaged under no other Act.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I am afraid the Opposition are frightened at a shadow. If the Bill went through with the new clause as it stands at present—

> "Every employer shall be entitled to employ at least one apprentice."

it could be readily argued that the clause gave to every employer the right to employ at least one apprentice, and to employ him without any conditions at all.

Mr. KING: No.

Mr. HARTLEY: If the clause is allowed to stand without the amendment it will give the employer the right to employ an apprentice without any restrictions, and without any conditions as to the training of the apprentice, as to the age at which he shall commence or cease his apprenticeship, and, what is more, he can employ the apprentice

without having him subject to the conditions laid down in the Bill as to the attendance at a technical college and the passing of an examination before entering the trade. The hon. member for Logan, as a lawyer, knows that the clause gives an absolute right to employ an apprentice——

Mr. KERR: No. Read the Industrial Arbitration Act.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is a totally different thing. I will touch on that matter directly. This Bill has been framed to provide for the proper apprenticing of apprentices, to provide for a proper selection of apprentices by a system of examination, to provide for the proper training of apprentices in shops properly equipped for their training, and to provide that the apprentices shall attend a technical college for certain hours, and, if they obtain a certain percentage on passing the examination, that the fees they have paid shall be refunded to them by their employers. If this amendment were not adopted, an employer could rightly argue that he was not entitled to refund those fees. The Bill also provides that, if an apprentice obtains a 75 per cent. pass at a technical college in connection with the subjects appertaining to his trade, he is entitled to receive a 5 per cent. increase in wages from his employer.

Mr. KING: That is part of this Bill.

Mr. HARTLEY: I know lawyers just as well as I know anyone else, and I know the hon. member for Logan would be the first to argue that the clause without the amendment would mean that the employer had an absolute right to employ one apprentice free from any conditions.

Mr. KING: Certainly not.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is what is in the hon. gentleman's mind. The amendment that was proposed when the Bill was recommitted on a former occasion stated that the apprentice could be employed subject to the award of the Arbitration Court. That is a totally different thing. There is nothing in this amendment which will have any effect in deciding the number of apprentices to be employed in proportion to the number of journeymen.

Mr. KING: This Bill includes the Industrial Arbitration Act.

Mr. HARTLEY: The Bill has to be read as one with that Act. The amendment will permit the employer to employ at least one apprentice, notwithstanding that he may have no other tradesman in the shop. The Minister tells me that my interpretation is correct, and he is in a position to know.

Mr. KING: Under what Act could an apprentice be employed but under this?

Mr. HARTLEY: He could only be employed under this Act, but, if the amendment were not adopted, he would not be subject to any conditions. I have no fear in connection with the amendment.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): I rise to support the leader of the Opposition and to endorse the views expressed by the hon. member for East Toowoomba. It seems to me that, if this Bill and the Industrial Arbitration Act are to be read as one, an employer cannot employ an apprentice unless he is allowed by the court to employ one and has in his employ two or three journeymen

Mr. HARTLEY: You know very well that the Arbitration Court could not affect this clause.

Mr. MAXWELL: That is the view I take of it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You know that this Bill prevails over an award of the court.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Bills says that it is subject to any award of the court. There is a distinction, but it is a distinction without a difference. The award is subject to this Act. As the hon. member for Logan pointed out to the Minister, why does not every clause commence with the words, "Subject to this Act"? This clause has to be considered in conjunction with the Industrial Arbitration Act. Notwithstanding what the Minister may say, the very thing we want to get—apprentices working in every trade or calling with a view to fitting them as competent tradesmen—would by this amendment be eliminated altogether The Minister interjected that the firm I was associated with did not employ any apprentices. We could not get them. It is for that reason that I support such a measure as this. The boys would not be bound to a trade, more particularly to the painting trade with which I was connected. As the leader of the Opposition has pointed out, there is no necessity for this amendment, and some power behind the scene has apparently asked for it. It is undoubtedly moved with a view to nullifying what otherwise would be in some instances a very good Bill, and would give boys an opportunity of learning a trade or calling. If the amendment is accepted, then the person in the saddlery business mentioned by the hon. member for East Toowoomba could not apprentice his own son or the son of a friend to learn his business.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Would the amendment debar him?

Mr. MAXWELL: Yes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Tell us how.

Mr. MAXWELL: I told the hon. gentleman that the employer and the apprentice will be subject to an award of the court. This Bill has to be considered in conjunction with the Industrial Arbitration Act. If the judge lays it down that there shall be one apprentice to every two or three journeymen, then how is the difficulty mentioned by the hon. member for East Toowoomba to be overcome? The Minister has been asked to give an assurance that the amendment will overcome such a difficulty. I want to emphasise the fact that I support this Apprenticeship Bill because it is impossible for firms to get apprentices.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You have not got any apprentices.

Mr. MAXWELL: Boys would not be indentured. The Technical College fees were paid and the boys were encouraged in every possible way.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! The hon. member is getting away from the question under discussion.

Mr. MAXWELL: I am aware of that, but the Minister diverted my attention from it. There is something undoubtedly behind the clause.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will tell you in a minute what is behind your opposition to this clause.

Mr. MAXWELL: The one-man shop will not have power under the amendment to employ an apprentice because of the conditions which are laid down by the Court of Industrial Arbitration.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*): It is quite interesting to find hon. members of the Opposition getting up and professing their belief in this Bill and their belief in this and that thing relating to apprenticeship. On one occasion the hon. member for Toowong stated that he was in favour of rendering apprenticeship compulsory, yet in his own firm for many years he did not employ any apprentices at all.

Mr. MAXWELL: I have told you the reason why.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Because apprenticeship was not compulsory there was no indenturing or anything else. The point was raised by the hon. member for Logan that this amendment is unnecessary, and the point has been further raised that, because this Bill is to be read as one with the Industrial Arbitration Act, certain results will accrue from the amendment being carried. Hon. members opposite know perfectly well that is not correct. Where this Bill might clash in any way with an industrial award that industrial award must be brought into conformity with this Bill.

Mr. KERR: Will you put that into the Bill?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Where any individual award differs from this Bill, then the award must be brought into conformity with this Bill dealing with apprentices. If we did not substitute the amendment I propose for the present reading of the clause it would mean exactly what the hon. member for Fitzroy said. A boy might be engaged by an employer and he would not be subject to any award of the court relating to wages or hours. He would not be subject to the clauses relating to indenture, to the provision for attending a technical college, and the various other provisions stipulated in the Bill as being essential in connection with apprenticeship conditions. One hon. member got up with all the air of having discovered something absolutely new, and said, "Why do you not put these words in every clause in the Bill?" As a matter of fact on the opposite page in clause 24 dealing with technical classes, subclause (5) reads—

> "(5) Subject to this Act, every apprentice attending a technical college or other prescribed classes . . . . "

and so on throughout the Bill. It was rather interesting to find the hon. member for Logan, when I asked him whether he was giving his legal or political opinion, state that it was a mixture of both.

Mr. KING: That is so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Personally, I would not like to have to pay for that opinion as a legal opinion.

OPPOSITION interjections.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If we did not put this amendment in the Bill, the position would be entirely as I stated when moving the amendment, and as stated by the hon. member for Fitzroy. It would be argued by employers that they could have at least one apprentice without being subject to the conditions of the Apprenticeship Act. The Solicitor-General is at least as capable a legal luminary as the hon. member for Logan, and, without being unkind to the hon. member, I would accept the opinion of the Solicitor-General in preference to that of the hon. member. This amendment is the result of his opinion, and it places beyond all shadow of doubt that the employment of all forms of apprentices shall be subject to the conditions laid out in the Apprenticeship Bill. It does not interfere at all with the meaning of the clause, which gives an employer the right to employ an apprentice so long as he is subject to the conditions of the Act. Apprentices may be engaged under various Acts, but, if an apprentice in any trade declared to be a skilled trade under this Bill is to be engaged when this amendment is carried, he can only be engaged subject to the Apprenticeship Act.

OPPOSITION interjections.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

The further consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.