

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1929

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The SPEAKER (Hon. C. Taylor, Windsor) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

RELIEF OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*) asked the Premier—

“Has he taken the necessary steps to raise the loan of £300,000 for the relief of unemployment, as definitely set forth in his statement to the Press dated Brisbane, 5th May, as follows:—

‘His scheme provided for the conversion of the Unemployment Insurance Fund into an Employment Assurance Fund. To this would be added £300,000, which would be raised by a loan, the interest being payable from the £18,000 saved on members’ salaries.’

As the interest has been provided for in the reduction of members’ salaries, and as immediate relief of unemployment was promised, will he make the £300,000 immediately available from the Loan Funds now in hand pending the flotation of the special loan?”

The PREMIER (Hon. A. E. Moore, *Aubigny*) replied—

“Loan money is procurable only through the Loan Council. The Government has made application for its requirements for this year, but owing to the present financial stringency the Loan Council has so far been unable to approach the market. The Government will carry out its programme as it deems best in the interests of the whole community, and the steps it intends taking will be disclosed in due course.”

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY TO JOHNSTONE SHIRE COUNCIL FOR RELIEF OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*) asked the Treasurer—

“In view of the statements made by the Secretary for Labour and Industry in this Assembly on Wednesday, 23rd October, that Government subsidy was available to local authorities in connection with relief works, will the Treasurer now make available to the Johnstone Shire Council, Innisfail, subsidy on loan proposals as submitted to the Treasurer, and referring to same, under date 3rd September, the Treasurer advised ‘that consideration of the application is deferred for the present?’”

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): replied—

“When the Johnstone Shire Council has submitted a definite proposal, the matter will receive further consideration.”

PERSONNEL OF PROPOSED HOSPITALS COMMISSION.

Mr. DUNLOP (*Rockhampton*) asked the Premier—

“In view of what has appeared in the papers in connection with the proposed appointment of experts to inquire into the hospitals question, will he say if these

experts are to be secured from the other States?”

The PREMIER (Hon. A. E. Moore, *Aubigny*) replied—

“This matter will receive further consideration.”

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Notice under the Diseases in Plants Acts, 1916 to 1924, rescinding the Proclamation made under those Acts on the 22nd September, 1927.

House Regulations 236 to 238 inclusive, under the Primary Producers’ Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1928.

HEAVY VEHICLES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. Godfrey Morgan, *Murilla*): I beg to move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the Heavy Vehicles Act of 1925 in certain particulars.”

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*): I called “Not formal” to this motion because we desire to get some information.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You cannot get it at this stage.

Mr. POLLOCK: Then why call “Not formal” and have this farce?

The SPEAKER: This is not the stage at which hon. members can get information concerning the contents of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

RECEPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Roberts, *East Toowoomba*) presented the resolutions reported from Committee of Supply on Thursday, 24th October.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): I beg to move—

“That the resolutions be now received.”

Question put and passed.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The resolutions being taken as read.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): I beg to move—

“That the resolutions be now agreed to.”

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Are we being asked to agree to these resolutions en bloc, without discussion?

The SPEAKER: They will be called.

And hon. members indicating a desire to discuss resolutions 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 15, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 30, 33, 35, 38, 40, 42, 52, 53, 54, 56, 61, 64, 65, 77, 89, 92, 94, 98, 104, 113, 114, 118, 127.

Resolution 1—“*Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor*”—agreed to.

Resolution 2—"Treasury—Chief Office"—

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*): In connection with the Treasurer's statement of the receipts and expenditure of the consolidated revenue, the loan, and the various trusts funds for the financial year ended 30th June, 1929, I should like the Treasurer to give the House some information as to why it was necessary for the Auditor-General to make certain observations as to the manner in which the accounts were prepared.

In his report the Auditor-General says—

"In examining the statement, which was received by me on 31st August, 1929, I formed the opinion that the account current of the Loan Account (page 223) was not correct, and that the balance shown at 30th June, 1929, was understated by £250,000. There is an entry of £500,000 on the debit side of the account for a temporary loan to the Commonwealth Government, and on the credit side an entry showing the repayment of £250,000, portion of the loan.

"These entries have the effect of reducing the Loan Account balance at 30th June, 1929, by £250,000. Temporary loans have been made to other States on many occasions, but no entries were passed through the Loan Account which would have reduced the balance of that account in the Treasurer's Annual Statement. It would, I contend, be just as correct to reduce the loan balance by any sum placed on fixed deposit with a bank. The making of temporary loans such as the above, or the placing of loan funds on fixed deposit is merely a disposition of the loan account balance."

There is also this observation by the Auditor-General—

"I am also of opinion that the sum of £140,000, received from the Commonwealth Government for advances in connection with wire and wire-netting for settlers, has not been correctly shown in the Treasurer's account. In the year 1927-28 a sum of £70,000 of the above amount was treated as an indebtedness to the Commonwealth Government, and was included in the total of the public debt. In the accounts for 1928-29 this £70,000, with an additional £70,000 received, has been excluded from the indebtedness to the Commonwealth Government, and is not included in the amount of the public debt."

On page 2 of his report the Auditor-General has this to say:—

"In respect to the foregoing. I have used throughout this report the figures which I consider correct; it will be noticed, however, that they differ from those in the Treasurer's Annual Statement to the extent of the amounts in question."

It is very astounding to find that we have two sets of accounts to deal with. This is the first time such a thing has happened since I have been a member of this Chamber. It is astounding to think that the accounts presented by the Treasurer do not agree with the accounts presented by the Auditor-General. To my mind, that is alarming, because, if there should be uniformity in regard to any accounts, it should be between the accounts we discuss in this Chamber and the accounts presented by the Auditor-General. When discussing our Estimates we

should be in a position to know exactly how the different accounts stand; and this year more particularly, when we are faced with financial stringency and other matters that the Treasurer and other hon. members on the Government side have referred to, we want to be in a position to know where we stand in regard to finance. There should not be a difference of £250,000 between the Treasurer and the Auditor-General; and it is only right that hon. members should have full information in regard to this matter. As I said before, it is a very strange fact that we should have two sets of accounts to discuss, one set presented by the Treasurer and another set presented by the Auditor-General.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): I hope the Treasurer will give some reply to the criticisms of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I take it that the object of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was merely to obtain information in regard to the position of the public accounts. I have read the explanation of the Treasurer in the newspapers, in which he stated that he had adopted a new method in regard to certain accounts without any desire to cloud the true financial position. We must accept that as being so.

We have elevated to the blue ribbon of the public service a man who for many years was Under Secretary to the Treasury; and he draws the attention of Parliament and of the public generally to the fact that the system adopted is a departure from the accepted principle that has been in operation in this State for many years. Take the average hon. member in this House. It is very difficult for us to understand even the ordinary presentation of accounts. We are not accountants, and whatever accounts are submitted to this House they should be along lines that make for simplicity. When a body of men have been for years accustomed to dissect accounts presented to this House under a clear system that they understand, if a departure is made from that system, it makes it very difficult for them. The Treasurer may be referring to a system which was in operation when he was Treasurer previously. That may be a justifiable attitude to take up; but he is making a change so grave that a highly qualified man such as the Auditor-General has deemed it necessary to draw attention to the matter. Some reply to the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is necessary.

The SPEAKER: I would like to state for the information of hon. members that, when the Treasurer gets up to reply in the debate on these resolutions, I shall give ample time for any other member to get up before the Minister replies. When the Minister rises in his place and states what he wishes to say, no hon. member will be allowed to follow him.

Mr. POLLOCK: I object to that course.

The SPEAKER: There will be ample time given for any hon. member to get up and ask a question; but, after the Minister has spoken, there will be no debate permitted on any statement he may make.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): Before you confirm that decision, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out what appears to be the common-sense position. If the Treasurer is going to close the debate, it means that

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hon. members will have to engage in a ceaseless repetition of questions, whereas a slight explanation by the hon. gentleman, which would not close debate, might clear the atmosphere and prevent a lot of talk. The practice has been for the Minister to speak when he likes.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I can quite understand hon. members being rather confused at the presentation of accounts as they are presented at the present time. I am speaking now from the point of view of a public accountant. I think I can say I am supposed to know a little bit about these matters; therefore I would like to make a few remarks before the Treasurer replies. The whole system of public accounts as it has grown up from year to year has become rather cumbersome to the average mind. When one comes into this House for the first time and studies these accounts from the point of view of an accountant, it seems that there might be more simplicity. I am not going to say that, if I had the handling of the accounts, I could present them in a form which could be clearer to the average mind than they are; but, from experience, I know that as a rule figures, in whatever form they are placed before the average man, are always somewhat confusing.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Even to an accountant.

Mr. KELSO: In many cases, as the hon. member says, even to an accountant. For some time I have given considerable study to the figures presented to the House, of which there are a great mass. Speaking to the point raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, so far as I am concerned it is a matter of choice for the Treasurer to present the accounts in the form he thinks best. The Auditor-General does not really present accounts to the House. What he does is to criticise the accounts which have been placed before the House by the Treasurer. If the Treasurer, being a new Treasurer, prefers a different way of presenting accounts to the House, he has a perfectly legitimate right to do so. At the same time, I wish to make it quite clear that I think the Auditor-General has a right to comment on the manner in which the Treasurer presents his accounts to this House. The Auditor-General occupies an isolated, sheltered position—as it is only right that he should. He occupies a position similar to that of a judge of the Supreme Court, except that he is dealing with facts and figures instead of law. If the Auditor-General chooses to criticise the method which the Treasurer takes of presenting the public accounts, he has a perfect right to do so. The whole thing, to my mind, seems to be this: If the Treasurer and the Treasury officials think that on this occasion a slight variation would make the position clearer, they have a perfect right to make that variation.

If hon. members look through the public accounts, they will find that everything the Auditor-General refers to is already dealt with in the Treasurer's accounts. He has mentioned the fact that £500,000 was advanced to the Commonwealth Government, and that portion—£250,000—was paid back by the Commonwealth, leaving a loan due by the Commonwealth of £250,000. Following that up, the comment—it is not a charge—the Auditor-General is commenting in the position he holds, and it is his duty to do so—the Auditor-General, speaking in round

figures, says that the Treasurer states that he has only £4,750,000 to the credit of the Loan Fund Account, whereas the hon. gentleman really has something in the region of £5,000,000. If you dissect the Treasurer's figures, you will find that the hon. gentleman has stated the amount he has actually available, in case Parliament should want to go in for a big scheme immediately involving £5,000,000.

The Treasurer would then say, "I cannot meet a demand for so much money. I have not got it, but I have £4,750,000." It is well to bear in mind the real position in regard to short-dated loans, in London for example. If you dissect such loans you will find that the principle adopted is that loans bearing a certain small amount of interest realisable at twenty-four hours' notice—which is practically money invested in current account—are to all intents and purposes cash. On the other hand, the £250,000 which has been loaned to the Commonwealth Government is not immediately available. It may be out three months, six months, or twelve months, and I think the Treasurer is perfectly entitled to show in his accounts the amount immediately available.

We may get a little enlightenment from a comparison with a fixed deposit. If the Treasurer found that he did not want money for twelve months or two years, he could put that money into fixed deposit for that period in the Commonwealth or other bank. He would be perfectly right in holding that it was not money that was immediately available. It would be no use to the Loan Fund until it was due. I think the Treasurer is perfectly justified in taking the course he has done, and I am sure the Auditor-General does not suggest that the hon. gentleman is trying to mislead the public. All the amounts to which the Auditor-General has referred are set out in the Treasurer's tables, and the only question is as to the way the Treasurer has presented them. The Auditor-General, from his point of view, thinks it would be better to have done as he suggests, but that is only his opinion. He may be right. The Treasurer may be right. If the Treasurer chooses to do it as he has done, then he is perfectly entitled to follow that course.

The other amount to which reference has been made is £140,000 advanced by the Commonwealth to the State for the purchase of wire-netting. It is not included in the amount of the debt to the Commonwealth Government. I take it that amount is in the nature of a trust account. It is loaned to the Treasurer by the Commonwealth, and it is held by the Treasurer for certain specific purposes. I believe that, if it were put to the Commonwealth, we would find that that £140,000 is not included in the Commonwealth loan expenditure, so that the Treasurer is only bringing his account into line with the accounts of the Commonwealth. That £140,000 in the Commonwealth accounts and in the Treasurer's accounts is recognised as a trust fund, and should not go into the Loan Fund. I feel sure that, with the explanation of the Treasurer, hon. members will agree that it is merely a question between the Auditor-General and the Treasurer as to how the accounts should be presented, and in whichever way they are presented they are right both from the point of view of the Treasurer and the point of view of the Auditor-General. There is nothing wrong. Each

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has a perfect right to present the accounts in the way he thinks. The Treasurer has not concealed any amount. The Auditor-General merely says, "If I were doing it, I would do it this way," but he is not the Treasurer, although, as Auditor-General, he has a perfect right to say that that should be done. He does not suggest that the Treasurer has done anything that he should not have done. I feel sure that the Treasurer will be able to amplify his explanation and satisfy the House that what he has done is perfectly correct.

[11 a.m.]

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Mr. Speaker, I do not desire to discuss your ruling on this vote. You have already given that ruling, but I will not be prevented from raising the question on the next vote. I leave that matter for the moment.

Dealing with the question raised by the Auditor-General in his criticism of the method of the Treasurer in presenting the finances of the State, it would appear to a person who is only ordinarily observant that the Treasurer is endeavouring to do what he did after the 1915 election. It will be remembered that at that time the Labour Party came into office, and the present Treasurer, who was the Treasurer of the defeated Government prior to 1915, endeavoured to make it appear that the Labour Party assumed office with a very full Treasury. It is apparent that the method of the Treasurer in presenting the finances—I do not say it is a dishonest endeavour. I would not go so far as to say that, but it is an extraordinary endeavour—has been adopted for the purpose of making it appear that the balance to the credit of the Loan Fund is less than it actually is. That is the impression sought to be conveyed to the general public. That is the only conclusion one can draw from the remarks of the Auditor-General. He says quite plainly that £500,000 was loaned by the Queensland Treasurer from the Loan Fund to the Commonwealth Government. He also says that £250,000 of that sum has been repaid to the Loan Fund of Queensland; he also says that the £250,000 which is still owing is an asset of the Loan Fund, and is at call at any time.

The TREASURER: That is not correct. It is not at call at any time.

Mr. POLLOCK: That would appear so, according to the method of presenting the finances.

The TREASURER: It is not so.

Mr. POLLOCK: It was left to the Auditor-General to point out that the position was not as it appeared. This is the first time in my experience that the Auditor-General has found it necessary to point out to Parliament that a Treasurer's method of presenting the finances was unusual, and that a departure had been made. The Auditor-General quite distinctly points out that the £250,000 still owing by the Commonwealth is loan money, temporarily loaned. When it is repaid to the State it will still be loan money. Why, then, the effort to cover up that amount? Why, then, the effort to make it appear that the Labour Party left a credit balance to Loan Account £250,000 less than the actual amount? That is the position. It is difficult to find any explanation for the position. The Treasurer has obviously endeavoured, for political purposes, to show that the finances of the State in the Loan

Fund Account are less healthy than they actually are; and apparently he has done it for the purpose of eventually being able to say that he started with a lesser Loan Fund credit balance than he actually had; and as a result of his method of financing, he was able to make it appear better than it actually is. There is no other explanation.

Mr. WARREN: The money will be repaid during the present year.

Mr. POLLOCK: Of course it will come back; but it was not proposed to show it under the right heading.

Mr. WARREN: Nonsense.

Mr. POLLOCK: The method may be the peculiar method of the Treasurer himself.

Mr. MAXWELL: You are charging him with misleading the House.

Mr. POLLOCK: I did not even think it.

Mr. MAXWELL: You are saying it.

Mr. POLLOCK: I do not say that the deal was a crooked one. I stated that for political purposes, the accounts were adjusted so as to enable the Treasurer eventually to show a better balance in the Loan Fund Account.

Mr. MAXWELL: What is that but a charge of misleading?

Mr. POLLOCK: I am not even thinking these things, but I have an active mind. We and the public, who may not be thinking these things, also have active minds. We should like to have an explanation from the Treasurer as to what the peculiar method of book-keeping to which the Auditor-General has drawn attention actually means.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Queenton*): I listened to the hon. member for Nundah with a good deal of interest, knowing quite well that he is a public accountant, and it quite capable of dissecting figures, and ought to be quite capable of giving a perfectly feasible explanation of the whole position; but I must confess that, when he sat down, I was in just as big a fog as before he rose.

Mr. KELSO: That is not my fault.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: I am quite prepared to admit that it might be my fault; but, when the hon. member stated that the Treasurer was right, and when he stated that the Auditor-General also was right, and when the Auditor-General has stated that the Treasurer is wrong, it must be admitted that the hon. member did not clear up that point.

There is no ambiguity about the statement of the Auditor-General. It is clear and distinct. He states that he formed the opinion that the Loan Account, as presented on page 228 of his report, was not correct. There is nothing misleading or ambiguous about that statement. It is a plain straightforward statement. He also points out that in times gone by similar transactions took place on more than one occasion, and they were not shown in the same method as they are now being shown in the accounts. I know quite well that, when the Treasurer previously occupied that position, money was lent to other States as short-dated loans—I think six months—and, when the Labour Party were in power, I believe the same kind of transaction also took place. If the present method of placing the finances before the public is correct, then the method previously adopted was wrong. If that is so, I never heard the Treasurer taking any exception to it. I never

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heard that previous Treasurers had adopted wrong methods, or had not placed the finances before this Chamber and the country in a correct manner. There is no question that the two methods differ. I am just wondering whether the hon. member for Nundah would present a balance-sheet to somebody which did not show the full amount of assets available. I heard him state yesterday that he was a trustee; and I am perfectly certain that, as a trustee, he would not think of not disclosing in a balance-sheet certain money which should be shown.

Mr. KELSO: You are confusing two different things.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: The statement of the Auditor-General is plain and distinct. He says that he formed the opinion that the method adopted by the Treasurer was not correct; and he goes on to say—

“Temporary loans have been made to other States on many occasions, but no entries were passed through the Loan Account which would have reduced the balance of that account in the Treasurer’s Annual Statement.”

That has been done on this occasion.

I, together with other hon. members, look forward with interest to the explanation of the Treasurer. I know that he has made a certain statement in the newspapers; but I do not know whether that statement satisfies the Auditor-General, who has no opportunity of replying to it; but I do know that his explanation does not satisfy the public. While the action of the Treasurer is not actually wrong, it is not a plain statement of the case for, while the £250,000 which has been loaned to the Commonwealth for the time being is certainly out of the State, it will reappear in the Treasury before the end of the year; and the Loan Account will then appear in a better position than at the present time, and will be credited with the full amount of loan money—viz., £5,000,000. If the Treasurer can offer no better explanation than that given by the hon. member for Nundah, then the position is not very satisfactory.

Mr. HANLON (*Ithaca*): No one in this House has made any suggestion that the Treasurer has done anything dishonest in this matter. No one would attempt to think that he has run away with that quarter of a million; but what we do want to call attention to is the fact that, by this new method of accounting, he has endeavoured to show the cash balance in the Loan Fund as left by the Labour Government a quarter of a million less than it actually is, and also with a view to showing next year his own transactions during the current year in a better light.

Mr. KELSO: You cannot give a loan to the Commonwealth Government and have the same cash balance as you had prior to granting the loan.

Mr. MAXWELL: He does not know any better.

Mr. HANLON: Let us look at the Loan Fund Account. In the first line of the account there appears the entry—

“Balance, 1st July, 1923, £5,651,807.”

In the Treasurer’s next Financial Statement he will show the balance carried forward in the Loan Account at £4,825,284, thereby making the amount to credit of the account at the commencement of the year show £250,000 less than it actually

is. Actually the Treasurer has taken over this year with a balance in the Loan Account of £5,075,284. It is not so much the present statement that we are complaining about, but rather the effect that it will have on the statement that will be presented to Parliament next year, when the commencing balance will be shown at £4,825,284 instead of £5,075,284. No one suggests that there is anything dishonest about this matter, but we do say that the system which the Treasurer has introduced tends to show that in the last year of the Labour Administration the Loan Account balance is £250,000 less than it actually is. To say the least of it, it is not correct bookkeeping.

Another thing which fits in with this system is that the Treasurer is budgeting for £3,355,507 for the coming year so far as loan expenditure is concerned, and has to give some reason to the public for not providing the extra £2,000,000 that was promised. The Government definitely promised to provide an extra £2,000,000 for the relief of unemployment, and it would be very difficult to explain away why the money was not provided if the Treasurer showed that the Loan Account balance was over £5,000,000 when he took over. It sounds very much nicer from his point of view to show that balance £250,000 less. There is nothing dishonest about it, but I claim that the system has been introduced to enable the Treasurer to secure a political advantage in the next financial year.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat and other hon. members opposite have evidently overlooked the fact that there is a system in connection with finance which is ordinarily followed in the commercial world. The hon. member for Ithaca stated that certain moneys were likely to come in before the close of the present financial year. That is perfectly true but I would draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that the £250,000 referred to is not cash in hand. Further, when that amount is repaid, the Treasury will show it in its next return.

What is the position with regard to local authority loans, for instance? Repayments on account of principal and interest appear as being received during the year in which they are actually received. In making up his returns, how could any business man show a promissory note which he had on hand under the heading of “Cash in hand”?

Mr. POLLOCK: When you know the money is available, it is an entirely different matter.

The TREASURER: There is apparently a difference of opinion between us as to the manner of keeping accounts, but, after all, I am the officer responsible to this House. After the Treasurer’s Financial Statement had been prepared and presented to the House, the Auditor-General came to see me, and ventilated the matter now under discussion after hon. members had been practically placed in possession of all the facts connected with the matter.

If the Auditor-General had felt that I was making a mistake, at least it would have been courteous for him to have come to me before the accounts were presented to this House. I have said in this House previously, and I repeat it, that no man who knows the Auditor-General would suggest that he would do an improper thing by me. I have been associated with him as Accountant to the

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Treasury, and later as Auditor-General, and I would not suggest that he would do anything that was not right, but I think it would have been at least nice of the Auditor-General to have come at the early stages and said to me, "I think you are making a mistake in connection with the furnishing of your accounts." But he did not do so until after the accounts were laid on the table of the House. I answered the Auditor-General when he interviewed me and stated that I could take no exception to his performing what he conceived to be his duty.

Mr. PEASE: An auditor does not do that with a private company.

The TREASURER: The hon. member does not like the explanation. The fact remains that this loan was for a fixed period. The hon. member for Gregory said that I could call it up at any moment. It is a fixed loan for a certain period.

Mr. PEASE: It represents cash.

The TREASURER: I did not disturb the hon. member while he was speaking; he evidently does not like my reply. A promissory note does not represent cash. I can remember Mr. Micawber, when he had signed a promissory note, saying, "Thank God, that debt's paid," but I do not know that it was paid. In this case the Auditor-General is quite within his rights in calling attention to any matter relating to the public accounts. That is his duty, and the public will applaud him for doing anything which he considers to be his duty. Seeing that hon. members have taken the opportunity of getting into "Hansard" something that was said by the Auditor-General, I think it quite fitting for me to get my reply, which appeared in the public papers, also inserted in "Hansard." This is what I said—

"In my opinion the Auditor-General, in his remarks with reference to the temporary loan to the Commonwealth Government, has given undue prominence to the matter, which the circumstances do not justify. He states that I have understated the balance of the loan account at 30th June, 1929, by £250,000. The facts of the case are that this sum was not in the cash balance of the account on that date, as it was on temporary loan to the Commonwealth Government. The Auditor-General further remarks that temporary loans have been made to other States on many occasions, but no entries were passed through the Loan Account. That may be so, but because the Treasury accounts were presented in a certain manner on previous occasions does not bind me to follow the same practice. I contend that I gave full prominence to the transaction in my Budget Speech on 25th September last. Included in my speech (page 7) are the cash transactions of the Loan Fund in which the loan to the Commonwealth Government of £500,000, and the repayment of a portion—£250,000—are clearly set out, and I gave an explanation of the matter (page 8)."

The facts are very clearly set out in that statement. One hon. member this morning wanted to imply that it was done primarily for political purposes.

Mr. PEASE: Perish the thought!

The TREASURER: I am very glad to hear the hon. member say, "Perish the thought!" He may say it sarcastically; but

I want to remind this House that, if the hon. member would pursue practices of that kind, the present Treasurer would not. When people have truthful minds, naturally they assume that others will regard things of this kind in the same light as themselves. However, let me continue my statement to the press—

"Furthermore, the transaction is set out in Table E of the tables accompanying my Financial Statement. No attempt was made by me to cover up the fact that £250,000 was on loan to the Commonwealth Government on 30th June last, and I maintain that the explanation in my Budget Speech, together with the tables which I have mentioned, make it amply clear that that sum was not included in the cash balance of the Loan Account on that date. If I had desired to cloak the matter, I could have omitted any mention of it in my speech, and could have deleted the entries from the published statement in the tables. This would have necessitated showing the transaction as a footnote to the statement of the Loan Account, to the effect that £250,000 was on temporary loan to the Commonwealth Government. To have done this would, in my opinion, have laid me open to the accusation of trying to hide the matter. I have no hesitation in asserting that the position has been correctly shown by me."

I say that, notwithstanding what the Auditor-General has said. He is a gentleman for whom I have the greatest respect; but, after all, it is only a question of who is right. It may be a question of "fifty-fifty" as to who is right. I think the practice of the department is right, and I have the courage to stand up for it and defend it in this House. That is the position to-day.

"Another subject to which the Auditor-General gives prominence is the manner in which advances under the Wire and Wire Netting Agreement have been dealt with. He gives it as his opinion that the sum of £140,000 received from the Commonwealth Government has not been correctly shown in the Treasurer's Accounts. I may say that, before this item was omitted from the public debt of the State, the Commonwealth Treasury was consulted, and the State Treasury was advised that the Commonwealth Government did not include these advances in loans owing by the States to the Commonwealth."

I ask if a Treasurer could have followed any other practice, after having appealed to the Commonwealth Government?

"These advances are not included in the public debt for the purposes of the Financial Agreement, as the Wire Netting Agreement contains special sinking fund provisions. It was decided to treat these advances as a trust account, and they are shown in the Treasurer's Statement accordingly."

(Opposition interjections.) Labour Governments never do anything wrong, I suppose. When they oppose such things as workers' dwellings—as they did when that Bill was introduced, for instance—sometimes they do things which are wrong. The statement continues—

"I may add that Western Australia, which State also receives advances under the Wire Netting Agreement, does not

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include the amounts in the public debt of that State, and the Commonwealth Treasurer treats them as quite apart from the public debt of this State."

Talk about the public outside! I venture to say that the public outside will pay at least as much attention—and perhaps a good deal more attention—to the explanation of the Treasurer, for the Treasurer can at least say this—and he challenges anyone opposite to dispute it—that he has consistently pursued straight practices in his public life.

Mr. COLLINS: Is that a reflection on the Auditor-General?

The TREASURER: It is not a reflection on the Auditor-General. Notwithstanding the insinuations that were made by some hon. members in a very "sugary" kind of way—the insinuations which were made that improper things were done by me—

Mr. POLLOCK: You are an artist.

The TREASURER: I would not care to be such an artist as the hon. member for Gregory. I do not covet to be an artist in that way because, if I did become an artist in that way I might go to the "tote" and get certain money and become exceedingly liberal afterwards with what I got. But perhaps it would be as well if I did not say any more on that subject.

Resolution 2 (Treasury—Chief Office)—agreed to.

Resolutions 3 to 10, both inclusive, agreed to.

Resolution 11—"Department of Labour and Industry—Board of Trade and Arbitration"—

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I desire to draw the attention of the Government to the fixing of the price of milk. Price fixing by the Board of Trade and Arbitration is loaded against the producer. The consumer is protected, but the producer, who has to feed his cows and produce milk fit for human consumption, gets no protection at all.

Mr. HYNES: The producers have the opportunity of putting their case before the board.

Mr. WARREN: That makes it all the worse, if the board fixes the price against the producer and in favour of the man who has no responsibility in the matter. The producer has his herd to keep up and all the expenses of production to meet; and I draw the attention of the Government to the matter in the hope that in price-fixing the producer will be protected.

Mr. HYNES: The producer is protected. He submits evidence to the board.

Mr. WARREN: He is not protected at all.

Mr. HANLON: What is the fixed price for milk now?

Mr. WARREN: Eightpence per quart.

Mr. HANLON: What is the fixed price for warm milk to the producer?

Mr. WARREN: The producer is only getting 11d. per gallon or less. He is not protected. If 1d. or 2d. per gallon is knocked off his price, the vendor can still go on charging his 8d., and the producer has no redress. We have heard a lot about pure milk; but how is it possible for the producer to go on producing an article fit for human consumption if the price is always against

him? If the producer got an equal share with the consumer, he could manage; but, when it is all against the producer, it is impossible for him to keep up a supply of pure milk for the people. I hope that the Government will make a move, and give the producer the same right as the consumer.

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): I feel confident that the hon. member for Murrumba is quite wrong. I understand that the Board of Trade and Arbitration takes all factors into consideration before it fixes the price of any commodity. I cannot see how the system can work satisfactorily unless it has regard to the case of the producer as well as to that of the consumer.

I want to raise the question of the Government's policy as to price-fixing generally.

I noticed recently that the price [11.30 a.m.] of bread and the price of meat had been decontrolled at Spring-sure; and I should like to know whether it is the policy of the Government gradually to do away with price-fixing in Queensland.

Mr. DANIEL: So they should.

Mr. FOLEY: Experience of the people of Queensland has been that the establishment of State butcher shops has caused a reduction in the price of beef, whilst, on the other hand, districts not enjoying those establishments have had a very cruel experience at the hands of the exploiters. If the Government carry out what is apparently their avowed policy of decontrolling prices, it will mean a reduction in the effective wage of the workers. The system of price-fixing acts as a material check on the unscrupulous retailer and distributor, who is often inclined unnecessarily to exploit the public. I should like a pronouncement from the Government as to their policy on the matter.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): When the hon. member for Leichhardt inquired from the Government whether they intended to abolish price-fixing, one hon. member supporting the Government said that the Government should do away with price-fixing.

Mr. DANIEL: Absolutely!

Mr. HYNES: I take it that that is the policy of the majority on the opposite side of the House.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You would take the worm out of a blind fowl's beak.

Mr. HYNES: A comparison between the intelligence of a blind fowl and that of the Secretary for Mines would favour the fowl. I was vitally interested in the question of price-fixing some months ago, when the Secretary for Labour and Industry summoned a conference of union representatives. At that conference I asked him if it was the intention of the Government to continue the policy of price-fixing, and the hon. gentleman gave his solemn assurance to the delegates that price-fixing would be continued in Queensland. I sincerely hope that the policy of price-fixing will be continued, particularly in its relation to foodstuffs. I have noticed that the disposal of State butcher shops in the metropolitan area has aided considerably in increasing the price of meat.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is always so in the dry season.

Mr. HYNES: Hear the geological genius who occupies the position of Secretary for Mines! The butcher talking about it being

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always so in the dry season! There has been an increase in the price of meat since the disposal of the State butcher shops. It must be apparent to any student of the subject that it is useless for the workers to approach the Board of Trade and secure an increase in the nominal wage if the effective wage is not preserved. The effective wage will be decreased if the policy of price-fixing is not adhered to. It would really mean that what the workers secured from the Board of Trade as industrialists would be immediately taken from them as consumers. After fourteen years of Labour legislation and administration, Queensland is in the happy position of being the cheapest State in which to live; and one factor that has contributed to that happy condition has been the operation of price-fixing in this State. I sincerely hope that the Government will not give effect to the desire of the hon. member for Keppel. What will be the position if after the workers have approached the Board of Trade and a wage is fixed, the exploiters and the distributors of foodstuffs and clothing are permitted to have an open go? What the workers have secured from the board would be immediately filched from them by tradespeople.

I believe that the margin which the distributor of milk is receiving is too great; and the producer should receive a greater return than he is receiving at the present time. This is an aspect of our milk supply to which the Board of Trade should give consideration under the regulations of the Profiteering Prevention Act of 1922 and endeavour to deal with the question.

I rose to protest against any attempt to interfere with the work of the Board of Trade in fixing prices of foodstuffs, for I candidly believe that immediately those powers are taken away from the Board of Trade there will be an increase in the cost of living and a reduction in the purchasing powers of the workers, and, consequently, a reduction in the basic wage standard of to-day.

Mr. DUNLOP (*Rockhampton*): I have received from the Board of Trade and Arbitration a list showing the maximum prices which may be charged for beef in Rockhampton; and, in view of this discussion, it is as well that I should quote one or two items. Under this list the price of meat in Rockhampton has been increased considerably; and I do not know how the working class will be able to pay the new prices demanded.

The first item on the list I have received is "Rump steak, 1s. per lb." How are the workers going to pay that price? That price is absurd. Surely the Cabinet will not permit these prices to be charged! Other charges are—

	Per lb.
	d.
Sirloin steak	11
Sirloin roast, 3 lb. or over ...	10
Corned beef, silverside	9½
Corned beef, round	8
Topside	9
Corned beef, brisket (without bone)	8
Sausages	7

How can the workers really afford to pay those high prices?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: What is the price of brains?

Mr. DUNLOP: If the hon. member knew the value of brains, he would considerably enhance their service by their use. The hon. member would know, after eating them, that brains are nutritious. Nurses in hospitals serve them to the sick. When these stupid interjections took place, I was pointing out that the poorer classes would be considerably hit by this new price list for beef. If a worker is to keep in a robust state of health, he must have proper foodstuffs—foodstuffs which give him the necessary nutrition. From what I can see of the new price list, the poorer classes will have to avail themselves of these items—

Shin beef	d.
Beef flank	3
Stewing steak	5
	4½

I hope the Premier will recognise the position that the country is in—he has already told us how stringent the money market is—and give the Board of Trade a gentle hint or whisper that he will not agree to an increase in the price of beef until such time as the country is in a better position to meet an increase. Perhaps the Minister who deals with this particular matter will tell us how the price of cattle to-day compares with what it was when meat was sold very much cheaper to the public.

Mr. HYNES: The closing of the State butcher shops has affected the position.

Mr. DUNLOP: Whether the present position is due to the closing of these shops or not, I trust the Government will take some action immediately.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): I think it is only poetic justice that the hon. member who has just resumed his seat should be the first to tell the people in his electorate the disastrous results that have followed the closing of the State butcher shops. During the last election campaign hon. members on this side pointed out that one of the contributing factors to the low price at which meat was sold to the public was the fact that the State butcher shops prevented unfair methods of trading being indulged in by private shops, with detrimental effects to the public. Now the people of Queensland will learn, as Rockhampton has learned, that the butchering activities of the State were a protection to the great mass of people against the imposition of high prices.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. Godfrey Morgan, *Murilla*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat knows that what he stated is absolutely incorrect. Anyone who knows anything about the cattle business is aware that for some time after the war the price of cattle was so unprofitable as to drive many people from the cattle business into the sheep industry, thousands of acres previously used for cattle-raising being converted into sheep country. The loss on the State stations clearly indicates my point. At one period in the North the butchers could purchase the best meat for 12s. 6d., 15s., or 19s. per 100 lb. To-day the Brisbane price is approximately £2 per 100 lb.

Mr. HYNES: Still you sold one of the State stations to Love for £3 per head.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When cattle were selling at a reasonably fair price the State stations sold cattle to the State butcher shops for £2 per head less than would have been received in the open

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markets. It did not matter to hon. members opposite that the State stations made a huge loss so long as the State butcher shops could show a profit. Thousands of cattle were treated in that way.

Mr. HYNES: The consumer got the benefit.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member who complains about the price of meat increasing should know that at the present moment, fortunately for this State, the prices obtainable for cattle are improving and the producer of cattle is now in a position to make a living, which for years he could not.

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

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I understand the vote now being discussed includes price-fixing. An hon. member wanted to know why the price of meat was greater to-day than it was years ago, and I was pointing out that, whereas meat could be purchased by the butchers at from 12s. 6d. to 19s. per 100 lb. some years ago, the price to-day was £2. Surely under those circumstances the price of meat to the consumer must be increased, although hon. members opposite endeavour to make out that the rise in prices has been due to the closing down of the State butcher shops!

Mr. FOLEY: You are talking about Brisbane now.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member ought to know that the Brisbane market rules the prices throughout the State, the Brisbane price being reflected proportionately in the prices at Rockhampton and Townsville.

In Sydney to-day prime beef is selling at £3 per 100 lb.—£1 per 100 lb. higher than the price at Enoggera. In Melbourne and Adelaide prime beef is being sold at £3 5s. per 100 lb. The reason why these high prices are being paid to-day is because there is a shortage of cattle in Australia. Why is there a shortage of cattle? Owing to the fact that in the past the industry was so unprofitable that people went out of cattle; and the hon. member ought to know that.

Mr. POLLOCK: We know you sold the State cattle stations on a rising market.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Taking everything into consideration, we got a very good price for the State cattle stations.

Mr. HYNES: You did not get £3 per head for the stock.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Nonsense! The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. The hon. member for Rockhampton ought to make inquiries from the Rockhampton butchers, who, I am sure, will be quite prepared to give him the price paid to-day for prime beef as compared with what was paid several years ago. We know that the cost of slaughtering is very great. We know that the man who cuts up a beast receives £3 in wages; so that, if a butcher buys a bullock for £10 in the yard, he must add £3 to the cost for cutting up and selling over the counter. All these matters have to be taken into consideration; and it is no use hon. members opposite endeavouring to lead the people to believe that beef has gone up in price simply because the State butcher shops

have been sold. To-day you can buy mutton at 2d. and 3d. per lb. Why is it that mutton can be bought so cheaply? It is owing to the fact that sheep have come down in value. At one time you paid 1s. per lb. for chops. When wool was worth 36d. per pound, sheep were worth from £2 5s. to £3 per head. At the present moment you can buy fat sheep from 10s. upwards. As a result, mutton can be bought at from 2d. to 3d. per lb., notwithstanding the sale of the State butcher shops. It would not be correct or fair to claim that mutton is cheap to-day and that beef is dear because of the sale of the State butcher shops. Beef is dear because of the high price of cattle; and mutton is cheap because of the low price of sheep.

At 11.48 a.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Roberts, *East Toowoomba*), relieved the Speaker in the chair.

Mr. HANLON (*Paddington*): The Secretary for Railways has made a rather remarkable admission. In discussing the price of beef he has admitted that the State cattle stations have been thrown away at scrap prices at a time when he says that there is a shortage of cattle in the country and that the beef market is rising. Evidently the Government knowingly made a sacrifice of these properties when they knew the value was rising day by day, and the State had a better opportunity of getting a return from that property had the sales been held over for a little time. He says the price of beef is high now because cattle are dear; yet we find a group of cattle stations were sold the other day at an average price of £3 per head of the stock on them, with the improvements thrown in. If that was a fair price to pay, it will not convince the people that cattle are dear. However, that is by the way. It is remarkable that the Minister should say they sold at a scrap price on a rising market.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not true; I did not say that.

Mr. HANLON: The price of meat is rising day by day. The hon. gentleman said meat was 12s. 6d. per 100 lb. a couple of years ago, and it is now £3 per 100 lb. in the South. He says this rise is the effect of a beef shortage; yet we find the cattle stations were thrown away. It is undesirable for a Government to buy station property at a peak period in meat; but it is bad to sell in a period of depression knowing that a rising price is coming.

One of the most sensible actions of the late Government with regard to price control was the handing over of the fixing of prices to the same authority which fixes wages. We have heard a good deal of talk about a vicious circle—that a rise in wages causes a rise in prices, and that a rise in price is a justification for another rise in wages. It was statesmanlike on the part of the late Government to leave the fixing of the prices of commodities in the hands of the authority which fixes the cost of labour. It has operated successfully—I do not think anyone can say it has operated harshly. The Board of Trade and Arbitration has given very fair consideration to claims put forward by producers or wholesale suppliers. The fact that the board has been conferring with the wholesalers and suppliers is proof that in many cases goods are sold at a less rate than the wholesale price fixed by the Board of Trade and Arbitration.

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The hon. member for Murrumbidgee said that suppliers were getting too little for their milk. I understood him to say that the Board of Trade and Arbitration has not fixed the price of milk, and if that is so, then the board has not fixed the minimum price.

Mr. WARREN: It has not fixed the producer's price.

Mr. HANLON: If it has not fixed the producer's price, in what way is it affecting the price of milk? The hon. member said the Board of Trade and Arbitration is allowing the distributors to get too much.

Mr. WARREN: I did not say that at all.

Mr. HANLON: If it has not fixed the producer's price of milk, in what way is it interfering with the producer getting a fair price? Evidently he wishes the Board of Trade and Arbitration to fix a fair price for milk.

Mr. WARREN: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. HANLON: I cannot understand what the hon. member means. Evidently the milk suppliers are getting the best price they can get. If it is not fixed, they are getting the best price possible in the market; but I understood that it was fixed. When the price of milk was fixed during the war, many wholesalers were selling milk at a lower price than that fixed by the Board of Trade and Arbitration, which showed that the board had not been harsh in fixing the price.

The same applies to groceries. In many cases groceries were sold at lower prices than those fixed by the Board of Trade and Arbitration, showing that the board had not been harsh in fixing the maximum price at which groceries could be sold.

There is another reason why I hope the Board of Trade and Arbitration is not going to be harsh in its price-fixing activities. Just recently the Government, in addition to parting with State stations, disposed of the State cannery, which was paying interest on a capital value of £62,000, and making a profit in addition. Hon. members opposite thought jam could be produced more cheaply by that factory if it were under private enterprise. If there was anything in their argument, the present owners of the cannery should be able to produce jam much more cheaply than the State cannery, which was paying interest on a capital value of £62,000, because they got it for something in the vicinity of £31,000. Therefore, on the same turnover, and with the same system of management, it would be returning double the interest rate which it was returning to the Government. If the present management is more efficient, we should look for a decrease in the price of jam in this State; but we find jam dealers are now advising clients to buy jam against the rise. That leads me to think that we are faced in the near future in Brisbane with a rise in the price of jam.

I hope that the Board of Trade and Arbitration will be allowed by the Government to discharge its legitimate functions, and that it will not be interfered with in its protection of the consumer from this barefaced exploitation with which he is confronted. The board has not given satisfaction to everybody—no public utility has ever satisfied every member of the community—but, in the main, its operations have been

a great benefit to the consumers; and no one can say that it has been in any way harsh to suppliers.

Resolution (Department of Labour and Industry—Board of Trade and Arbitration) agreed to.

Resolutions 12, 13, and 14 agreed to.

Resolution 15—"Department of Public Works—Buildings"—

Mr. BARBER (*Bundaberg*): Seeing that the Secretary for Public Works is also Secretary for Public Instruction, he may be able to give me some information as to the building of an intermediate school at Bundaberg. I want to emphasise that the accommodation in the schools in Bundaberg, especially on the south side of the river, is overtaxed. On visiting the South Bundaberg school, I found that the teachers reported a large increase in enrolment, and had had to bring in new seats, and that in some cases the rooms were called upon to accommodate eight, ten, and twelve more pupils in classes than ordinarily they should. The department will have to make considerable extensions to the South Bundaberg school or else provide for an intermediate school. I know that the establishment of intermediate schools is in its infancy; and it may be some time before it is decided what is to happen in Bundaberg. The difficulty applies also to the Central school, but mostly to the South Bundaberg school; and I would like to know whether any action has yet been taken regarding an extension of the latter or the provision of an intermediate school.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): I want to refer to a matter I endeavoured to discuss on another vote yesterday—the change in the policy of the Government from the day-labour system to the contract system, so far as it affects public or semi-government bodies, such as hospital boards.

[12 noon.]

In my opinion, the members of the Townsville Hospital Board were placed in a very unfair position. Certain additions to the hospital were required, and, as a result of its experience with the Department of Public Works, the board decided to allow that department to carry out the work by day labour. They were informed that they would not be permitted to have the work constructed by the department, and were obliged to call tenders for the major portion of the job. I want to say, for the credit of the Minister, who received a deputation on the matter, that he agreed to a compromise to the effect that the foundation work should be carried out by day labour so that there would be no cessation in the work. The hospital boards are responsible for the financing of the institutions, and they should be permitted to carry out their work in the most economical way; but, having decided in this case that the work should be carried out by the department, they were told that they would have to abide by the policy of the new Government. That is wrong. There is an analogy between hospital boards and local authorities with respect to their connection with the Government; and I would like to know whether the local authorities are to be coerced in a similar fashion.

The West End State school at Townsville—a very old building—one of the oldest in North Queensland—when constructed, was

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placed very close to the ground. For years I have agitated for the raising of this school upon high blocks, because it would then provide additional accommodation and a cooler place in which to conduct classes. This would be of material advantage from the point of view of the health of children and teachers alike, particularly during the summer months. The cost involved is small, and I urge upon the Minister the necessity for attending to this urgent requirement as soon as the necessary finances are available.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. R. M. King, *Logan*): I can assure the hon. member for Bundaberg that the matter mentioned by him will receive serious consideration. The policy of the Government in connection with intermediate schools is similar to the policy of the previous Government, as I have already announced.

In reply to the hon. member for Townsville, I say quite candidly that I countermanded the instructions in connection with the addition to the Townsville hospital that were proposed to be carried out by day labour. I intimated that the contract system would have to be adopted. I make no apology for that action. I am speaking from memory, and I regret that I have not the exact figures available at the moment so that I might give them to the House, but my action has already saved the people of Townsville over £2,000. I can say without any hesitation that at least £2,000—probably £3,000—has been saved by the substitution of the contract system for day labour in the erection of this building. So far as the raising of the West End State school is concerned, I will give this matter attention, and have it brought before the department.

Resolution (Department of Public Works—Buildings) agreed to.

Resolutions 16 and 17 agreed to.

Resolution 18—"Department of Mines—Chief Office"—

MR. PEASE (*Herbert*): This party is concerned with the future development of our State coalmines. I understand that in the early stages of the session the hon. member for Bowen asked a question relative to the Government's policy in connection with State coalmines, and was informed that it was the intention of the Government to discontinue operations in all State coalmines except the Bowen State coalmine. I also understand that since then the Secretary for Mines has made certain arrangements for the carrying on of the Mount Mulligan State coalmine by the miners on tribute. I do not know whether that experiment will be successful or not, because, unfortunately, the miners have already struck trouble in marketing their product, through the non-washing of the coal on account of the expense. It looks as though the new arrangement will not be remunerative to the miners. We hope it will be so, because it will be a pity if that mining field is closed down.

I am sorry the Premier is not in his place, because I wanted to discuss the future policy of the Government with regard to the overseas marketing of coal, and, more particularly, the agreement that was entered into by the late Government with Mr. H. C. Sleigh for the overseas marketing of the coal from the Bowen State coalmine. Certain charges were made on the floor of this Chamber

in regard to this matter; and I regret that the Premier so far has not given us an opportunity to discuss this agreement, or to appoint a select committee to analyse the statements that were made. Personally, I consider that, before the Estimates were finalised, it would have been advantageous if this matter had been cleared up. Certain charges were made in connection with this agreement, and those charges should either be proved or withdrawn. I say unhesitatingly that it is not right that charges should be made under the cloak of parliamentary privilege.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

MR. PEASE: We are concerned about the marketing of our coal overseas. We realise that any attempt made to market our coal overseas will be a good thing for the State. We realise that, if any scheme for the overseas marketing of our coal is interfered with, or is not continued, it will be a very bad thing for the State. Everyone realises that our great problem to-day is the finding of markets for our products. In Queensland it is not so much a question of production, more particularly with respect to coal, as it is of markets. The question is to find suitable markets. Our local market is limited, and naturally the market we are looking for is an overseas market. An attempt was made by the late Government to do something in this direction. Anyone who knows anything about mining knows that an increased output means decreased overhead expenses, decreased cost of production, and a greater opportunity of making the mine a payable proposition. Our problem at the Bowen State coalmine was to reduce the cost of production; and the idea of the late Government in attempting to establish an overseas market for that coal was to reduce the cost of production and make the mine a payable one. It certainly would provide more employment, and would be of great benefit to North Queensland generally. That was the principal reason which actuated the late Secretary for Mines and the late Government in entering into that agreement.

I notice that the Auditor-General discusses that agreement in his report, and points out that the price is too low. If the price has turned out to be too low, then most certainly it should be reviewed. As I say, the idea of the late Government was to develop the activities of the mine and to find new markets for the coal produced. It is well known to any business man that, after the first expenditure of a business has been met, there is generally a movement to expend money in the development of the business, and to place more goods on the market. In entering into this agreement the idea was that a certain amount of money would be allowed to the other party to the agreement for advertising purposes. As the hon. member for Bowen very ably pointed out, the gentleman concerned rendered excellent service in that regard, and spent a considerable amount of money in advertising and exploiting new markets. I understand that quite recently the Premier saw that gentleman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the hon. member to keep in mind that there is a definite notice of motion on the business sheet proposing that the whole matter of the Sleigh agreement should be inquired into. I know it is difficult to draw the line of demarcation, but I ask the hon.

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member to remember the notice of motion which stands in his own name.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): I rise to a point of order—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr. POLLOCK: You ought to let me state it. Under the Standing Orders I am entitled to do so.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have merely drawn the attention of the hon. member for Herbert to a certain matter. The hon. member for Herbert has the floor.

Mr. POLLOCK: Am I not entitled to state a point of order?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr. POLLOCK: My point of order is that, no doubt, your ruling would be that, as there is a notice of motion on the business paper in connection with this matter, hon. members are not entitled to anticipate it. That is strictly in accordance with parliamentary procedure, and it might be all right, provided we are ever allowed to discuss that motion. If the Government would give us some indication—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. POLLOCK: As to whether we shall be allowed to discuss it—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have already stated that there will be an opportunity of discussing it on a motion now on the business paper.

Mr. POLLOCK: But will we be afforded an opportunity of discussing that motion?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I cannot say. Mr. Pease.

Mr. PEASE: In dealing with this matter it is very difficult not to be drawn on to discuss certain points which may be out of order. If the Premier would indicate—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I do not want any misunderstanding on this matter. I am not going to allow the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to get a discussion on this matter when he knows that he will have an opportunity of discussing it later.

Mr. POLLOCK: We do not believe we will have a later opportunity.

Mr. PEASE: I am concerned as to what will happen in future regarding the overseas market for Bowen coal. It is only fair that the Premier should let us know what is taking place in that regard.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no objection to that.

Mr. PEASE: We know that the Premier has seen Mr. Sleigh, and I think he should give the House some information regarding that interview with reference to the future of Bowen coal. We want to see a satisfactory overseas market established for Bowen coal, and we want to know what the Government intend to do.

Mr. MAHER: Do you still want to give the coal away?

Mr. PEASE: We want the Government to attend to these matters. The hon. member who interjects is not a business man, or he would realise that money must be spent in exploiting new markets. Does the hon. mem-

ber forget that butter and sugar are sold overseas at a lower price than in Queensland, simply with the object of building up a market for our surplus production? The great sugar industry that I have the honour to represent sells sugar overseas at £10 per ton solely to make a market, whereas here it is sold for over £20 per ton.

Mr. KENNY: It is bad business.

Mr. PEASE: The hon. member should talk to his Secretary for Agriculture, and tell him that it is bad business. Everybody knows that it is necessary to do this sort of thing, more particularly in a primary producing State. Something has to be done in regard to our coalmines, and what we are concerned about is, What is going to be the future regarding the overseas market for this coal? The Labour Government did initiate something which was for the benefit of the coal industry of Queensland and for the benefit, more particularly, of Bowen and the Bowen State coalmine. We have there a fine class of coal, which only needs to be known overseas, when a constant market will be obtained for it. Arrangements were made by the Labour Government to see that an overseas market was opened up.

We want to know what is going to happen in the handling of that coal so far as Townsville is concerned. The agent there only got a small wage of £7 per week. He did excellent work. He worked up trade for coal all over the place, and we want to know what is going to happen now that that man has been dismissed. We think it is a wrong thing to dismiss a good servant. I understand the Department of Mines, in giving Mr. Byrne his notice of dismissal, tendered him a compliment for the good work he had done; and anyone who knows anything about Mr. Byrne in Townsville knows that he is an excellent man. I do a good deal of travelling in North Queensland, and I know Mr. Byrne did a lot of travelling and went to a lot of trouble to secure a trade. He worked night and day looking for a market for coal, and interviewed the sugar people and the meatworks. He is recognised as one of the most conscientious officers the Government ever had; yet, for some reason or other, this man has been dismissed. Is the Department of Mines going to see that an official is appointed to attend to the marketing of that coal? This man worked up a very fine market for the coal, and it is the duty of the Government, more particularly when you have such an excellent mine and such excellent coal as the Bowen coal, to see that that product is put before the people and a good market found for it. It is astounding to me to realise that a man who was doing good work in that respect should have been dismissed. I do not know of any man who can fill the position as well as Mr. Byrne did.

In connection with the overseas trade, if, as the Auditor-General says, the price is too low, then a review of the position should take place. When the arrangement was made, no one anticipated the position that has since arisen in the coal trade. At the time the agreement was made, there was no trouble in the Southern coalfields, and naturally there was no interstate trade. The trade provided for was essentially an overseas trade. Anybody who knows Bowen will know, as the hon. member for Bowen so ably pointed out, that the shipping facilities

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there are very good. Steamers have come there from all parts to take coal. An overseas trade has been worked up, and we are concerned to know what is going to happen in the future in regard to that trade. It is a good thing for the district and if the trade is developed it is going to mean a big thing to the Bowen coalmine. The hon. member for Burrum, who is the only member on the Government side who understands the coal business, considers that the Bowen coalmine is the only coalmine that should be kept by the State. What we are concerned about is what is to be the future development of that mine.

I am sorry we are not permitted to deal with the other matter. The Premier has not been fair to this House. He has certain information; he has had interviews with the people handling this matter, but he is not prepared to give that information to the House. All we are concerned about is to have the matter cleaned up properly. I am sorry we are not able to discuss that matter. I think the Deputy Speaker's ruling on the matter is correct; but I think the Premier has treated this side of the House very unfairly in the matter.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to allow the hon. member to debate the action of the Premier on this resolution. There will be an opportunity later to discuss the matter.

Mr. PEASE: I am quite prepared to apologise for any remarks I have made with regard to the Premier, if he will let us have the matter discussed. What we are concerned about is what is going to be the future of the overseas market for this particular commodity. We want to know what is going on, and the Premier should give us what information he has. That is only fair. Innuendoes are thrown out; aspersions are made; newspaper controversy goes on; and this is the place where these remarks should be made. I understand the Premier has made statements to the newspapers in regard to the marketing of Bowen coal. He should make them in this House. There is no reflection on the Premier in saying that. This is the place, and now is the time. When we are discussing the Mines Estimates is the time when we should be told exactly what is going to happen. We should know why that man in Townsville was dismissed; what is going to happen in the future; and what the Government's position is going to be regarding the overseas trade. What we object to is that Parliament is used to cloak attacks made on certain people.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I regret very much that, when the Mines Estimates were under discussion, I was unable to be present, as I was suffering at the time from illness. As one who has taken a very keen interest in the development of the Bowen coalfield, having seen it at its very early stages when there were practically no people there at all, and having seen the growth of the population to over 2,000 people, I am anxious to see that nothing is done that will injure the further development of that important coalfield. I was always under the impression—maybe I was wrong—that anything that appeared in the Auditor-General's report could be discussed in this House; but I find from a ruling just given by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are prevented to

some extent from discussing matters mentioned in that report.

I have no wish to get round your ruling; but I want to say a few words in connection with the export of coal from Bowen, and the stand I have always taken in connection with that matter. The attitude I took up in the early stages of the development of the Bowen coalfield was that, in the interests of the Bowen Harbour Board on the one hand and the railways on the other, and to create permanent employment for the miners on the field, it was desirable that we should try to build up an export trade in coal. I realised that we were up against a very stiff proposition indeed, as Newcastle coal was known throughout the whole of the civilised world; and to get our coal on the market it was necessary that the price should be reduced. Everyone knows that people who have been accustomed for a considerable time to deal with a commodity like coal are very conservative in regard to taking coal from a source other than that from which they have previously obtained it. Therefore, with a view of trying to enable the Bowen Harbour Board to meet its liability to the Government, after £200,000 had been spent in equipping one of the finest jetties in Queensland if not in the whole of the British Empire, with loading cranes equal to anything to be found in any part of the world, it was necessary to take certain action. On more than one occasion I not only interviewed the late Secretary for Mines, but wrote letters to the Mines Department and to the then Premier, urging that, if Queensland was to get an export trade in coal, it was necessary that the price should be reduced, and necessary, perhaps, to reduce it below the cost of production. After a considerable time the Government agreed to the proposal, and I am very pleased to say that to a certain extent it was a success.

In his report the Auditor-General shows that the cost of production in 1927-28 was 13s. 9.30d., and for 1928-29 13s. 11.95d. He also shows that the average price received last year for certain coal that was exported was 11s. 4.3d. per ton. The amount of that coal that was exported was 27,402 tons 15 cwt. On that coal, therefore, the figures showed a loss of approximately 2s. 7d. per ton. I have given a good deal of time to this question, and I wish to point out to the House that it was only in the financial year 1927-28 that the State's royalty on coal was increased from 6d. to 1s. per ton. If the royalty is increased, naturally profits are decreased; and the point I want to make is that there was not a loss of 2s. 7d. a ton on that coal, because, if there had been no export trade—the bulk of the coal went to New Caledonia—the State would not have benefited to the extent of that 1s. per ton, because the coal would have remained in the ground. The State received £1,370 in royalty in respect of the export of that particular coal, which it otherwise would not have received. Of course, more coal than that was exported from Bowen; but I am dealing with this particular coal, and I want to point out that the Auditor-General has not taken into consideration—as he ought to have done—the factor I have just mentioned. If that coal had remained in the ground it would have been of no value to anyone, and to that extent the loss on that particular quantity of coal is lessened.

I emphasise that very few members realise that, while the profits of the State coalmine

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at Bowen are stated in the Auditor-General's report as a little over £4,718, no mention was made by the Auditor-General of the royalty paid to the Department of Mines, which, on the whole output of the mine, amounted to a great deal more than those profits. That fact needs to be taken into consideration.

I am naturally interested in this export trade. Why not? Has it not increased employment on the water front at Bowen? Have we not a larger number of men engaged there than have worked there for years past, as a result of the fact that we have worked up this export trade and steamer bunkering trade? Has all this not meant an increased business for the people of Bowen and increased traffic on our railways? Has it not meant increased employment at the State mine? Has not all this meant an increase in the earnings and consequently in the spending capacity of the people, enabling them to buy many more commodities than they would have been able to afford if they had had less employment?

[12.30 p.m.]

If the Government are not prepared to do these things in connection with the export trade in coal, and they are not prepared to make any sacrifice which would mean probably that they would lose on the one hand but would gain on the other, if they are not prepared to do these things and thereby provide constant employment, then there is no hope for the future development of Queensland or of Australia. Have not the same things been done in connection with our sugar industry, and do they not practically apply in connection with our butter production? A lesser price is received for the products exported overseas than that paid in Australia.

The Auditor-General's report is a very important report, and for the first time since I have been in Parliament we are not allowed to discuss a part of that report. I claim the right to discuss any part of the report, even though it might refer to the Sleigh agreement, which it does. Owing to the state of my health I have no desire to come into conflict with the Chair—it would do me no good. I am speaking under great difficulties even at the present time. I have risen on this occasion only because I have taken such a keen interest in this question and a keen interest in the development generally of my electorate, of which I am very proud, because no electorate in Queensland has shown the same rapid progress and development, not only in connection with coalmining but in connection with every other matter. Naturally I do not wish to see anything done that might injure the development of that part of Queensland which I have the honour to represent in this Parliament. I do not know anything about what took place when Mr. Sleigh visited Brisbane recently, nor do I know anything about the interview that he had with the Premier, or whether the Premier referred the matter to the Secretary for Mines. More than likely the Secretary for Mines will tell us all about it when he rises to reply. Although our views may be opposed politically, I take it that the hon. gentleman, as Secretary for Mines, does not want to do anything—at least I hope not—that would be likely to injure the development of the Bowen coalfield. When I ascertained from the Commonwealth "Year Book" that South

Australia consumed a very large quantity of coal, I regretted that we had not a more up-to-date Government at the present time to deal with the matter. It would pay the Secretary for Mines to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Thomas, a member of the British Labour Government, who did not hesitate, when visiting Canada, to take samples of coal with him with a view to establishing a trade with Great Britain.

The time of the Minister would be well spent in a journey to South Australia to interview the Premier, the Secretary for Railways, or the Commissioner for Railways in that State. The time would be well spent in a visit to Victoria. Victoria consumes 500,000 tons of coal in excess of the production in that State. There should be great possibilities for the opening up of a coal trade in the Southern States, not only for the Bowen coalfield but for the whole of Queensland. I believe that we have the greatest coal deposits of any State in the Commonwealth. I have endeavoured to prove that, as a result of the development of the Bowen coalfield, those engaged on the water front are enjoying increased employment, the railwaymen have more constant employment, and the coalminers have had more constant employment than has been the case in the past. If we are able to increase the earning capacity of the workers in the community, then it means general prosperity all round.

I shall now deal with the question of prospecting. I willingly admit that I have met with fair treatment in the past from the ex-Secretary for Mines, and I have had fair treatment from the present Minister in connection with the prospecting vote; but for years I have been dissatisfied with the amount of money voted for prospecting. In my electorate there exists a large mineral belt of country. For years I was unable to convince the ex-Secretary for Mines of the necessity for a proper method of prospecting. If he had remained in office for another two or three years, I might have been successful in convincing him. We have had the experience of individual prospectors, but results have not been satisfactory.

My idea of prospecting—and I have advocated it in this House for years, just as I was the first man in Parliament to advocate the geophysical system of prospecting—is that a prospecting party should go out under a trained geologist. Let me give hon. members an illustration. To the south of the Bowen coalfield is a vast mineral field reaching to within a few miles of Proserpine. A geologist should be placed in charge of the prospecting party, and should take an area of country in that district 10 miles wide and examine it geologically. A party of five or six men could do all the testing that is required. If a shaft were required to be sunk, it could be sunk under the supervision of the geologist. By that method we might make some discovery that would be for the benefit of Queensland. Speaking as an old miner, I know that a number of men who go out prospecting know very little about minerals outside of gold; and this prospecting party under the trained geologist could look for all minerals. I am quite satisfied that they would get good results. I would like to see this proposal carried out in my electorate, because within it is the old Normanby goldfield, to which, in company with a geologist, I paid a visit in order to get a proper insight into the field. I told the people of Bowen that I would not

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favour any attempt being made to open up reefs that were worked years and years ago, for I realise that those old miners had a large amount of intelligence, that they knew gold, and knew how to follow gold. What I believed and still believe—the Normanby reefs are not large, but there are numerous leaders ranging from an inch to six inches in width, and big lodes might also be discovered—is that many of the leaders showing there could be opened up, and men would be able to make a living working them. We have a State battery on the Normanby goldfield at the present time, and I hope that the Secretary for Mines will see that the grass is cut around it in order to preserve it from bush fires. If my proposal were acted upon, a prospecting party under a geologist might be able to open up some of those leaders which will give men a decent living and help to relieve the unemployment market.

In conclusion, I hope that nothing will be done to injure the export trade from the Bowen coalfield, because any such action would injure the port of Bowen. I would not care to see any injury done to my electorate, which I have done so much in assisting to build up. Even if the loss of 1s. 7d. per ton on the export trade which I mentioned does take place, I am sure that, if we create a greater export trade, the cost of production will be reduced. If it is not reduced, then all the teaching of economists are wrong, for they teach us that increased production means lesser cost of production.

Mr. POLLOCK: The mines inspector admitted that the greater the production the less the cost of production.

Mr. COLLINS: That is true. Further reference is made in the report of the Auditor-General to the sale of duff coal to Swifts Limited. Thousands of tons of duff have been sold at 5s. per ton. There was nothing wrong in that transaction. Duff is practically the dust from the coal, and in the future will be used to a large extent and be known as pulverised coal. Previously the value of duff was not realised. There were thousands of tons of this duff stacked at the Bowen coalmine. It was in danger of being swept into the watercourse in time of flood. It had no value stacked at the mine; and the very fact that we were able to get even 5s. per ton from Swifts proved that it was of some value. There was no outcry because it was sold to Swifts at that rate, notwithstanding the fact that the miners received over 6s. per ton to hew that coal.

At 12.40 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. COLLINS: Although it was sold at a loss compared with the hewing rate, that was much better than allowing it to be washed away.

I regret very much that the Deputy Speaker gave a ruling that a certain agreement could not be dealt with. It is the first time during the whole of my parliamentary experience that a discussion has not been permitted on a matter mentioned in the Auditor-General's report. Parliament is degenerating if I cannot discuss any such matter notwithstanding that a notice of motion on the subject appears on the business paper. I consider that I have a right to discuss the report of the Auditor-General, who is not a departmental officer, but is an officer

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responsible to Parliament. However, owing to the state of my health, I do not intend to get into conflict with the Chair or upset myself in any way, so I content myself with the few remarks I have made on the coal export trade.

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): I am pleased that the Secretary for Mines is in his place, because I want to impress upon him the necessity for doing everything possible to encourage the building up of an export trade in coal. The importance of the matter is particularly emphasised by a consideration of the position in New South Wales. In a report which I have in my hand it is shown that in 1913 the total coal production in New South Wales was 10,000,000 tons, which, with the periodical fluctuations, was maintained yearly until 1922. Out of a production of 10,182,000 tons in that year, 2,208,000 tons were exported overseas to such markets as Alaska, Borneo, British New Guinea, Canada, Cape Colony, Chili, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, France, Gilbert Islands, Great Britain, Holland, Hongkong, India, Japan, Java, Mauritius, Marshall Islands, Natal, New Caledonia, New Guinea, New Hebrides, New Zealand, Norway, Ocean Island, Panama, Peru, Philippine Islands, Sandwich Islands, Straits Settlements, and the Solomon Islands. That will give hon. members some idea of the extensive nature of the overseas markets which exist for a commodity that we have in this State, and in connection with which very little has been done so far—although I admit the Labour Government did make some attempt to encourage an export trade—to enable those producing it to sell it at a price at which competition with other countries could be met. When New South Wales was exporting coal in great quantities, the price was from £1 0s. 6d. to £1 1s. 6d. f.o.b. As a result, however, of recent competition from South Africa, where the Government give a rebate up to 8s. 6d. per ton on coal exported, the export trade of New South Wales has seriously declined. Despite the excellent coaling facilities at Newcastle, the export coal trade of New South Wales is under 1,000,000 tons per annum at the present time.

Mr. KELSO: Have you any figures as to the cost of production?

Mr. FOLEY: South African coal can be exported at from 11s. to 12s. per ton f.o.b., which makes it difficult for even New South Wales, with its excellent coaling facilities, to compete.

Mr. KELSO: There is no loss on the cost of production on New South Wales coal.

Mr. FOLEY: Not that I am aware of. I am speaking of the average price obtained for the total amount exported. There were times when the exporters, in order to maintain their markets, had to export coal below cost of production. I know one or two small companies in Queensland, who could ill afford to do it, who have already sent away from 200 to 300 tons of coal in an endeavour to get their coal established on the overseas markets. The previous Administration went so far as to assist the Blair Athol district and coalmines west from Rockhampton, in the Central district. It was pointed out to the Treasurer of the day that the freight charges that were then imposed made it almost impossible for those mines to place coal on boats at a price at which they could hope to compete with New South Wales

coal; and the Treasurer of the day agreed to carry coal in Queensland at a rate of 4d. per ton per mile, which hon. members must admit was a considerable concession. It was practically a peppercorn freight rate, but, notwithstanding that low rate, these companies still have difficulty in securing an export trade. The recent trouble in New South Wales has assisted, not only Bowen, but some of the coalmines in the hinterland of the Central district. We export many commodities at a loss in order to keep an industry going. I do not say we could do that with every industry in the country, but where there is an opportunity of building up a trade which will mean the circulation of tremendous sums of money in the country the Government should go to the extreme in the way of granting concessions to enable coal producers to fight the competition from South Africa and other countries, and eventually establish our coal on the overseas markets on its merit. We can supply coal equal to any coal produced in South Africa. An attempt was made along those lines in the agreement made with Mr. Sleigh.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot introduce that subject.

Mr. FOLEY: It is bearing on the subject.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot introduce that subject.

Mr. FOLEY: I do not want to create a brawl, but I want to refer to a section of the agreement.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot refer to the agreement.

Mr. FOLEY: The Auditor-General makes reference to the loss on the export coal trade, which is another way of arriving at the point I wish to make. Complaints have been made by hon. members on the Government side against the loss made. I claim that, if we ever intend to establish Queensland coal on the overseas market, we shall have to make a loss for a number of years and let the home market make up that loss, as is done in connection with other commodities. Other countries are doing the same thing. The South African Government give a rebate of 8s. 6d. per ton on all coal exported, which enables the coalmines in that country to compete not only with Wales and other coalmines in Britain, but also with coalmines in Australia. We shall have to adopt similar tactics to establish our coal. If we allow them to adopt those tactics and get their coal on the overseas market, these users will take no other coal.

If we can concede to companies freight rates and other concessions to enable them to fairly compete with South Africa, we shall have the advantage of getting our coal, which is a superior product, on some of the markets which South Africa is now supplying; and, once it is used in those countries, we shall be able to maintain a trade with them, and eventually get a price approaching a reasonable cost of production. I hope the Secretary for Mines will do everything possible to build up an export trade in coal. We have in the Blair Athol district a coalmine with an average of 65 feet of clean coal—one of the best seams of coal in the world, and the largest seam of steam coal in the world. If the company were given a concession, it would be able to place the coal on boats at Gladstone or Broadmount at a

reasonable price, and be able to adopt other methods of marketing than are being adopted there to-day. In that mine it is possible to strip the overburden and produce coal at a price in the vicinity of 2s. or 3s. per ton. They are doing that in some countries where there is 20 to 30 feet of overburden in some places. In Alabama, in the United States of America, they are using Bucyrus shovels and stripping 30 feet of overburden and marketing the coal successfully from narrow seams 28 to 33 inches in width. We have at Blair Athol a seam of 65 feet of clean steam coal with an average of 60 feet of overburden; and it would be stripped if inducements were offered to this company to enable it to build up a market. It would then have sufficient confidence to adopt a different system of mining, thereby cutting down the cost of production enormously.

Mr. NIMMO: Didn't Blair Athol try that?

Mr. FOLEY: No; it has never got to that stage. There was an effort to adopt that system of mining, but, after spending £20,000 to make an open-cut, the funds were exhausted before the coal was reached, and it could not get support from any financial institution to carry on. There the hole lies at Blair Athol at the present time, and no further work being done, as no encouragement is being given to the company operating there to go on with the scheme. No managing director can recommend to its company the installation of machinery, such as Bucyrus shovels and elevating machinery, costing from £100,000 to £150,000, if he cannot see any chance, when the coal is produced, of marketing it overseas, as, owing to our present port charges, royalties, and such like charges, it is impossible to do anything. We shall have to go on similar lines to South Africa, at least for a year or so, if we wish to establish our coal on the overseas market.

Mr. MAHER: Is your company prepared to continue selling coal under the cost of production?

Mr. FOLEY: It has already done it. It is not what you would call a big, powerful company.

Mr. MAHER: You want the State to do what you want.

Mr. FOLEY: The South African Government have given a royalty or rebate of 8s. 6d. per ton; and the export runs to thousands of tons a year. The South African coal is getting a market all over the world. The export coal trade of New South Wales has been cut down by half as the result of those methods by South Africa. We must adopt those methods, and the State, being richer than coalmining companies, must assist them if they wish this particular trade to be developed. A company cannot possibly expect to do it by itself.

The Bowen and Styx River State mines are much better situated than Blair Athol, because they are practically right on the coast; and, although their cost of production is a little high as compared with that in South Africa, much could be done with sympathetic administration by the Government to establish their coal on some of the markets I have mentioned.

It has been announced that Mr. Frank Byrne, who was acting as agent for the Department of Mines in placing its coal on

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the local market, will eventually be dismissed. I do not know whether he has been dismissed up to date; but I would point out that he has given excellent service. He is an energetic man, with plenty of push, who can approach practically any coal user and put his case well; and, if the Minister dismisses him, he will have to appoint somebody in his place—somebody who can be right on the spot in the centres where Bowen coal is distributed. The amount which Mr. Byrne has been receiving is but a small percentage of the actual cost of production, and would not amount to one-thousandth part of a penny per ton of coal produced at the Bowen State coalmine and sold by him. I cannot understand the department dismissing a man who has done such excellent service in improving the sale of Bowen coal on the local market when it is known that, if production from the field is to be maintained, somebody else will have to take his place. I do not think it is possible to get a better man.

I trust that the Secretary for Mines will do something to induce the Government to do something in the way of giving concessions to producers in Queensland to enable them to build up an overseas trade.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): It appears to me that the practice of the Bowen State coalmine of endeavouring to market coal by selling it at a price even lower than the cost of production is fairly generally adopted by firms starting out with a new line.

It is not an uncommon business practice on the part of people who desire to place a new line upon a new market to sell that commodity at less than the cost of production in order to secure the business. First of all, it is essential that the commodity sought to be sold should become known

[2 p.m.] and established. Every business firm recognises the necessity for making some sacrifice in that regard. Let me illustrate the case of the A.C.B. and perhaps the drapery establishment of the Treasurer. I do not desire to be personal, but I use these places merely by way of illustration. It is not an uncommon thing for the A.C.B. to put a line of groceries on the market actually at less than cost price. I believe that certain wholesale firms found it necessary to prevent the A.C.B. in this action. The object of the A.C.B. I know was to draw the custom to other lines on which they made a huge profit.

Mr. MAXWELL: What other lines would the State have apart from the coal?

Mr. POLLOCK: I know that the case is not an exact analogy, but I use it for the purpose of illustration. It was necessary to establish an overseas market, and, in order to establish that market, it was necessary that the products should become well and favourably known. If the market which the Government sought to obtain had been secured, is it not obvious that an increased output would enable the production costs to be decreased? I am merely taking the experience of men like Henry Ford and other well-known manufacturers on a large scale. If such a system were adopted, the State of Queensland could become a producer of coal in a big way. If the State chose to establish a coal trade on a foreign market and temporarily lost on the deal in order to secure the increased output, it would follow that there would be a decreased cost of production. It is not unreasonable to assume

that an increased output would mean a decrease in the cost of production, and eventually the coal would be sold at a lower price. It is laid down as an axiom by big business men that the bigger the output the lower the cost of production. Otherwise how do we secure the motor car so cheaply under the system of mass production? It is because of the increased output. Obviously then, if the State wishes to secure an overseas trade in coal, it necessarily must make sacrifices in the beginning in order to advertise the product.

I do not desire to get round the ruling of the Deputy Speaker in any way, Mr. Speaker. I have no intention of trying to do so. We cannot. The Speaker gives a ruling, and there is no use trying to get round it. I am sorry that the Premier is not in his place this afternoon. The ruling given by the Deputy Speaker was to the effect that we could not discuss the Sleigh contract because there was on the business sheet a specific motion with that object in view. The ruling is a sound one, and in accordance with parliamentary procedure, provided we are given an opportunity to discuss the motion referred to. If the Premier had given us an undertaking that we would have an opportunity of discussing the motion at a later stage, nobody would have endeavoured to introduce the matter during the discussion on this resolution. We do not believe that we shall be given an opportunity to discuss it. We believe that it will be among the "slaughtered innocents" at the end of the session, and, therefore, the man whose honour has been impugned will not have a chance to reply to any of the charges that have been made against him.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. E. A. Atherton, *Chillagoe*): In reply to the discussion which has been continued for the last hour or so by members of the Opposition, I desire to state that there is no intention of discontinuing the work in the coalmines mentioned, more especially in the Bowen State coalmine, which has come under discussion this morning.

The hon. member for Herbert referred to certain charges, presumably made by myself, in connection with the sale of coal from the Bowen State coalmine, but the Deputy Speaker ruled that at this stage those charges could not be discussed. Whatever I said on the floor of this House on a previous occasion has been verified in the report of the Auditor-General. As hon. members have quoted from the report of the Auditor-General, I also desire to do likewise. Hon. members questioned the figures which I gave concerning the margin between the price to produce the coal, the price under the contract, and the price at which the Bowen coal has been sold to other consumers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman will not be order in dealing with that subject.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Auditor-General in his report says—

"As the average cost of production in 1927-28 was 13s. 9.3d., and in 1928-29 13s. 11.95d., the prices paid by Sleigh are considerably under production costs."

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Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman is not in order in referring to the Sleigh contract.

Mr. POLLOCK: We will want to refer to it if the Minister is allowed to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member for Herbert endeavoured to draw an analogy between the loss sustained on the export price of coal and the loss sustained on the export of butter and sugar, but the comparison is quite out of place.

Mr. POLLOCK: Because you don't eat coal.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The sugar-growers do not allow a middleman to make a profit from the sale of sugar exported overseas. The sugar exported and disposed of overseas is handled by the Sugar Board, who obtain the best possible price for the exportable surplus in the overseas markets. Under their method of dealing with the exportable surplus no personal benefit accrues to any middleman, as there does under the Sleigh coal contract. There is this further difference between the sale of our sugar and coal: The sugar sold to the other States of the Commonwealth is not classed as export sugar; but the coal that is sold in the other States of the Commonwealth is classed as an export sale. Therefore, the sale of the two products is conducted on a different basis altogether.

In referring to the Townsville agent of the Bowen coalmine, the hon. member for Herbert asked if anyone would be appointed when he vacated the position. I can assure the hon. member that when Mr. Byrne retires from the position someone will be there to negotiate in the interests of the Bowen coalmine, which will not be left without a selling agent. The hon. member mentioned that he had met Mr. Byrne on several occasions; in fact, he said he had met him all over the country. Probably the hon. member met Mr. Byrne as far south as Adelaide. Now, it was no use Mr. Byrne or anyone else in his position going to South Australia to try to sell coal there, because Mr. Sleigh—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have already ruled that reference to the Sleigh agreement is entirely out of order, and I hope the hon. gentleman will not refer to that matter at this juncture.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Outside of coal for bunkering purposes, Mr. Byrne could not sell coal outside of Queensland. That answer also applies to the query of the hon. member for Bowen as to the advisability of sending someone to South Australia.

The hon. member for Herbert stated that he did not know a person who could fill this position as satisfactorily as Mr. Byrne. All I can say is that the hon. member for Herbert does not know every individual in Queensland. There are quite a number of people whom he does not know—possibly to their benefit.

The hon. member for Leichhardt was quite concerned as to whether developments would continue at the Bowen coalmine. For the last month or so that mine has been producing more coal than ever before, possibly due to the amount that is being exported at present. At the same time, the day may come when the mine will not be worked so consistently, for the simple reason that,

when normal conditions again prevail on the coalfields in New South Wales, we shall probably lose as much as 50 per cent. of the business which we are now transacting. Of course, I naturally hope we shall be able to maintain some of the export business if the price is a little more suitable.

We are also in negotiation with the Mount Isa Mines, Limited, concerning Bowen coal. Quite recently we sent away a parcel of coal to be manufactured into coke to see if an article could be produced that would meet with the requirements of the Mount Isa people. We are hoping that, if the article is suitable and the price is satisfactory, we shall be supplying all the coal and coke requirements of Mount Isa.

It does not matter how good the coal is, there are certain qualities of coal that will not manufacture the class of coke required. We hope that it will. The sample of coke manufactured has been sent overseas to see whether it is adaptable to their purpose or not. As most hon. members are aware, in silver-lead mining you must have coke of a certain quality. If these qualities are in the coke, we hope to come to an arrangement with the Mount Isa Company to supply them with the amount of coke they require. Pending these negotiations, we have not done anything in the matter of extending development in the Bowen State coalmine more than is possible under present conditions.

Mr. COLLINS: There is no intention to interfere with the Bowen State coalmine as a State enterprise?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: At the present juncture we have not the slightest intention of interfering with the Bowen State coalmine. I am not sure whether it was the hon. member who interviewed me with regard to the Bowen State coalmine; but, in answer to the hon. member who did interview me, I said: "If you had a hive of bees, consisting of one queen and a lot of drones, naturally you would get rid of the drones first." I look upon the Bowen State coalmine as the queen amongst State enterprises, and I have no intention of getting rid of the queen until all the drones are gone. I am glad to say that a lot of the drones, such as the State stations and the State cannery, have been disposed of. I do not say that we shall dispose of the Bowen State coalmine even when all the drones are disposed of. If we do decide that the Bowen State coalmine has to go to private enterprise, there will be certain restrictions that the mine must still work favourably towards Queensland, such as is the case under the supervision of the Government.

The hon. member for Bowen definitely declared that the Auditor-General was wrong when he said there was a loss of 2s. 7d. per ton on the coal sold overseas.

Mr. COLLINS: I said the loss could be reduced to 1s. 7d. per ton.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member for Bowen also said that the extra royalty that the Government derived on that coal more than counteracted the loss that occurred. In round figures the royalty on coal exported in 1927-28 amounted to £1,500, and the extra loss incurred on that coal would be considerably over £3,000, so it will be seen that the royalty on that coal does not counteract the extra loss incurred.

Mr. FOLEY: How did you arrive at that £3,000?

Hon. E. A. Atherton.]

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The figure given in the Auditor-General's report for 1927-28 was 27,000 tons. That is how I arrived at the £3,000 odd.

The hon. member for Gregory made a rambling statement about temporary loss, saying that it was always expected, and you could expect temporary loss on a deal when it is going to increase your sales. All I can say to that is that this is more than a temporary loss. The loss runs into years, and, in my opinion, it has got beyond the temporary stage. The hon. member for Gregory apparently imagines that he has a grievance—and I consider that I have a grievance—in not being able to discuss the Sleigh contract. I say definitely that it was the hon. member's party which placed that notice of motion on the business sheet which prohibits us from discussing the matter. Apparently hon. members opposite did not want the matter discussed, or they would not have given notice of that resolution. We are following the same methods at the Bowen State coalmines as were previously adopted; we are continuing the work in the same direction.

The hon. member for Leichhardt said that the expense per ton incurred in having an agent in Townsville did not run into one-thousandth part of a penny per ton. I think it will be agreed that that is quite a wild and exaggerated statement to make.

Mr. POLLOCK: Are you discussing the Sleigh contract? We were not permitted to discuss it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member is wrong again. I am dealing with Mr. Byrne. In round figures, it is costing considerably over 3d. per ton to market that coal. I am not saying that 3d. per ton is too much; I just want to contradict the statement that would get abroad that it did not cost the one-thousandth part of a penny per ton to sell the Bowen coal. I am showing that it has cost over 3d. per ton. I have nothing further to add on the Bowen State coalmine at the present juncture.

Resolution 18 (Department of Mines—Chief Office) agreed to.

Resolution 19—(*Department of Mines—In Aid of Mining*)—agreed to.

Resolution 20—(*Department of Mines—Mining Fields*)—

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): I rise to a point of order. I understand that the resolutions are called out at the beginning of the day's proceedings to simplify the business before the House, and to enable you, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of convenience, to put en bloc those resolutions which we have indicated we do not wish to discuss. But that does not entitle you to put those resolutions without discussion.

The SPEAKER: Ever since Standing Order 307 has been in operation, the practice has been for the Speaker to call out the numbers of the resolutions, and for hon. members to notify which resolution they wish to discuss.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: As hon. members call out the resolutions they wish to discuss, they are noted by me, and I give hon. members the opportunity to discuss those resolutions.

[*Hon. E. A. Atherton.*

Mr. POLLOCK: There is nothing in the Standing Orders providing for that.

The SPEAKER: It is not in the Standing Order, but the practice I have outlined has been observed in this House ever since Standing Order 307 came into existence.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. POLLOCK: We shall have to call "Not formal" to them all.

The SPEAKER: Hon. members are quite entitled to call "Not formal" to every one of them, or indicate that they wish to discuss every one of them; but, if they do not do so, I take it that I am entitled to put the resolutions they do not call.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Suppose an hon. member is not here?

The SPEAKER: If any hon. member is not here when the resolutions are called, he should be here. I am not to blame if hon. members are not here. They know that the business is coming on, and they should be here, or get somebody else to call them. The question is—

"That Resolution No. 20 be agreed to."

(Opposition dissent.)

Mr. BEDFORD (*Warrego*): During the debate on the Mining Trust Limited Agreement Ratification Bill—which was not a debate at all on that Bill, because the whole subject was lost sight of in an attempt to influence the Federal election and to review things which happened five years ago, which were well known to the House at the time they happened and have been public property ever since—certain statements were made to which I have not had the opportunity of replying till now; and I propose to avail myself of the opportunity. It will be remembered that the Secretary for Mines, in introducing the Bill—his speech was not on the Bill so much as it was an attempt to make political propaganda in view of the approaching Federal election on 12th October, the result of which may or may not have satisfied him—made certain statements to the effect that I had "blackmailed" the Mount Isa Mines Limited—those were the words used—in order to get £125,000 for certain mining leases.

The facts are these: In 1923 I purchased an option from the holders of five mining leases on the Mount Isa field for £25,000. Early in 1924 a company with a capital of £50,000 was floated to pay this £25,000. It developed some millions of tons of ore, spent £27,000, and finally sold to Mount Isa Mines Limited for £125,000. The circumstances—and nothing could have been clearer—were that some of the meaner followers of the Government were put up to make the worst possible case out of those facts. In anticipation of this matter being discussed in this Chamber, the Nationalist Association prepared certain headlines and reports, which were on the way to the country before the statements were uttered here. It is a known fact that certain members on the Nationalist side who were proceeding to the country to help the party opposed to Labour in the Federal election were supplied with all these alleged facts a couple of hours before the statements were made here. Since then the Premier has stated—and nobody could help saying it after having had the

real facts put before him—that he believed there was no corruption in the matter.

Since then I have had to see him privately, and ask him that the injustice should be removed from me of being associated with the Mungana inquiry. It must be admitted—I would be the readiest to admit it—that the evidence given into that most opportunely held federal bankruptcy inquiry,

dated so that, if there was any [2.30 p.m.] evidence to come out against Mr.

Theodore, it should come out in time for the Federal elections—showed that the Government had made out a good case for an inquiry into Mungana, if the evidence there adduced was true. It must be remembered that this party absolutely and thoroughly believes the statement made in this House and at the Labour Convention in 1923 that the holding of Mr. McCormack in that property was only 338 shares. If the evidence rebutting that be correct, then the Government have made out an excellent case for a Mungana inquiry. The Premier himself has admitted, and he knows, as all fair-minded members on his side know, too, that it is a sweeping injustice that any attempt should be made to tie up Mungana with the clean proposition that Mount Isa Proprietary was. To all my inquiries and questions in this House I have had the same stereotyped reply—the last reply being that the Premier had “nothing more to add.” I have something more to add, and I am adding it.

On the whole question of Mungana proving worthy of inquiry, and Mount Isa being worthy of an inquiry for different reasons, it must be apparent, after all, that the Government are doing that. If no inquiry is granted, I shall be forced to exercise my rights as a private citizen to deal with the newspapers that were primed by the Nationalist Association in collusion with the party opposite. They knew what was going to be said; they knew the statements that were to be made, and they had already prepared briefs for the country papers three or four hours before the statements were made in this House. If that kind of thing has to be done, then it only means that a member of Parliament has no rights in Parliament, and no right of defending himself in Parliament, because it will not be admitted that he is defending himself. The Standing Orders could be strained to a point that would not permit commiseration of any kind being extended to this side. The Government could refuse justice to a man by saying that it had nothing further to add—the mean statement made by the Premier yesterday and quite unworthy of him. It also means that, if we have no rights in this matter, we have some rights in other matters, and we have a right to demand that the Sleeman case shall be investigated from one end to the other.

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

MR. BEDFORD: Although we may be in a minority, yet we have certain rights, not only as members of Parliament, but as private citizens. I want to know from the Government if, in connection with the Mount Isa matter, I am to be forced to spend my own money prosecuting newspapers outside to get justice from the Government that permitted its followers—its meanest followers again—to put up charges which, when absolutely and thoroughly replied to, they run away from, and state that they have nothing

further to add. I have something further to add, and if I do not add it here I will add it outside.

Resolution 20—(*Department of Mines—Mining Fields*)—agreed to.

Resolutions 21, 22, and 23 agreed to.

Resolution 24—“*Railways—Intelligence and Tourist Bureau*”—

MR. HYNES (*Townsville*): I notice that there is a reduction of £500 in this item. I was hopeful that the Government would see the desirability of doing something to advertise the State to encourage a tourist traffic to North Queensland. The sights to be seen in North Queensland and the climate in winter time are unsurpassed in any part of the world. It is rather extraordinary that greater advantage is not taken of North Queensland by people in the South and people of other countries. This sub-department has been transferred from the Chief Secretary's Department to the Railway Department. I am hopeful that this will mean some stimulus to the work of the bureau; but the reduction in the vote for this important branch of the public service inclines me to the belief that no great improvement is to be effected in consequence of the transfer. I have taken the matter up with the Commissioner for Railways, who informed me that it is his intention to get local authorities and progress associations to co-operate with him in advertising the various tourist resorts along the coast. This is a matter which is a function of the Government. It is all very well asking local bodies to co-operate with the department, but it is the bounden duty of the Government to encourage tourist traffic in Queensland. I had the opportunity last year of looking through Tasmania, but found the attractions were not comparable with the attractions of North Queensland; yet Tasmania has a tourist traffic that is worth hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum. The tourist traffic in Queensland is languishing because of the meagre support and encouragement received from the Government. Hon. members may say that the late Governments were also responsible. I think that the past Government should have taken a deeper interest in this important matter. We have a climate in North Queensland second to none in the world. We should advertise that fact throughout the world. We should also advertise the fact that North Queensland, notwithstanding the opinion of people ignorant of its conditions, is the most healthy part of the world to live in. Vital statistics establish that fact. The climate is salubrious, and the scenery compares with anything of its kind in the world.

There is little done in advertising the pleasure resorts around Townsville. We have within a few miles of that city Magnetic Island, which is one of the most beautiful islands on the coast. A daily launch service provides easy access between Townsville and Magnetic Island, while the accommodation, guest-houses, bathing, and fishing there are excellent. The fact that such resorts as Magnetic Island are not being used to the extent that they should be is due to the fact that not sufficient publicity is given to their existence. I was hopeful that, when the bureau was transferred to the Railway Department, a fair sum of money would be expended in an endeavour to build up a tourist traffic to North Queensland; but the amount indicated in these Estimates, I regret

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to say, rather discourages than encourages the traffic which already exists.

I also understand that the Sydney office is to be discontinued. That is a very unwise step to take, because the Sydney office has done very fine service in advertising Queensland resorts. In my opinion, offices should be opened up in all the capital cities of the Commonwealth, and more literature should be published and circulated setting out the very fine tourist attractions of North Queensland. It is not too late for something to be done. The Commissioner for Railways is enthusiastic enough about it, but he cannot do very much with the meagre sum of £8,000 which has been allocated for the purpose. An additional sum should be provided, particularly when we remember that other States of the Commonwealth and other countries of the world are spending tens of thousands of pounds in developing the tourist traffic, and consider the money well spent. Were the very fine attractions of North Queensland only more widely known, thousands of people would be attracted to visit it, because it has one of the healthiest climates in the world, and its scenery cannot be surpassed. I trust that even at this late hour the vote will be increased.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I support the remarks made by the hon. member for Townsville. I would point out to the Minister in charge of this department that about three weeks ago I made application to the Bureau for copies of a booklet entitled "Bowen and the District," but no copies were available.

I think I can claim that I represent more islands than any other member in this House. Those hon. members who have travelled to North Queensland have probably seen that most beautiful piece of scenery between Mackay and Bowen—I refer to the Whitsunday Passage—which a friend of mine who has travelled the world declares to be unsurpassable. With proper advertising, I am satisfied we could encourage the visit of a large number of tourists from the South. I always remember with pleasure the thrill I experienced when first I sailed through the Hinchinbrook Channel, which is further north again. That is another scenic attraction which should be brought to the notice of Southern people, because the more visitors we get from the South—that is where the bulk of the population is—the greater understanding there will be of the problems confronting the development of North Queensland and its industries.

I trust that the Minister will see that copies of the booklet I have referred to are printed to enable the Bowen Chamber of Commerce, which made the request through me, to take an active interest in trying to encourage the tourist traffic to the beauty spots which are part and parcel of the electorate I represent.

Mr. BRUCE (*Kennedy*): The necessity for money has been emphasised for some considerable time both in the press and in this House, and tourist traffic is one way in which we can get a considerable amount of money, if not for nothing, at least at a very small expense. All the time I have been in this House, and when I was a supporter of the Labour Government, I advocated that we should have the Tourist Bureau in the centre of the city. The Tourist Bureau that we have up against the Central Railway Station, with nothing to attract visitors

inside it, is absolutely useless. No one knows that it is there, and we should have an up-to-date Tourist Bureau in Queen street, which would attract the attention of Southern visitors going through the city. Such a Tourist Bureau would dispel the idea that Southern Queensland up to Brisbane was the whole of the State. Already we have largely developed the tourist traffic by a few people coming here, and telling their friends in the Southern States of the beauties of North Queensland. As one who has had an opportunity of seeing the whole of North Queensland, I say there are very few places in the world, and certainly none in Australasia, that can surpass North Queensland. After getting past Rockhampton, we come to Mackay, where the sugar industry is at its best. The sugar industry is certainly carried on south of Mackay, but when we reach Mackay we see the industry carried on on a large scale; and this is of great interest to the Southern visitors. Then we go on to Bowen and the Burdekin district, where sugar is grown under a system that will not be seen elsewhere in the world. Owing to the natural advantages that exist in connection with the Burdekin River, a system of irrigation, where water can be secured at a depth of 15 or 20 feet, has been instituted. The farmer on the Ayr side has established machinery, certainly at a very large cost, for the purpose of growing sugar-cane. On the opposite branch of the Burdekin we have Home Hill in the Bowen electorate, under an irrigation scheme established by the Government. There, owing to irrigation, they are learning to increase the density of the cane, and they can handle the sugar much better in every way than is the case when trusting entirely to the rainfall as is done in other portions of the State. Southern tourists who have already gone there have evinced tremendous interest in the areas I have mentioned. Then we go along to Townsville. The hon. member for Townsville adequately described Magnetic Island, which is in the Kennedy electorate, where a visitor has much to see. Going further up the coast you come to Ingham, through to Halifax, and down to Lucinda Point on the Herbert River, and, by motor launch, into Hinchinbrook Channel. Oversea tourists have been there, and they have definitely stated that there is nothing to equal a trip down the Herbert River past Lucinda Point, out into Hinchinbrook Channel, and up to Cairns. From Cairns you can go to the Tableland either by railway or by what is known as the Range road, or up one way and down the other. There are beautiful views on either of these trips. In the last month or so I saw the Tableland for the first time, and I can assure hon. members that anything they can say about the Tableland will not be an exaggeration. It is absolutely wonderful from the point of view of future possibilities of the agricultural and dairying pursuits, and also from a scenic point of view. I have advised dozens of my friends in the Southern States to take the Northern trip. They have done so, and they have told their friends in the South of the beauties of North Queensland, and many of them have subsequently visited there.

As I have told the Secretary for Railways—who, I understand, has charge of the Bureau—we can get revenue from that source without any dispute or argument, if sufficient money is spent in advertising the State; and, although it would be advisable,

[*Mr. Hynes.*

as one hon. member suggested, to lay out some money on advertising in the other capital cities of Australia. I believe that, if an attractive Bureau were established in Queen street, and literature was handed out when the train from the South arrived at the Central Station showing what the North offered in the way of scenic attraction, the result would be very satisfactory. If we met visitors from the Southern States when they came here, we would reap an enormous benefit. Years ago, when I was in New Zealand, I found that people came there from America and Great Britain solely as tourists, and paid £25, £30, and £40 for trips specially arranged by the Tourist Bureau to different parts of New Zealand. From this source New Zealand reaps a very fine revenue, which has been increasing from year to year by leaps and bounds. This is a vote in connection with which we do not need to worry as to what the producer or consumer gets. We have the goods—Nature has provided the goods—which we can capitalise at a small cost. Money spent in this direction will add to our revenue, and give us more cash with which to develop the State.

Mr. HANLON (*Ithaca*): I have nothing to say on this resolution other than to point out to the Minister that this is rather a bad time to be reducing the vote for advertising the State. Before the vote was reduced, public-spirited men in Brisbane and other parts of Queensland had realised the necessity for further advertising the State, and had formed a Travel Association here with a view to spending money in advertising the State and bringing visitors here. Those people are subscribing to that association in an endeavour to supplement the advertising already being done by the State; and it is very poor encouragement to them if their subscriptions towards that purpose are going to result in the Government curtailing their advertising expenditure. No citizen can be expected to spend money in advertising the State merely to save Government expenditure. The fact that public-spirited people are prepared to spend their money with a view to advertising the State and encouraging this business should induce the Government to give an increased vote for advertising. I hope the Minister will review the vote and see if it cannot be brought up to what it was last year. Personally, I think it should be much more.

Mr. BARBER (*Bundaberg*): In going round the Railway Office in George street, I find that practically the whole of the lower portion of the building is set apart for advertising purposes and Tourist Bureau work. I am pleased to see advertising being done there, because the Tourist Bureau in Ann street was too far away from the main thoroughfares of the city. There is no doubt that that is a very good move on the part of the Government to have placed the bureau in a more central position. At the same time, they are inconsistent in reducing this vote and circumscribing the work of the Sydney office. As pointed out by previous speakers, I do not think that Queensland is doing justice to herself in the very small amount of money which is appropriated for advertising purposes. On going through Adelaide street the other day I noticed that Tasmania, the poorest State in the Commonwealth, had opened a well-equipped tourist bureau there. I found a very fine

class and range of literature, and that office is practically right up to date in its advertising methods.

I want to put in a word for the district I have the honour to represent. On Tuesday night last a largely attended meeting was held in the Caledonian Hall in Bundaberg, and representatives of the civic authorities, chambers of commerce, and industrial, commercial, and mercantile bodies generally joined together with a view to giving Bundaberg a bigger place on the map than it has. There seemed to be a sort of cyclonic disturbance, so earnest were they in bringing Bundaberg to the forefront; and they have asked me to make representations to the Secretary for Railways to instruct the Tourist Bureau photographers to take pictures of the various scenic beauties of the Bundaberg district when they shortly set out on a tour along our coast. It would be largely to the benefit of the Railway Department, because a railway 8 or 9 miles long runs from the city to the Sand Hills, where we have as fine a little bathing resort as there is in Queensland. If people from the South knew that we had such a fine, clean, and safe bathing resort within that short distance of Bundaberg, I am sure they would come there in thousands. Our roads have been brought up to date by the Main Roads Commission and by means of loans to local bodies; and you can run to the coast in twenty-five minutes through some of the best of the sugar lands in the Bundaberg area. From Bundaberg to the coast you have roads 18 feet wide the whole way, lined on both sides with vast areas of canefields; and Southern visitors who have come to Bundaberg have gone away satisfied that it is the centre of one of the finest little districts they know of for its scenic beauties and its agricultural resources.

Mr. EDWARDS: Everybody knows that. What are you stonewalling for?

Mr. BARBER: I am not stonewalling. Bundaberg has been very good to me, and I want to do something to put it on the map. I ask the Minister to remember, when getting out his next list of tourist literature, that there is such a place. It is remarkable to what extent the tourist business is catered for in other parts of the world. I remember that one particular place in England which I once knew very well used to have from 45,000 to 55,000 visitors for bathing and other purposes every year. That was as long as forty-five years ago, and I would like to see the Government do something with the idea of getting similar results in Queensland.

I have here some literature that I received from a friend in California. Although no doubt the Tourist Bureau in Queensland has supplied literature on a somewhat small scale, I have seen nothing to [3 p.m.] equal this supplied in California in connection with the part of the State on the Mexican border. At any rate, there is plenty of colour in it. Anyone reading the world's literature on this matter must be struck by the fact that the American tourist traffic in France is estimated to be worth £100,000,000 annually to France, and the value of the tourist traffic to London from America is estimated at £30,000,000 per annum. If anyone wishes to gain a knowledge as to the way the tourist traffic is carried on, I advise him to peruse that weekly magazine the "Literary Digest," which is to be found in our library, where

Mr. Barber.]

he will see column after column devoted to the subject. That magazine has a very wide circulation, selling from 1,750,000 to 2,000,000 copies per week. The tourist industry is boomed in one issue after another. Queensland certainly lacks enterprise in this matter. I hope the Minister will accede to the requests that I have made—requests backed up by the whole of the people of Bundaberg. They anticipate a visit from the Secretary for Railways shortly, when the request will be submitted to him. I hope to be in Bundaberg when the Minister is there, and to have the pleasure of submitting the resolution passed by the big public meeting that was held the other night.

Dr. KERWIN (*Merthyr*): I endorse the remarks of the previous speakers concerning the tourist traffic in North Queensland. Undoubtedly Queensland is a blessed State judging by the natural facilities we have for tourist traffic. I do not think there is any climate in the world to equal that of Charters Towers. I recommend to the Minister that, when preparing the necessary pamphlets, he should see that they contain a record of the minimum and maximum temperatures of Charters Towers and other places, together with the rainfall. It would be a good idea to have a pamphlet forwarded to every medical man in the Southern States. Nearly every month we receive elaborate pamphlets advertising the health resorts of Canada. If Canada can forward pamphlets to this country, surely we can send our pamphlets to the Southern States. As a hint to some hon. members representing these various places, it would be a good idea if they could arouse the people in the various localities to the necessity for improving the places of accommodation so as to provide improved facilities for visitors. It is one thing for the Government to advertise a place and describe its natural beauties; but it is the duty of the people in the locality to provide up-to-date hotel accommodation. Some of the hotels in North Queensland are not what they ought to be, and a little propaganda work is essential.

Mr. COOPER: The proprietors of the hotels may not be alive, but some of the hotels are.

Dr. KERWIN: I agree that some of the hotels are very much alive. I hope that the suggestions made to-day will stimulate a little enthusiasm in the various centres, and that the local people will help the Tourist Bureau by providing suitable accommodation.

Mr. COOPER (*Brewer*): I would like to impress on the Minister the necessity for a more intensive advertising campaign with reference to Muckadilla. We could greatly benefit Queensland by making Muckadilla more widely known. I am not speaking of anything from my own knowledge; but a very eminent medical man in Brisbane told me that, when he recommended people to go to Muckadilla, they rather frowned on him, but if he said "Go to New Zealand and stay a fortnight or three weeks at Rotorna" they would jump at it, whereas Muckadilla as a health resort is much the better place. On that ground alone we should make much more use of Muckadilla than is now being made. Mr. Tolmie, when Leader of the Opposition in this House, made great use of Muckadilla. In fact, he was a travelling advertisement for the benefits to be derived from fortnightly visits to that locality every

six months, for they enabled him not only to walk about but to do his business as Leader of the Opposition, so great was the benefit he received from periodical visits there. I hope the Minister will revive the drive on behalf of Muckadilla, which appears to have been dropped.

The PREMIER: Has the Leader of the Opposition gone out there now? (Laughter.)

Mr. COOPER: The Leader of the Opposition has not gone to Muckadilla. He has gone somewhere, not so much to cure his own ills as to cure the present ills of Queensland. I again urge a revival of the publicity of the beneficial results obtainable from a visit to Muckadilla.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. Godfrey Morgan, *Murilla*): It is quite refreshing to hear hon. members opposite who represent Northern constituencies leveling criticism at the Tourist Bureau. I endorse the statements that have been made that there are many beautiful localities in North Queensland which should attract a greater tourist traffic than at present, but during the whole period that I was sitting in opposition I do not remember hon. members who represent those localities, who previously sat behind the Government, being so anxious to have their tourist resorts advertised. Their remarks were much more applicable to those days when they were supporters of the Government of the day, because money was much more plentiful then, and the Government could afford to spend that money more freely than the Government can do to-day. If those hon. members did advocate the claims of North Queensland in the matter of the tourist traffic, the fact that so little was done shows that they had little influence with the administrators.

Mr. COLLINS: That is not true. The Government issued two books concerning the tourist resorts of the Bowen district.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is quite true, as some hon. members have stated, that there is a reduction this year of £500 in this vote; but I would remind hon. members that the results from advertising are dependent not so much on the amount of money that is spent as on the manner in which it is spent. Money can be expended in advertising in journals in such a way as to be of little or no use for the purpose intended. I could spend £10,000 or £20,000 in inserting in certain journals advertisements which would be of no use whatever in connection with the tourist traffic. If you want to bring our beauty spots prominently before the tourists of Australia and other parts of the world, you must select the right class of journal to advertise in—journals which come before possible tourists. There is no State in Australia which possesses more natural beauty spots and tourist resorts than Queensland, and there is no place in the world possessing a finer winter climate than the northern parts of our State.

It does attract quite a number of tourists from the Southern States, and many of those people spend three or four of the colder months of the year in North Queensland. Of course, the tourist traffic is governed to a certain extent by the prosperity or otherwise of the general community.

Mr. HYNES: It depends also on the amount of publicity.

[*Mr. Barber.*]

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: For example, a large number of people from the South visited Queensland last year. Their visits did an enormous amount of good to the State, because they advertised its possibilities and its attractions on their return to their own States. This year, however, despite the efforts which have been made by the Railway Commissioners in the various States, the tourist traffic has not been so heavy, which I am told is due to the fact that conditions are not as bright as they might be in the Southern States, and people cannot afford to spend money in that direction. I know that this year only four or five gentlemen arrived on one of the tours; and, when I met them, they told me that the decreased tourist traffic was due to the fact that times were bad in the South.

We are endeavouring to bring about a complete change in the Tourist Bureau, and I extend an invitation to all hon. members to visit the new offices which are being fitted up in George street. They are being established on lines similar to those in Challis House, in Sydney, although not on such an elaborate scale. When those offices are opened, people will be able to go there and be supplied in a comfortable waiting-room with all information they desire, and have all arrangements made for them to visit any part of the State.

Mr. BARBER: You have provided very nice seats for them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why not? Tourists like every comfort; they are prepared to pay for it. They are not what might be termed people with a limited amount of money; and, if we can provide decent accommodation not only in those offices but on our railways and in the refreshment-rooms—

Mr. HYNES: In the towns, too.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Exactly—we are going to attract many other people to visit Queensland.

It is not our intention to advertise specially any particular locality. It is up to the people who are anxious to attract tourists to their districts to do everything in their power, and not leave the hard work to be done by the Government. The claims of any beauty spot in a locality should be "boosted" by the residents; and steps should also be taken to provide good, clean accommodation in hotels, etc. It is not much use the Government attracting tourists who, after their first visit, will take back unfavourable impressions of the State to others who might otherwise add to the tourist traffic.

Mr. HYNES: That is where you want the co-operation of the business people in the various towns.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I might also state that we are going to appoint the station-masters in the different districts as agents, and they will be able to direct tourists in their districts, and give them all the information they desire. The whole system will be worked from the George-street office.

I am sorry to say that we are not getting the results from the Sydney Tourist Bureau that we should get. We see a little paragraph in the papers where "So-and-so" wanted a few tins of turtle soup and "So-and-so" wanted 5,000 tons of coal; but that is all we hear about it. Our agent in

Sydney reported that certain people wrote to him that they wanted so many dozen tins of turtle soup if we could supply them at 8s. per dozen. The price of turtle soup is 12s. per dozen, and, owing to the fact that we cannot supply at 8s. per dozen tins, no business resulted. Again he wrote stating that he could get orders for 5,000 tons of coal, provided we could supply the coal at 18s. per ton. We cannot supply coal at less than 21s. per ton; and again no business resulted. That is what is happening throughout. We are told people are continually applying to our tourist agent in New South Wales, endeavouring to do business in Queensland, but unfortunately no business has resulted.

Mr. HANLON: You can always get a buyer for an article if you are prepared to sell under its value.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Exactly. I am not going to say that the values we placed on these commodities are too high. Proposals only come from the Tourist Bureau in Sydney, and nothing more. We are making an alteration there. As already indicated, we intend to move into Challis House, where the Tourist Bureaus of the other States are situated, and in our George-street office we are going to place rooms at the disposal of the New South Wales and Victorian agents. The different States have agreed that the bureau of each State should be located in the one building. The Sydney bureau is giving us accommodation in Challis House without charge, and, when people come to Sydney and want to know how to get to Queensland, they will be told to go to Challis House. From Challis House tourists can arrange to go to any place they desire. They will not be told to go to "So-and-so" in a certain street to make inquiries about Queensland. All the different State bureaus should be together, as people travelling around the different States do not want to be sent from pillar to post. They want to go to one place where they can get all the information they require. The same applies in Victoria. Later on we intend appointing an agent in Victoria to look after the interests of Queensland industries. Had we had an agent in Melbourne when the discussion in respect of chilled meat was going on, we would not have experienced any difficulty in that matter. The agent would have been able thoroughly to inform the people of the facts of the case; and we would have known just exactly what was happening in that regard. I am pleased to say that any regulation passed in Victoria has not affected the sale of our chilled meat, as we are sending all the chilled meat we possibly can to Victoria. The same thing applies to sugar. If we had a representative in Melbourne, he would be able to put the true position of the Queensland sugar industry before the Housewives' Association, and thus put a stop to the agitation against our sugar industry. It is wise not to let a fire spread. Directly there is smoke, you want to get in with vigour and put out the fire. We intend to do that, but we must have a little time. We are reorganising this business, and are going to issue a new pamphlet and assist in every way we can to attract people from other parts of the world to this State. We want the money they bring. I feel sure that we shall be able to accomplish a great deal in the near future. I know that we are up against the question of finance. People in Victoria and

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other States have not a great deal of money available, and that will prevent us doing as much as we desire; but we are going to help as much as we possibly can.

I am the Minister in control of the railways, main roads, railway refreshment-rooms, and the Tourist Bureau. It is the duty of my department to see that the very moment an individual arrives in Queensland he gets comfortable accommodation when travelling by rail. If he is travelling by road, it is the duty of the department to see that the roads are in good order for travelling to different places. It is our duty to see that he is directed to our beauty spots, and that, when on the trip, he gets decent food and any other refreshments he desires. We intend to see that the refreshment-rooms are provided with a good supply of Queensland fruit. We are now giving pineapple at breakfast, with porridge or before porridge. You do not see the little banana on the table that one used to see, 4 inches long, but attractive fruit about 9 inches long; and it is the same with oranges. We are letting the people know that excellent fruit can be grown in Queensland—not the little shrivelled bananas we used to see.

MR. HANLON: Don't you think that, while conditions are bad in Victoria, it is well to exploit New Zealand? There is a good field of operations there.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, I think it would be as well to do all we possibly can in regard to New Zealand. We are fully alive to the situation. I feel sure that, under the new management and with the co-operation of all our railway officials, the result will be beneficial to the State generally, and especially the northern portions of the State which hon. members have mentioned.

Resolution 24 (Railways—Intelligence and Tourist Bureau) agreed to.

Resolution 25—"Railways—Southern Division"—agreed to.

Resolution 26—"Railways—Central Division and Mackay Railway"—

MR. BULCOCK (*Barcoo*): There is just one matter I desire to raise in connection with the railways in the Central Division of the State. Some little time ago, Mr. Chambers, the General Manager of the Central Division, was approached with reference to the conveyance of fruit from Jericho to Yaraka, which latter place is in a semi-arid district. A deputation of residents waited on Mr. Chambers, and asked him to make some provision for the conveyance of perishable goods such as fruit in a more satisfactory way. It was pointed out by the deputation that under existing conditions fruit could only be brought down once a week. There are two trains a week, but, owing to the unsatisfactory connection at Blackall, only one of the trains was available for the carriage of fruit. I have had some personal knowledge of this matter. On more than one occasion I have received claims which I have submitted to the Railway Department in respect of perishable fruit which had deteriorated in transit.

The request has been made that at least once a week some system should be adopted for the conveyance of this fruit from Jericho or Blackall to Yaraka. The train stops at Blackall overnight, and another train goes to Yaraka the following day. The people in

this district have several grievances against the railway system. One is that there is no train between Yaraka and Blackall to enable them to connect with the mail train on Mondays. This line serves a big territory beyond the actual confines of the railway itself; and they point out quite rightly that they have a service of only one train a week by which to travel to the coast. There is a train to connect with Thursday's mail train from Longreach, but none to connect with Monday's train, with the result that people who wish to go to the coast by Monday's train from Longreach have to travel by what is known as "No. 15 Down"—a mixed or goods train—which is most unsatisfactory in that it picks up loading all over the place, has no lavatory accommodation, takes a considerable number of hours longer to reach its destination, and generally subjects its passengers to all the difficulties involved in travelling on mixed goods trains.

The people at the lower end of the line complain also about the faulty distribution of mails. The fact of the matter is that mail can be delivered by road mail in that district much more quickly than if it is conveyed to Yaraka by the Commissioner for Railways. In other words, a mail service leaving Blackall will deliver mails a day or two earlier to the people who should be served by the Blackall-Yaraka Railway line than if it were taken by rail to Yaraka and there distributed.

One other very important question to which I wish to draw attention is the lack of water facilities at Yaraka. It is inconceivable to me that the Railway Department has been content for so long to haul a train-load of water to Yaraka once a week. That does not seem to me to be very profitable. In all fairness, let me say that Mr. Chambers, the General Manager of the Central Division of the Railway Department, offered the Isisford Shire Council, in whose area Yaraka is, to pay half the cost of a water supply at Yaraka if the local authority would bear the other half of the cost. For some reason or other which I cannot understand, the council turned the proposal down. Quite recently I was speaking to the chairman of the council, and he expressed the desire that the offer should be repeated. I hope the Minister will see that that is done. It is obvious that, if water—generally bore water—has to be carried to Yaraka from Blackall by train every week, it is going to militate very seriously against a more efficient service.

At 3.28 p.m.,

MR. MAXWELL (*Toowoomba*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Speaker in the Chair.

MR. BULCOCK: It appears to me that, if we had water at Yaraka, several advantages would be gained. Yaraka is on a stock route, a fact which would cause a lot of stock to gravitate there if water were available, with the result that the Railway Department would get revenue, more particularly at the present time, and especially since there are very many stony ridges beyond, which in the interests of cattle it is desirable to avoid. The position is that there is no water, or expensive water only, at Yaraka. Sometimes none at all is available for travelling stock; consequently the drovers divert their cattle to Cheepie, Quilpie, or Charleville, with the result that they lose value and the Railway Department

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loses revenue. If there were a water supply at Yaraka—a tank similar to other supplies along the line—this would be avoided. In that way the difficulty could be overcome.

The institution of a water supply at Yaraka is a very necessary thing. Probably the reason why there is no water supply there is this: Some years ago the line to complete the original survey was embarked [3.30 p.m.] upon—an extension from Yaraka to Powell Creek, a distance of 23 miles, where in the ordinary circumstances of seasons an adequate supply of water would be available. The foundations of the line were carried out a little beyond Yaraka, but eventually the work was closed down, and Yaraka was made the terminus. I frankly admit that it is extremely unlikely that for many years to come the line will be extended from Yaraka to Powell Creek. For some strange reason the engineer in charge constructed a tank for a water supply 5 miles from the Yaraka terminus; but why that was done one cannot understand. To-day we have that tank 5 miles from the railhead which was supposed to be the water supply for the Railway Department. I understand that the tank is of no use, because, after it had been sunk to a depth of 12 feet, cattle bones were encountered, proving that they were sinking the tank in a sump. I hope the Minister will give the matter serious consideration. If he analyses the position on a financial basis, he will probably find that the additional livestock traffic would compensate for the expense, together with the fact that one heavy train per week could be cut out. He could then probably employ a rail-motor to give those people—who at least deserve a decent service—a much better and more expeditious service than they have at present. On the Monday the rail-motor could be used to connect with the mail at Jericho, and thereby overcome one of the real grievances that the people on the line have against the Railway Department to-day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. Godfrey Morgan, *Murilla*): I shall give the matter mentioned by the hon. member for Barcoo every consideration. I quite realise that a good water supply is an absolute necessity in country areas, not only for the railway but for the people. I entirely approve of the practice of the department in securing its water supply from local bodies that have provided a water supply system. The department undertakes to secure its water in cases where the people have shown some initiative by locking creeks and by other means, provided the water can be secured at a reasonable rate.

Mr. BULCOCK: There is hardly a sufficient number of people in this area.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It may not be possible to do that in the case to which the hon. member refers. If the department undertakes to take, say, 3,000,000 gallons of water per annum at the rate of 1s. 9d. per 1,000 gallons, that means that the people responsible for the provision of the water supply receive revenue amounting to from £250 to £300 per annum. It meets the convenience of the department to be assured of a permanent supply of water whenever necessary, and, in return, the department assists the locality that is prepared to make provision for water requirements. I think that practice is a very good one,

and one which should be extended. So far as I am concerned, it will be extended.

There may be some difficulty in connecting with Yaraka. The department has to look at the matter from the point of view of finance. If the department was satisfied that a saving could be effected in present costs by the expenditure of a few hundred pounds, naturally it would be good business for the department to make the money available.

If, on the other hand, it is not going to effect a saving, or is going to cost the department more—that is, if the interest on the expenditure will be greater than the cost of conveying water to that locality, as we are doing at present—then we must give consideration to that side of the question. We have to study these matters carefully, and deal with them in a business-like manner. We cannot spend a large amount of money, even for a water supply, unless it will be a profitable undertaking. I shall go into the matter with the Commissioner, and if any assistance can be given to the people in the Yaraka district, by giving them a better service to connect up with the mail train at Jericho and thus cause them less inconvenience than at the present time, it will be readily given. We must always take into consideration the fact that to-day the railways are losing a considerable amount of money, and that it is the duty of those in control of the system to endeavour, without injuring the convenience or facilities of the people, especially in distant parts, to economise in every possible way, and not impose any additional charges upon the revenue of the State.

Mr. BULCOCK: You are losing money now by not making the connection with the mail train.

Resolution 26—(Railways—Central Division and Mackay Railway)—agreed to.

Resolutions 27 to 32, both inclusive, agreed to.

Resolution 33—“*Department of Public Lands—Irrigation and Water Supply Commission*”—

Mr. BULCOCK (*Barcoo*): I asked for a discussion on this vote in order to get some information about the future of the Dawson Valley irrigation area. I am sorry that the responsible Minister is not in his place in the House. I am somewhat handicapped by his absence, as I have some questions to put to him, and I feel somewhat aggrieved at his absence. I do not desire to state my facts unless I can get some information in reply.

The question that I am most particularly concerned about is in relation to the whole problem of irrigation, as to the future of the Dawson River irrigation settlement, and also the future policy of the department with respect to undertakings originally undertaken by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. Until quite recently it was the practice, at the request of a local authority, to make available the services of officers of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. This was a convenience to the local authorities. To-day that policy has been entirely revoked, and local authorities are now required to engage private consulting engineers for any problem or work associated with their functions. The two questions are interdependent. In the first place, we all know that very grave hardship has at times

been inflicted on councils by a consulting engineer who was not capable of discharging his job. I have in mind several instances where private engineers were consulted about doing a certain job. The job would be done to the detriment of the council, yet the council had no legal redress against the engineer they engaged.

Nobody could advise the council. That happened so frequently that ultimately the late Government regarded it as being necessary that some protection should be afforded to the local authorities in question, and for that purpose made the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply a consulting engineer. He and his officers were available to local authorities to guide, guard, and protect them from being despoiled at the hands of private individuals. That position has been entirely revoked; and I understand the Government now propose to go back to the old vicious system whereby the local authorities have no protection. They propose that the private engineer shall be the all-powerful individual in this particular regard, and he may despoil a council, and there is no official redress and no one to whom that council may go for advice. That seems to me to be a wrong policy. I think the Commissioner's services should have been retained in a consulting capacity, or that the new Commissioner, if one be appointed, should be utilised in a consulting capacity when a local authority requires certain information and is of the opinion that it is not getting a fair deal from the engineer employed by it.

There is another vital issue involved so far as bores are concerned. We all know that the problem of water supply in the West is most serious. Many people to-day profess to believe that there is a great diminution in the supply of water in the artesian basin of the State. Personally I do not believe we have very satisfactory data one way or the other; but the Commissioner should take the long view in regard to these matters. He should take a fair view, whereas the private practitioner would be more concerned about getting a bore down, irrespective of what the position might be. Although there is a water supply inspector attached to the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission stationed in Central Queensland, it is very obvious that he is not going to accept the full responsibility for a job that is handed over to private enterprise. In this particular direction the Government are handing over these things to the councils; and are handing over work previously done by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission to private individuals. If the private individual gives the council a fair go, well and good; if he does not, then the council—which means the people in that particular area—will have very little redress. The fact emerges that the whole of the activities of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission in relation to local authority work is now being handed over to the tender mercies of private enterprise, some of which will be honest and some dishonest.

I want to know something about the intentions of the Government in regard to the Dawson Valley irrigation works. I am a bit concerned about this matter, because I was a member of the Government which passed a Bill which made possible the irrigation in the Dawson area. We gave those settlers assurances that we would do certain things for them. I want to know whether the

department is revoking those assurances—whether it is abandoning to the wolves the men who have taken up land in the Dawson Valley area, or whether it intends to continue the policy we laid down. I believe that many settlers in the Dawson Valley area are finding themselves in very grave difficulties. In previous years it has been the practice of the Commission to ration the water—to make a survey of the water resources in the early spring, and to ration the water over the balance of the year until the rainy season sets in, if it did set in. The net result was that the district produced many thousands of pounds worth of cotton and other goods. I understand to-day, now that control has virtually been abandoned, that the water supply has been practically exhausted at this early stage of the year, and that consequently there will be very little cotton produced. They are pumping air for the first time there. Under the supervision of Mr. Partridge that never happened; but since he dissociated himself from the supervision of this irrigation work I am informed that no attempt has been made, or is being made, to conserve the water supply. I should really correct my statement that no attempt is being made, because it would be futile to make any attempt, seeing that there is no water available. The weir was put there for the purpose of conserving water, to be distributed later. The water that the weir has backed up has all been utilised; and the consequence is that the crops that would have been produced, had irrigation been possible, will not be produced this year.

If my information is correct, it discloses a lamentable state of affairs, and shows the absolute necessity for some supervision in regard to the distribution of water in connection with the Dawson Valley Irrigation Scheme. Nothing could wreck an irrigation farm scheme more quickly than this sort of thing. It will do incalculable harm to the settlers, and do a great deal more harm to the prestige of the State. The State made certain promises to the settlers; and is now apparently not fulfilling the promises that were made.

I ask the Minister to investigate this question; and I lay particular stress on the conservation of water supplies when water is again available in the Dawson Valley. If this is not done, we are going to have a repetition of the present position each dry year, with the natural result that in the process of time the Dawson Valley irrigation area will be another thing that is abandoned, and hon. members opposite will say, "It was your scheme; we accept no responsibility for its having proved a failure." As a matter of fact, it promised to be one of the most successful irrigation schemes in Australia. Some years ago some of us had an opportunity of visiting the area, and most of us were favourably impressed with the possibilities of the scheme. To-day everybody will regret to know that the settlers have encountered this very grave set-back, and I want to know whether the department is prepared to go on with further development and open up new areas; what it proposes to do in relation to the present settlers; and whether it is proposed to discharge the contractual obligations in regard to those men. I would like the Minister to give special attention to the question of conserving water when there is a fresh supply there, and thus make this irrigation scheme a success.

[Mr. Bulcock.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. A. Deacon, *Cunningham*): The hon. member for Barcoo stated that local authorities had been handed over to the tender mercies of the private practitioner, and that they had no protection. The position is that in regard to any future works local authorities take on they will have to accept their own responsibilities. They have their own engineer, and he will be able to see that they are protected. The only condition the Government make is that, if they borrow money from the Treasurer, before that money is loaned, the proposal will be inspected and reported on by an engineer of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. I do not think there is any danger of the local authorities all being ruined, as the hon. member suggests. The local authorities are capable of looking after themselves. They should be, as they have had enough experience. If they are not capable, certainly they will have to abide by the result of their incapacity. They will be in no worse position than they were in when they were under a Government department.

Let me give the hon. member an instance of the failure of an irrigation scheme under the late Government. The Inkerman Irrigation Settlement was attached to the Water Supply Department at one time. The result was that they got a very expensive scheme built by a Government department under the late Government which they could not afford to pay for. No body of settlers could possibly be put in so bad a position as the Inkerman farmers were left in by a Government department.

At 3.50 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: A large amount of that money has been written off. Mr. Partridge has done it of his own accord. So far as water supply in the West is concerned, the bores will still be under the control of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. The late Government put settlers on the Inkerman area without providing them with water. They promised to make provision for water, but did not honour their promise. They put up a temporary weir there which would not hold sufficient water for the needs of the settlers.

Mr. BULCOCK: They never had any difficulty until this year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They never had any drought before this one.

Mr. BULCOCK: The water is rationed now, but it was not rationed before.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Mr. Partridge is a man in whom we have every confidence. The temporary weir put up by the late Government would not hold back sufficient water to provide for the settlers. We have hastened the completion of the new weir, which is now completed; and all that we want is rain to fill the dam. If the late Government, which the hon. member for Barcoo supported, had realised their responsibility to the settlers they put there, there would not be any difficulty at the present time. They made promises without bothering to make provision to meet them. The settlers are better off under this Government than they were before.

Mr. BULCOCK: They were better off under our Government than they are under yours.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member can go and see for himself. He knows the position as well as I do. I do not know that he is aware of what quantity of water there is there.

Mr. BULCOCK: You should make some inquiries.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Until I hear from the department that what the hon. member says is the case, I decline to believe it. At the same time, the whole blame in connection with the matter rests with the late Administration, which made promises when they sent the men there and neglected to keep their promises.

Resolution 33—(Department of Public Lands, Irrigation and Water Supply Commission)—agreed to.

Resolution 34—“*Department of Public Lands—Miscellaneous Services*”—agreed to.

Resolution 35—“*Department of Agriculture and Stock—Chief Office*”—

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): I wish to take this opportunity of referring to the administration of the Animals and Birds Act. We have at the present time a large fund accumulated as the result of a levy imposed upon the trappers during the last few open seasons. According to the Treasurer's Tables, we have no less a sum than £58,855 to the credit of the Animals and Birds Act, and to that will be added the royalties and other fees collected this year or last season and not put in this financial year—to the extent of over £20,000, thus making a total credit of £78,855.

The point I wish to raise is that, when this 5 per cent. royalty was charged originally upon the value of skins, it was intended that the amount so raised would be used for the better protection of animals in the close season against trapping and the building up of the industry on a more stable footing than previously was the case. Although it was not expected that such a large fund would be accumulated, nevertheless it was fully intended in the time of the late Mr. Gillies as Secretary for Agriculture that whatever money was obtained would be used for that purpose. Up to the present time all we have done is to appoint seven rangers and provide on the Estimates a sum of £5,440 for their salaries and incidental expenses. Out of a fund of £78,855 that is a very small amount, and the rangers have no possible chance of adequately carrying out the purposes for which the fund was established. In my own district we have one ranger, who has to control the whole of the Springsure and Rolleston districts, the area towards Jericho as far as Clermont across to Mount Coolon, and down on the Isaacs River, 100 miles from Jericho. It is impossible for one man to police such an area and prevent men from trapping in it in the close season. The bona fide trapper who makes it his business to go trapping in the open season because he is assured of making a very good cheque made in a short space of time—

Mr. COSTELLO: Don't they use cyanide?

Mr. FOLEY: The “mug” trapper in the hon. member's district may use cyanide or go out with a pea rifle at night; but the man who knows his business, such as the men around Springsure and Rolleston who use snares frequently get thirty or

Mr. Foley.]

forty dozens of opossum skins a month. At any rate, I recommend to the Minister that out of this enormous fund he should put on sufficient rangers to carry out the Act in the way originally intended. He has the money there to pay them and adequately protect opossums in the close season; but he cannot do it or exercise adequate supervision with the few rangers he has now. Otherwise, in a very short space of time the average trapper will awaken to the fact that he is paying 5 per cent. royalty on every skin he gets, in addition to his 10s. fee, and he will go on strike against building up a huge fund. We are fast reaching that stage. We should either reduce the percentage below 5 per cent., cut it out altogether, or utilise the fund in the way in which it was proposed to use it. Only a few

[4 p.m.] rangers have been appointed under the Act, but during the past financial year they were instrumental in securing very few convictions for breaches of the Act, and a number of prosecutions are still pending. Fines amounting to £203 were imposed, and a considerable number of skins were confiscated to the Crown. The time has arrived when the legislation should be amended in many directions. In the Springsure district one man has been convicted on no less than three occasions, and was found to have a number of skins in his possession. Apparently he was able to dispose of the skins during the close season. Although he had been convicted on two previous occasions, he was fined a paltry £15 for his third offence. The average bona fide trapper is definitely opposed to any persons trapping in the close season. A bona fide trapper has in mind a certain district which he proposes to exploit immediately the season is opened; and, if certain individuals are permitted to trap indiscriminately in the close season it means that the bona fide trapper during the open season has continually to shift camp before he finds a locality where it is profitable to operate. This industry is a very valuable one, not only from the point of view of the trapper, but also from the point of view of the State. The value secured for skins obtained last year indicates that the industry is more important to-day than the goldmining industry, and is much more important than a number of other smaller industries that receive encouragement and are fostered at the hands of the Government. Strict supervision should be exercised during the close season so that the industry may be a profitable and stabilised one during the period of operation. I suggest that the Minister should adopt the method followed by his predecessor, the hon. member for Mackay, now the Leader of the Opposition. The late Secretary for Agriculture realised that it was necessary to deal properly with the industry, and with that object in view, he arranged in Brisbane a conference of rangers and chairmen of the boards constituted under the Act, with the object of discussing ways and means of improving the industry. At that time the individuals concerned had not had a great amount of experience, as they had been operating only for a period of about twelve months. I would suggest that, as these rangers and chairmen of the various boards have now had a considerable amount of experience, they should be called to Brisbane to advise the Minister as to whether there is any room for improvement in the Animals and Birds Act.

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Another suggestion worthy of consideration is that of laying down something specific in the Act in order to determine whether a skin was or was not caught in the close season. At the present time the magistrate has nothing in the Act to guide him in determining whether the skins found in the possession of a trapper were caught in the close season, or whether, as it is frequently contended in prosecutions for trapping in a close season, they were a carry-over from the previous season, and that the trapper had been unable to sell them. That is very often the difficulty that the magistrate is confronted with in a prosecution; and that difficulty is accentuated by the fact that the skins in question had not been seen previously. It has been suggested that a claw of the right forefoot should be left on the skin to denote that it had been caught in one season, and that a claw of the left forefoot must adhere to the skin to denote that it was caught in the next season.

Another point I wish to deal with is the prohibition of the marketing of skins known as "kittens." It is very hard to determine what is the right time to open the opossum season. Every season we notice from the first sales that a great number of what are termed "kittens" are sold. If this is permitted to continue, it will have a very damaging effect on the propagation and continuation of the opossum in Queensland. I suggest that the Minister should give consideration to the prohibition of marketing what are known as "kitten" skins, and also to the payment of a reasonable price, such as occurred in the Springsure district, of 2s. or 2s. 6d. per head for every young opossum that was caught by the trapper in any open season. We were successful in collecting quite a number of young opossums in the Springsure and Clermont districts and having them conveyed and distributed to districts where the animals are practically extinct. If that were done, it would to a large extent assist in the continuation and propagation of the opossum in many districts where trapping operations are carried on to a large extent. I hope that my suggestions will bear fruit, and that the Minister in charge of this Act will at least make an honest endeavour to use some of the funds for the purpose they were intended for; and that, if he cannot see his way to do so, he will at least discontinue the royalty system if we are not to use it as intended.

Resolution 35 (Department of Agriculture and Stock—Chief Office) agreed to.

Resolutions 36 to 39, both inclusive, agreed to.

Resolution 40—"Department of Agriculture and Stock—Slaughtering Act"—

Mr. BULCOCK (*Barcoo*): I desire to draw attention to the attitude of the Government with regard to the question of slaughtering, more particularly in the Brisbane area. This year there is a reduction of two in the number of inspectors provided under this Act. There are more butcher shops in Brisbane to-day than in previous years, and the consumption of meat in Brisbane—indeed throughout Queensland—is greater to-day by reason of the increased population. The system we have denends for its success on the most rigid scrutiny and inspection. For the benefit of those hon. members who do not know the vicissitudes under which the slaughtering inspectors labour, I would like

to point out that in Queensland—and in this respect Brisbane is unique—we have a variety of slaughteryards situated at widely divergent points. Even with the number of inspectors who were employed—they numbered thirty-five—it was humanly impossible to make the necessary inspections to ensure that Brisbane was getting an absolutely pure meat supply. It is very obvious that the inspection cannot take place if there is a diminished number of inspectors available. It is commonly known that on many occasions diseased meat has entered into human consumption in Brisbane and other towns in Queensland. One need only look at the press reports from time to time to see where some unscrupulous butcher—and sometimes some unfortunate butcher who is not in a position to recognise diseased meat—is prosecuted for offering diseased meat for sale or having it in his shop. It is not always the fault of the butcher, who may have his slaughtering done by contract, and in that case he is the unwilling victim of circumstances. This fact does emerge, however, that for every butcher or slaughter-yard proprietor who is prosecuted for having diseased meat in his possession many must escape. Our system inevitably tends in that direction. It is not the fault of the inspector; we want more inspectors than we have if the Act is to be efficiently administered. The reduction in the number of inspectors represents a very grave position so far as the people are concerned, because it represents a prospective inroad on the health of the community, seeing that it is obviously impossible for all meat consumed each day in Brisbane to be inspected. We are doing the best we can with the present system. I believe that the best that the system affords is being done; but I am reluctant to agree to a reduction in the number of persons who are employed to conduct this inspection. It is a real menace to the health of the community. Probably the only way whereby the difficulty can be adequately overcome is by the establishment of a central slaughtering authority. Sooner or later abattoirs will come, and in that connection I should like to inquire whether any move is being made. I know that the Government have been awaiting the report of Mr. Cramsie. I thought, perhaps, the Minister might have some earlier information, as this matter is of vital importance. It is a matter that should have been taken up seriously years ago. If we are going to have abattoirs, well and good, because the sooner we have them the better it will be for the health of the people of Queensland.

Resolution 40 (Department of Agriculture and Stock—Slaughtering Act) agreed to.

Resolutions 41 to 51, both inclusive, agreed to.

Resolution 52—“*Premier and Chief Secretary's Department—Legislative Assembly*.”—

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): I am sorry that the courtesy of being present in this Chamber when their Estimates are under consideration is not being extended to hon. members by Ministers as much as it ought to be. Some of the Ministers are here; others are not. Apparently the consideration by Parliament of these resolutions amounts to very little. I am glad that the Premier has come in, because I desire to raise a matter under the heading “Legislative Assembly” which is of extreme importance to members of the Opposition. I refer to the

question of arranging the business, which is a matter for the Legislative Assembly. In view of the ruling given by Mr. Deputy Speaker earlier in the day, that we would be entitled to discuss a certain matter, I ask the Leader of the Government to give to the Opposition some indication as to whether he proposes to allow a discussion to take place in regard to the charges made by a certain Minister during the present session? A motion relating to those charges is on the business-sheet. A ruling has been given that we shall not have the right to discuss this question in any way until that motion comes along. If the motion does not come before us, I maintain that we shall have to rush into recess with the honour of certain members of this Assembly impugned without their having had any chance whatever to defend themselves against charges made under the cover of parliamentary privilege. Now, that is not right. No Government knowing their job or desiring to be fair to hon. members of this Assembly can view with equanimity such a state of affairs as that. I do not believe that the Premier can. I am fair enough to say that I believe the Premier regrets the attacks that were made under cover of parliamentary privilege, but then it is only fair that those who are attacked and who have to suffer silently under this sort of thing ought at least to be given some indication as to when the motion which deals with these matters is likely to come before the House. The public is not aware that, when notice is given of a motion on a matter such as this, it cannot be discussed unless the Government choose to allow it to be discussed. The Government, with their majority, arrange the order of business, and this motion, that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the allegations made by a Minister of the Crown against hon. members on this side—an allegation that there was a master mind behind a certain thing—cannot be discussed unless the Premier chooses to bring that motion up on the business-sheet, and give us an opportunity to discuss it. The Premier, as a man of honour—I think he is one—ought at least to give us that right. It is a horrible thing for any hon. member who is either present in this Assembly or who is absent through no fault of his own to have to sit silent under an accusation such as this. It is not fair. There is no justice whatever in closing this session without giving the Opposition an opportunity of refuting the charges that have been made against it and against the previous Government. There are members of this Assembly who were members of the previous Government. Their honour has been impugned, and they are unable to defend themselves. It is not competent for them to say one word in defence unless the Premier chooses to allow them. I ask the Premier point blank, “Will he give them that opportunity?” It is a straight question. He is here in his place. I ask him. Will he give members—who have been accused under cover of parliamentary privilege of all sorts of things by one of his Ministers—will he give them that opportunity to defend themselves? Will he give us a chance to discuss a motion to appoint a select committee? He is silent!

It is obvious that the Premier realises that one of his Ministers has got himself into a hole, and he will not allow this party to defend itself because he believes and knows that. If it does defend itself, his Minister

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will be in a hole. This is a horrible state of affairs to be hanging over the heads of members of this Chamber. It is not just, and there can be no defence of it. If the Premier does not give us the opportunity of discussing this motion, he must stand condemned as being a man who is not prepared to give men who have been unjustly accused a fair deal.

Mr. BEDFORD (*Warrego*): On the Estimates-in-Chief we were prevented from reviewing the conduct of the Assembly on the Legislative Assembly vote. It will be admitted that a vote, for instance, on the Home Secretary's Estimates should not prevent us from inquiring into the conduct of prisons, asylums, outdoor relief, and so on; that on a vote for the Department of Public Lands we should not be prevented from inquiring into the conduct of any of the sub-branches of that department; yet, when this vote was going through, we were prevented from speaking on the conduct of the Assembly, particularly relating to the occurrence in this Chamber on 4th October.

I do not wish to traverse the statements I made earlier in the day on the vote for the Department of Mines; but on this vote cases arise which directly concern us as members of this Assembly, such as being unable to get straight answers to questions, the actual wording—the verbiage of questions—being censored—with which I have no quarrel, as questions should be decently put; but they should also be decently answered.

In a question which I addressed to the Treasurer the other day, I asked if, considering the statements made by me in a personal explanation as to giving Mount Isa shares to certain persons, seeing that all these statements were made in my income tax return for 1924, and were also supplied by the secretary of Mount Isa Proprietary Silver-Lead, Limited, in the same year in his income tax return, the Treasurer would use his new-found powers and peruse those income tax returns and give me this little amount of justice in regard to the charges made by the meaner followers of the Government on 4th October. The eventual reply of the Treasurer to that question was that he has never yet perused income tax returns and does not propose to do so, from which arises the natural question, "Why, if he does not, did not, and will not, did he have this regulation passed through the House?" Was it only intended for the main purpose of affecting the Commonwealth election? If it were not, and if it is right for him to proclaim a regulation—which they can do by the mere force of their numbers, and by reason of the fact that they are the Government—is it right to stop there and not to use the regulation to do justice to a member of the House? The general air of scandalmongering that has been going on in this House since before the Federal election, and which suddenly was dropped after the Federal election—just as we know the unemployment in Queensland was made a leading feature of all newspapers—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BEDFORD: I am only making an illustration in passing—I do not propose to get on to that subject. I say in the same way that that disappeared immediately—miraculously—so far as newspapers were

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concerned, immediately after the election on 11th May, similarly this air of scandalmongering is now permitted to be dropped just because the Federal elections are over—just because they have resulted as they have. Whether they had resulted in this way or the other, they would still have been dropped. And why should any of the people, especially members on this side who have been thereby implicated, suddenly be refused anything in the way of a withdrawal of the charge or an inquiry into it?

Now the case of Mungana is attempted to be tacked on to the case of Mount Isa Proprietary Silver-lead Limited. For what reason? Only because Mount Isa Proprietary Silver-lead Limited is a clean proposition. The Mount Isa Proprietary business was brought into this House under cover of a proposition in the Mining Trust Limited Agreement Ratification Bill—it could not otherwise have been brought up here—so that the Minister would not review the conditions of the Bill, as he ought to have done, but could immediately sidetrack himself and the whole source of the Bill and the reasons for the Bill by stating that the reason why it was introduced was in order to prevent a repetition of the blackmail—that is the word he used—the "blackmail" which had been exercised on Mount Isa Mines Limited. Everybody knows the facts of the Mount Isa Proprietary Silver-lead Limited by this time. Everybody knows that, because certain prospectors would not deal with the representatives of Mount Isa Mines Limited—because they had known them before—and insisted on dealing with me because they had known me before, the Mount Isa Mines Limited tried to get certain leases from us—first for £5,000, then for £35,000—and depreciated our stock in the open market so that we could not issue our reserve shares and would not be able to pay the £25,000 for the option over those leases, hoping thereby that, as they had already tried to do, they would be able to sidetrack us and so save themselves £100,000. Everybody knows that this business was introduced here purely for the effect it might have on the Federal election, the objective being—not me, but Theodore. Everybody knows that that was the reason for it, just as everybody knows that they "thudded." Now, whatever the case may be about Mungana, the case here was that the Mount Isa Proprietary business was a clean arrangement between prospectors who knew me and trusted me and a company of men who were game to put up their money because of their knowledge of me and all those small men who followed me and who eventually got £1 for their 5s. That case is tacked on to the Mungana case as a makeshift. If there is proof of the truth of the statement made in that very opportune inquiry into the bankruptcy of Mr. Reid, then this party has had its leg pulled badly; but this party can only plead guilty to believing that the statement made by its Leader was correct. If it was incorrect, then let him answer it in any tribunal of the land; but I have yet to learn that it is right to have my business fastened on to a thing in which the Government had bought something from members of the Government. I object to that course.

While we are on the question of the conduct of this House, let us get back to the evasive replies given to a statement made in reference to this cutting from the Melbourne

"Age." It is a copy of a letter addressed to the Premier, although, for the purposes of the Act relating to libel, certain statements have been deleted from it by the Melbourne "Age," which accepted it as an advertisement. This is the letter, addressed to the Premier—

"Dear Mr. Moore,—I received your telegram yesterday (Saturday). I enclose for your perusal a clipping from the 'Guardian.' You will note the headline, 'Bribe Convict.'

"Over a period of seven years I have been getting this sort of thing. Anything else can be treated with contempt. This sort of thing can only be fought.

"For seven years I have had to be on the watch all the time. I never knew from whence to expect the next attack. The struggle must necessarily become harder and harder unless I can ease up the strain.

"As briefly as possible let me review the events of the last few months. When I visited you I asked—(1) That an inquiry be held. That you refused. Then you were asked as a second alternative—but to me I must confess a distasteful alternative, and one prompted by circumstance alone—that your Government would pledge itself not to plead the Statute of Frauds and Limitations if legal action were taken to secure the release of the £3,000 bonds and £200 cash which counsel had advised us had been confiscated by a faulty Act. This also you refused; but your Government said, in effect, if we could weather so fateful a bar as a certain nonsuit, you would not introduce legislation to reconfiscate the money."

[4.30 p.m.]

"That was a promise that could only be interpreted to mean that your Government would concede nothing.

"Returning to Sydney I got a couple of bumps over the seven-years-old trouble, and then the Federal elections came on. Dr. Nott was howling so much about Billy Hughes not agreeing to meet him in debate that I wrote him, and challenged him to meet me. He sidestepped that challenge in the very manner he was condemning Hughes for adopting. He informed me by telephone that he was writing to me on the following day—but he did not keep his word."

I do not blame Nott for that—

"Then came the question in the Queensland House, and for all practical purposes I am back where I was on the day I was released from Boggo-road Gaol, with this exception—that then I believed the thing could be lived down, but now I know that it has to be fought down or I must go under. I prefer to fight.

"When I read that headline in the 'Guardian,' I realised that it said in callous type what Country Party Nationalists often said, and are now saying, in effect. I knew seven years ago that this would be said, but then believed if my silence saved a party the representatives of that party would keep their promises made to me at a time when to exact the promise from them in writing would have been as cruel as it was cowardly.

"Having read the headline I then wired to you. For the courtesy of your reply I thank you.

"What I now want to point out to you is this: The organisation responsible for the hatching of the plot, and linking it up with the politicians, is the one that hurls the stone at me.

"This is the simple fact of the whole thing."

I am informed by people who ought to know that the letter went on to say—

"I went to Boggo road for what I did, but the man who prompted and showed us the political legal way out of it got the position of Agent-General."

The PREMIER: He did not say that in the letter he wrote to me.

Mr. BEDFORD: He mentioned Macartney's name in the letter he wrote to you.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. BEDFORD: Did he mention Jim Clark?

The PREMIER: No. He did not mention anybody's name.

Mr. PEASE: You said that you had never received the letter.

The PREMIER: I had not when the hon. member asked me the question.

Mr. BEDFORD: Let me proceed—

"A certain well-known association at an executive meeting, after I had advised that it was unnecessary to go on with the proposal, decided that a man should be 'bought' to cross the floor of the House."

He mentioned the United Pastoralists and Graziers' Association; and I am told that in the letter to the Premier the name "Macartney" is mentioned. Further—

"When I asked about penalties in case of failure, I was told that a well-known political legal man had advised that it was perfectly legal, provided the man to be 'bought' was not asked to vote on a specific Bill, and he further advised that he be paid in bonds, preferably across the New South Wales border."

Dirty work at the cross roads! Further—

"Certain members of the Opposition were approached, and agreed that to give the 'bought' man a chance to cross the floor of the House a no-confidence motion should be moved.

"Now, the position is that the association referred to was responsible—officially responsible—for the attempt not to bribe Brennan, but to buy his political support in the House. The mode of operations was outlined by the solicitor referred to.

"Nearly every member of your party who was in the House in August, 1922, was prepared to accept the dissolution which the defection of Brennan would have brought about. There were several interviews in the House with members on the subject. Some of the members who howled loudest against Connolly and myself knew as much about the whole affair as I did myself."

Mr. POLLOCK: What?

Mr. BEDFORD: This is what the man said in his letter to the Premier.

Mr. POLLOCK: Say it again.

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Mr. BEDFORD: I repeat it—

“Some of the members who howled loudest against Connolly and myself knew as much about the whole affair as I did myself.”

Further—

“The man who supplied the bonds, however, put over a story worthy of a novelist.”

Or a pearler!

The PREMIER: Does he say that in that letter, or do you say that?

Mr. BEDFORD: I am saying that in parentheses—you ought to have known that.

“This was the explanation of that man:—I found the bonds for legitimate propaganda work, and Sleeman misapplied the funds entrusted to him.”

“That falsehood and the unholy and hypocritical horror with which parliamentarians cursed us to clear themselves were the initial stages in the campaign of malicious misrepresentation that is going strongly to-day.

“I believe there is only one way to meet this—to effectively suppress this—to win free from this manacling and damaging evil from the past, and that is to publicly proclaim the part I played in the matter, and I do not think a fair-minded public will be slow to realise that, after all, I was an agent who was afterwards handed the liabilities of the principals gratuitously to carry; nor do I think that the public will think that the Brennan case was the sole case of its kind.

“You will pardon an Ishmael who has been in the wilderness for seven years feeling very strongly on the matter. You may even be able to realise that after the ‘Guardian’ headline it is my duty to clear myself of a mass of imputations and innuendoes that have grown about an ancient conviction in the law courts of your State.

“You have promised the people an inquiry into Mungana. You are sworn to act without fear or favour.”

“Whilst you will not fear the men who may have been responsible for irregularities at Mungana, it is to be hoped that you will not favour the men responsible for shelving their responsibilities in the matter of attempting to buy Brennan.

“I ask you, as a result of these further facts, to grant me an inquiry. Let the matter of any moneys involved be forgotten. I will give you a written guarantee to make no financial claim if you will give me an official inquiry.”

That is very good of him—because he could not get any money back. It was taken, just as smuggled goods are treated as contraband by the Customs. Where the Premier has a case like this with the facts so clear, he keeps silent, and refuses even to go on with the Mungana inquiry in the absence of the man principally implicated.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: He has got to take up a manly attitude after what he said.

Mr. BEDFORD: It is perfectly right to be manly not only to the people who look guilty but also to the people who look innocent. If the Premier wants to be

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manly, let him start by giving an independent inquiry into Mount Isa right away. It will not suit him to do so; it will not suit his followers, because he knows it is too clean; but just before the next election he may do so. I am not going to wait until just before the next election. If it is necessary for a member of Parliament to get his own reputation cleared, and he cannot get it cleared in the House itself, then I will waive my rights as a member of Parliament and take it outside as a private citizen. In the meantime this thing must stick. The Treasurer passed a most iniquitous regulation, which generally destroyed the inviolability of the secrecy of income tax returns—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Then your legislation is iniquitous.

Mr. BEDFORD: And used that regulation for the purpose of getting some political advantage for a party which failed on 12th October. He could do that, and yet refuse in this “catfish” way of his—this way of a cat, this complacent “catfish” way—to do a thing when it suits him, and to refuse to do it with an appearance of great nobility when it does not suit. After all, I am not talking to the Treasurer; I am, I believe, talking to a bigger man—the Premier. Personally, I know he believes—and I have not the sense of proportion if I could not see it—that there is nothing in these charges. I ask the Premier, who has already expressed his own private opinion to me, and he has expressed the same opinion in this House—that there is nothing in this Mount Isa business—to grant an inquiry so that it may see the light of day; but I believe that he is prevented by the meaner people behind him. Mungana is on its own; Sleeman is on his own; and Mount Isa Proprietary is on its own; and I ask the Premier to give three separate inquiries into those three questions.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER (Hon. A. E. Moore, *Aubigny*): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. FOLEY: Stand up to it.

The PREMIER: Of course I will stand up to it. I have never been afraid to stand up to anything that I have said in this House. I want to tell the hon. member for Warrego that I definitely stated in this House that I accepted without reservation the statement he made that he gave these shares to different individuals. I accepted that statement of his; there is no question about it. I would not ask the Treasurer to look at the hon. member's income tax returns to see whether his statement was true or otherwise. I believe he did do that. But that was not the point. The point is this: Are men who were occupying high positions in this House and receiving gifts of these shares capable afterwards of handling the business of this State, and passing a railway which enhanced the value of those shares?

Mr. BEDFORD: Are men capable of governing who receive the gifts of a Sleeman?

The PREMIER: The whole point at issue is not a question of whether the hon. member for Warrego gave away these shares, or whether he did not do so; but are men occupying Ministerial positions justified in accepting these shares and afterwards

voting for a railway, which enhanced the value of those shares?

Mr. BEDFORD: No one voted for that railway; it went through on the voices.

The PREMIER: I do not care whether the hon. member for Warrego gave the Ministers in question 500 shares, or 1,000 shares, or even one share.

Mr. BEDFORD: Is it corruption to ask for a railway? (Interjections.)

The SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: I am not accusing the hon. member of corruption. I do not say that he did not give the shares in perfectly good faith.

Mr. BEDFORD: You said in this House that it was done in good faith.

The PREMIER: The part I object to, and the part that to me is so wrong and humiliating, is that Ministers should have taken those shares knowing full well they were going to pass a railway to the Mount Isa field.

Mr. BEDFORD: Your party were prepared to take the benefit—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BEDFORD: Of the gift to Sleeman.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member does not obey my call to order, I shall be compelled to deal with him. The House listened to him in silence, and I ask him to extend the same treatment to the Premier.

Mr. BEDFORD: I beg pardon, Mr. Speaker. I was talking so loudly that I could not hear myself. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: Some of the gentlemen who took those shares are men who were also mixed up in Mungana. They are not only members of this House. We have it that Mr. Dunlop, a mining warden, was given shares. All this wants to be sifted. Not that the hon. member did anything wrong—he is perfectly entitled to give his shares away—he could give them all away.

Mr. BEDFORD: Not all! (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: I am not accusing him of anything wrong. The point of view I take is in respect of those individuals who received the shares and who were afterwards going to vote on a railway proposition.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: They did not vote.

The PREMIER: Well, they brought in and passed a Bill.

Mr. BEDFORD: Wouldn't you bring in a Mount Isa Railway Bill to-morrow?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HYNES: The Public Works Commission approved of it.

The PREMIER: The hon. member might be able to justify it in his own mind: I cannot justify it. The principle is a bad one and a wrong one. It cannot be justified in any Parliament, and it ought to be inquired into.

Mr. BEDFORD: That is all I am asking you to do.

The PREMIER: But the hon. member has brought in the Sleeman case, and read out a letter, interpolating names that were never put into that letter.

Mr. BEDFORD: They were. I am assured by a man who saw it.

The PREMIER: I am assured by somebody who saw somebody else do something else! That might be all right if you want to get in a "dig" at a man who has been appointed to a high and honourable position. It may be all right if you want to blacken the characters of those individuals, but I give my word of honour that those names were never in the letter Mr. Sleeman wrote to me.

Mr. BEDFORD: I accept that.

The PREMIER: I am prepared to lay it on the table of this House. I have nothing against Mr. Sleeman. He came to see me. The case was old, and I went through the papers, and have been through them since, and I cannot see any justification at the present time for any action to be taken. If he is going to come out and openly accuse members of this side of the House, or members whom I know to be honest, then we know what to do; but I am not going to digress into generalities when people are merely throwing dirt. I am not going to have it. At the very time that this bribery business was dealt with in Parliament, what happened? This is what Mr. Vowles, the then Leader of the Opposition, said in this Chamber—

"I desire to again dissociate myself and party from those happenings, and invite the Premier to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the truth or otherwise of his statement or insinuation. I make that challenge now to the Premier. I challenge him to appoint a Royal Commission to show that any or every member of my party was in any way associated with those happenings."

Mr. Vowles asked the Premier to do that. The late Government were in power at that time, and they had the opportunity, with their detective force and everything else, to go into the whole question. What happened? A leading article in the Brisbane "Daily Mail" of 1st May, 1923, after a reference to the late Secretary for Mines, Mr. Jones, went on to say—

"His colleague, Mr. Mullan, is undertaking some amateur theatricals at Charters Towers, with the Minister for Justice in the title role as the hero. It is easy to understand that Mr. Mullan, as Attorney-General, feels some responsibility with reference to the six-months-old case of attempted bribery. It is generally realised that in that case the Government prosecuted only the men who had been the tools, and that the principals have not so far been brought to justice."

Mr. BEDFORD: Is a leader from a "burn" newspaper your best evidence?

The PREMIER—

"Mr. Mullan now states that the Government had a pretty fair knowledge as to who were the owners of the bonds found in the possession of the arrested men. Probably Mr. Mullan's audience was duly impressed by this dramatic statement and by the Minister's further declaration that he had obtained information that might lead to an arrest, but when it recovered its breath it would feel disposed to ask Mr. Mullan the simple question: Why have not the principals been arrested? Is Mr. Mullan waiting to bring off a coup on the eve

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of the election? That would be a very dramatic spectacle, particularly if the Minister himself were to continue his role as Sherlock Holmes and make an arrest personally. But a British community does not want this sort of spectacular justice. If the Government has a *prima facie* case against principals, let it place them on trial; if it has not, let Mr. Mullan cease his melodramatic posturing. He is a sorry actor at his best, and should confine himself to politics."

We challenged the Government of the day to appoint a Royal Commission, and the extraordinary thing to me is this: I have been through the whole of the papers, and there is not one single document to show that the Government took any action at all after the trial.

Mr. POLLOCK: That should not stop you.

The PREMIER: I would like to ask the hon. members, who were sitting behind the Government of the day, why they did not press the Government to go into the whole question and find out who were the guilty persons.

Mr. BEDFORD: They could not prove their case. They had not the evidence. Now it has been supplied.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

The PREMIER: The late Attorney-General practically stated in this House that he knew who they were. I have gone into the papers. If the late Government were genuinely interested in safe-guarding the honour and probity of this House, one would think something would have been done immediately after the trial.

Mr. BEDFORD: Sleeman has since "squealed."

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member wait till someone "squeals"? Had the late Government no opportunity of finding out where the bonds came from? Was it not stated by Mr. Theodore that he would make every inquiry?

Mr. POLLOCK: A man who turns King's evidence is accepted as a witness.

The PREMIER: This is what Mr. Theodore said, as reported on page 2145 of "Hansard"—

"I know more than can be stated here as to who was actually concerned in arranging to bribe a member."

He knew it. Why did he not go on with it?

Mr. BEDFORD: He knew it, but no one had turned King's evidence.

The PREMIER: The hon. member goes back seven years to a case like this at an election time. I say to-day that I am not going to reopen a case of that sort.

Mr. POLLOCK: Why open Mungana?

The PREMIER: Because, when we were in Opposition, we tried to get an inquiry into Mungana. What happened? In the last session of that Parliament we submitted a definite motion of want of confidence in the Government because they would not hold an inquiry. Were we allowed to discuss that motion? It was put at the bottom of the paper, and it remained at the bottom of the paper until the end of the session, and we never had a chance of discussing it. Do we not know from the evidence obtained in the Reid bankruptcy case that it was

hinted that we brought it on? Brunkhorst was the first man to bring it up.

Mr. BEDFORD: Separate them.

The PREMIER: Why separate them? There is nothing personal against the hon. member, who is the only one not affected in this matter. There is no accusation against the hon. member of doing anything corrupt. He gave the shares away before anything happened.

Mr. POLLOCK: What about the other men?

The PREMIER: They are not here. They are all concerned, and they ought to be here when the inquiry comes on.

Mr. POLLOCK: More than Mr. McCormack is concerned.

The PREMIER: There were several of them. The people concerned in the questionable part—the dishonourable part or the want-of-taste part, or whatever you like to call it—they are the ones I want to have the inquiry about.

Mr. POLLOCK: It was just a lack of taste.

The PREMIER: If an hon. member on this side had taken the shares, the hon. member would characterise it by a very different name than "lack of taste." They would be speaking from soap boxes all over the country. They would be telling the people up hill and down dale that the then Premier, who was the person in authority, had an opportunity to benefit himself at the expense of the public, and took it.

Mr. POLLOCK: You must take the responsibility that you refuse to inquire into the allegations.

The PREMIER: I take the responsibility; and the late Government must take the responsibility, with all the knowledge and opportunity they had for seven years, and with all the capital they made out of it.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: You would benefit by the act of the late Government.

Mr. BRUCE: You would clear yourself.

The PREMIER: I have not to clear myself. I am not going to have that said about me. Then we have hon. members opposite bringing in the names of men that Sleeman did not mention in order to get them into a dirty case in this House.

Mr. BEDFORD interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: I am not going to have this sort of thing pushed on to me. There is no charge against me or against this party. The charge is against men who were brought into a court and convicted; and the Government at that time, in 1922, said that they knew they were only tools. The judge practically said they were only tools. Was it a reasonable thing that the Government at that time did not take the opportunity to find out who were the really guilty persons? Why did they leave it for seven years till this Government came in before attempting to clear themselves from suspicion—to try to clear themselves from a statement that one of the convicted men made seven years afterwards?

Mr. POLLOCK: How could you get that admission unless the convicted man said it?

The PREMIER: These matters are not recorded on the file.

Mr. POLLOCK: Would it be on the file?

[Hon. A. E. Moore.]

The PREMIER: It ought to be—it ought to be in the report of the detectives.

Mr. POLLOCK: What are you going to do about Sleeman? Are you going to give an inquiry?

The PREMIER: I think the motion put down by hon. members opposite will go out in the same way as our motion of want of confidence went out in the last Parliament. Hon. members opposite did not want it.

Mr. POLLOCK: The Speaker told us that we had no right to discuss it.

The PREMIER: If the Speaker tells you that you have a right to discuss it, I will not stand in the way. (Laughter.)

Mr. POLLOCK: When it comes on you won't be here. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: I do not want to be placed in a false position. If the hon. member for Warrego had got up and stated his case and appealed—I do not say appealed—but suggested, without dragging in all this about Sleeman's case in order to cover it up—

Mr. BEDFORD: I have done it a dozen times. Your last reply to me is that you had nothing to add. I know something that he added.

The PREMIER: I have told the hon. member why. I am going to wait, because the men who accepted those shares are the ones I want to inquire about.

Mr. POLLOCK: There is only one man, and you told me you do not think he will come back. Is that going to last for ever?

The PREMIER: No. I have let him know the inquiry is coming off, and given him the opportunity to come.

Mr. POLLOCK: It is a cowardly thing to say a man won't come back. I do not know of any reason why Mr. McCormack is not game to come back.

The PREMIER: I have a right to think; and I know what I would do if I were in his position. For a person who gets up and poses as a lily-white individual—

Mr. BEDFORD: I have exhausted my patience with you. I have asked you a dozen times, and your last reply is "Nothing to add."

The PREMIER: The hon. member brings in the Brennan and Sleeman case and the excerpts from the letter to the "Age" with his comments that something was omitted because it was libellous, as a means of trying to "put the dirt" into somebody else.

Mr. BEDFORD interjected.

The PREMIER: It may be, but I do not think it is a very generous thing to do.

Mr. HANLON: If there is ground for an inquiry, why not have an inquiry?

The PREMIER: There will be an inquiry; but we will have it when it suits us. There is no occasion for an inquiry now. However, I do not want to go on with that question. The hon. member has said that now the scandalmongering has been dropped. Scandalmongering has never been dropped. It was never going on. The whole thing was that one of the people who were engaged in the Mungana mines business was being examined in bankruptcy.

Mr. BEDFORD interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: Inquiries were made, and the share registers in Sydney and here were inspected, and we discovered certain other things, and we followed those things up. Nothing in the Income Tax Department was used—not one single thing. They had the mining registers and the writ that was issued by the Income Tax Commissioner against the company. All that information was available.

Mr. BRUCE: What about the Commonwealth taxation inspector?

The PREMIER: If the Commonwealth Commissioner of Taxes likes to send inspectors to Queensland—as his department does times out of number—what has that to do with me? What happened in this House had nothing whatever to do with the Income Tax Department. The whole of the information was got from the share registers in Sydney and here, from the writ list, and the registration particulars of the companies.

Mr. BRUCE: The income tax regulation was proclaimed to cover something that the Treasurer did illegally.

The PREMIER: It is all very well for the hon. member to talk in that way, but my opinion is that the Crown had no occasion to proclaim that regulation, because the Crown has an absolute prerogative to do what it likes. You cannot put any official—any public servant—above the Crown. You cannot say he has the same rights as the Crown. I say that the Treasurer has the right to go and find out what he likes. You cannot place a public servant in such a position that he is higher than the Crown or the Minister, and the latter cannot inquire into what is done.

Mr. POLLOCK: There was uneasiness amongst business men.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is trying to make out a little case for himself. He tried that before, and it fell very flat. I know the sort of propaganda that hon. members on the other side use. They get somebody to go down the street and say, "Your income tax returns are going to be looked up." That is the sort of "whispering" that goes on; but it has fallen very flat.

Mr. BEDFORD: Your cows are more honest than your followers.

The PREMIER: I am not talking about that. I am talking about the propaganda that hon. members opposite took the opportunity to carry on. The hon. member himself took the opportunity this afternoon to carry out some propaganda on very broad lines. The point I want to make is that it is suggested that the Income Tax Department was used for the purpose of getting information. That is absolutely wrong.

At 5 p.m.,

The SPEAKER: The question is—

"That Resolution 52 be agreed to."

Those who are of that opinion say "Aye"; on the contrary "No." I think the "Ayes" have it.

Mr. COOPER (*Bremser*): I desire to raise a point of order as to our right to discuss these resolutions.

The SPEAKER: Had the hon. member better not wait until I proceed to put the other resolutions?

Under the provisions of Sessional Orders agreed to by the House on 22nd August

Mr. Cooper.]

25th September, 4th October, and Standing Order No. 307, it is now my intention to put the remainder of the resolutions not already agreed to by the House.

Mr. COOPER (*Bremer*): I rise to a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I desire to draw your attention to some of the Sessional Orders and the Standing Order you have quoted. Standing Order No. 307, in the seventh paragraph, says—

“At 10 o'clock p.m. on the last of the days allotted”—

By the Sessional Order providing that Friday should be made a sitting day, that time becomes 5 o'clock p.m.

[5 p.m.]

“At 10 o'clock p.m. on the last of the days allotted, not being earlier than the seventeenth day.”

What I desire particularly to draw your attention to are those words “not being earlier than the seventeenth day.” According to the “Votes and Proceedings” of to-day recording the business of yesterday, yesterday being a double day, it was the thirteenth and fourteenth “allotted” days for the consideration of the Estimates; so that there are still two days after to-day for the consideration of the Estimates. The question naturally arises as to what are the Estimates. The Estimates are the accounts presented annually to Parliament showing the probable means of expenditure of the several administrative departments for the current year. I want to draw particular attention to the fact that the Estimates are presented to Parliament—not to the Committee of Supply, but to Parliament. After they are presented to Parliament, Parliament refers them to the Committee of Supply, and, so that Parliament may have an opportunity of discussing the resolutions arrived at by the Committee of Supply, it provides that at least one day shall be given to the House for the consideration of those resolutions. Not “only one day,” but “at least one day.” The Standing Order is very plain upon the question. It says that certain things shall be done “not being earlier than the seventeenth allotted day.” The Committee of Supply finished on the fourteenth “allotted” day, and the Standing Order makes it clear that the House is entitled to a further three days. It makes it clear that certain things cannot be done until the seventeenth day.

It may be argued that certain things have transpired since which upset that Standing Order, but I contend that they have not. In the first place, I should like to point out that the Standing Orders of this House follow very closely the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, and in “May’s Parliamentary Practice,” 13th edition, at page 524, these words appear: “(not being earlier than the twentieth of the allotted days),” subsequently altered in our Standing Orders to “seventeenth allotted day.” “May” lays it down that it shall be “not earlier than the last allotted day”; and seventeen days are allotted by our Standing Orders for the consideration of these Estimates. It will possibly be contended that certain Sessional Orders cover the situation, but I contend that they do not. The first Sessional Order to which I wish to refer is found on page 23 of the “Journals” of the Legislative Assembly. Therein it sets out: “On the day appointed for the reception of any

resolution or resolutions reported from . . .” —This is the point—“Committees of Supply and Ways and Means.”

I contend that no resolutions have yet been received from the Committee of Ways and Means. The business-paper for to-day sets out that the next Order of the Day is—“Ways and Means; Opening of Committee.” We have not yet opened that Committee, consequently there can be no resolutions coming from the Committee of Ways and Means; and until that is done, I contend we are not in order in closing this discussion. It may be in order—for certain purposes—for the Premier, being the Leader of the House, to move a certain Appropriation Bill at a certain hour; but nothing can be done to stop the debate on these resolutions, because we have not yet reached the point where yesterday’s resolutions apply. Yesterday’s resolution as it appears in the “Votes and Proceedings” is to this effect—

“It was ordered that the resolutions be received to-morrow.”

The resolutions being “received to-morrow” does not make that a Standing Order, nor is it a Sessional Order. To quote the resolutions passed on 24th October as a Sessional Order is wrong.

Mr. POLLOCK: Even if they are received, they need not necessarily be passed.

Mr. COOPER: On that very question alone, if it is contended that the Sessional Order agreed to on 4th October limits the discussion, then, seeing that the Committee of Supply has dealt with the Estimates, I still contend that this House has every right to discuss the resolutions, and that discussion cannot be burked.

Standing Order No. 307 provides—

“Not more than seventeen days shall be allotted for the consideration of the Estimates for the year and the Supplementary Estimates for the previous year.”

I do not think that the resolution passed yesterday can be regarded as a Sessional Order. It merely stated that these resolutions should be received “to-morrow.” Until we have the resolutions from Committee of Ways and Means—and we have none—the Sessional Order which I previously quoted for the reception of the resolutions cannot apply. I contend that we are at liberty to go on discussing these resolutions as submitted to this House until the time allotted for the consideration of the Estimates is exhausted.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): I would like to add to that—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have listened to what the hon. member for Bremer has had to say in regard to Standing Order No. 307. This is an important point, and one which we want to settle satisfactorily. If there is anything that Standing Order No. 307 is clear and definite upon, it is that sixteen days shall be allotted for the consideration of the Estimates in Committee of Supply.

Mr. COOPER: No, no, Sir; it does not say anything of the kind. Excuse me, it says, “Seventeen days shall be allotted.”

The SPEAKER: I said that it provides that sixteen days shall be allotted for the

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consideration of the Estimates in Committee of Supply, and one day in the House for the consideration of the resolutions received from Committee of Supply.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. POLLOCK: You won't find that in the Standing Orders.

Mr. COOPER: "Not more than seventeen days shall be allotted for the consideration of the Estimates for the year, and the Supplementary Estimates for the previous year." There is no getting away from that.

The SPEAKER: The day provided by the Standing Orders for the consideration of the resolutions by the House shall be a day "not being earlier than the seventeenth day; but—"

Mr. POLLOCK: This is earlier.

The SPEAKER: We are not on the seventeenth day. What I want to point out to the House is that Standing Order No. 307 is perfectly clear and definite about what is to be done when the debate has taken the whole of the "allotted" period.

Mr. COOPER: The whole of the allotted period has not yet been taken.

The SPEAKER: That is so. What has the Standing Order got to say if the allotted period for the consideration of the Estimates has not been taken? It is silent. It has not one word to say on the point.

Mr. MAXWELL: Hear, hear! The consideration of the Estimates has been completed.

Mr. COOPER: We are still on the Estimates.

The SPEAKER: I say that the Standing Orders are absolutely silent on the point. If the consideration of the Estimates finished in eight or ten days, what would be the position then?

Mr. COOPER: But the Estimates are not yet finished.

The SPEAKER: Let me finish, please. If the consideration of the Estimates in Committee of Supply finished in eight or ten days, do hon. members argue that the remainder of the "allotted days" should be confined to the discussion of the resolutions in the House?

Mr. COOPER: I do contend that.

Mr. POLLOCK: Not that they "shall," but that they "may."

The SPEAKER: That cannot be so.

Mr. POLLOCK: Why?

The SPEAKER: Not unless this House agrees to it.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COOPER: No, Sir.

The SPEAKER: The Standing Orders are absolutely silent as to what can be done if a lesser period is taken than is allotted under Standing Order No. 307 for the consideration of the Estimates in Committee of Supply.

Mr. POLLOCK: That is because the point has never arisen previously.

The SPEAKER: That is so. As the hon. member for Gregory states, the point has never arisen previously, and no provision is made in Standing Order No. 307 for what shall happen in the event of such a position arising. Then what are we to do? The Standing Orders are silent; there

is no precedent to guide us; it is necessary, therefore, to create a precedent. There was never a time when it was more necessary that common sense should be introduced into the interpretation of what is the right thing to do in connection with a Standing Order than the present. The Standing Orders assist us to get over the difficulty in one direction. Standing Order No. 307 says that one day of the "allotted days" shall be devoted by the House to the reception of resolutions from Committee of Supply.

Mr. COOPER: It says one day at least.

The SPEAKER: That is the only stipulation in regard to the reception of resolutions.

Mr. COOPER: Isn't that definite enough?

The SPEAKER: The Standing Orders are definite enough for me. My ruling is that it is quite in order to act as I have done. I now propose to put the whole of the remaining resolutions through under certain Sessional Orders and under Standing Order No. 307. My ruling is perfectly correct, and is in agreement with Standing Order No. 307. The hon. member stated that we have not yet received the resolutions. They were handed in here this morning by the Chairman of Committees.

Mr. POLLOCK: The resolutions from the Committee of Supply were handed to you; but you have not yet received resolutions from the Committee of Ways and Means.

Mr. COOPER: That is what I said.

The SPEAKER: We shall come to that a little later, after these resolutions have been agreed to.

Mr. POLLOCK: After we have exhausted the seventeen days.

The SPEAKER: We shall not come to that stage until we have passed the whole of the resolutions reported from Committee of Supply, and I am going to put the remainder of those resolutions now.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COOPER (*Bremer*): Mr. Speaker, have you ruled?

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr. COOPER: What was the ruling?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot speak. I would like hon. members to make themselves acquainted with the Standing Orders. Standing Order 116 reads—

"Upon a question of order being being raised, the member called to order shall resume his seat; and after the question of order has been stated to Mr. Speaker by the member rising to the question of order, Mr. Speaker shall give his opinion thereon, but may first invite the opinion of the House."

Mr. POLLOCK: You would not let me do that the night you fired me out.

Mr. BEDFORD: That was some time ago. (*Opposition laughter.*)

The SPEAKER: Hon. members on the left do not seem to like it, so I will read it again—

"Upon a question of order being raised, the member called to order shall

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resume his seat; and after the question of order has been stated to Mr. Speaker by the member rising to the question of order, Mr. Speaker shall give his opinion thereon;

which I have done—

“but may”

not “shall”—

“first invite the opinion of the House.”

Mr. STOPFORD: You only expressed your own opinion.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COOPER (*Bremer*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COOPER: I again rise to a point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! (Mr. Cooper resumed his seat.)

Mr. COOPER: I rise to a point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! (Mr. Cooper resumed his seat.)

Mr. COOPER: I rise to a point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! (Mr. Cooper again resumed his seat.)

Mr. COOPER: I am quite justified in rising to a point of order and in sitting down when the Speaker calls me to order. Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COOPER: I desire to give notice—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member for Bremer continues to interrupt, I shall certainly have to deal with him. I do not desire to do so.

Mr. COOPER: I certainly do not wish to do anything wrong.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COOPER: I am not disobeying your call to order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question is—

“That resolution 52 be agreed to by the House.”

Question put and passed.

The SPEAKER: The question is—

“That resolutions 53 to 127, both inclusive, be agreed to by the House.”

And the voices having been given for “Aye” and “No”—

Mr. POLLOCK: Divide.

Question—“That resolutions 53 to 127, both inclusive, be agreed to by the House”—put; and the House divided:—

In division—

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Mr. Speaker, while the division is in progress, I desire to call your attention, being seated as the Standing Orders provide, to the fact that you have definitely ruled to-day and have quoted Standing Order 116 to the effect that a member who desires to raise a question of order shall first have that point of order stated; then, after you have heard him, you shall give your decision. Mr. Speaker, I desire further to draw your attention to the fact that the hon. member for Bremer rose to a point of order, and that you committed

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a breach of the Standing Orders by not permitting him to state his point of order, in the same manner as you did with me on the night that you named me for exactly the same thing.

Interjections by Government members.

Mr. POLLOCK: The Speaker is here to protect the rights of the minority.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. STOPFORD: He is giving away the rights of the minority.

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

Mr. STOPFORD: I withdraw.

Mr. COOPER: I rose to a point of order. I desire to give notice that your ruling be disagreed with.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COOPER: I rose to give notice—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot dissent from my ruling. The hon. member can give notice.

Mr. COOPER (rising): I tried to give notice.

The SPEAKER: It is not necessary to stand up in your place to do that.

AYES, 23.

Mr. Atherton	Mrs. Longman
„ Barnes, W. H.	Mr. Macgroarty
„ Bell	„ Maher
„ Costello	„ Maxwell
„ Daniel	„ Moore
„ Deacon	„ Morgan
„ Duffy	„ Nimmo
„ Fry	„ Peterson
„ Grimstone	„ Russell, H. M.
„ Hill	„ Russell, W. A.
„ Kelso	„ Swayne
Dr. Kerwin	„ Tedman
Mr. King	„ Walker, J. E.

Tellers: Mr. Duffy and Mr. Fry.

NOES, 17.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Hanson
„ Bedford	„ Hynes
„ Brassington	„ Pease
„ Bruce	„ Pollock
„ Bulcock	„ Stopford
„ Conroy	„ Wellington
„ Cooper	„ Wilson
„ Foley	„ Winstanley
„ Hanlon	

Tellers: Mr. Barber and Mr. Winstanley.

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Sizer	Mr. Kirwan
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Smith
„ Kerr	„ Bow
„ Warren	„ Collins

Resolved in the affirmative.

WAYS AND MEANS.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Maxwell, Toowong, one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, in the chair.*)

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): I beg to move—

“(a) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1929-1930, a further sum not exceeding £7,178,806 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(b) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1929-1930, a further sum not exceeding £3,741,663 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

"(c) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1929-1930, a further sum not exceeding £1,755,507 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(d) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1928-1929, a supplementary sum not exceeding £145,637 11s. 9d. be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(e) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1928-1929, a supplementary sum not exceeding £42,714 19s. 8d. be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

"(f) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1928-1929, a supplementary sum not exceeding £96,619 13s. 6d. be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(g) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1930-1931, a sum not exceeding £2,000,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

"(h) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1930-1931, a sum not exceeding £900,000 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

"(i) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1930-1931, a sum not exceeding £600,000 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account."

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Now that we are in the Committee of Ways and Means, I would just like to ask the Treasurer whether he has found any ways or means whereby the £2,000,000 of which we heard so much during the election may be secured?

Mr. COOPER: What was it for?

Mr. POLLOCK: For the 10,000 jobs. (Laughter.) Perhaps the Premier can give us the information. Before the election he said that there were several ways and means of solving the unemployed question and of getting money for that purpose. I would just like to know whether those ways of which he told us at the time have proved the ways he thought they were.

The PREMIER: Several have.

Mr. POLLOCK: They have? Well, we have not seen on the Estimates any amounts of money to provide these jobs: and I can only assume that, although the Premier may have found the ways and means he spoke of to his own satisfaction, he will not be able to give very much satisfaction to the unemployed, because there is no provision for any jobs. Apparently the ways and means

of getting the money have not been so easy as the Premier would have us believe.

Question—That the resolutions be agreed to (*Mr. Barnes's motion*)—put and passed.

The House resumed.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions.

Resumption of Committee made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

RECEPTION AND ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

On the motion of The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*), the resolutions were received, and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 2.

FIRST READING.

A Bill, founded on the resolutions reported from the Committee of Ways and Means, was introduced, and read a first time.

[5.30 p.m.]

SECOND READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): I beg to move—

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

Question put and passed.

MOTION TO GO INTO COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move—

"That you do now leave the Chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole to consider the Bill in detail."

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*): I desire to raise a very important matter which I was prevented from raising during the discussion of the resolutions from the Committee of Supply. Yesterday the hon. member for Bremer quoted a notice that had been posted up at the Ipswich railway workshops referring to the State Government Insurance Office. Since then several other circulars have been issued, and we can come to only one conclusion—that the Government are out to settle the State Insurance Office in Queensland by circulars. Quite a number of circulars have been issued. I am sure hon. members will be astounded to learn of the number that have been issued. I have only a few. We do not know how many more there may be, but we are alarmed at the attack on the State Insurance Office by the present Government. This circular, which was issued from the Treasury, was forwarded to the heads of all departments—

"CIRCULAR TO HEADS OF ALL DEPARTMENTS.

"The Treasury,

"7th October, 1929.

"Sir,—I am directed to inform you that a request was made by representatives of the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of Queensland, who interviewed the Treasurer recently, that the practice of exerting pressure on public servants to place their private business with the State Government Insurance Office be discontinued.

"The association has been advised that action will be taken to remove any

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impression which may exist that public servants are expected to place their private business with the State Government Insurance Office, and that the Insurance Commissioner will discountenance any attempt at unfair competition in this respect.

"It is requested that you will cause an intimation to the above effect to be conveyed to the officers of your Department and sub-departments.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) J. H. STANLEY.
"Under Secretary."

Mr. MAHER: What is wrong with that?

Mr. PEASE: What is wrong with it? That circular was sent to every State department in Queensland, and it was sent at the instigation of the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of Queensland. They realise that the present Government are opposed to the State Government Insurance Office and are merely continuing that office because it represents £2,750,000 to the Treasury. The Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of Queensland are determined to hamstring the State Office. Here is a circular issued to the heads of every department, and, if it means anything, it means that an attempt is being made to do exactly what the Government say should not be done. The Treasurer gave us to understand that pressure had been brought to bear upon the public servants in the past to give their business to the State Office.

Mr. KELSO: Quite so.

Mr. PEASE: Here, to-day we have the Treasurer bringing pressure to bear on the public servants in order that they shall not give their business to the State Office.

Mr. KELSO: They can do as they like now.

Mr. MAHER: The pressure has been removed.

Mr. PEASE: Hon. members will not find that the late Government issued any similar circular to the departmental heads. The Premier, in reply to our leader the other day, and with a great air of indignation, said that he would not exert any pressure on public servants; and at the same time he claimed that in the past pressure had been exerted upon them. If this is not pressure, I want to know what it is. I want to place on record in "Hansard" the actions of the Government to let the people of Queensland know the deliberate attempt that the Government are making to sabotage the State Government Insurance Office. We have another circular to prove our case. I do not know how many circulars we shall find have been issued.

The PREMIER: If you had asked for copies of the circulars, you would have got them.

Mr. PEASE: We will ask for them in the future; but, if we do not receive anything more than when we ask for information, we shall not get very much. Only the other day we asked the Premier if he had not received a letter from Mr. Sleeman, and, notwithstanding that he denied having done so, we now discover that he did receive one.

The PREMIER: I received it four days after you asked me.

Mr. PEASE: The following is an extract from an instruction issued by the Insurance

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Commissioner to district inspectors, agents, and officers of the field staff regarding insurance business—

"It has been decided that, where business in which the Government is only partly interested, such as Public Curator, ambulances, shire councils, hospitals, sugar-mills, butter factories, schools of art, and other institutions subsidised by the Government, and all pools under the Primary Producers' Acts, was restricted to the State Government Insurance Office by the Government, such restriction is to be removed and the business is to be open for competition to all licensed insurers and the State Government Insurance Office."

Mr. KELSO: Hear, hear!

Mr. PEASE: Whose demand is this? Is it the demand of the people of Queensland? No! It is the demand of the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of Queensland, who, as everybody knows, are the people who provide funds for the other side. (Government laughter.) The Premier may laugh, but he will laugh on the other side of his face when the people are given an opportunity of judging him on his actions. When the hon. member for Bremer pointed out this matter yesterday, hon. members must have noted how the Treasurer attempted to sidetrack him. When we find that, in addition to sending these circulars broadcast throughout Queensland, the Government are making every Under Secretary circularise the officers of his department, it is an instruction to public servants that they must not insure with the State Government Insurance Office. (Government dissent.)

The PREMIER (Hon. A. E. Moore, *Aubigny*): That is not so. I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member for Herbert in order in saying that the Government issued instructions to public servants that they must not insure with the State Government Insurance Office, when no such instruction was given. I demand a withdrawal of that.

Mr. PEASE: You can demand withdrawal of what you like. We demand an inquiry into the Sleeman business.

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the point of order of the Premier?

The PREMIER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition stated that a circular issued by the heads of departments told members of the public service that they must not insure with the State Government Insurance Office. I say that is untrue.

Mr. POLLOCK: You can deny it.

The SPEAKER: Does the hon. member for Herbert accept the denial of the Premier?

Mr. PEASE: I accept it; but here is the letter itself for the information of public servants. What else does it mean?

The PREMIER: It does not mean what you say it does. Read it properly.

Mr. PEASE: I have read it. You would not understand it if I did. I will leave the matter for the people of Queensland to judge for themselves.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PEASE: The Premier previously stated in his election speeches that his party

would not interfere with the State Government Insurance Office.

The PREMIER: And we will not do so.

Mr. PEASE: If this is not a method of hamstringing it, then I do not know what it is meant for. Just imagine the Treasurer circulating his employees, and practically telling them they must not do a certain thing! What would they take from that? I would ask the Treasurer if he thinks that any insurance company in Australia would send out such a circular as that. They decidedly would not.

Here is another way in which the Government are going to hamstring State insurance. Why did the Underwriters' Association come to the Treasurer and ask him to do that; and why did he so easily comply with the request? If the Trades Hall people had come to us and asked us for something, we would have heard a howl about it from hon. members opposite; yet, when these outside people come to them, they have no hesitation in complying with the request they make. What are the present benefits from State insurance? We find that in connection with life policies taken out by public servants the premiums are allowed to be paid by twelve monthly instalments in the shape of deductions from their monthly salary. Here is a State institution which has been instituted for the benefit of Queensland, which allows assurances and insurances to be effected by those on whom it confers a benefit. Here is a Government Insurance Department which, under a sympathetic Government, provided that the premiums on policies held by public servants could be paid by twelve monthly instalments, with no interest being charged. Private enterprise does not do that. I take it that later on the Treasurer will probably "hobble" the provision that, when a policy is taken out on the basis of premiums being paid monthly, the total premium thus charged is 12½ per cent. in excess of what the premium would be if paid annually in one lump sum. Now I presume that, if a State insurance agent goes round canvassing and points out to public servants the benefits to be derived from State insurance, the Treasurer will send him a circular, or see to it that he loses his job. (Government dissent.) If the circular sent by the Insurance Commissioner means anything, it certainly means that. (Government dissent.) Hon. members opposite who know anything about business would see to it that no such circular as that was sent out from their business. If it means anything, it is telling the canvassers in the State Government Insurance Office that they must not put forward the benefits of State insurance to public servants.

In connection with workers' homes policies, where applicants for workers' homes have policies under the industrial method issued by outside companies under which the premium is payable either weekly or monthly, they pay a considerably much greater percentage than under an annual premium in a lump sum. There are instances where the department accepts such a policy by assignment, and pays the annual premium in advance. Notwithstanding this, the companies refuse to make a reduction in the premium, but adhere to the original policy. Thus the companies not only gain in the additional premiums, but receive the advance total premium, and have the use

of that income for the twelve months. With State insurance, however, the Workers' Homes Department pays the annual premium in advance, and recoups itself from the applicant by monthly instalments. An applicant thus has the benefit of 12½ per cent. reduction in premium rates, although he is still paying the amount involved by monthly instalments. If the Treasurer is going to continue his policy of "hamstringing" State insurance, I take it that he will see to it that this 12½ per cent. benefit is withdrawn. (Government dissent.) The Premier may laugh; but, if he were a State insurance canvasser, and had been specially detailed to go through the public service of Queensland and point out the advantages of State insurance, and in the course of that work he received a circular of this description, his heart would drop—

The PREMIER: I would have enough intelligence to understand it.

Mr. PEASE: And he would say, "What is the good of my work when I get a circular like this?" We must realise that the increased business that would accrue would be of benefit to the State—the money would be here for the benefit of the State, and would not be going outside the State.

I was astounded at the Treasurer getting up in defence of the allegations made by the hon. member for Brenner, and pointing out that in the past pressure had been exerted. Here we have him, through his responsible official, deliberately telling canvassers for State insurance that they must not canvass public servants. (Government dissent.) The Treasurer will know from the Auditor-General's report that the investments from the State Government Insurance Office in Government and local government securities at 30th June, 1929, amounted to £2,543,127.

Mr. KELSO: What about the private insurance companies?

Mr. PEASE: I will give the hon. member something about private companies. It has been stated that the State Government Insurance Office is living on the profits made from its monopoly of workers' compensation, and is not doing the business it should in fire and life insurance. Why did the Underwriters' Association come to the complainant Treasurer to get him to "hamstring" the State Government Insurance Office? Because year by year, thanks to the benefits that State insurance has given, the business has been gradually increasing. The premium income of all departments in 1928 was £1,026,085 and in 1929 it was £1,049,617. In every department of the State Insurance Office the figures for last year are a record, and that is what is going on.

The hon. member for Toombul says, "Give us something about private companies!" In the debate yesterday hon. members opposite stated that the State Insurance Office had many advantages, and they stated that men are put into the office who are not fit for their jobs. But we find that, in comparison with the great private insurance companies, the State Insurance Office is showing better returns and better methods of running the business than any other concern in Queensland. This is what is going on.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: It wields the big stick.

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Mr. PEASE: I appreciate the candour of hon. members opposite, who tell us they are out to destroy the State Insurance Office.

Mr. KELSO: You are a twister.

Mr. PEASE: Where is the twisting?

Mr. KELSO: The whole of your statement is twisted.

Mr. PEASE: I do not want to twist it. It is here in black and white for anyone to read—

“The ratio per cent. of ‘Expenses’ and ‘Balances’ to premium income for State insurance (year 1928) is—(1) 26.3 per cent.; (2) 30.4 per cent.”

That is what we are showing all the time. The State Insurance Office, because of its many advantages, is able to keep its expenses account so low that the public reap the benefit. The public get the whole benefit of that. It does not matter whether business people are insuring their businesses or the worker is insuring his home. Labour has always claimed to give the public of Queensland benefits that they could not get in any other way. This table shows the State Insurance Office expenses and balance as against those of Australian companies—

THE RATIO PER CENT. OF “EXPENSES” AND “BALANCE” TO PREMIUM INCOME FOR AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES.

	Expenses.	Balance.
	Per cent.	Per cent.
State Insurance (year 1928) ..	26.3	30.4
Australian Companies—		
In case of 11 such companies	36.9	3.7
In case of 14 such companies	29.0	15.3
New Zealand Companies—		
In case of 4 such companies	39.6	8.0
British & Foreign Companies—		
In case of 29 such companies	38.9	0.2
In case of 29 such companies	45.6	3.2

I want to emphasise these balances, for hon. members opposite say that the State Insurance Office in the past has been a refuge for political deadbeats. That is the statement made, and it appears in “Hansard.” I am going to emphasise the balances again, because that is what counts. What counts in any business is what is left after your expenses are paid, and what is left in insurance is the most vital of all, because, if your balance is good, you are able to reduce your rates in connection with fire insurance, and you are able to give greater benefits in connection with life assurance. The State Insurance Office is a co-operative concern for the benefit of the people of Queensland. If there is any concern which the Government should preserve in its entirety and not attempt to hamstring, it is the State Insurance Office, which is for the benefit of the whole of the people of Queensland. Everyone realises the benefits of life assurance. Widows and orphans are our main concern.

I am satisfied that I have shown enough to prove that the Treasurer is trying to mislead this House. When the hon. member for Bremer, fortunately, was able to give the House information as to what was going on, the Premier tried to sidetrack him, and said that, when we were a Government, we exerted pressure, that it should not be done, and that all that he was trying to do was to remove that pressure. He did say that one circular was issued. I do not know how

many more have been issued; but we have been able to trace three circulating throughout all the Government workshops in Queensland, telling the men in those shops that they do not want them to insure in the State Insurance Office. (Government interruption.) If it means anything, what does it mean? Would the Treasurer, as head of the “Barnes Booster Club,” send a number of circulars to people working in Barnes and Co.’s business, saying, “We do not exert pressure on you to buy your requirements from us”? What is the “Barnes Booster Club” for? Just to make Barnes and Co. a good concern. Yet, when it comes to the State Insurance Office, which belongs to the people of Queensland—one of the finest benefits which has ever been conferred on the public of Queensland—the Treasurer tells the people, “We do not want you to have State insurance.” (Government interjections.) I am not a child; I have been in business. Do hon. members opposite mean to tell me that the “Barnes Booster Club” would send out a circular such as was sent out here? I appeal to the Treasurer to put the “Barnes Booster Club” in the position of the State Insurance Office. The object of the “Barnes Booster Club” is to make Barnes and Co. a good, live concern. That is a laudable object, and it should be the object of all business men. I recognise the Treasurer’s business capacity in doing that. But what is he doing in connection with the State Insurance Office? Like a circular saw, he is sending these circulars out to destroy it.

Mr. KELSO: Don’t be ridiculous.

Mr. PEASE: Don’t be ridiculous yourself. If the hon. member was an agent of the State Insurance Office, and he received a circular from his chief telling him he was not to exert pressure on the public servants, what would he take it to mean? I leave the Treasurer to be judged by his business associations. I am satisfied that the “Barnes Booster Club” would not live a day if the hon. gentleman exercised such methods as he is doing now. I say deliberately that this is an effort to destroy the State Insurance Office. It is a vicious attempt. It is a bad thing for the people of Queensland, who will know how to answer when the time comes.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, Wynnum): Usually in connection with debates here private matters are left out. I want to say straight away in regard to the last reference to the “Barnes Booster Club” that, if there is such a thing, they have to compete with people outside. All we ask is that any Government office should be prepared to compete with people outside.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The TREASURER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition gets up and says that no pressure was brought to bear on the State Insurance Office. When the Insurance Commissioner was in the lobby of this House last night, he distinctly said that instructions were issued by the late Government that the office was to get from public servants an assurance that they would insure with the State Insurance Office. I ask what pressure was brought to bear in 1912, during the general strike, when the community was half-starving, when men supporting the party opposite said that poor unfortunate women could not even get a loaf of bread unless they got an order from the Trades Hall.

The party opposite have been associated continually with people who have gone to

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extremes in victimisation and tried to hamper and block all that others have endeavoured to do for the good of the community. The position is that the Government realise that, whilst the State Insurance Office is a valuable asset, there are other offices which were established here long before the State Insurance Office was set up. Will anyone deny that? Will anyone deny that they have helped very largely to build up this State? Have not companies like the Australian Mutual Provident Society and other old-established insurance companies been part and parcel of the business life of this great State? I said last night, and I repeat now, that some of those companies are largely assisting us at the present time by finding money to tide us over the difficult period through which we are passing. Can anyone say that is not true?

Mr. POLLOCK: If you had had a State Insurance Office years ago, it would have found all the money you want to-day.

The TREASURER: The hon. member is the champion interjector in this House, and very often his interjections are most senseless. If we did not have a State Insurance Office years ago, we had companies which have been part and parcel of the business-life of this State, and which have contributed towards the maintenance and development of the State. Do they run their offices without employing people? Have they no agents? Have they not spent money in buildings? If we look around, we must all agree that a great deal of their money has been spent in these directions.

Mr. PEASE: They did nothing for the people until the State Insurance Office came along.

The TREASURER: Certainly they have been here to make a success of their business; and one of the things that has hurt us so much in Queensland is that the Government of hon. members opposite embarked on undertakings which were failures, and which have left this State impoverished in many directions. I say here to-night that we are out to help private enterprise so long as it is legitimately carried out. I say that we should do so, and we will do so. I repeat that in the past for many years such companies as I have mentioned have contributed largely to the things that have been essential to Queensland's progress.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has spoken about certain things which he says have not been fairly represented. Why, the hon. member himself is the champion "twister" of the House. The hon. member for Herbert spoke about Barnes and Company—

Mr. PEASE: I gave you a good "boost."
[7 p.m.]

The TREASURER: If the State Government Insurance Office is as good as hon. members opposite suggest—and the statements have not been contested by this side—then surely competition stimulates everybody. Has this office no advantages? What other insurance office can effect workers' compensation insurance? This office has a monopoly in that regard. Every person liable to pay then surely competition stimulates everybody. State Government Insurance Office. Surely that is a distinct advantage! I am not here to-night to speak against our own office. The Government have received money, and

expect still to receive money from this office. We have a right to expect that; but I do say that the Government Insurance Office should be able to compete with the other offices. What has happened in the past in connection with certain departments controlled by the late Government? Those controlling the department went to other departments, and the other departments were permitted to fix their own prices without any competition whatever. It was not in the interests of public business that that should be so. Should not the State Office be able to compete when it enjoys all these advantages?

Mr. PEASE: You are handicapping it very badly.

The TREASURER: The hon. gentleman, I am sorry to say—as I shall prove later—has lived absolutely up to his reputation—

Mr. PEASE: That is why I am here.

The TREASURER: Yes; I am sorry that that is why he is there. He quoted only part of some of the letters that he purported to read.

Mr. PEASE: I quoted all of them.

Mr. POLLOCK: What about the Secretary for Mines?

The TREASURER: The hon. member for Herbert quoted only part of some of those letters.

Mr. PEASE: Which one?

The TREASURER: He has lived up to his reputation. He has justified it to-night.

Mr. PEASE: I quoted everything down to the last line.

The TREASURER: I am going to quote something that the hon. gentleman did not read. Competition is the soul of trade, and my opinion is that this office will be inspired by competition, and will seek to do better and better. I am amazed at the remarks of the hon. member for Herbert when he knows that some of the businesses conducted by the late Government were conducted at a tremendous loss to the State.

Mr. PEASE: That has nothing to do with the State Insurance Office.

The TREASURER: Have you ever noticed how hon. members opposite cuddle everything that seems nice, but say, "Please wipe out that which is nasty! Forget it! Put something over it! Score it out!"—just as they wanted to wipe out a nasty little thing yesterday which I produced showing what their supporters did in 1912.

Mr. PEASE: That won't get you out of it.

The TREASURER: They are asking that we should have nothing to do with the unpleasant things. Even the Leader of the Opposition, when speaking last night, said that the system of workers' dwellings was a very excellent thing; but turn up the columns of "Hansard," and you will find that that system was condemned in the roundest possible way by the Labour Party when it was introduced by this party.

Mr. POLLOCK: Didn't you withdraw the Bill?

The TREASURER: No. The hon. member is trying to rake up something entirely incorrect. Mr. Hawthorn introduced the Bill.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: He withdrew it.

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The TREASURER: I did not withdraw it.

Mr. POLLOCK: You were a party to its withdrawal.

The TREASURER: Quite a number of the Labour Party then sitting in opposition, including Mr. Lesina and the present Deputy Governor, condemned the Workers' Dwellings Bill for all they were worth, saying it was unsuitable for the needs of Queensland. Surely the State Government Insurance Office will continue to exist!

Mr. PEASE: I don't know. I am afraid.

The TREASURER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is trying to make it appear to the public that the State Government Insurance Office is such a sickly thing that it cannot compete with other people engaged in similar business, and who are in competition with it. The hon. member's idea of it is that the State Insurance Office must go under. That is the logical deduction to be drawn from his argument.

Mr. PEASE: You are hamstringing it.

The TREASURER: Mr. Speaker, have you noticed the side issues raised by the hon. member? If I were asked to name the hon. member who could tell a story which did not come into line with facts, I think I should give the hon. member the cake every time. He would come out No. 1 every time.

Mr. PEASE: He has to go before more intelligent electors than you.

The TREASURER: We shall allow the hon. member to think that. Sometimes we at this end feel that the hon. member's electors fail to realise the class of individual—of course, a good class—that they have in the hon. member; but some time or other they will wake up to it.

Mr. PEASE: You are living up to your reputation.

The TREASURER: I said that the hon. member only read a part of the letter. I intend now to read a further portion of it. The Under Secretary is not responsible for these letters other than to frame them at the dictation of his Minister, who accepts the responsibility of them.

Mr. POLLOCK: More shame to you!

Mr. BRUCE: We knew you did it.

Mr. HYNES: At the dictation of the private insurance companies.

The TREASURER: The hon. member for Gregory sometimes forgets the law obtaining in this Assembly, more especially when he says, "More shame to you!" I am out to help to develop this great State, and I am out to see that private enterprise, if legitimately conducted, shall have the right to compete for business. There is nothing unfair in that. Let me read to the House that portion of the letter which the hon. member for Herbert read—

"Sir,—I am directed to inform you that a request was made by representatives of the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of Queensland, who interviewed the Treasurer recently, that business in which the Government is only partly interested, such as Public Curator, ambulances, shire councils, hospitals, sugar-mills, butter factories, schools of art, and other institutions subsidised by the Government, all Government pools under Primary Producers'

Act, workers' dwellings, workers' homes, State Advances Corporation, should be opened for competition to all licensed insurers as well as the Insurance Commissioner."

That is the part of the letter that the hon. member read, and I now propose to read the part that he did not read.

Mr. PEASE: Perhaps I did not get that part.

The TREASURER: Do you notice, Mr. Speaker, how the hon. member slips now? One of the duties of a member of this House—

Mr. MAXWELL: Is for him to tell the truth.

The TREASURER: Is that he shall not read part of a letter and omit to read the whole of it.

Mr. BRUCE: Tell that to the Secretary for Mines.

The TREASURER: Did hon. members notice a little while ago that the hon. member for Herbert said that he had read the whole of the letter?

Mr. PEASE: I said that I had read the whole of Mr. Stanley's letter.

The TREASURER: This is the part of the letter that he did not read—

"The association has been advised that any existing instructions which restrict insurance of the abovementioned nature to the State Government Insurance Office will be removed, but that this cannot be done with respect to the existing practice in connection with workers' dwellings, workers' homes, and Agricultural Bank, nor can any alteration be made in cases where insurance with the State Government Insurance Office is provided for by statute."

Mr. PEASE: He cannot do that.

The TREASURER: In the course of an hour and a-half—and we adjourned an hour for dinner—the hon. member has to admit that he said something, and afterwards said that he did not say it.

Mr. PEASE: I admit candidly that I read all I got.

The TREASURER: If the hon. member had applied to me, I would have seen that he was supplied with copies of these letters. If the hon. member quotes public letters, he should make sure that they are not cut short just at the point where they cease to suit his purpose. That is the attitude and character of the hon. member, who has the honour of being Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader of the Opposition! That is the character of the gentleman who will come to this House and, before a number of hon. gentlemen, will just read a portion of a letter and then say that he only got that portion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: And suppress the truth.

The TREASURER: I can quite imagine that, if the letter was read over to the hon. member, he said, "Stop there! Don't read any more!" when the reader was about to get on to the part that the hon. gentleman did not wish to quote.

Mr. PEASE: I am going to do what you suggest, and get you to give me copies of those letters. Then I will read every part of them.

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.

The TREASURER: Mr. Speaker, do you realise how dangerous that would be in the case of someone who at some distant date might only read a portion of the letter that was given to him? No! I must withdraw that offer. I could not do it. When copies of letters are asked for, I shall have to judge the person by his previous actions before allowing the copies to be supplied to him.

Mr. COOPER (*Bremer*): I want to put a grievance before the Secretary for Railways. Now that the Committee of Ways and Means has agreed to the appropriation of a certain amount of loan money, I ask the hon. gentleman to give consideration to the placing on five days per week of a number of men at the Ipswich railway workshops who are at present working only four days per week, and that that be done at least for the balance of this year. I make that request on the ground that for some considerable time these men have been losing one day's work per week, and that on a previous occasion when they were similarly affected they were given full employment some considerable time before Christmas in order that they might make up some of the leeway they had lost during the previous months. If the Minister will grant the men at the Ipswich railway workshops full time up to the Christmas recess they will only get about six days' extra work between now and Christmas. Taking the average wage received at £1 per day—it would not be so high as that—the extra weekly expenditure would not exceed £600. I believe that the Estimates of the Minister show that he cannot provide full time for the whole of these men for the remainder of the financial year; so that after Christmas they are faced with another six months of four days' work per week. I ask the Minister to give some consideration to this request, because, apart from the fact that they have a very desperate time ahead of them, the granting of full time from now till Christmas would enable them to make some arrangements for the festive season. I am satisfied that, in addition to giving the men a full week's work for five or six weeks, it will create an amount of goodwill amongst the men in the workshops that will well repay the department. Nothing pays so well as goodwill, and nothing creates goodwill so fast as does good treatment; and, if the Secretary for Railways can see his way clear to grant this to these men who have suffered considerably during the whole of this financial year, I believe he will be doing something for which he will earn the thanks and general appreciation of the men throughout the workshops.

It is not going to cost very much. The money has been voted, and I am satisfied the work is there to do. As the hon. gentleman knows, there is urgent work to do. Because of the rains, he is faced now with a heavier Christmas traffic. There are numbers of carriages that can well be put into running repair to cope with the Christmas traffic. In doing that the hon. gentleman will be doing something to relieve the railway system, and at the same time bring to the workers in the Ipswich workshops a degree of contentment that does not exist there now. I hope the Minister will give favourable consideration to the request that full time be granted to the men in the Ipswich workshops and to other men throughout the State—there are not very many of them—who have been on short time for a considerable period.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*): Throughout the debate there have been statements by the Premier and by different Ministers that Labour candidates at the last election misrepresented their intentions, and that we fought the election on the cry that a change of Government would mean a reduction of wages. We based our claim on the utterances of hon. members opposite when they were on this side of the House. The electorate adjacent to mine seems to be the first to be singled out for a reduction of wages. In to-night's "Standard" there appears a paragraph, and I would like the Secretary for Public Lands or the Premier to reply to it. It reads—

"Rockhampton, Friday.

"The Rockhampton branch of the A.W.U. is taking up the case of their members employed by the State Government who have had their wages reduced by 15s. per week. A number of windmill erectors have been employed at Biloela by the Lands Department, which was recently taken over from the Irrigation Department. Their wages were £6 per week, but now they have been reduced to £5 7s. It is pointed out that the men were by no means overpaid, even at £6 per week, considering the highly technical character of their work. The reduction is, therefore, oppressive, and is felt to be a distinct breach of faith, in view of the repeated statement made during the recent State election that there would be no reduction of wages."

Mr. FRY: Are they working a short week?

Mr. STOPFORD: They are working no short week, but there has been a change of administration.

Mr. FRY: Has there been a new award?

Mr. STOPFORD: There has been no new award. Those men are working as riggers—a highly dangerous and technical work. We have passed the Estimates on the understanding that the wages operating in the State to-day will continue unless altered by some tribunal. At the earliest opportunity the Government have taken a very definite method of reducing wages. From my experience in industrial matters I believe that wages in any industry are like water. Unless you can lift the man on the lowest wage up to the standard, you eventually drag them all down. When the Government, without the consent of Parliament, abolished the rural workers' award, they took the first step towards what I believe to be an organised step to reduce wages. In to-day's paper we have a declaration that the New South Wales Board of Trade has reduced the basic wage by 12s. 6d. per week. The other night in Marlborough the Premier and the Secretary for Railways publicly stated that the Government had no intention of reducing the wages of the workers of this State.

I want some explanation as to why the wages on this particular job have been reduced. The workers realise that, if it can be done to a handful of men at Biloela, then it can be done to every worker employed by the Government. Of course, we must realise that the shortening of the days of labour is an effective reduction of wages. If you reduce a man to a wage of £3 5s. per week, you not only hurt that man but you hurt every business man in the community and lessen the purchasing power of the man. If the Government lessen the

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purchasing power of these men, how are they to fulfil their election pledges that they will create employment and not cause unemployment? The practical effect of any reduction of wages of even a section of workers must be that it will be followed in the trading and business community by a corresponding reduction of costs, which can only be brought about by the lessening of the number of hands they employ.

I have brought this matter up to-night, because the Australian Workers' Union resist what people regard as the thin end of the wedge in wage reduction in Queensland. If the Australian Workers' Union sat down and calmly submitted to that, it would be the most effective argument to bring forward before the Board of Trade to ask for a reduction of wages afterwards. I have no desire to labour the point—no doubt the Premier may be able to give some explanation.

The PREMIER: Are they being paid less than the award rate?

Mr. STOPFORD: I have no more information than is contained in the paper I have quoted from. All I know is that, while these men were under the control of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, their pay was £6 per week. It has now been reduced, and the Australian Workers' Union, according to the correspondence from Rockhampton, understands that they have suffered a reduction of 13s. per week. The Premier might investigate the matter and reply later on.

I also desire to ask the Premier for some information in regard to the commissions operating in Queensland to-day. We have heard it stated that it has been a device of the Federal Government, in order to avoid responsibility, to appoint Royal Commissions to investigate matters requiring attention. Commissions appointed by the Federal Government have cost Australia £600,000. The late Government appointed the Mining Commission from which I thought we would have had a report in two or three months.

The PREMIER: You could not have expected that, because they have to go to America. They were all advised by Mr. McCormack to go.

Mr. STOPFORD: That was one of the matters I was going to ask about. Why have the members of the Commission had to go to America and South Africa if there was no much urgency in the matter? I believe they are now going down to Tasmania. They can learn nothing in Tasmania about the mining conditions in Queensland. I know pretty well as a miner what the Commission will advise. Why was the Racing Commission appointed? As I said last night, they have not been fortunate enough to be able to see the Melbourne Cup this year; but they are hoping they will be able to go next year. The Treasurer admits that he knows nothing about racing.

The TREASURER: Didn't you tell them yesterday that you wanted them to go to Rockhampton?

Mr. STOPFORD: I did. That is why I am rising in my place to-night. I want to know why they are not going to Rockhampton. Not even the judge appointed as chairman of the Racing Commission has any racing experience—not even Mr. McCarthy, who represents the Government.

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No doubt he might be able to get in more revenue for the Treasurer. Mr. Cadell Garrick may know something about racing. Anyhow, I want the Premier to tell me to-night exactly what fees all these gentlemen are getting.

The PREMIER: I do not know.

Mr. STOPFORD: Does the hon. gentleman mean to tell me that he appointed a commission and does not know its expenditure?

The PREMIER: You did not know everything about the Mining Commission.

Mr. STOPFORD: The Mining Commission had definite fees laid down. What power has the Racing Commission got? The Government appointed Mr. McGill, chairman of the Nationalist political organisation, to represent the Government without any restriction at all. The Racing Commission is becoming a farce. Everyone is wondering how long Mr. McGill is going to string it out. Does the hon. gentleman mean to tell me that the commission can delay presenting its report as long as it likes, and that no definite time has been stated for its presentation?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You wanted them to go to Rockhampton.

Mr. STOPFORD: That would only take a few days, because it is only wanted there to adjust what is really a local quarrel, which will never be adjusted until a proper inquiry is made on the spot. I think the time has come when the Government woke up to the fact that we have a Mining Commission and a Racing Commission, and that we are going to have a Mungana commission, a Mount Isa commission, a hospital commission, a redistribution commission, and a railway investigation commission—all in about five months. That is not too bad. Is that the Government's idea of solving the unemployed question? They have more commissions than they have found jobs for men otherwise in five months. When you ask what they are going to do about the unemployed, they say, "We have only been here for five months."

Now I have a suggestion to make. Why not get Mr. Vockler as a racing commissioner instead of a judge who knows nothing about racing and these other gentlemen? He is a student of racing. The hon. member for Kelvin Grove is connected with racing, but he cannot tell you who has won until the horse has passed the post. Even then he sometimes makes a mistake. (Laughter.) Mr. Vockler will tell you the day before. (Laughter.) I think the Racing Commission is developing into a farce. It may be interesting in a sporting way. What I think the Government want is to get certain information regarding the ownership of racehorses and the dates allowed for racing.

The PREMIER: Do you want proprietary racing to be abolished?

Mr. STOPFORD: We find that the legal fraternity really have control of the Racing Commission. The Government have handed over to Mr. McGill the right to cross-examine all witnesses, and a man like Mr. Burke has been in the box for three days.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: The matter is sub judice.

Mr. STOPFORD: It is not sub judice; but even if it is, this is the time for me to state my objection, if I have one. We have

the spectacle of Mr. Burke being in the box for three days, and the whole of the minutes of the Kedron Park Club being examined.

[7.50 p.m.]

I do not desire to delay the passage of the Bill. I have made my protest, and my suggestion on behalf of Mr. Vockler. I would like an assurance from the Racing Commission that, if they are going to wait until the next Melbourne Cup, they will allow Mr. McGill to go back to do useful work for the Nationalist cause, in connection with which many difficulties are awaiting his valuable attention.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): I thoroughly endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Herbert. Obviously it is the intention of the Government to "hamstring" the State Government Insurance Office. The Premier quite candidly stated that the Ministers of the various departments take full responsibility for the instructions issued to the heads of the different departments that they should do what they could to dissuade Government employees from continuing to support the State Insurance Office. That is something that the Government should not do. They should be just as jealous of the wellbeing of the State Government Insurance Office as they are of the railways from the point of view of securing new business and retaining the present patronage. Knowing as I do the personnel of the directorates of some of the private insurance companies, I know that some members of the Government Party are interested in insurance companies in Queensland. The Treasurer condemned as an immoral act the action of hon. members on this side in taking shares in the Mount Isa Proprietary, Limited, and criticised the action of the late Government for constructing a railway to add to the development of the Mount Isa mining field.

The PREMIER: I condemned the gifts of shares.

Mr. HYNES: The hon. member for Warrego has explained the conditions on which those shares were given. They were not given by the hon. member for services rendered or about to be rendered.

Mr. KELSO: Oh, no!

Mr. HYNES: How was Mrs. T. J. Ryan going to assist the hon. member for Warrego to secure a railway? How was old Fred Ackers—a man who has done a lot for mining in the past—a man who is "down and out," receiving only the old-age pension—going to assist in providing a railway? He got a parcel of Mount Isa Proprietary shares. What benefit could the hon. member for Warrego secure from him? There is an incentive for members of the Government party to abolish the State Government Insurance Office by reason of the fact that some of them are pecuniarily interested in other offices. The abolition of the State Office will mean increased profits to the companies in which their money is invested. I now tell the Premier that the Government have done something distinctly immoral in setting out to kill the State Office when members of his party have an incentive to do so by reason of the fact that it would increase the profits of the companies in which their moneys are invested.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Where has the money been invested?

Mr. HYNES: The Government have instructed the hospital boards and other

semi-Government bodies that they are no longer impelled to give their business to the State Office; but they have also directed that these bodies must adopt the policy of the Government in the direction of the contract system. The Government refused to allow the Townsville Hospital Board to complete its work under the day-labour system when that hospital board was satisfied that the additions could be constructed more economically under the day-labour system than under the contract system. On a question of policy the Government compelled and coerced them into adopting their contract system. They are not asking these semi-Government institutions to support a State institution.

The PREMIER: We are not compelling them to do so.

Mr. HYNES: The State Government Insurance Office is as worthy of the support of the Government as the Railway Department. The Secretary for Railways is contemplating some measure that will compel people to use the railways. He is quite justified in doing so. Should not the Minister in charge of the State Government Insurance Office do the same thing?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Who is competing against the railways?

Mr. HYNES: The State Government Insurance Office is a semi-Government body, and, seeing that the Secretary for Railways has the courage to issue a regulation to compel people to use the railways, there should be nothing to stop the Government from compelling semi-Government bodies to insure with the State Government Insurance Office.

I would like to make some reference to the retrenchment policy now being adopted on the railways. I voice my protest against the action of the Government in embarking upon a policy of drastic retrenchment in the railways. Certain lists of retrenched men in the North have been read out in this Chamber. In reply to a question on the subject, the Minister stated that these men have been offered work on bridge construction and other work. On investigation, I find that the men now engaged on the bridge work who will be replaced by these men will be sacked, and will have to join the ranks of the unemployed. That is retrenchment. Unfortunately, there are large number of employees in the department classified as temporary employees, notwithstanding that they may have twenty years' service to their credit. Through some physical disability or other they have been unable to pass the qualifying medical examination for appointment to the permanent staff. I know men who are to be displaced who have a longer record of service than the permanent employees taking their places. The Minister is shuffling when he states that there are no men being put off except temporary men.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not shuffling.

Mr. HYNES: I wish to draw the attention of the House and of the people outside to the fact that temporary men—men with fifteen years' service in the railways—are being put off. So far as the men are concerned, it does not matter whether they be classified as temporary or permanent. If they are put off, the result is the same. They will be unable to obtain work, and they and their wives and children will suffer in consequence of the

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action of the Government. To my mind, the Government intend to make all railway construction work relief work. There are thousands of men employed on construction work. It has been laid down that the basic wage for a man with a wife and three children shall be £4 5s. per week in order to maintain them in a certain standard of comfort.

Mr. MAXWELL: Your Government give them nothing.

Mr. HYNES: This is the honest Government who were not out to reduce wages!

Mr. MAXWELL: You sacked them.

Mr. HYNES: The hon. member's Government have reduced their wages from £4 5s. per week to £3 4s.

Mr. KELSO: You sacked the whole crowd.

Mr. HYNES: It is quite obvious that the Government intend to make loan work relief work, or, in local parlance "tucker jobs." I voice my protest against the action of the Government. There is evidence of a conspiracy between the various Tory State Premiers to reduce wages and interfere with the conditions of workers in the Commonwealth. (Government dissent.) We told the people from the hustings that such a conspiracy did exist.

I remember making the statement in Townsville before the last State elections that Mr. Bavin, the Tory Premier of New South Wales, had stated that it was the intention of his Government to reduce the basic wage in New South Wales. Mr. Bavin later sent a wire to Townsville stating that such was not the case—that they had no intention of doing it. The press today, however, tells us that the Industrial Commission in New South Wales has reduced the basic wage from £4 5s. to £3 12s. 6d. per week, which is a substantial reduction. Of course, I can imagine what is in the minds of hon. members opposite, who will have the same excuse as Mr. Bavin when he says, "We did not do it. The Industrial Commission did it." By removing certain restrictions and provisions in the Industrial Arbitration Act, the Queensland Government hope to be able to lay the blame on the Board of Trade and Arbitration. There is every reason to believe that what has happened in New South Wales will happen in Queensland when the Industrial Arbitration Act is amended so as to enable the wages to be reduced. I am protesting against the proposed legislation of the Government, which is being launched for the purpose of interfering with the standard of living of the industrialists of Queensland. I am satisfied that it is the intention of the Queensland Government, following in the steps of the Tory Government in New South Wales, to bring about a considerable reduction in the basic wage in this State, and I take this opportunity of voicing my emphatic protest against such action.

Mr. FOLEY (*Leichhardt*): One of the grievances which I desire to ventilate on behalf of my electors deals with the question raised by the hon. member for Townsville. The construction workers in my electorate have had their wages reduced by being put on short time. Of course, it is too late now to complain of that action, which has already been taken; but, following on the lines suggested by the hon. member for Bremer, I suggest to the Minister that, if at all possible, he should endeavour to put these men on full time between now and Christmas

to enable them to get something together to tide them over the Christmas holidays. Those men are not concerned so much with a job lasting as long as possible by working short time as they are with getting on with the job and finishing it. They would much prefer to be on the job, rather than idling in their camp for one and a-half days in the week, even though they realise that they will probably have to go elsewhere when that work finishes. I certainly had that feeling in the days when I followed work from New South Wales right up to the Clermont district. When one job cut out, I simply packed my portmanteaux and took a train or boat to another place in search of work. That is the type of men for whom I am appealing to-night. They are prepared to take their chance when the money for that work is exhausted.

Another matter to which I wish to refer concerns the policy of the Railway Department in regard to the future requirements of sleeper blocks from suppliers at Birmingham. When I put a question to the Secretary for Railways earlier in the session, the hon. gentleman replied that the matter was under consideration; and no doubt he will be able to give some information now. The position is that the men who originally supplied timber to the depot at Birmingham desire to know where they stand. They have 20,000 feet of blocks on hand ready at twenty-four hours' notice to cut into sleepers, and are hanging round in the hope that the mill will start operations before Christmas. They know that certain sleepers are wanted.

On the Anakie construction job, anything from 30,000 to 40,000 sleepers will be required; and they are hoping that these sleepers will be used up and the mill restarted before Christmas. If the mill is not to be restarted, I should like to know so that these men will know where they stand and have an opportunity of treking to some other part of the State where there is a better opportunity of getting employment. As a result of certain orders for railway timbers in the Southern district being obtained under the contract system, it is mooted that that system will be applied by the Railway Department to any requirements obtained in the Central district. There are no definite instructions to that effect, but it is generally understood that the new Administration intend to follow that policy in regard to future requirements. During my recent visit the men there strongly objected to such a system. During the whole of the operations of that mill they have worked under an agreement between the Forestry Department and the Australian Workers' Union, which was arrived at after long investigation. Representatives from all parties travelled throughout the various scrubs of the State where timber operations were being carried on, and after a thorough investigation they arrived at an agreement to deliver certain railway timbers at certain prices. They have worked satisfactorily under that agreement for a number of years. Under the new system, if 20,000 sleeper blocks are required, the department will call for tenders for their delivery, and that will mean that all the men on the job will compete with each other to get a share of the order. The only object can be to get the timber requirements of the department at a cheaper rate than previously, or, in other words, it will mean the cutting down of the wages of the timber workers in the bush. That is one way of cutting down

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wages; and I can assure hon. members opposite that the men in the Central district strongly object to it. They realise that it is another method of undermining the conditions that they have been working under satisfactorily for a number of years.

Since the last State election I have received numerous letters from people in my electorate asking me to find work for them. Not only have I received letters from adult males, but from mothers asking me to do what I can for their boys and girls. I want to emphasise that this correspondence is the result of a letter which, prior to the election, was circulated by the Premier in the Central district by the thousand. The letter was supposed to be in the Premier's own handwriting, but, of course, it was only a photographed copy.

In that letter the hon. gentleman pointed out the deplorable conditions existing in Queensland. He showed how trade had fallen off during the past three years, picking out the worst three years during Labour's rule—being a drought period. Then he dealt with the falling-off of invested capital in the State, and later on asked what was to become of our boys and girls. The only inference people receiving those letters could draw was that, if they voted for Mr. Moore and his party, Mr. Moore was going to revolutionise the conditions which he claimed existed, and that every boy and girl, as well as every adult, would be placed in a position.

THE PREMIER: In your electorate they elected to keep things as they were.

MR. FOLEY: They received letters of a similar nature prior to the Premier's; but they were quite satisfied with me as their representative. No doubt they have been caught by confidence men before, and some have probably lost a few pounds through the three-card trick and having the double-headed penny spun on them; but they were not going to fall to the confidence trick the Premier attempted to put over them. I am continually receiving letters from the people there, and the only thing I can write back is that so far the new Administration has made no attempt to reorganise conditions so as to provide the employment which it was promised would be found. We have now passed the Estimates; but I have yet to see any provision to bring about what the Premier claimed was possible. In view of the advertisements during the election campaign that 10,000 workers would be employed as the result of a special loan which would be raised immediately, men and women in the Central district seriously took it for granted that something would be done in that respect.

Then we cannot find any appropriation from the Loan Fund for 1931. The only conclusion I can come to, and the only thing I can do, in writing to my electors in reply to their requests, is to point out that apparently the Government were not sincere in making the promises they did before the election.

THE PREMIER: I would never expect you to do anything else.

MR. FOLEY: I cannot do anything else. If there was something on the business paper, or a definite intimation from the Premier, that he intended to capitalise the £18,000 he has filched from members of this House, as he promised in his policy speech, one could write back and say that in due course something would be done. If

there was any intimation that a special loan to find employment would be raised, I could say to my electors, "In due course jobs will be found in different parts of the State, and you will be found a job in your turn." But there has been no indication of any encouragement to the investment of capital during the five months the Government have been in power, and no new factories have been opened where these boys and girls can be employed. During the dinner hour today I heard a lecture by Mr. Stephenson, M.A., of the Brisbane Grammar School, in which he pointed out that a few years ago he was turning out 250 boys a year, while this year he will be turning out in the vicinity of 750, quite apart from those who have been turned out by other grammar schools, colleges, and technical institutions. There was one thing which he recommended which was quite out of place and should be attended to by the Premier. He suggested that employers to whom he was speaking should notify him of any billets that were available, so that he could choose from the ranks of the boys available those whom he considered suitable for those billets.

If the Government allow a system of that nature to be adopted, by which employers may write to an institution such as the Brisbane Grammar School, what about the technical colleges, Nudgee College, the Rockhampton Grammar School, and other institutions? I claim that something should be done whereby all applications for apprenticeship should go through the Apprenticeship Committee, which would then be in a position to choose or recommend boys for employment.

The main point I want to emphasise is that we have had no intimation whatever that any promises made by the Government are going to be fulfilled, and that Queensland is going to flow with milk and honey, as the Premier intimated in the loving letter he sent to every elector in my constituency. When I saw it I came to the conclusion that I had better get busy or I would be losing my seat. (Laughter.) In it there was promise after promise, or, at least, the inference of promises that, if the Premier and his party were returned, Queensland would flow with milk and honey. When requests come from my electors for information as to the fulfilment of those promises, all I can do is to intimate that up to date I can see no move on the part of the Government to fulfil any of the promises they made.

Question—That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Bill in detail (*Mr. W. H. Barnes's motion*)—put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Maxwell, Toowoong, one of the principal Temporary Chairmen, in the chair.*)

Clause 1—"Appropriation [*Schedule, Parts A, B, C, D, E, F*]"—agreed to.

Clause 2—"Appropriation"—

MR. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): Seeing that a certain sum of money—£600,000—is by this clause appropriated from the Loan Fund for the services of the year 1930-31, I would like the Treasurer to give us some idea as to whether this money is to be used for the purpose of relieving unemployment. If the Government are sincere in saying that it is their intention later on to relieve unemployment, and that they have not yet had time

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to do so, I take it they must make preparation for appropriation for that purpose in the future. It is, therefore, only a fair thing to ask them to tell us for what purposes this money is being set apart. It is obvious that, when only £600,000 is being set aside from the Loan Fund on account of the next financial year, there cannot be any serious intention in the near future to make any provision for the jobs that were promised by hon. members opposite. In spite of what the Premier and the Treasurer have said—that this party do not want to see those promises carried out—I say that we do want to see employment given to the people.

The TREASURER: We are giving it to them.

Mr. POLLOCK: I say that the appropriation now being made for the next financial year does not show any indication whatever that there is any intention to give it to them. Therefore, it is up to the Premier to say where he has found it possible to give effect to the promises that he and his party so glibly made just prior to the last election. I hope something will be done by the Government to show their bona fides.

At 8 p.m.,

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said: Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 22nd August, 26th September, and 4th October, I shall now proceed to put the remainder of the questions necessary to complete the business.

Clause 2—“*Appropriation*”—agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 8, both inclusive, schedule, and preamble agreed to.

The House resumed.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*): I beg to move—

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

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 8.5 p.m.