

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 1934**

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The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Carpentaria*), for the SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. M. P. Hynes, *Townsville*), replied—

"1. No. The applicant may be granted ration relief immediately he becomes unemployed if, in the opinion of the police officer receiving the application, the applicant is destitute and in need of relief assistance. He cannot be granted intermittent relief work until his application has been received and assessed by the officer in charge of relief and approval received by the police officer. An applicant may be granted rations only pending unemployment insurance rights becoming due, if destitute, but there is no waiting period after sustenance rights are exhausted, and the applicant may at once be approved for rations or intermittent relief work subject to his lodging the necessary application. Single men in receipt of relief assistance and granted a period of rotational work for six weeks are required to subsequently wait for three weeks before being eligible for further relief assistance, but this does not apply to married men.

"2. The conditions regarding engagement of labour under subsidy loans provide that in areas in which intermittent relief work is operating, 25 per cent. of the labour may be engaged by the local authority from men registered as unemployed for two months, the balance of 75 per cent. to be selected by the labour agent from men on intermittent relief work or in receipt of rations. In areas where intermittent relief work is not operating, the method of engaging the labour required is determined by the Director of Labour after consultation with the Minister, but in all cases a certain percentage is drawn from those in receipt of relief assistance."

#### PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Regulations, dated 1st November, 1934, under "The Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1932," entitled "The Sanitary Conventions Regulations for Licensed Victuallers' Premises, 1934."

Ordinances under "The City of Brisbane Acts, 1924 to 1933"—chapter 23, buildings; chapter 41, amendment of section 41 (2), "The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, 1909 to 1924"; chapter 41, amendment of section 73, "The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, 1909 to 1924."

Regulations under "The Health Acts, 1900 to 1931," being "The Plague Prevention Regulations of 1934."

Regulation under "The Health Acts, 1900 to 1931," dealing with the supply of water from the Leichhardt or Cloncurry River.

Orders in Council under "The Local Authority (Grazing Districts Improvement) Acts, 1930 to 1933."

Orders in Council under "The Supreme Court Act of 1921."

### WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER, 1934.

MR. SPEAKER (Hon. G. Pollock, *Gregory*) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

#### QUESTION.

ELIGIBILITY OF UNEMPLOYED FOR RATIONS AND INTERMITTENT RELIEF WORK.

MR. EDWARDS (*Nancngo*) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

"1. Is there any specified minimum period before an unemployed man becomes eligible for—(a) ration relief; (b) intermittent relief work—(a) after losing ordinary employment, but not entitled to unemployment insurance benefits; (b) after exhausting unemployment insurance benefits?

"2. Must a man be on either ration relief or intermittent relief work in order to be qualified for work under the Government's loan-subsidy scheme for local authorities?"

## HEALTH ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

## SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, *Ituaea*) [10.35 a.m.]: I move—

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

There is not much I can add to what I told hon. members on the introductory stages of this Bill. The Bill is merely a formal one, having for its object the installing of Dr. Cilento as Director-General of Health and Medical Services in charge of the Department of Public Health. The Government have in view certain work for Dr. Cilento. For the next six months, at all events, Dr. Cilento will inspect and report on the various activities of the department with a view to its reorganisation.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [10.36 a.m.]: The Minister states that this is purely a formal Bill creating the position of Director-General of Health and Medical Services for the State of Queensland.

Apparently the officer concerned will have a great deal of the power that I suggested yesterday to make the Home Department more or less a clearing house in respect of the various health services and institutions that come under its control. I do not know whether the press statement I read is correct, but I understand that the appointment of Dr. Cilento is for seven years. The salary to be paid to him is not stated, but I have heard that the figure will be £1,500 per annum, subject to none of the reductions that affect other public servants. If that be so, the principle is wrong. If it is desired to give Dr. Cilento a certain salary, then a higher rate of salary should be fixed and made subject to the deductions imposed on other public servants, leaving the net salary it is desired to pay. It is wrong to establish a precedent that a certain person is not to be subject to any of the reductions that may operate in respect of other public servants, and it would be better to do as I have suggested.

I am not quite clear as to what the position of Dr. Coffey will be under this Bill. It seems to me we are creating another appointment and still leaving the officer who is now presumably successfully carrying out the health services of the State to continue in that work. This new appointment may be a new departure; it certainly means more expense. It may be that the expense will be more than recouped by the savings effected by the Director-General in his general supervision of the institutions of the State. When replying yesterday the Minister suggested a great extension of the health operations of this State in the way of institutions that would be founded for the purpose of housing mental defectives and also individuals who really ought not to be sent to Dunwich but who in present circumstances are sent there for lack of another institution to which they should go. All these activities will, of course, mean extra expense to the State, and so far as I can see no provision has been made for extra expenditure of this kind and we have no knowledge that the money will be available from the proceeds of the “Golden Casket.” We are continually incurring extra expense, irrespective of the ability of the State to meet it. The anticipated deficit is over £1,000,000.

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Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: You have a long narrow view of looking at it.

Mr. MOORE: It may be a long narrow view, but I can only take the figures in the Budget placed before this House. How far this level of expenditure is to be maintained by borrowed money is a difficult problem that the State will have to solve. We are not paying our way, yet we are continually increasing our expenditure. The advantages in all sorts of ways may be very great. Several suggestions could be made as to avenues in which expenditure could be incurred, but the question is: is the State in a position to afford the extra expenditure continually placed upon the shoulders of the people? After all, carrying out work on borrowed money does not obviate the necessity of meeting the interest and redemption payments in future. The State is rapidly approaching the time when it will have to consider not what it would like to do, but what it can afford. It is on that basis that Parliament should study the questions placed before it for consideration, not only in this department but also in several other departments. Relief Bills of various kinds are being introduced to Parliament, the effect of which will be to reduce the revenue of the State; yet we are increasing its expenditure. A great part of the expenditure that is being incurred and many of the concessions that are being given are in respect of money that has been made available by overdraft, Treasury bills, or loans. On several occasions in this House the Premier has indicated that he recognises that the load of taxation is becoming intolerable, and said that nothing would please him better than to reduce it.

The HOME SECRETARY: Are you complaining about his giving some relief?

Mr. MOORE: No. The relief that can be given is dependent on the revenue of the State. At the same time we are increasing our expenditure, thus widening the gap between revenue and expenditure. That is all being done on a principle that the future will have to carry the load, which, of course, is a very convenient way of getting out of our present difficulties, but it is not a very honest way of treating those people who have to shoulder the burden afterwards. The whole basis seems to be the Micawber-like attitude of hoping something is going to turn up. That appears to be the idea of the Government all the way through. They do not consider whether the State can afford the increasing expenditure, but only whether it is desirable to do the things the money is spent upon. If so, the outlook appears to be “Let us go ahead,” irrespective of whether it may or may not be possible for the State to meet the obligations.

The Bill is of minor importance, dealing only with one particular thing; but what it may mean in extra expenditure to the State is very problematical. We all know that medical men are not, as a rule, expert financiers. They believe that there are many things that ought to be done or that they would like to see done.

The HOME SECRETARY: If you had any dealing with them you would know they were pretty good financiers.

Mr. MOORE: Very good at spending other people's money. A medical man does not consider the expenditure side when making a recommendation that may cost a great

deal of money. We have only to consider the experience of hospitals and other institutions to know that medical men make recommendations in regard to something they deem necessary without concern for the financial difficulties that may be incurred.

The HOME SECRETARY: I hope this is not intended for an attack on Dr. Earle Page.

Mr. MOORE: It is not intended for an attack on Dr. Earle Page at all. It is the general position, and I think the hon. gentleman recognises it. I have seen all sorts of suggestions made by professional men in regard to things that may be quite desirable, but they leave the burden of financing it to whoever has to carry it out. Sometimes it may be the Government, and the Government may not have the means for carrying it out. I understand Dr. Cilento is a scientific man, and it is very desirable to secure his services for this State; but the question is what liabilities are to be incurred in carrying out recommendations that might be made? We have had experience throughout the State of professional men making suggestions for quite desirable projects if the enormous amounts of money they would cost were available. Are we justified in placing individuals in high positions whose recommendations it may be impossible to carry out owing to the financial obligations involved, so that thus their suggestions may be nullified.

Mr. WIENHOLT: They always have the Loan Council.

Mr. MOORE: The Loan Council is the body that prevents the Governments of each State from procuring the amount of money they think they ought to have. The Loan Council should be in a position to allocate the amount available according to the requirements of the States. The whole financial position of each State is placed before the Loan Council, and the Premiers and the Federal Treasurer have a say in the question whether it is desirable to raise that amount, and whether it can be secured. We are discussing this morning a Health Acts Amendment Bill, under which a Director-General is appointed. Nobody disputes the qualifications of Dr. Cilento—they are undoubtedly great—but his recommendations may be such that it would be impossible for the State in its present financial position to carry them out. We are light-heartedly going ahead and increasing our services. New appointments are being made from day to day, irrespective of where the money is to come from. It seems to me we should take into consideration the financial position of the State before we create new offices that may possibly mean considerable expenditure for which we are making no preparation whatever. Although we have passed the Estimates, we are increasing the gap between expenditure and revenue by instituting new services and making new appointments, the expenditure for which has not been included in the Estimates, so that really we are throwing the burden on the people of the future. That may be all right from one point of view, but from my point of view it is not a satisfactory method of conducting the business of Parliament. Parliament should be in the position of saying what money is available, and what should be spent. The Home Secretary, when intro-

ducing the Local Authorities and Other Acts Amendment Bill, pointed out the necessity for local bodies adopting the budgeting system in order that their expenditure might be kept within revenue and within the amount that they could borrow under their Acts, and admitted that until they did so we should continue to see them borrowing beyond the statutory limits, and Parliament would have to pass Bills validating their actions. They got into that position owing to the fact that they proceeded in exactly the same way as the Government have—increased their expenditure without having in sight the revenue necessary to meet their increased obligations. I have no objection to the appointment of Dr. Cilento as a professional man. It is quite possible that he may be able to effect a considerable saving. On the other hand, there is also the possibility that increased expenditure will be involved in his recommendations. If there is no intention to carry them out, then it is useless appointing a Director-General with the idea of his making suggestions for new institutions which the State will be unable to afford until the financial position is sounder. Dr. Coffey is, apparently, to be Deputy Director-General, and the Director-General apparently will be occupied in a general survey of health services at any rate for the next six months. The whole point is what is going to happen in the future? On one or two Bills the Home Secretary has introduced he has definitely stated that in future people who are charged with the responsibility of expending public money must keep within the statutory limits laid down for them. That indicates the view I take of the Bill. From the point of view of the desirableness of the appointment I do not suppose there is any question. The important question is the financial position of the State, and whether we are in a position to afford the extra expense likely to be incurred.

Mr. LLEWELYN (*Toowoomba*) [10.50 a.m.]: Public health must command the most serious consideration of the Government, especially when we consider the numbers and variety of the health activities of the State, and recognise the incidence of disease. I submit that the appointment of a man well versed in medical science—not necessarily Dr. Cilento—to make a survey of the State's medical activities and disease generally, is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. During the discussion on the Estimates of the department controlled by the Home Secretary, I enumerated the activities controlled by the State in this direction. The Leader of the Opposition has drawn attention to the possibility that the creation of the office of Director-General of Health and Medical Services may mean expense to the State. I submit that the appointment will prove to be a great economy. Had we had in the employment of the State, under the direction of the Home Secretary, a man conversant with tropical diseases, Weil's disease, which is at present causing such anxiety, might have been combated ever so much more quickly than it has. The hon. member has also mentioned the possibility of an additional charge on the general taxpayer, yet members of the Opposition criticised the Bill brought down recently by the Secretary for Agriculture, which called upon one industry

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to meet the greater part of the cost of eradicating that disease. Such inconsistency is ridiculous. I welcome the Bill because I believe that it will do inestimable good, and that it will enable Queensland to be quoted as an excellent example to the other States of attention to the physical wellbeing of the community.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN (*Murilla*) [10.55 a.m.]: I have no objection to the Minister appointing a Director-General of Health and Medical Services for the State of Queensland. Hundreds of thousands of pounds are being spent in this State in an endeavour to save the lives of the people.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR interjected.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The hon. member will be put out if he is not careful. (Laughter.) The Minister is spending huge sums of money upon public health, first in this direction and then in that direction, apparently on the assumption that there is to be no settling day for these financial transactions. He is proceeding on the assumption that an unlimited amount of money is available to him for this special purpose. I appreciate his ideals, but I am prompted to point out to him, for instance, that our hospitals attend to a large number of cases, the results of accidents in the streets and elsewhere. I believe that if the records were consulted, it would be found that the number of persons killed and injured by motor vehicles over a long period of years would exceed the number of people killed at the war.

A short while ago a very prominent big game hunter who indulged in this occupation for a living and not merely for sport, paid a visit to London. This was his first visit to a city of such magnitude, and on every hand he was welcomed by the people, who gave him a banquet in his honour. They complimented him on his bravery in entering the dark untrodden jungle for the purpose of shooting lions and tigers, but in his reply he pointed out that every man, woman, and child in the city of London was braver than he was for the reason that they risked their lives every day. He added that he had been in London for only three or four days, but he had had very narrow escapes from death by being knocked down by vehicles when crossing the streets. He said that the people were subject to greater risks in the streets of London than in attempting to shoot wild animals in the jungle. Surely the lives of people are worth saving, and surely no effort should be spared to save the people from death through motor accidents!

The Minister is prepared to spend a large sum of money for the purpose of stamping out Weil's disease, which has accounted for the lives of five or six people, but I think he would find that during the same period that the Weil's disease has existed in the canefields, a greater number of sugar-field workers have been injured in going to and from their work. I appeal to the Minister to protect the lives of individuals from motor accidents as well as from epidemic diseases. I am sure that if hospital records were consulted, it would be found that the majority of cases were there as a result of accident. Perhaps the Home Secretary and the Secretary for Public Works could collaborate with the object of formulating a scheme to achieve the end that I have in

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view. Is not the life of an individual killed in a motor accident just as valuable as the life taken away by disease? The question is a fairly big one, but as it involves the purchase of petrol, perhaps the Government are afraid to tackle it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The Minister is anxious to save the lives of people who are probably menaced by the advance of a disease new to Australia. My object in rising was to draw the attention of the Minister to the number of people being destroyed daily in some other direction, and to ask him to use his endeavours to mitigate this mortality also.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR (*Enoggera*) [11 a.m.]: I commend the Government and the Home Secretary for introducing this Bill. A medical survey of this State is long overdue. There is not the slightest doubt that Queensland is growing in importance every year, and, therefore, the health of the cities and towns should be of paramount importance to any Government. The influenza epidemics of 1919 and 1923 gave food for thought to the men in control of the Health Department. We must recognise that epidemic diseases recur at various periods in Europe and other older countries, and that we have only escaped serious ravages by those diseases owing to the fact that Australia is not over populated and favourable climatic conditions prevail in this wonderful country of ours. That could not justify the Government in being unprepared. If hon. members opposite who have been criticising this Bill were called upon to-morrow to provide money for medical services in the event of war the famous motto of Baden-Powell would be adopted and used by them at every opportunity. Because we desire to apply the same motto to the industrial conditions of the country to protect the industrial army and the lives of the citizens generally, the Government are accused of incurring an expenditure too great for the State to bear. That is not a fact. The whole case could be summed up in this manner: The Health Department has not had the attention from Governments in the past that it should. With the limited amount of expenditure available an attempt has been made to police health matters in this State by the appointment of health inspectors, but that did not provide machinery necessary to deal with epidemics such as that which has occurred recently in North Queensland. I read in the "Courier-Mail" of Monday that one of the victims of Weil's disease had appeared in Victoria, and that the disease had probably recurred in him. That is one of the problems that the new Director-General will have to look into. Should persons who have been unfortunate enough to become victims of the disease, and who have been apparently cured, be allowed to leave the district where they contracted the disease and travel by water or land to other districts free of the disease until all fear of any recurrence is past?

Another factor is that by the step now being taken the hospitals of the State, together with the ambulance and other health services, will become rapidly nationalised. That will mean that the Director-General will have at his disposal machinery capable of handling the health of the people and be able to prevent this State from being ravaged from serious diseases. No doubt

he will be able to do something to mitigate the disease operating in certain districts in North Queensland.

During the plague outbreak in 1919 I was appointed a temporary health inspector, and had the Balmoral district placed under my control. What a spectacle one saw on that occasion! When the plague assumed serious proportions the patients were transported to the annexe at the Exhibition Grounds, because there was nowhere else for them to be taken. People who have any knowledge of that disease will realise that the fact that patients had to be moved from their residences to accommodation that was not suitable was significant proof that no thought had been given beforehand to measures necessary to combat an epidemic. It is not pleasant to know that, because people were thus moved by medical men—no doubt in the best interests of the community amongst whom they were housed—fully 25 per cent. of them lost their lives.

Mr. EDWARDS: How do you know that?

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: I do know that, because I was connected with the outbreak at the time. In order that the health interests of the community will be protected, a most efficient system of organisation should be available when required, under the supervision of officers who know their work. I believe Dr. Cilento does know his job, and that the people will thank the Government for this Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, *Ithaca*) [11.8 a.m.] in reply: I quite sympathise with the Leader of the Opposition in his objection to medical men having charge of the administration of any concern. Naturally, the experience that Australia had during the time, when a medical man was Treasurer of the Commonwealth would dishearten any person who contemplated appointing any medical man in charge of an organisation. The gentleman concerned earned the title of the "Tragic Treasurer," and perhaps the Leader of the Opposition has that fact in mind.

I am not satisfied, however, that all medical men are such tragic administrators as that gentleman proved to be, and I have every confidence in Dr. Cilento, who has already proved himself not only one of the world authorities on tropical diseases—and tropical diseases are of particular importance to Queensland—but also a very capable organiser. Dr. Cilento, it may be mentioned, organised the health services of New Guinea when the Commonwealth Government assumed control of that mandated territory. The service he rendered in placing its medical and health services on the sound footing on which it stands to-day—when it is more or less safe for white people to live and work there—has been recognised by the Federal Authorities and by the medical profession, not only from a medical but also from an organising point of view.

The question that the Leader of the Opposition seems to ask is: Can we afford the salary of Dr. Cilento?

Mr. MOORE: Not only the salary, but what may come after.

The HOME SECRETARY: As the head of the Health Department, Dr. Cilento will

be subject to a Minister, who is responsible to the taxpayers. That is the safeguard that the community has in the system of Parliamentary government, for the elected representatives of the people are responsible to the people for the expenditure of the State, and on them falls the onus of taxing the people to provide funds for that expenditure. The major part of ministerial duties is to see that the work that departmental officials wish to undertake is proportioned to practical needs at the time, that the public can afford to pay for it, and that professional men do not lose that responsibility which they should have to the people.

One thing that we in this State, indeed all civilised people, cannot afford to neglect is the health of the community. We cannot afford to allow people to lose their health; we cannot afford to let people die if we can prevent it; we cannot afford to have the present mortality rate amongst children; and we cannot afford the maternal death rate that we have to-day. In particular, people have realised that we cannot afford to lose the lives of so many women in childbirth. We can better afford to pay £1,500 a year than we can afford to have people die because the health service is neglected. It has to be remembered that a public health service is a preventive service; if it is not preventive, it is not worth bothering about. In this State we have built up a very excellent curative service. We have an excellent hospital service, a very fine body of medical men who will compare favourably with any other body of medical men in the world, and every facility for curing disease; but we have not the preventive health service that we should have to make the expense of curing unnecessary.

It is also to be borne in mind that one of our safeguards against epidemics has been broken down by the inauguration of an air service. The isolation of this country, which protected it from epidemics from overseas, has been broken down and some organisation will have to be provided to see that disease is not introduced from Asiatic countries. Through our isolation we have escaped many epidemics to which the other side of the world is subject; but now that our isolation has been broken down we must be prepared to meet the altered circumstances. When people have been stricken with an epidemic it is not much good to endeavour to formulate means of preventing it. We had an illustration of that truth a few years ago when that most dreaded of all diseases, infantile paralysis, attacked the children in this State. The Department of Public Health, the municipal health department, and the medical profession generally were unprepared to deal with the situation. No medical service and no public health service that is unprepared to meet an outbreak of disease is worth while at all. Any money spent on an inefficient service is money wasted. It is far better to spend more money on a service that can give results than to waste a lesser sum on a service that does not give results. We are spending an enormous amount of money on health services to-day, and I am quite sure we are not getting value for the money spent. If one reflects on the health services we are paying for and notes what it is costing and realises the total unpreparedness of the State to deal with an emergency outbreak of disease, one must

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admit that the position is not very satisfactory. The State Health Department costs a considerable amount. It employs two full-time doctors and several part-time doctors. We have our local authorities all over Queensland, who have local medical officers and health inspectors. We have health inspectors in the State Health Department. Then we have all our insanity services in which we have eight doctors. In the Aborigines Department there is one full-time and one part-time doctor. In the child welfare service there is one doctor. The Department of Public Instruction employs one doctor, and the State Government Insurance Office one doctor. Our sanatoria and homes have either full-time or part-time medical officers. We have a host of doctors employed throughout the State hospital services, and a host of Government medical officers on salaries more or less. In small towns we have Government medical officers who are paid for work they do. We have thus an immense expenditure in medical services, and there is no co-ordination, but overlapping everywhere; and in the last analysis there is no responsibility. In my own department we have medical officers in the insanity service, and they have nothing to do with medical officers of the Aborigines Department. We have hospitals for those people who may be cured and for those who are incurable. We have a T.B. sanatorium and a child welfare service, and there is no cohesion, no co-ordination or common direction. All those institutions work as little separate kingdoms, and that can only result in inefficiency and waste.

So it goes on right through the health service. We have health inspectors operating under the State Health Acts, and health inspectors under the Department of Labour and Industry for housing, and so on, and health inspectors under the Local Authorities Acts, and an inspector from each of those departments may be working in the same district, and may be giving different decisions to the people who would, perhaps, be glad to know what was the right thing to do but are unable to decide which is giving them the right advice. I maintain it is necessary that the whole of the services should be improved. We were not in a position to meet the infantile paralysis outbreak; we were not ready for the outbreak of Weil's disease; and what position would we be in if we had an outbreak of plague? Despite the fact that the City of Brisbane and the Government are co-operating in the work of rat destruction, which is being carried on more effectively to-day than ever it was, still nobody will say that this city is as free of rats as it should be. Rats have infested the North Queensland area. In the event of an outbreak of plague, we are not in a position to deal with it. The Department of Public Health should aim at preventing an outbreak. If an outbreak of plague occurred it would cost the State of Queensland far more than all the salary of Dr. Cilento as long as he remains in the department.

These are things that must be kept in mind, and hon. members must see them in their right perspective. We have malaria and filaria in North Queensland, which makes it necessary to destroy mosquitoes. The lack of a public health conscience in Queensland is demonstrated when one sees that Rockhampton, Townsville, and

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Cairns are still without sewerage systems. That is because a public health conscience has not been created. They have never been educated to the necessity for protecting their health and the health of the children. If the people had a public health conscience the present sanitary services in the northern towns would not be tolerated. It is only now that people are beginning to realise the importance of public health matters. Since I have been in the Home Department I have repeatedly stated that it is essential in the interests of public health in North Queensland that a sewerage system be installed in each one of those towns. Not only is it essential from the point of view of public health; it is necessary also from the view of the development of the tourist traffic. Every endeavour is being made to attract tourists to this State, and undoubtedly this traffic will mean much to Queensland, but if it is to grow then it is essential that these towns must be sewered and their health services brought up to date. People come from well sewered cities of the South, and on arrival in the northern towns—knowing that they are in the tropics and finding no sewerage system—become fearful. The crazy idea of the southern people has been inculcated in them that in the tropics life is endangered. They reach the northern cities, and are astounded at the antedeluvian sanitary system in operation. We have to see to it that public health matters are attended to.

Mr. RUSSELL: It would be better to do that than erect public buildings.

The HOME SECRETARY: It would be better to do that and also build the necessary public buildings. That is what the Government is doing. These towns are now considering sewerage schemes, and we have every reason to believe that during the next year of two the whole of these northern Queensland towns will have embarked on the installation of sewerage systems.

As I see the position, the public health service needs reorganisation, and we need a better health service. We also need a better public health consciousness among our people than exists to-day. We need a service that will prevent epidemics. If we are to obtain it, then the only sensible and logical thing for the Government to do is to obtain the best possible medical advice. I think we have done that in obtaining the services of Dr. Cilento. At least we have secured the best medical man available in the Commonwealth to take control of our health services. That is the first step, and the rest will naturally follow, as Dr. Cilento makes his report. When he makes his suggestions, and if they involve the expenditure of extra money, and it should be necessary for the Government to tax the people to obtain that money, the responsibility will rest on the Government of deciding how far they will be justified in following out his suggestions.

Question—"That the Bill be now read a second time" (Mr. Hanlon's motion)—put and passed.

#### COMMITTEE

(Mr. Hanson, Buranda, in the chair.)

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

## THIRD READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, *Ithaca*): I move—

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

Question put and passed.

## LAND ACTS (CROWN DUES) RELIEF BILL.

## SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [11.24 a.m.]: I move—

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

In view of certain statements made by members of the Opposition in an endeavour to make a political issue out of the Upper Burnett and Callide settlement, I say at once that Parliament as a whole must accept full responsibility for it. I have searched the history of this settlement in its initial stages, and I find there was no debate to any extent on the Bill on its introduction to this Assembly. Parliament as a whole voted for the Bill, and Parliament must accept the responsibility. It is no avail now, because a certain set of circumstances has arisen, to try to fasten the responsibility on either one side or the other. Had the Opposition of the day condemned the Bill and voted against it, then there might be some justification for their present attitude, in view of the situation that has arisen. A great deal is due to the present economic position—the fall in prices, etc.—and I would ask the House to put aside party political issues, and look at this matter from a national viewpoint. A more stirring battle cry can be found for the hustings than this settlement, and I appeal to hon. members generally not to do anything that will injure it. Hon. members on both sides have to accept the responsibility for the settlement, and it should be our job to-day to endeavour to rehabilitate it in the interests of the State.

The following figures set out the cost of the settlement under review:—

	£
Land resumption ... ..	235,044
Construction of roads and bridges ... ..	221,196
Railways to serve the settlement ... ..	1,888,212
	<u>£2,342,452</u>

The area comprises approximately 2,500,000 acres. When the Land Administration Board investigated the affairs of this settlement in 1929, the number of settlers was 1,108. At 31st December, 1929, the number stood at 1,129, at 31st December, 1930, at 1,720, and at 31st December, 1933, it had increased to 1,429. The Crown is treating the settlers very leniently indeed. Having regard to the capital cost, the total rental charged to the 1,429 settlers of £24,292 is merely nominal, which shows that the Crown is a beneficent landlord, and is not crushing the settlers in any way. It cannot be justifiably claimed that any distress that exists in the settlement is due to the rents that are charged by the Crown.

In order that hon. members may have a true appreciation of the expenditure incurred

in connection with this settlement, it is well that I should quote the cost of the various railway extensions constructed in the area:—

	£
Many Peaks to Monto ...	962,204
Mundubbera to Monto ...	562,426
Rannes to Lawgi ...	346,582
Extension from Lawgi ...	17,000

Those figures make a total cost of approximately £2,000,000, so that it can be seen that the settlement is well served with railways. In addition, the Government carried out a ten years' road programme in the settlement area, from 1923 to 1933, at a total cost in the vicinity of £250,000.

Prior to 1929 the settlers began to feel the effects of adverse economic conditions, and requests were submitted to the department urging that an investigation be made concerning this area. On 23rd February, 1929—I want to stress that date—a commission consisting of Messrs. Payne, Melville, and Power was appointed to go into the matter. In the course of their investigations they examined 339 witnesses and travelled 1,433 miles. The report of the commission was submitted on 29th May, 1929, but, unfortunately, it had to be considered by the Moore Government. The people of Queensland had foolishly voted the McCormack Government out of office.

Mr. EDWARDS: Why raise that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am telling hon. members the position.

Mr. PLUNKETT: Unfortunately?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes, it was unfortunate. I do believe that had the McCormack Government been allowed to remain in power, the settlement would not have got into its present position. The commission discovered that the capital value of the land ranged from 17s. 6d. to £3 10s. per acre, and that the rentals of the perpetual leasehold, fixed on the basis of 1½ per cent. of the capital cost, ranged from 2d. to 5½d. per acre. So that it will be seen that the rents were really a nominal inclusive charge. In 1929 the Moore Government introduced legislation based on the findings of the commission providing for additional areas for settlers, a review of capital values and rents, and a review of the costs of water facilities. Additional areas aggregating 239,967 acres were made available to 412 applicants for additional land.

Mr. EDWARDS: When was that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That was in the beginning of 1930. I am advised by my Land Administration Board that the granting of these additional areas exhausted the applications then made for additional areas. When those additional areas were granted every settler who had asked for an additional area had got one. Therefore, in 1930, as other settlers did not make application it was taken for granted that the granting of these requests exhausted all applications, and that every one was satisfied that his area was such that he could make a living from it.

A review was also made of the capital values of the land selected in 337 cases. The result was that the annual rents of selections over the first period of fifteen years was reduced by £1,363 16s. Then, of course,

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under the legislation of the Moore Government, every settler got the right to convert his selection to an agricultural farm selection with freehold tenure on a reduced value. A small number of them did so.

The water facilities on the selections were always a burning question. It appears that these water facilities were provided under the direction of the department, that is to say, the department took the responsibility of finding water facilities for the selector. The amount written off the cost of water facilities as a result of the same investigation represented £3,396. That was done after the Government had carefully considered the report of the Land Administration Board. This writing off was considered necessary to place the water facilities on a proper basis that would enable the settlers to make a living. There is one phase of the Moore Government's legislation to which I desire to direct the attention of the House, because in one respect it is on this legislation that I must administer the settlement. From 1st January, 1930, a section was specially embodied in the Land Acts Amendment Act as a result of which I am quite satisfied that the Minister of the day told the settlers that they had had every consideration that could be given to them and that henceforth they would have to pay their dues to the State, and if they did not do so then the penalties would be strictly enforced. I wish to cite section 23, which amended section 4 (2) of "The Upper Burnett and Callide Land Settlement Act of 1923"—

"(m) If default is made by the lessee or licensee of a selection in the payment of any moneys due and payable under this Act, the lease or license shall, at the option of the Crown, be forfeited, but the lessee or licensee may defeat the forfeiture by payment of the amount due within ninety days from the prescribed date, with the addition of a sum by way of penalty equal to interest thereon at a rate not exceeding ten pounds per centum per annum for the period of default; but, unless the whole of the amount due, together with the penalty, is paid within ninety days from the prescribed date, the selection shall, at the option of the Crown, without any inquiry or other process, be forfeited:

"Provided that the Minister may waive the forfeiture and reinstate the lessee or licensee on payment of the arrears due and the accrued penalty."

That is the position I have to face. I could not do anything with these selectors because this clause—

Mr. DEACON: That clause is in every Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Provides that if the dues are unpaid the selection shall be forfeited. I found that the outstanding dues in connection with this settlement were very considerable. In view of the fact that an investigation had taken place in 1929 I was rather surprised at this fact and desired to find out what was the position. I was told that the position concerning the outstanding dues was largely accounted for by two successive droughts, but the department could not give any redress to the selectors because of this legislation. We had the alternatives of collecting the moneys due, or ordering the forfeiture of the land. We could not do either; we

could not collect the dues from people who had not got the money, and we certainly could not order the forfeiture of their selections, in spite of the statement of the ex-Minister that he would put these people off the land if they did not pay their Crown dues. That is a thing that this Government are not going to do; it is not their policy. It is their policy to keep the people on the land and not put them off it.

Mr. NIMMO: Your Government have put hundreds off the land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member is not telling the truth; that is the usual class of statement that he makes. We are not putting any man off the land unless he is an absolute defaulter and will not pay. So far as the Upper Burnett lands are concerned, we are not putting any man off the land. We have to bring this Bill down to get authority to give assistance to these people. We certainly cannot collect from people who cannot pay, and most certainly we are not going to take the land away from them. What we are trying to do is to rehabilitate them and give them a chance of making good.

I have already shown what has been done with reference to the assistance to settlers on that area by this Government. Since 1932, when this Government initiated a scheme of assistance for rural development, a total amount of £23,889 has been advanced by the Department of Public Lands to landholders in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley land settlement area. That money was advanced for scrubfalling, ringbarking, clearing, fencing, and the provision of water facilities.

As a result of representations made by the hon. member for Leichhardt and the hon. member for Port Curtis, who drew attention to the plight of some farmers in that area who had no money with which to proceed with the work of planting cotton, the Department of Labour and Industry advanced the following amounts to necessitous farmers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley land settlement area for planting cotton:—

	£
1932-33	28,885
1933-34	16,505
1934-35	(approx.) 20,000

Of the latter amount, £9,991 11s. 7d. has been advanced to date, and of the total amount advanced by the Department of Labour and Industry, repayments to date total £36,741 14s. 6d. It is a very effective answer to the criticism of the hon. member for Cunningham as to the character of the settlers to be able to emphasise that, immediately they were in a position to do so, these settlers repaid £36,741 14s. 6d., showing a readiness to shoulder their responsibilities as soon as circumstances permitted. I pay a tribute to the settlers in this respect.

As I develop my speech I think I shall convince the House that the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley land settlement area has a bright future. Once the readjustments contemplated have been made, this settlement will come into its own and will prove to be one of the best settlements not merely in Queensland but in Australia.

I caused inquiries to be made concerning the value of the production in that area, and I must say that the figures submitted exceed my expectations. I visited the area

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in company with the two hon. members to whom I have already referred, and I could see its possibilities, but I was astounded to find that for the last twelve months the value of production from this area was—

	£
Cream ... ..	140,000
Cotton ... ..	341,000
Beef cattle ... ..	100,000
General produce ... ..	10,000
Pigs ... ..	6,000
	£597,000

That does not include Barrimoon pine, the figures of which are not available. That information will give hon. members some idea of the productivity of this area, as will also the following figures relating to cotton production in the years shown:—

	Lb.	£
1920 ... ..	45,571	1,038
1921 ... ..	922,778	21,145
1922 ... ..	3,878,573	88,466
1923 ... ..	11,769,502	246,399
1924 ... ..	15,179,046	314,775
1925 ... ..	18,296,507	338,187
1925 ... ..	9,007,148	188,989
1927 ... ..	7,345,951	150,000
1928 ... ..	12,218,036	228,000
1934 ... ..	17,945,000	*341,000

\* Estimated gross value.

Mr. SPARKES: How far down the line did you come?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The figures I have given are in respect of the whole settlement that is known as the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley land settlement area. It will be seen that the settlers are directing most of their attentions to cotton production, and I trust the Commonwealth Government will not interfere with the industry. Some danger exists at present, but I hope nothing will be done to interfere with the value of cotton.

Mr. FOLEY: They have already done the damage. They have reduced cotton prices from 5d. to 3.6d. per lb.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am very sorry because cotton had been made a major item in their production, and it would be very bad for the State if anything happened to reduce its value. We are endeavouring to assist those settlers in a better way than was adopted in the past. The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Public Lands and the Bureau of Industry are making a survey to see what can be done to bring the settlement up to a good production value. We have helped the settlers to a certain extent and we will help them, so far as the resources of the Government will permit, in an endeavour to make that settlement what it ought to be. To indicate the opinion, not only of Queensland but also Federal experts, I will quote a few extracts taken from a report by Sir Henry Gullett, then Mr. H. S. Gullett, Commonwealth Superintendent of Immigration in Australia, who reported on the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley in 1921. He was sent up by his Government to report on the possibilities of placing a number of migrants on the land, and the following are a few extracts from that report:—

“The reports of a number of royal commissions and committees and of Government land and railway experts

provided a great bulk of evidence and opinion on the proposed scheme and upon the quality of the country. These are unanimous in their commendation of the country as a field for farming settlement on a grand scale. It was impossible for me to examine the area and the project in detail, but I was able to check the evidence and decisions in their main features, and my general conclusion is that they have substantially understated the agricultural and dairying potentialities of the country.”

“Only railway communication and settlers are necessary to make it one of the most profitable rural localities in Australia. The expenditure of £2,000,000 upon railways for the development of this country would lead to the speedy, prosperous, and permanent settlement of the whole area in small holdings, and would be fully justified.”

That expenditure has been incurred and the railways and roads are there. The report further states—

“The suitability of the area for close farming is, as far as could be learned, endorsed by all the expert opinion of Queensland. Experienced officers of the Lands and Agricultural Departments—and, in fact, all who are familiar with farming—are emphatic that the State possesses no area so happily designed by nature for prosperous farming on small areas.”

Mr. Gullett was a journalist, and in writing his report he has found scope for his talent. The report continues—

“The area—by its richness, its magnitude, and the simple methods by which it could be pioneered—is ideal for settlement in part by carefully selected immigrants.”

The royal commission, which reported on 29th May, 1929, had something to say in regard to the suitability of the settlers. Some doubt has been expressed in this House about their suitability—the ex-Secretary for Public Lands seemed to be concerned in that regard. The report of the commission reads—

“Character and suitability of settlers—Of the 1,108 settlers who have been allotted portions, we met and discussed settlement problems with 339. Not more than 5 per cent. of this number are unsuited for facing the pioneering conditions of a new settlement. On the other hand, at each place visited we saw a number of hard-working progressive men, who are determined to succeed, and whose accomplishments to date are very creditable. These men will be a stabilising influence in the places where they are settled. The scheme will not fail for want of suitability of the settlers.”

When I examined the situation I found it was rather serious. I visited the area in company with the two members concerned and I then promised the settlers I would have a committee go into their affairs again. As I said before, I did not think that within three years such a distressing condition would arise. The settlers, of course, were not responsible for the drought that occurred in two years. I appointed a committee of inquiry early in the year, and on 30th May,

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1934, they made their report. This committee stated—

“It can be safely accepted that fully 95 per cent. of the settlers can be classed as good settlers, and many have shown remarkable courage and perseverance in the face of great odds, and will continue to work their properties to the best advantage.”

Mr. DRACON: Whom did this committee comprise?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Mr. Quodling, Mr. Kingston, and Mr. Tibbits of the Irrigation Department. Mr. Quodling was naturally placed on the committee on account of the Agricultural Bank's concern in the area. Mr. Kingston is probably one of our best officers in connection with land. I have just looked up a report he made on the original Burnett settlement, and there is no doubt that his advice then was very sound. This committee of inquiry saw more settlers personally than did the Commission. They took the evidence of 557 settlers personally, and the notes of the evidence cover many hundreds of pages. Approximately 400 other settlers submitted statements of their position, and claimed relief in some form or other. I desire to stress the fact that of about 1,400 settlers this committee of inquiry personally met or had statements from over 1,000, and the opinion of its members is that they are a very fine type. That disposes of the argument that any fault lies in the selection of the settler. According to all reports, the settlers who are there to-day are 95 per cent. efficient.

I also desire to emphasise that the responsibility of adjusting matters rests on Parliament. It is not a party question. It is no use saying that a particular Government did it, and therefore is responsible. Responsibility rests on the officers concerned. It is not a question of political issues. The State's interests must be considered, the settlement must be rehabilitated, and as I have informed the House it has very great possibilities. If so many settlers can return £500,000 in production in times like these, it only requires some little help and guidance and a rise in price levels to make it a wonderful asset to the State.

I have discovered in the course of my investigations a want of co-operation amongst the permanent officials of the Government. Someone is responsible for not drawing attention to the state of this settlement in the period between the previous report and the action now being taken. As a matter of fact, no one told me that this settlement was behind to the extent I found it was. Matters were allowed to drift. The officials of my department evidently did not concern themselves about the matter, and that is the position I have found in many matters that come under my notice regarding the financial position. Unless the Minister “digs” into questions for himself, no official will tell him the position. I am not aware whether the ex-Minister for Public Lands had the same experience. I have on my own initiative had to find out the position of this settlement, and for that I do blame the officials, not only of the Department of Public Lands but also the officials generally in the Department of Agriculture and other departments. When a settlement is opened,

and an enormous financial responsibility undertaken by the State, I find, from my own experience, that one cannot get any permanent official who will accept any responsibility. Someone is responsible for allowing this settlement to get out of hand as it has done, but I cannot find any officer in my department who will accept the responsibility. They all place it on to someone else. Certainly, when a land settlement scheme is devised, a responsibility rests on the permanent officials of the Government to pay attention to it and not wait until it gets into a hopeless financial mess before directing the attention of the Government to the position. I am endeavouring to devise some method by which every land settlement scheme in Queensland under State control will be carefully watched or policed. The position we have reached in connection with the Burnett settlement is such that the action that is now being taken should have been taken two or three years ago.

Including the Agricultural Bank's commitments, £3,000,000 of Government money is involved in that area. That is the position I desire to stress, and I repeat that I do not care what the position is—it has got to be faced. The job is on the Government of the day and on the Parliament of the State to rehabilitate the settlement, and I am satisfied that it can be done. I am quite satisfied that by careful watchfulness over the settlement, and with the officials of the Departments of Public Lands and Agriculture doing their job properly, the settlers will not again get into such a position that it will be necessary to bring before the House a Bill like the one we are discussing.

I realise that it is a very serious matter to wipe out a considerable amount of Crown dues. How far is this going to extend? This Bill has been rendered necessary by the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the Burnett area, but its provisions will also apply to other areas. Any man who is in arrears to the Crown for two years or longer may apply for relief and his case will be considered. Already the Government have appointed an investigation committee of three within the Department of Public Lands consisting of Mr. Turner, the Land Commissioner for the district, Mr. Salisbury, who was so successful in handling soldier settlements in the past, and another officer. They are examining all the claims for relief. We have the report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed to inquire into the area, and each settler will eventually be asked to fill in a questionnaire and to submit a claim for relief. This will be considered by the investigating committee referred to, then by the Land Administration Board, and relief will be granted in deserving cases. I am hopeful that the majority of the applications from the Burnett district will be finalised before the end of the year.

Once again I remind hon. members that this is not a party political question. (Opposition laughter.) Hon. members opposite may laugh, but they will have to realise that Parliament must accept full responsibility for what was done in the past. Parliament annually approved of the various sums required for water facilities and other purposes in this district, and as it is claimed that Parliament should be supreme then Parliament should accept the responsibility

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to-day. I have read the reports by the Auditor-General, and I know that the Auditor-General did refer to the fact that the financial position of this settlement was far from satisfactory. It is difficult to say what departmental officer or officers are guilty of any neglect in this direction, but a Minister in charge of the department cannot be expected personally to inquire into every phase of the administration of his department. We can attend to matters only when reports are placed before us, and if reports are not made to us then we cannot be expected to be cognisant of all the details of administration. My attention was first directed to the unsatisfactory position of the Burnett settlement by requests for relief, and when I investigated the matter for myself I found that Crown dues in arrears in this settlement amounted to something like £50,000, and that a sum of £3,000,000 had been invested in it. I feel hopeful that with the assistance already extended to the settlers and the relief that it is proposed to give the position in the area will then be as it should be. Originally the area was designed for four times the number of settlers that are there to-day, so that it cannot be claimed that a sufficient area is not available for the existing settlers. I have placed the whole position fairly and fully before the House, and I conclude my speech by again emphasising to hon. members that the question is a national one and that it should be considered entirely apart from party politics.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) [11.58 a.m.]: The Minister stated time and time again during his speech that the subject-matter of the Bill should not be made the excuse for party political considerations, but he devoted the major part of his time to an endeavour to place the whole blame for the unsatisfactory state of this settlement on another political party. He drew a very gloomy picture of the Burnett settlers, depicting unsuccessful settlers and all of them in debt. I cannot believe that he has drawn a correct picture of the existing state of affairs. He has attributed their distressing conditions to the unprecedented fall in price levels, but that economic phenomenon applies not only to the Burnett farmers but also to the State as a whole. I understood that the Bill was to be general in its application, that it was intended to deal with cases of hardship and to extend relief to settlers throughout the State. According to the Minister it is simply a Bill to give relief to the settlers in the Upper Burnett settlement, who were under no greater disabilities than settlers in many other parts of the State. It is not justified for one particular little section, for after all they are no worse off than other settlers.

The Minister wants to make this question a party one. He has attempted to throw the blame for the present state of the settlement on the past Administration, yet he showed in his speech that every one of those settlers was quite satisfied with his area and with the measures taken to give him relief at the time it was done. In 1929 every settler in the area who had applied for an additional area had his request granted. Could anything have been wrong then? The first mistake made by the Government was when the settlement was first started, and it was a very grave one. It was pointed out at the time by every hon. member who had had experience of that

class of land. The Labour Government of the day made the areas too small. That handicapped the settlers for a long time. A number of the settlers spent and lost their money in attempting to make a living from areas that were too small to admit of their doing so. When some of them got their additional areas, they had exhausted their resources.

Another, also a big error, was made in attempting to select the settlers in the first instance. The settlers were picked out, from among the applicants, for political reasons. That was a very grave error. The only consideration that should be given to a selector is whether he is capable of taking on the job. The first batch of settlers who went on this settlement numbered 1,079. The total land available was taken up. Up to 1929, 566 of these settlers had been driven off the land. Their lands were forfeited. The Minister spoke of hardship to settlers who had been driven off the land, but half of the original settlers in this settlement had had their land taken from them by a Labour Secretary for Public Lands, who had been administering the settlement from its inception until 1929. After that date the settlement was put in order in so far as the areas were concerned. They then got a chance. On the statement of the Minister two droughts struck the settlement in successive years, with the result that the settlers have not been able to do as well as otherwise they would. They were not really droughts, but semi-droughts, and those semi-droughty conditions applied to almost the whole of Queensland, with the result that a number of settlers here and there all over the State were in a similar position.

The Minister said that he could not obtain any information from his department as regards this settlement, and that the department withheld information from him as to the position. I cannot believe that. When I was in charge of the Department of Public Lands I had no such difficulty. Nothing was ever hidden from me. When anything was going wrong, the responsible heads brought it under my notice. If any subject required legislation, it was brought before my notice early. The Minister has tried to shove the blame, first on to this party, and, secondly, on to his own officers, but he has to take his share of the blame also. He has been administering this settlement for nearly three years, and during those three years it has gone to the bad. Therefore, he must take his share of the blame. It was not in its present condition when he took over the department, yet he has now to bring in a special Bill entirely for the benefit of these settlers to put things in order!

I find fault with one thing in this Bill. The Minister told us on a former occasion that this Bill was designed to give relief to settlers who were in arrears in their Crown dues and in distress. As I have pointed out, the conditions suffered by the settlers in the Upper Burnett area have applied to practically all Queensland, and in spite of it many selectors have paid their way. They have done it somehow. Some of them have left their farms and worked in other districts. They must have experienced the same hardship as the men who did not pay, yet they complied with their contract. The Minister gives them no relief under this Bill. Are they not at least as deserving of consideration as the others?

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If the conditions have been too onerous for others and relief has to be given, why should it not be extended to those who under the onerous conditions have paid their way? Why should not the Minister be big enough and the Government generous enough to take all settlers into consideration and not single out a few?

Mr. O'KEEFE: Are you a settler?

Mr. DEACON: The hon. member for Cairns knows as well as I do that there is a difference between men. Some men cannot be successful, and particularly is that the case on the land. They may try but are unsuccessful because they have no aptitude for the job, and sooner or later go out in spite of everything that is done for them. Even if you gave some settlers fully improved land rent free they would start to get into debt from the day they took it over. That has happened repeatedly in every district in the State. The Minister has some people of that type in this area, and he says, "Whatever they do I will not turn them off the land." From the point of view of the concessions to be given, the lucky people are those who have not met their obligations, for no consideration is being shown to those who have worked hard, met their dues, and done their job. Relief measures should have general application to those engaged in the industry. Why should not those who have paid their way be given the same consideration as those who have not? Why not give general relief? Why not write down values all over the State or give relief in general conditions? All settlers are in trouble. Even in older districts no farmer is doing very well. The settlers in any district have to fight to get along, but they are fighting. We are considering a Bill that is intended for one particular district—a settlement that has had £3,000,000 already spent upon it, that has railways in all directions, that has had concessions extended to no other settlement—

Mr. FOLEY: It can be extended by Order in Council.

Mr. DEACON: This Bill should be a general measure, for this area has no more right to relief than any other. Why not make it a general measure?

Mr. WILLIAMS: It can be under the clause providing for the Order in Council.

Mr. DEACON: Why not make it so?

Mr. WILLIAMS: There has to be a starting point.

Mr. DEACON: Why should it apply only to one district now? This area has had generous treatment, has had railways built for it, has had land made available at a cheap rate, all the settlers there have had their areas revised—

Mr. WILLIAMS: So have other districts.

Mr. DEACON: All have had a living area granted to them. Go all over Queensland and you will find no other place that has had that treatment. In any other district you will find settlers who are not holding living areas. Can they get them? If they have not been able to get them in the past, they cannot do so now.

Mr. FOLEY: The land is available.

Mr. DEACON: If the land is available, as the hon. member says, land can be made available in other places. When we were

in search of land for the Burnett settlers, if there was any other place they wanted to go to they were offered assistance to enable them to do so, and some of them availed themselves of that offer. I cannot follow the argument of hon. members on the Government side that this settlement is any worse off or more entitled to special relief than any other district in Queensland. I know these conditions. Other settlers have to fight, and they do fight; and there is no suggestion of helping them at all. If we are going to pass a Bill of this nature we should not single out one particular settlement for treatment in this manner.

In my opinion the Minister made a big mistake when he said that no matter what any settler did he would not turn him off. That policy also apparently applies to the Burnett only. If a settler anywhere else does things he is not entitled to do he is turned off—foreclosures are taking place every day because conditions have not been complied with—but apparently the Burnett is the one district in which settlers can do as they like. Is that policy any encouragement for the men on the Burnett settlement who have been paying their way. Those people who have forfeited have gone; but is it fair to those who remain that a man may get into arrears and remain in arrears whilst those who have paid up have to keep on paying? The men who have been paying their way are still expected to pay whilst the men who have ignored the department and got into arrears—in some cases they could not help it, and, perhaps, in some cases, it was intentional—are going to have everything their own way. The Minister is going to let them have their land and pay nothing and do nothing. He will not turn them off. Why are these men selected for this differential treatment?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER interjected.

Mr. DEACON: That is the Minister's statement in this House—no matter what they did he would not turn them off. He does not say that in regard to those who had paid—even in the Burnett. Are those who have paid voters for our side? Is there to be political patronage in this matter by allowing the Labour voters to ignore their duties to the Crown? It does appear to me as though fair play was not being given to settlers, even in the Burnett, under this Bill.

We shall move an amendment later with the object of making this Bill a general measure of relief. Such a Bill should apply to north, south, east, and west, and bring every settler under it. If it is not a Bill of that nature, unless very special reasons have been given—and they have not been given by the Minister—then we should not pass the Bill in this form. I am quite sure that if hon. members on the other side could get away from the political view of things they would cease attempting to put the blame for this miserable failure on to the late Government. When the settlement was proposed there was not a single member opposite who pointed out the possibility of failure. Hon. members on this side of the House objected to many of the provisions of the original Bill, and they pointed out the possibility of failure—the areas being too small, and so on—and we were not assisted by members sitting behind the Government in our endeavour to have them remedied.

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The hon. member for Normanby was there then, and he gave no assistance.

Mr. FOLEY: When was that?

Mr. DEACON: When the first Bill was put through—when the first mistakes were made.

Mr. FOLEY: I did not know the district. How could I pass an opinion on an area with which I was not acquainted?

Mr. DEACON: Other members did not know the district; they only knew from a general knowledge of farming that a mistake was being made. Hon. members on the other side did not care. They looked upon it as a huge political stunt—and at that time it was—for which the State has had to pay ever since, and will have to keep on paying. I hope that they will accept some assistance that we shall be able to give them when this Bill goes into Committee. I hope that we shall be able to make the relief general, and that hon. members on the other side will not stick to the principle, "Our own friends first, and nobody else."

During the administration of the Moore Government there was a man on the spot. He was experienced, and was practically given a free hand in dealing with these settlers. He met each man and heard his story, and then reorganised the settlement. Those who did not deserve any consideration, who were not endeavouring to work their places, who were doing nothing with what they had or making no attempt to do so, whom he considered shiftless—for these men he advised nothing be done, as it was useless waste of money, and waste of land. Now that the Minister is surveying the scheme, he should observe the same principle. In the distribution of relief of this kind we must remember that the deserving deserve it, and the undeserving do not deserve it, but the Minister is giving a general remission to the Burnett only. We ask that that remission should be made general to the whole of the State. If it is to be for the Burnett settlement only, then settlers who have not tried or who are not likely to try, or whose hearts are not in their work, should receive no consideration at all.

Mr. FOLEY (*Normanby*) [12.22 p.m.]: The hon. member for Cunningham is developing really into one of those cross and cantankerous old gentlemen who are up against the Government for anything they may do, and are prepared to make the sweeping accusation that anything the Government may do in the matter of giving relief is a move made for political reasons. Such is not the case with regard to the Upper Burnett and Callide lands. It is true, as has been stated by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat, that agriculture throughout the State is in a very bad way as a result of the fall in the price levels of agricultural products. But the same applies to every country in the world. The astonishing fact is that, no matter how prosperous any country may be industrially, the agrarian populations in that country are struggling as a result of economic causes for which they are not responsible. However, that is a question much deeper than that before the House to-day of giving relief to the settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valleys.

I claim, in contradistinction to the hon. member for Cunningham, that this is an

exceptional case, as compared with the rest of Queensland. This settlement is comparatively new, and the settlers thereon have not had sufficient time to get on their feet. For the few years that conditions were comparatively good the whole of the income of the settler was reinvested in the land. They have been in the unfortunate position of having had three bad seasons in succession. The prices for their main products, cotton and butter, declined by over 50 per cent. These adverse factors have operated in this new district, whereas in the older-established districts referred to by the hon. member for Cunningham the farmers have had an opportunity to improve the quality of their herds, adopt more efficient agricultural methods, and undertake intensive development, and as a result of their increased efficiency over a number of years they are in a much better position to withstand the onslaught of adverse economic conditions than settlers in new areas.

Mr. PLUNKETT: That is not quite fair.

Mr. FOLEY: That is the position as I see it, although I do not deny that there may be many settlers in other parts of the State in an equally precarious position. Taking the Upper Burnett and Callide areas as a group, and comparing it with other parts of Queensland, I claim that it is an exceptional case and one entitled to special consideration. The Government must commence somewhere if relief is to be extended to the settlers. I am satisfied that the Government appreciate the importance of reducing capital values throughout the State, but what State Government in Australia are financially able to concede concessions in this direction to-day? No Government in this State could grant relief of this nature and apply it throughout the State. Even if the Government agreed to reduce the capital values of perpetual leasehold country by 25 per cent., the loss in revenue to the State in that one item alone would be £60,000, and, in view of the existing financial position in Australia generally, no State Government are able to grant concessions in this direction at the present time. Naturally, a Government must consider first those districts that are in urgent need of relief, and that is being done in this Bill. I definitely say that relief is urgently required in the Upper Burnett and Callide districts following the operation of the adverse factors to which I have already referred. The settlement is a new one, the settlers experienced a few good years, and were induced to reinvest their earnings in the further improvement of the land, then followed three successive bad years, with a fall in the prices for their main products. These adverse factors undoubtedly placed them in a position where it was utterly impossible for them to meet their obligations to the Crown. It must also be remembered that the high cost of the water facilities provided by the Government for their use cannot be borne by the settlers in their present economic circumstances.

Mr. CLAYTON: And the rural workers' award?

Mr. FOLEY: The rural workers' award has not militated against the success of this settlement. Speaking for every settler in the Upper Burnett and Callide districts, I am satisfied that they would pay the wages prescribed by that award, and more, if

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they could get a price for their products, and if it had not been for the interference with the industry by the Lyons Government, who have the same political aspirations as hon. members opposite, the settlers would have secured a fair return for their cotton crop. If they had been permitted to continue to enjoy a guaranteed price of 5d. a lb. for cotton, they would have secured a fair return for themselves, and would thus have been able to pay a fair wage to the cotton pickers, which they are unable to do to-day. The settlers were considerably handicapped by this unwarranted interference in their industry by the Lyons Government.

I have to admit that a considerable amount of impatience has been displayed by some of the settlers on account of the alleged delay in extending the much needed relief to them. The Minister when visiting the district promised that some relief would be given. An investigation had then to be made to ascertain what was necessary. As a result a committee of inquiry was appointed. It took that committee a long time to accomplish its task. Even after its members had made their interim report the Land Administration Board referred it back to them for further report, which caused further delay. As time went on Parliament assembled. Even had the committee accomplished its task earlier there would have been no earlier opportunity of bringing down this measure. Most of the agitation that has proceeded in the district will be allayed immediately the Land Administration Board possesses the necessary power to give the relief measures which are provided for in this Bill.

This settlement is of great importance to the State. As mentioned by the Minister, the area affected is 2,411,834 acres, and the number of settlers concerned is 1,429. Hon. members will realise that it covers quite an expanse of country and affects a considerable number of people. Some reference was made of the importance of the district by the Land Administration Board, which in 1929 inquired into the conditions of the settlement. On page 10 of its report it referred to the standards adopted by the British Economic Mission in its report, dated the 7th January, 1929. The board points out that this mission—

“Pointed out that such schemes, financed out of loan moneys, should be self-supporting within a reasonable measure of time. The members of the mission went on to say, ‘By this we mean that within such measure of time they should, either directly or indirectly through the increased taxable capacity of the community and the enhanced value and price of Government-owned land attributable to the development schemes, provide at least their own working costs, interests on the loan capital invested in them, and a sinking fund sufficient to provide for its repayment when it falls due.’”

After referring to that standard the Land Administration Board states—

“Judged on that basis, the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley settlement scheme may be regarded as a sound investment.”

The importance of the district should be quite apparent. Another point which the

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board made it its business to note was referred to thus—

“Much more important, in our opinion, than increased land values, is the wealth productivity of the land. When fully settled on the lines of our recommendations, we estimate the settlement will comprise 1,500 mixed farmers, dairying, and graziers, and the annual production from the settlement will then exceed in value one million pounds sterling.”

The Minister points out that notwithstanding the low prices prevailing for primary produce, this area alone marketed a little over £500,000 worth of produce last year. The report goes on to state—

“All the State expenditure, therefore, that has been incurred in the scheme must be considered in relation to the many advantages to the community of this increased annual production.

“But there is another and still more important way in which the matter may be measured—in persons rather than in money. Amongst the settlers many are to be found with large families. A number of the witnesses who gave evidence before us had families ranging from six to ten children. Allowing, however, for average families of three children the Upper Burnett and Callide lands will directly support 7,500 people.

“Now, for every one million pounds of wealth produced in the land it may be said, as a wide generalisation, that about one-third will find its way into the pockets of the producers, while two-thirds as costs of production and general expenses will be distributed amongst the community. Therefore, besides the 7,500 people maintained on the land, the distributed wealth will support a further 1,500 people, making 22,500 people all told.”

It is clear that this settlement is of great value to Queensland, and that anything done to place it on a more stable footing will be of advantage to the State.

The suitability of the district for cotton-growing is described on page 17 of the report of the board, which carefully inquired into all factors operating, where it is stated—

“With cotton, however, the position is different. The Upper Burnett and Callide Valley and neighbouring districts are specially suited for the production of cotton. In fact, they are the chief cotton-producing centres of Queensland and Australia.

“The area under cultivation is, however, going backwards. Although definite figures for the 1929 season are not available, the evidence clearly establishes that, throughout these districts, the area of cotton at present being harvested is less than the preceding year, and the prospects are that smaller areas will be put under crop during the current year.”

The board then proceeded to give a brief outline of the cotton industry, pointing out what I have mentioned earlier—that as a result of a stabilised price an increased area of land was cultivated, whereas when the price was lowered, a distinct falling-off in the area under cultivation took place.

The following figures, which were supplied by the manager of the Queensland Cotton

Board, indicate the fluctuations in cotton-growing in Queensland, and the prices obtained by growers:—

Year.	Approximate Area under Crop.	Average Price per Lb. (Approximate only).
	Acres.	d.
1920 .. .. .	166	5½
1921 .. .. .	1,967	5½
1922 .. .. .	8,176	5½
1923 .. .. .	28,695	5½
1924 .. .. .	35,373	5
1925 .. .. .	40,000	4½
1926 .. .. .	36,000	*5
1927 .. .. .	18,000	5
1928 .. .. .	24,970	4½

\* Includes State grant of ½d. per lb.

From 1928 varying acreages have been put under cultivation, the area having a definite relationship to the variation in price. This year a considerable falling-off compared with last year will probably take place by reason of the fact that prices have been reduced. At 5d. or 5½d. per lb. the average cotton-grower can get a reasonable return for his work and pay a reasonable wage to the picker, but when the point is reached, as it was last year, where the average price of 3.6d. per lb. was paid, it is an utter impossibility for either the grower or the picker to get anything out of the industry. That result has been brought about by the definite interference of the Commonwealth Nationalist Government with cotton duties and tariffs. This year a further reduction in price may take place, the figure being estimated at 3.4d. per lb. Unless cotton growers secure a reasonable return, it is impossible for them to carry on and meet their obligations. Certain recommendations were made by the Cotton Board to the Federal Labour Government when they were in power. They were—

Duty on raw cotton and linters to be imposed so as to ensure the purchase of the Australian article by spinners.

Deferred duty on cotton yarn to be made effective.

Duty on cotton wadding and oils to be increased.

Bounty to be given on percentage yarn.

Bounty on cotton yarn to be increased.

All these recommendations were put into operation by the Scullin Government, and the result was that a guaranteed price of 5d. a pound was possible to the cotton-grower by the Australian spinners, resulting in the Australian spinners using up the whole of the cotton produced in Queensland. As I mentioned before, the whole of that went by the board as a result of the tinkering with the duties laid down by the Scullin Government. I do not wish to stress that matter much further, for fear I shall be called to order: but the fact remains that it is an important factor in the success of the settlers in this area, and unless some assistance is given by the Federal Government to bring the prices to a higher point than 3.6d. or 3.4d., the outlook for next season's crop will be dismal, because naturally the average cultivator of the soil will gradually drift from cotton-growing to the production of some more profitable commodity.

Another question considered by the Land Administration Board in 1929 was the matter of areas, and in its report it laid down standards for the district. It is probable, as the last speaker pointed out, that when this settlement was established too little consideration was given to the question of areas, and many settlers are paying the price for that omission to-day. In its report the board says—

“We are of the opinion that, on an average, the areas are too small. Some of the portions are large enough, while others are quite inadequate to provide a reasonable living for the settler. The mistake that was originally made in the Mundubbera subdivisions has been repeated, though, fortunately, not to the same extent. For successful settlement some of the portions will need to be doubled in area, others increased by fifty per cent., while a number will be quite satisfactory as they are.”

Something was done to that end by the granting of additional areas, as recommended by the board. Considerable areas were granted to existing settlers to bring their areas up to living areas, but, unfortunately, much of this additional land is not situated adjacent to the original blocks taken up by the respective settlers, and consequently it is not so workable as it would otherwise be.

The board further stated—

“For a new settlement such as this we are of opinion each settler should have sufficient land to provide him with at least thirty milkers in profit throughout the year; that is, his selection should be capable of carrying about forty-five head of grown cattle, together with young stock and necessary working horses, and should also have at least fifty acres of cultivable land for growing feed for the cows. This should give him a gross income from his dairy of about £360 per annum, which ordinarily would be added to by pigs and by crops, etc.”

Mr. MOORE: One pound per month per cow?

Mr. FOLEY: Of course that statement can be discounted to some extent because of the fact that at the time this report was made prices for butter-fat were much higher than at the present time; consequently we can extend the area considerably above that advised as sufficient for a settler in those districts. The Minister assures me that he wants to clear the whole matter up while he is at it and to that end I would offer him some advice.

Some provision should be made to allow a settler who finds he has not a living area and cannot obtain an additional area by reason of the fact that no land is available, to sell his farm to a neighbouring settler. Such a farmer should be given some priority in the matter of obtaining a living area in some other district. I have in mind an area of land which is being surveyed, and in the not very distant future will be available for dry mixed farming in the Theodore area. It would be possible to give such a concession to a farmer on that land. It is only some few miles distant from the settlement under discussion. My suggestion would be the means of solving the problem of larger areas for some of the farmers on the settlement.

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The report of the board proceeded—

“What area will be required to fulfil this new standard? The carrying capacity of land varies greatly. The best forest land in this district may carry one beast to 5 acres throughout the year. Forest land capable of being used for dairying varies in capacity from this down to one beast to 10 acres.

“Areas would therefore range from 300 acres upward according to quality, with an average area of, say, 500 acres. Scrub lands planted with artificial grasses are of better carrying capacity than forest country; moreover, such grasses retain their succulence longer.

“We think, however, that 300 acres of the best dairy land on the settlement is sufficiently small.

“We repeat that increased areas will not be needed in all cases. In many instances settlers are satisfied with the areas they hold, and many areas conform to the standard laid down by us; in fact, a few settlers have more land than they can improve and bring into production.”

The board, naturally, was endeavouring to advise the then Minister as to what was necessary, and an attempt was made, as I have pointed out, to cope with the problem by allotting additional areas. A number of settlers were served in that manner, but still quite a number are on too small areas, and if we desire to solve the problem properly one way out of the difficulty would be as I suggest—the right of disposal, with priority in obtaining land in another district.

The question of capital values is another important factor. The commission of 1920—the Land Administration Board—went into this matter very carefully and pointed out that the capital value of the land ranged from 17s. 6d. to £3 10s. an acre, which meant that on the basis of the usual 1½ per cent. the rents of these grazing lands would be from 3d. to 5½d. an acre. I have discussed this matter with quite a number of settlers in the district, and I find that notwithstanding that certain adjustments were made, a number of anomalies still need attention. I think there is power in section 19 of “The Upper Burnett and Callide Land Settlement Act Amendment Act of 1929” enabling the Minister to adjust anomalies. The settler in that district naturally argues that we have already given a 25 per cent. reduction to the sheep grower in the pastoral districts because of the enormous fall in the price of his product.

Mr. MOORE: It is only a temporary reduction—one that has to be approved by Parliament every year.

Mr. FOLEY: Yes. The Upper Burnett and Callide districts certainly merit special attention. When the royal commission investigated the affairs of this settlement the price of butter-fat ranged from 1s. 5d. to 1s. 7d. a lb. for first grade, and 1s. 4d. to 1s. 6d. a lb. for second grade.

Mr. SPARKES: When was that?

Mr. FOLEY: Back in 1929. But to-day the settler receives only 7½d. a lb. for first grade and approximately 6½d. a lb. for second grade.

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Mr. MOORE: The prices in 1929 were not as high as those that you have mentioned.

Mr. FOLEY: I am not quite sure of the year, and it is just possible that the prices that I have mentioned were applicable to a period just prior thereto; but even if the price in 1929 was 10d. a lb., a reduction to 7½d. a lb. is a considerable reduction, and justifies the contention of the settlers in favour of some relief. A reduction in the smaller areas would not amount to a great deal—probably not exceeding £2 to £3 a settler per annum; but any sympathetic consideration that the Minister may give to this aspect of the matter later will assist considerably.

The Bill also provides for relief in connection with water facilities. It is interesting to refer to the hypothetical cases mentioned in the report of the commission already referred to. It seems ridiculous that any department should allow water facilities to be constructed at such a high cost. The conditions laid down provided that the settler was to take over the water facility at actual cost; no settler was to be charged more than £300; windmills or engines or troughing were to be supplied to the settler at actual cost; and in the case of a bore, interest and redemption payments were to be spread over twenty years. In particular, two cases are mentioned that show the utter impossibility of a settler being able to carry on and meet his obligations.

I am pleased that the Bill provides relief in these urgent cases; but, as I mentioned during my speech on the initiatory stage of the measure, much will depend upon its sympathetic administration. I have already pointed out that the commission that visited the area in 1929 took evidence, travelled many thousands of miles, and then submitted its report. Legislation was introduced based on its recommendations, and a measure of relief was granted to the settlers; but in 1934 it is necessary to grant further relief to the self-same settlers. I express the hope that the Land Administration Board and the investigating committee considering this matter will endeavour to arrive at a basis of granting relief to the settlers that will obviate any necessity on the part of the men in the area to seek further relief from the Government in the future. If that is done and the matter is dealt with sympathetically, then the average settler will enjoy a greater measure of stability than he now has.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [2 p.m.]: As a measure of relief of which there are no limits set out in this Bill except in one or two particular areas of the State this measure is perfectly incapable of doing what it sets out to do. The claim that it is satisfactory to all schemes, and that it will cure the position which obtains to-day is far from being adequate.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is as much as we can give.

Mr. MOORE: In my opinion a relief measure should not be introduced to cure an ill. The position is much the same as that the Home Secretary talked about this morning when introducing the Health Acts Amendment Bill when he endeavoured to prove that the appointment that he had made would not only remedy but also prevent ills. The Secretary for Public Lands,

in making his second reading speech certainly put forward the suggestion that this Bill only referred to one particular area.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Oh, no! Its objects are stated in the Bill.

Mr. MOORE: The speech of the Minister was directed entirely to the people settled in that area, and the tone of his speech was an endeavour to escape a responsibility and say that it was a responsibility of Parliament, which had passed the Bill in 1923. He suggested, therefore, that Parliament should undertake the task of dealing with the position as he now finds it. I remember a former Premier saying much the same thing. When Mr. McCormack came in as Premier he found fault with this scheme, and said—

“Unfortunately, I did not start it; I inherited it.”

He said he found the position, whatever it was. The whole responsibility of finding the position, whatever it was, must rest on the Government at the particular time, because they absolutely refused to take any notice of the recommendations of people who had knowledge of that particular class of land settlement. They also refused to take any notice of the reports of their own departmental inspectors, and insisted on proceeding with a scheme that was entirely opposed to common sense, and was doomed to certain failure. One thing we have to recognise in all land settlement to-day—not only in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley settlement—is that the preventive measures that should have been taken at the time were the ones which did not occupy the attention of the Government. Instead we find that greater and greater disabilities are being placed on these people and others in similar settlements in practically every Bill that is brought forward in this House. There is additional interference with the individual in carrying out the work he considers advisable. We have the bull tax and the stallion tax, an increase in railway freights and fares, the imposition of levies to combat disease, and taxation that discriminates against the farmer who is anxious to keep his son on the land in order to assist him. We all know of the disabilities that are placed in the way of a farmer who is anxious in these times to keep his son on the farm. The Government have been keeping their interest charges at 5 per cent. when every other institution has reduced its charges. All these things tend towards making it impossible for these people to meet their obligations. At the time the original Act was passed it was the subject of comment by the Minister, who said that the fact that no vote was taken on it showed that Parliament agreed with it.

Mr. NIMMO: What year was that in?

Mr. MOORE: In 1923, when a Labour Government was in power.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: But your Government was supposed to correct all the mistakes that had arisen in connection with the settlement.

Mr. MOORE: That is not so. The mistakes had arisen through the obstinacy of the Labour Government. At the time I and other hon. members made remarks, as reported in “Hansard,” showing that departmental officers had pointed out that experience over a period from 1914 to 1923

showed that the Government’s plans of cutting up this class of settlement would not lead to success, yet the Government obstinately ignored the advice given to them by these officers and practical farmers. They also endeavoured to secure propaganda for the settlement of this area by taking evidence from one or two selected farmers in the Upper Burnett and Callide areas and publishing it in such papers as the “Alert” and “Standard” for the purpose of inducing people to take up this land, pretending that the returns of these selected farmers were average returns, whereas they were returns of one or two individuals in selected months. Consequently a large number of people were induced to go on the land without any possible hope of success.

At page 812 of “Hansard,” vol. cxli., during the debate on the Upper Burnett and Callide Land Settlement Bill on the 4th September, 1923, I said—

“It is no use pretending that 160 acres in a great deal of this country, even if it is first-class land, is enough for a man to make a living on. It is all very well to talk about the average rainfall—the average rainfall is not worth a snap of the fingers—it is the distribution that counts. The average rainfall is most misleading when people are being induced to go to a settlement which is being opened up. It may be of no use to a man so far as agriculture is concerned, and of very little use in connection with dairying. We have a certain amount of evidence given by the officials of the Lands Department during the last ten years, and I cannot say that that evidence leads me to believe that a large portion of this land is suitable for small area settlement. When we talk about grazing farms of 1,280 acres, which the Minister admits can only carry cattle, and about grazing areas of 5,000 acres which will carry a beast to 15 acres, I do not see that there is going to be much successful settlement on areas of the size allowed. I would much prefer the Government to be more generous in regard to the area of land allowed, and instead of trying to settle too many people on a given area, give them a good opportunity. The Government seem to think that, if they can give a man a little more land than he can make a fair living on, he will make money out of it.

“The Secretary for Public Lands: No, it is only because he will not cultivate it.

“Mr. MOORE: I object to putting a man on an area so small that he will always have his nose to the grindstone. The settler is practically always going to be a wages man for the Government under this scheme.”

I went on to quote the reports of various land commissioners during the period 1914 to 1923 to show the inadvisability of proceeding with the settlement scheme under the basis laid down. I stated that the Land Commissioner for the Maryborough district in his report for 1914 said—

“BIGGENDEN.

“Dairying is still active in the Biggenden area in spite of the fact that the rainfall has been very irregular.

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"General agriculture is not making the headway I should like. The principal thing grown is maize, and this often fails for want of rain at a critical moment.

"GAYNDAH DISTRICT.

"Owing to the continuous dry weather the prospect for the coming season does not appear to be very bright, but still farmers are hopeful.

"Greater progress would have been made in dairying but for the fact that in most cases cattle had to be driven so far to water.

"A good crop of maize would have been harvested in this locality had the rain come six weeks earlier."

In the same year the Land Commissioner at Banana said—

"The rainfall for the year was 17.14. Generally speaking, surface water except in the Dawson River is gradually giving out, and a system of tanks and dams is urgently needed to make good this loss. Underground supplies in shaft wells of from 40 to 100 feet deep have greatly diminished, and in many cases completely given out. About twelve bores from 50 to 250 feet deep were put down during the year with varying success.

"No progress was made in agriculture, owing to the bad season."

In 1918 the Land Commissioner at Banana stated in his report—

"The first part of the year was very promising, but was followed by a prolonged dry spell. The absence of rain caused serious loss to stockowners, and many had to seek relief country. The year's rainfall was 30.06 inches, or 25 inches below the average."

"Although there is good land throughout the district adapted for general farming, this is unlikely to succeed, owing chiefly to the uncertain rainfall."

"In later years dairying may be a success when a railway line is built through the district."

The Land Commissioner for the Gayndah district has this to say in his report for 1918—

"The year opened very favourably as regards rainfall, but unfortunately one of the worst seasons on record was encountered, which resulted in losses of stock and a large diminution as compared with 1917 in the output of dairy and farm produce."

In 1920 the Commissioner at Gayndah said—

"The rainfall for the year was a vast improvement on the records for the two previous years, during which disastrous droughty conditions prevailed, causing a serious diminution in the supply of natural surface water. The district abounds with stretches of fertile land of various descriptions well adapted for agriculture, a large part of which has been settled. The success that was hoped for from agriculture has not been realised in consequence of the irregularity of the rainfall."

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At page 814 of the same volume of "Hansard" I said—

"When you are going to launch a big settlement scheme of 1,500 farms and put some of the farmers on 160 acres, and when much of the land is poor, as the Minister admits, and when much of the rich land is subject to flood along the creeks and gullies, you want to be careful.

"I doubt very much if he would care to undertake to make a decent living out of 160 acres in an area like this. Why not give them a little more? In New South Wales and Victoria the Governments made exactly the same mistake of endeavouring to settle people on areas which were too small. The fear always seems to be that, if a man gets a little more than he can make a bare living on, he will become a capitalist. I contend that a man should have an area such that, if he gets a couple of bad seasons he will have something to fall back upon."

Right throughout I endeavoured to point out from the reports of the departmental officers, extending as far back as 1910, that the irregularity of the rainfall was one of the greatest difficulties the settlers would have to contend against. The various reports pointed out that the areas must be of such a size as would enable settlers to pull through in periods of difficulty. The Premier, who took office after that settlement had been commenced, complained that he inherited it and had to face the difficulties brought about by a faulty distribution of the land and the fact that settlers were encouraged to spend too much money in the initial stages of development and thus started off with a load of debt around their necks—which is the greatest bar to successful settlement that we can have. Generally speaking, the successful settler is the one who has not indulged in a lavish expenditure during the initial stages, but the man who was prepared to start in a bark hut or in a shelter covered by a few sheets of iron until he had made sufficient from the land to improve his condition. In many cases, not only in this settlement, but also in soldier settlements, large amounts of money have been spent in practically useless improvements that created a debt on which interest had to be paid and were bringing in nothing to the settler.

Under this Bill the Minister will give relief to those people who have been in arrears for two years and over. I say that principle is quite wrong. On what grounds can a policy be justified that picks out the individuals in arrears and gives them relief, whereas the man who has struggled and battled and denied himself, and who has been confronted with the same difficulties, is compelled to meet his obligations without any assistance?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have either to collect the arrears or put them off.

MR. MOORE: The Minister is bringing in a Bill to-day without thought of what he will have to do in the future. We want him to give the Land Administration Board power to give the same measure of relief to these people, who have possibly borrowed money from the storekeeper or the bank in order to meet their obligations to the State,

and who have worked under the same conditions as the people who did not meet their obligations to the State.

Mr. SPARKES: Some of them on adjacent farms.

Mr. MOORE: In many cases they occupy adjacent farms. Under this Bill people who may have borrowed money from the bank in order to pay off the Government will not get relief, whereas those who continued as tenants of the Government and failed to meet their obligations not only have their interest rates reduced but also their capital values. Under this Bill the Minister has selected for assistance people who have definitely failed to meet their obligations, from whatever cause—it does not say what cause. So long as they are in arrears for two years and over they will be entitled to get relief.

Mr. FOLEY: They are then in a position to make application.

Mr. MOORE: In a position to make application! I have known cases where settlers did not bother to meet their obligations as tenants. I remember one case on Cecil Plains where a soldier settler commenced dairying. The price of cream was good and he was milking over thirty cows and received, I think, £46 at the end of the month. When he received that cheque he apparently decided he was not going to bother any more and he went off for a trip and left the cows there. They wandered about the settlement and when their udders were pretty well bursting the other settlers milked them. He came back a month after, having spent his cheque, and he did not meet his obligations to the Government. This settler apparently reasoned to himself, "The Government cannot afford to put me off; it would make them unpopular if they did so," and he did not trouble to meet his obligations to the Crown. There are other settlers who look at the matter in a totally different way. They deny themselves in order that they may fulfil their obligations to the Government.

Mr. FOLEY: You will find 95 per cent. of these men are honest.

Mr. MOORE: I am not saying they are dishonest at all. The hon. member knows perfectly well that when this settlement was started many people went there who were not adapted to a life on the land.

Mr. FOLEY: The commission thought they represented only 5 per cent.

Mr. MOORE: They represented considerably more than 5 per cent. at the beginning. A large number of them have gone. I am speaking of the average settlement, and the hon. member must know that a certain number of people who go on to a settlement are not adapted to farming and will make a failure of it. It appears that the man who struggles and endeavours to meet his obligations by denying himself all sorts of luxuries, does not go for a holiday, and meets his obligations to the Crown—and he may have borrowed the money from the storekeeper to help him to do so—gets no relief under a system of this sort; the only person who gets relief is the man who has defaulted to the Crown for two years and over. There is no encouragement to a man to meet his obligations. Why should he do so? The man who has denied himself and met his obligations to the Crown gets nothing. He sees his next door neighbour

who has not cared, spent all the money that he can obtain, perhaps going on sea voyages or some other holiday, who has denied himself nothing and allowed himself to become over two years in arrears to the Crown—he sees him being told by the Crown, "We will give you relief." He receives nothing at all in the way of relief, although he has had to meet exactly the same conditions of prices and climate. The proposal by the Government is only an incitement to the individual to say he will not bother with the liabilities to the Crown. If that is so—and I do not think it can be disputed—there is no encouragement to the man who has endeavoured to fulfil his obligations. In fact, his neighbours point out to him that he is a fool and ask him as to why he does it.

Mr. FOLEY: Do you suggest we should do nothing?

Mr. MOORE: I do not. I suggest the Government make it applicable to all. I suggest they delete from the the clause the words about being two years in arrears. I suggest that the Bill be made applicable to all such settlers who have had to meet similar conditions, and that the Land Administration Board should go into their position in exactly the same way as into the position of the man who has not met his obligations.

The relief that can be given is remarkably wide. The clause includes the words—

"Any other form of relief that may be determined by the Governor in Council by Order in Council."

The clause provides that there can be capitalisation of arrears and reductions in values and any other form of relief that may be determined. My desire is to give encouragement to that farmer who has met his obligations, although he has had to face the same difficulties as those who have failed to do so. I do not desire that he should be placed in a disadvantageous position in comparison with the man who has not bothered. The hon. member knows perfectly well—and it can be said without meaning that they are dishonest—that if there be a method of avoiding payment to the Government or anybody else a number of people will avail themselves of the opportunity. I have heard it stated in various shire councils and I have heard it recommended even by hon. members, "Get all you can. If you cannot meet your obligations afterwards the Government will have to do something. They cannot put you insolvent." That is a bad principle to inculcate in the minds of the settlers of Queensland, and it is unfair discrimination against the man who has made every endeavour, even by denying himself to meet his obligations. He should be the one who, rather than the other, should receive a certain amount of assistance. Do hon. members consider that such men as have failed to meet their dues to the Crown for a period of two years or over will endeavour to meet them in the future? They will be in exactly the same position. Having "got away with it" on the first occasion and discovered that the Government did nothing they will act in an exactly similar fashion in the future. They will hear it stated that the Minister said in this House, "No man is going to be put off." Is it not human nature that a man in such circumstances would act thus?

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The hon. member should put himself in the place of the man who has met all his obligations and denied himself and his family certain necessities and luxuries in order that he might meet rents due to the Crown and obligations to the Agricultural Bank. Let him put himself in the position of the man who has struggled and met infinitely bad and difficult conditions, the same as the man next door who has not bothered and has just left things drift and has never met his obligations to the Crown. After two years the man next door receives relief—whatever relief it may be—and a certain amount of liability is written-off or the valuation of property written-down. Is that much encouragement to the hon. member? Would he not feel sore? Would he not say, "Why should I bother?" It would be only human nature for him to say so, and I should not blame him.

Mr. FOLEY: That is not an average case, and does not apply to this settlement.

Mr. MOORE: I do not know how many there are in this particular settlement who will come under this Bill, but I do know that throughout the length and breadth of Queensland that position operates, more or less. In the case of estates purchased from private individuals do the farmers fail to meet their obligations in this manner? The hon. member knows they do not. What I am objecting to is the principle of the Government assisting only the man who, either through misfortune or by not denying himself anything, has failed to meet his obligations. Those others may have been in exactly the same position as regards climatic conditions or may not have had reasonable areas of land from which to obtain a decent living, but they have denied themselves of all manner of things. I know people who in an endeavour to meet their obligations to the Crown have eaten roasted wallaby and have used ground and roasted maize as a substitute for the coffee they could not afford to purchase. They have gone without butter, and they have suffered many disabilities in order to meet their obligations to the Crown. All credit to them for doing so. They are the citizens of whom we may well feel proud. Many of them commenced with very small beginnings, but they gradually advanced, and eventually became the most prosperous settlers in the district. On the other hand we have men who are determined to enjoy all the benefits but are not prepared to work their properties in a proper way. The latter sort of settler says, "The Crown should accept some responsibility, because I was induced to come on to this area under false pretences. I was told that the area would be big enough, and I am not going to deny myself or my family in order to pay the Government. I shall allow the rent to get into arrears, and I will get relief." These are the people who get the relief.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We must either give them relief or take them off the country.

Mr. MOORE: Then it comes to this: that the Government are going to extend relief from those people from whom they cannot collect the rents. That is not relief; that is merely accepting the position as it is. How can the Government expect these people to meet their obligations in the future if the people are prepared to allow a load of debt

to grow around their necks? The same position will inevitably arise again in the future.

Mr. O'KEEFE: Your Government assisted the soldier settlers on the Atherton Tableland in the same way.

Mr. MOORE: I know that we did, but the principle is wrong. It should be stopped and it should not be encouraged. It is wrong in principle to extend relief to a man merely because he has failed whilst at the same time denying assistance to the settler who has sacrificed himself and his family in order to meet his obligations. We should encourage the latter settler, because he is going to be successful and be an asset to the State.

Mr. WILLIAMS: Many of the settlers who are able to meet their obligations to the Government had natural water on their property, whilst those who are unable to do so had to bear the cost of water facilities.

Mr. MOORE: The settlers in this district have been better treated than any other settlers in the State. If a "dud" bore was put down the cost was borne by the Government, whereas on all other settlement areas the cost of a "dud" bore had to be borne by the settler. In the case of the Upper Burnett and Callide districts, the Government have granted concessions all the way through, and as I said in my speech in 1933 the Government are encouraging a class of settler who will run to the Government all the time, believing that as the Government are the landlord, no matter what they do they will not be put off their holdings.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Would you put them off?

Mr. MOORE: In some cases it would be a kindness to put the people off the land, because it is not a bit of use trying to conduct a settlement if the settlers are to have a load of debt from which they cannot possibly escape. That is of no advantage to the State and no advantage to the individual. Some of them do not worry. Hon. members opposite know full well that the temperament of the individual bulks largely in this matter. Some people could never rest until they had met their obligations and so deny themselves of many things and work very long hours in order to pay their way. I know what the settlers did in my own electorate when they took up 160 acres, 180 acres, and 190 acres of scrub land between Crow's Nest and Cooyar. The nearest railway was 25 miles away and some of the settlers actually carried a coil of wire weighing 1 cwt. 14 to 15 miles to use in the fencing of their blocks. They met their obligations to the full. I would do anything in the world to help these people, because they deserve it, but you could never expect a new settler to make good when out of the first advance from the Government he purchases a buggy and a pair of horses although he has not a dray or spring cart to carry the posts on to the fencing line. The latter persons always obtain relief.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why did you not apply this principle to soldiers' settlements?

Mr. MOORE: I cannot answer conundrums. This Bill has been introduced for the definite purpose of providing relief to certain people and we have proved that that principle has failed. This is not the first

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Bill that has been introduced to extend relief to land settlers. When the legislation was introduced, based on the findings of the royal commission some years ago, it was said that that legislation would end all the trouble in this district.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We were also told that the last war was a war to end wars.

Mr. MOORE: We are considering the same principle now. We were given to understand that the legislation passed through this Parliament on a previous occasion would tend to place the settlement in a satisfactory position, but no one in his wildest dreams would imagine that this Bill was going to place the settlement in a satisfactory position for all time, and that there will be no further need to extend relief. It is an invitation to the man to default, because if he does so he will get relief.

Mr. WILLIAMS interjected.

Mr. MOORE: I do not know what else I can say except that it is an invitation to him not to meet his obligations. I am perfectly satisfied that the hon. member, as well as myself, would feel that way. I can imagine the feelings of the hon. member if he had struggled against adversity and denied himself in order to win through only to see his neighbour, who had not bothered, obtain the relief that is now being given to enable him to continue.

Mr. O'KEEFE: You are only suggesting that these people do not try.

Mr. MOORE: No. I recognise the frailties of human nature, and I recognise that there are some people who are not adapted to farming, and will never be suited to that occupation. Every person who goes on the land is not adapted to making a living from it. He is not physically or mentally suited. Doubtless, some of such persons make a success if working under direction.

Mr. O'KEEFE: That was why the returned soldier settlements were unsuccessful.

Mr. MOORE: That is so. Many of the returned soldiers should never have been allowed to go on the land, because the Land Settlement Committee of the day knew perfectly well that a number of them were not suited for the purpose. It was, however, faced with this position: The returned soldiers wanted to go on the land, and when the committee demurred in some cases, the invariable reply was, "I was good enough to go to the war, yet I am not good enough to have a piece of land." The committee then, against its better judgment, permitted some of these men to go on the land. There was no crime in doing so; but we all recognise that many of these men have wasted the best portions of their lives in work for which they were unsuited.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: To-day they are sorry they did so.

Mr. MOORE: I can imagine the position of the committee. Like ourselves, it made a mistake. It said, "We will give this chap an opportunity. He is desirous of going on the land." While I am not blaming the committee, we have to recognise that in soldier settlements as in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley people have been allowed to go on the land who are not suited to farming and who will never make a success of it. They have no organising

ability, and not the temperament necessary to make a success of land life.

Mr. WILLIAMS interjected.

Mr. MOORE: Is it going to make them any better to keep them there? Suppose they cannot meet their obligations to the Crown in regard to rent and their commitments to the Agricultural Bank—after all, rent is only a minor matter—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The cost of the water facilities is the main thing.

Mr. MOORE: The settlers are to have all their costs and arrears capitalised; but will this enable them to meet their commitments in the future?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They have told me "Yes," and I am prepared to trust them.

Mr. MOORE: They are gambling, as the Government are gambling, on an increase in prices of the primary products which they are going to sell. This legislation will probably have its influence all over Queensland. We know that some people cannot produce wheat at 3s. 6d. a bushel, while others can produce it at 2s. 5d. and make a profit. It all depends on how the work is done. One man makes a success of dairying on country with similar conditions in rainfall as the man alongside of him who proves a failure. It all comes back to a question of the person's adaptation to the particular class of industry he enters. Some people are good workers under direction, but if they are allowed to rely on their own initiative prove absolutely useless. Non-members opposite know of men who are splendid officers when working under the direction of another, when someone is telling them how and when and what to do, but who are quite hopeless when compelled to rely on their own initiative. I have not lived in the country without having seen evidence of this difference in men time after time. We had a concrete example of it when farmers from the South came into our district and stated that they were going to show the farmers who had been settled in the district a long time how to make a living from the land and how they had wasted their time by farming on the wrong lines. If they were able to hang on long enough they generally reached the same position as the men already there found themselves in as the result of experience.

This Bill does not go far enough one way and too far in another.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We do not say that this is going to be the last word. We have to fix up those who cannot pay without putting them off under the formula you laid down.

Mr. MOORE: That does not require an Act of Parliament.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I say it does.

Mr. MOORE: The Secretary for Public Lands evidently refers to the proviso in the 1929 amending Bill relating to a 10 per. cent. penalty for overdue rents. That is not to say it will be enforced.

Mr. FOLEY: How can you enforce it when a man cannot pay?

Mr. MOORE: That is what I say. How many people are there in Queensland with overdue rent on farms? The Minister does not put them off, notwithstanding the Acts

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say they are liable to a 10 per cent. penalty and forfeiture. You do not need a Bill to say that. A Bill such as this should make it possible for relief to be extended also to people in the same area who have suffered the same disabilities but who, through self-sacrifice, have met their obligations. I am not saying that the Bill is wrong, nor that it will cure the position; but I do say that an injustice is inflicted upon one section of the community who have done their best and met their obligations to the Crown when relief is given only to the men who did not bother.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Business firms wipe out bad debts, but do not give a bonus to the clients who have paid up.

Mr. MOORE: I know they do not give a bonus.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is what you want to give.

Mr. MOORE: No. The Minister knows that in many cases settlers have borrowed money to meet their obligations to the Crown. They may not have paid debts due to storekeepers, and may even have borrowed money from storekeepers. Why should these people be debarred from securing relief when they still owe money to other creditors? Why give the relief always to the man who for some reason or another has defaulted—the man who may be incompetent, careless, or indifferent? My view is that we should always help the man who is endeavouring to help himself, for the man who will be an asset to the State should receive every encouragement.

It is stated that this Bill is expressly introduced to allow it to be extended to other areas. The same conditions apply all over the State. The settlers here have had a royal commission and other investigating authorities inquiring into their position. More attention has been paid to them than to any other group of settlers in the State.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They are the largest group of settlers.

Mr. MOORE: It is not because they are the largest group of settlers, but because this is one of the settlements that were embarked upon without proper investigation—the class of settlement that was investigated on behalf of the Development and Migration Commission and turned down because of the unsuitability of the soil, rainfall, etc.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Gullett didn't turn it down.

Mr. MOORE: I am not referring to Gullett at all; I have in mind the special engineers who were appointed to investigate on behalf of the Development and Migration Commission. Anyway, what did Mr. Gullett know about it? The people of whom the Minister should take notice are his own land commissioners and land rangers who over a period of years have had experience of this country and who have stated that the rainfall was irregular and that a great proportion of the country would do no more than carry a beast to 15 acres. The Minister should take notice of the reports of his own officials, not that of a visiting politician who is shown only certain features of the settlement.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He was not a visiting politician; he was the investi-

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gating officer of the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. MOORE: It does not matter what he was; he could not possibly have the same knowledge as departmental officials whose experience of the country extended over a period of years. The report shows that in a sixteen-year period, in five years out of eight, the country was not suitable for closer settlement because rainfall was too irregular.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS (*Port Curtis*) [2.41 p.m.]: I find it again necessary to disagree with the extraordinary attitude of the ex-Secretary for Public Lands regarding this measure and the more or less similar attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. I object again to the remarks of the ex-Secretary for Public Lands regarding the type of settler in this area. As I pointed out last Thursday, the settler there is the type of man we should encourage to stay on the land, for he has struggled through years of adversity, drought and low prices, in much the same way as people in other parts of the State. In the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley districts, however, the settlers have not the climatic advantages of those in more favoured areas of the State, for cotton-growing and dairying are the two main activities, whereas in other parts of the State wheat, fruit, and banana-growers are able to produce other crops and enjoy a better opportunity to meet their obligations, both privately and to the Crown, than settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley. The hon. member for Cunningham, an ex-Secretary for Public Lands, took up a remarkable attitude in regard to this Bill. He stated that it apparently applied to the Burnett settlers only. I point out to the hon. member that clause 4, subclause (1) of the Bill, reads—

“Any selector or lessee (other than the selector of a grazing selection, or the lessee of a pastoral holding, or the lessee of any town or suburban land) of any land under the provisions of the land Acts whose Crown dues are at the date of the passing of this Act in arrears for two years or more may, within six months of the passing of this Act or within such further time not exceeding twelve months from the passing of this Act as the Minister in his discretion may allow, apply on the prescribed form to the Minister to be granted relief in respect of the payment of Crown dues.”

Some weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition took up the cudgels on behalf of the settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley, and read a letter from a local producers' association in that area, and, in effect, asked what the Government were going to do to afford some measure of relief to these people, and practically suggested that he would force the Government to do something. This Bill will enable something to be done for these settlers, and the attitude of the Opposition is hard to account for. I think the Minister is to be congratulated upon bringing in a Bill of this nature, because it is very essential that the selectors in the two areas mentioned in particular—although it does not apply wholly and solely to those selectors—should be afforded some measure of relief.

The ex-Secretary for Public Lands suggested this was being made a political matter. He said he was satisfied that only the selectors who were Labour voters would be considered. I resent that statement. If the hon member for Cunningham were aware of the true facts he would know that quite a number of those who are affected by this Bill are not supporters of my Government. Hon. members opposite apparently expected that the Government, whilst doing something for the majority, should also do something for the minority. If hon. members were acquainted with the true position they would know that the measure is not a political one. There are all classes of political thought in the Upper Burnett, and in framing a Bill of this nature every settler has to be considered. This Bill does not apply only to the Upper Burnett people; it applies to the Callide Valley, and will apply to other areas as time goes on. The settlers in the Upper Burnett are mainly dependent on cotton and dairying, whereas the settlers in other areas of the State, where the rainfall and climatic conditions are suitable for the growing of other classes of products, are not so limited in their operations.

The Leader of the Opposition lays the responsibility for the settlement at the door of a Labour Government. Be that as it may, it could not alter the position as it exists to-day. The report that was made in 1929 afforded the Moore Government an opportunity to rectify a number of the wrongs that existed through the alleged failure of the Labour Government in 1927 to realise the mistake that had been made, but they did very little for the relief of those settlers.

Mr. EDWARDS: You know that is not true.

Mr. WILLIAMS: I did not say they did not do anything; I said very little was done. This Government are endeavouring to assist these settlers, and hon. members opposite are not prepared to assist them in their endeavours to remedy the mistakes made by previous Labour and Nationalist Governments.

The ex-Secretary for Public Lands made a statement that should not go unchallenged. He stated that settlers have been hunted off their blocks by a Minister, and in reply to an interjection he said it was a Labour Minister. I resent that statement. I do not know of any settlers in the Upper Burnett who have been hunted off their blocks by either a Labour or Nationalist Minister. Before this debate closes I should like the ex-Secretary for Public Lands to quote specific cases of settlers who have been hunted off their blocks by a Labour Minister.

The ex-Secretary for Public Lands suggested that all farmers should receive relief irrespective of whether they had failed or not. He regretted that relief was being given only to those who had failed. That practice is followed in regard to the payment of pensions. We do not pay old-age pensions to men and women who succeeded in life. Men such as the Hon. T. C. Beirne and the late Mr. McWhirter, who have made a success of their calling or business, do not expect to receive and do not receive the old-age pension, whereas a small store-keeper, residing within a short distance of the gentlemen named and who has failed

in his business receives the old-age pension when he reaches the age of 65. The latter naturally becomes entitled to some relief. In this case the settler who has met his obligations to the Crown and other liabilities should, as I have said, receive some consideration also, and no doubt at some time in the future, should he become unable to meet his commitments to the Crown, he will be entitled to make application for consideration, as are the unfortunate settlers to-day.

The Leader of the Opposition, when he stated that there were men in this settlement who paid and men who did not, forgets to mention that a number of those settlers who have been able to meet their obligations went to the settlement with some knowledge of farming or perhaps a little more money than the other unfortunate people. Alternatively, in many instances farmers had a natural supply of water with which to proceed immediately with their farming operations, whereas the unfortunate who got dry blocks had to wait for their water supplies; and it is the water facilities that are the load on most of the settlers at the present time in both the Upper Burnett and the Callide Valley. It is to these men that this Bill will afford some measure of relief.

The settlers appreciate what the Government are doing for them and I feel confident that this Bill will pass the remaining stages without much further opposition.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Yanango*) [2.50 p.m.]: The necessity for the introduction in 1934 of such legislation as this proves, first of all, the absolute necessity of giving careful consideration to projects of this magnitude, and secondly, that whatever Government may be in power should take very much more notice of the advice of men who have firsthand knowledge and some practical experience. I have made research in "Hansard" of 1923 and I find that hon. members who were then on this side of the House, particularly those who came from the land, definitely and strongly advised the Government—there being no party political question involved—that they were doing the wrong thing regarding this settlement. This settlement has cost the State a large amount of money merely because the Government of that day were determined to proceed therewith irrespective of the report of their officers and of the advice coming from this side of the House from hon. members who had knowledge of the difficulties that would beset the settlers. To-day, after ten years, we find the settlers in difficulties and involving the State in a large amount of money.

To my mind the principles involved in the legislation under discussion are of the worst class. The trend of the legislation introduced by the present Government, not only as regards land settlement but works and everything, is on the same principle as is contained in the Bill before us. The measure before the House considers the man who has, perhaps, to some extent, neglected his work, or on the other hand has not been efficient or has taken up a block of land too small in area, in contradistinction to that man who has endured every sacrifice to establish a home for himself and his family and meet his commitments for rents and other dues as they became payable. The latter is to receive no consideration whatsoever. I can recall a deputation I introduced

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to Mr. McCormack from the soldier settlers in the vicinity of Yarraman Creek. When some of the settlers there disposed of the saleable timber and found themselves in difficulties they drifted away, neglected their farms, and allowed the undergrowth to come up. When the properties were inspected by a board specially sent out for the purpose it recommended that the arrears due by these farmers to the Crown should be practically wiped out and a clean sheet be given to them. Amongst the settlers in that area were a number of married settlers who had struggled to make a success of their holdings and little by little met their obligations to the Crown. They also endeavoured to purchase a little machinery and stock on the time-payment system. After Mr. McCormack, the then Secretary for Public Lands, had listened to the case submitted by the married men who were well aware of what had happened in the case of the other settlers, he said, "If I do not get any money from you fellows, where will I get it?" I hope we are not going to arrive at the same position under this Bill, but if that is proposed then it merely amounts to an invitation to the men who are trying to do their best to "go slow." It certainly would not be an attempt to lift the casual settler to a higher state of development, but rather a levelling-down process to the plane of the settler who is not prepared to try. I appeal to the Minister, above all things, to encourage the man who is prepared to help himself. That principle is not adopted in connection with men who are seeking employment. They are encouraged to apply for rations and to remain at that social standard.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. EDWARDS: I am only making a comparison, Mr. Speaker. These are the only men who are qualified to be employed upon loan work to-day. What are we doing in connection with land settlement in Queensland? Is it not fair to give every possible encouragement to the man who is prepared to help himself, and by so doing encourage the man alongside? Nothing gives a settler more confidence than the fact that his next door neighbour is striving to make a home for himself. In proof of my statement I would point to the action taken by the Victorian Government to settle soldier settlers in many of the up-country districts of Victoria, not under the group system but in long-established areas. The Victorian Government established a board charged with the duty of purchasing land for settlers which was let out to them on reasonable terms. These blocks were purchased in well-established areas where old hands were doing well, and the presence of prosperous settlers was an incentive to the new men, who made a success in almost every case. The new settlers endeavoured to follow the good example set by their well-established neighbours. That is why we should give the settlers every encouragement in this State. I do not suggest that no assistance should be given to a settler who has had an unfortunate experience and finds himself in difficulty, but, above all, the Government should encourage the man who is prepared to assist himself.

In 1923, on the Upper Burnett and Callide Land Settlement Bill, the hon. member for Normanby, then the hon. member for Leichhardt, in correcting what he regarded as

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incorrect statements made by hon. members on this side, concluded his speech by saying—

"I have every confidence that the scheme will turn out a huge success and will be a monument to the Labour Government."

Eleven years afterwards the hon. member has the opportunity to congratulate the Government upon their desire to grant concessions to these settlers on account of the failure of the undertaking.

Mr. FOLEY: Would you suggest that I should "put the boot in"?

Mr. EDWARDS: I do not. I am not criticising the hon. member at all. I am endeavouring to prove the necessity of the Government's seeking the advice and opinion of men who know something about the land. Had that been done in 1923 this measure of relief would not have been necessary to-day in so far as the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley settlers are concerned. Had the larger areas and other things we advocated in 1923 been conceded to the Upper Burnett the settlement would doubtless have been a success. In 1923 the hon. member for Cunningham told the Government in plain terms that the areas of the Upper Burnett scheme were too small, but he had to wait until 1929 before he could rectify that error. In the meantime the settlers themselves had to contend with the difficulties that these restricted areas forced on them. One of the main difficulties of all land settlement, particularly land which has been resumed for closer settlement, has been that the Crown has placed upon it valuations five times in excess of its original value, and at a later stage has been compelled to introduce legislation to reduce those valuations and give concessions in regard to overdue rent and other charges to give the settlers a chance of making good. The point that must not be overlooked is that it was the Crown that brought about this failure. Those methods were adopted in our soldier settlements. Had the Government of the day been prepared to obtain the assistance and advice of those hon. members who knew something of land settlement, a great deal of the trouble that arose in subsequent years would not have taken place, and both the State and the settler would have been saved an enormous amount of money.

One point that is overlooked in legislation such as this is the tragedy of the years of difficulty and trial that have beset the settler in his endeavour to make a success of his job, particularly the conscientious settler. One cannot imagine what they have meant to him and his family. I quite agree with the Minister that matters concerning land settlement should be considered apart from party politics. The question is too big for partisanship to enter into it. I should never think of getting up in this House and advising persons with mining experience how they should embark in a mining enterprise, but I do say that men on this side of the Chamber who know something about land settlement—and it would not be much to their credit if they did not, because they have been through it from the pioneering stage—should be consulted on land settlement matters. It is a great pity that their advice is not sought on these matters.

I hope that the Minister will be prepared to make these concessions that are being

offered to the settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley areas of general application. We know that settlers in other areas are in a parlous state, and their case should be considered on their merits. The hon. member for Port Curtis made the definite statement that this settlement was different from most other settlements inasmuch as it was a new area.

Mr. FOLEY: It is true.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is not true. What about the new settlement at Chinchilla and other places during the last few years? There is a real necessity for the extension of this legislation to embrace the whole of Queensland. It is opportune for Parliament to give careful consideration to the necessity of placing all land settlement in Queensland on a sound basis, so that attention may be devoted to encouraging a growing population in this State and the influx of that capital which is so necessary for the full development of Queensland. For too long have we lingered over the question. Let us tackle it earnestly and see that the settlers of Queensland not only get a fair deal but have every inducement to become prosperous, for the best advertisement we can have for Queensland is the prosperity of her producers.

Mr. SPARKES (*Dalby*) [3.8 p.m.]: When introducing this Bill, the Minister laid considerable stress on the class of land under review. If, as the hon. gentleman says, this land is good—and I agree with him to a certain extent—some reason must exist for the failure of this settlement, where at least 95 per cent. of the settlers are efficient. From my knowledge of the settlement, a good deal of which is at the northern end of my electorate, I have no hesitation in saying that to a great extent the failure is due to errors that occurred when the settlement was opened. That has been the case with practically every Government in Queensland, and I suppose also in other States, for in opening up land for settlement the first consideration of the Government has been to provide only a bare living area and to extract from the settler the highest possible rental. The Minister might retort, "But why did they take up the land?" You, Mr. Speaker, know that if land were opened up in the district that you represent at, say, 6d. an acre rent, and was eagerly sought, that would be no indication of its real value, for 6d. an acre rent would probably be 100 per cent. more than its value. No matter what provisions are stipulated in regard to land settlement, the same difficulty occurs, for mainly through legislation such as this people who take up land know that so long as they get the land they can later on approach the department for relief. Land is acquired under all sorts of tenures and later on relief is sought. When land is opened for selection the authorities should err on the side of allocating too large areas and fixing reasonable purchase terms, giving the selector a little more than is actually required and allowing him to work out his own salvation. If the hon. member for Port Curtis were present at the moment he would confirm what I have to say, that towards Mundubbera and on the Binjour Plateau German settlers and their women folk have worked and slaved to meet their commitments. No wireless sets or motor cars there! What benefit will these settlers get under

this Bill? Imagine their feelings when they read in the press that some settlers in this area will have two years' rent refunded to them, while they continue to slave and get nothing! What will be the result? I venture to tell the Minister that in two years' time the Minister will have not only a big proportion of these selectors in trouble again, but many more, for the other selectors will say, "If we do not pay we shall get relief." What will the Minister do in two years if selectors cannot pay? The hon. gentleman says that he will not put them off—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are not going to put them off.

Mr. SPARKES: And at the end of two years the hon. gentleman will not put them off.

This settlement was fundamentally wrong at the inception as regards living areas. Let the Minister get right down to bedrock, so that the man who has worked hard and denied himself wireless and other privileges will also benefit. I want to see assistance given to the settlers who are in difficulties, because, as they are to-day—an absolute burden on the Government—they are of no use. It may be done by reducing their rents and the charges for water facilities, thereby giving each settler an equivalent amount of relief, instead of singling out the person who has not paid his dues. The same principle is observed in regard to old-age pensions. If an individual spends all the money he earns he is entitled to a pension at sixty-five, but if an individual saves some of his earnings he is not entitled to it. It is a matter that is made a political football by the different parties. One party says, "I will give you 15s.," and the other party says, "I will give you 17s. 6d." In this case the Government are saying to the settlers, "We will reduce your rents and write off the arrears." That is all for political gain. If the Minister were sincere in his effort to help the settlers of Queensland, he would investigate the position of the whole of the settlements in Queensland in the matter of rents.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That will come later on.

Mr. SPARKES: If the Minister was on one of those farms and had worked hard, would he like to see the other man having his two years' arrears of rent wiped off? The other man could say, "I bought a motor car with the money that I should have paid as rent for the two years, and in your case you paid it to the Government, but I am going to get my debt wiped off."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Does the purchase of a motor car get a man into trouble?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. member knows many men have got into trouble through buying a motor car. There are settlers on the Burnett who have denied themselves all these little luxuries, and they are not to receive any benefit by this Bill. I asked the Minister the other day if he was going to reduce the rents payable by those people and thus bring them into line with those settlers who had their arrears wiped off, and he said, "No." The effect of this inequitable treatment will be that the settlers throughout Queensland will be inclined to say, "We won't pay our rents." It is only

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human nature. If the Minister had a neighbour who had two years of arrears wiped off, would he feel inclined to pay his dues the next year, especially in view of the fact that the Minister has stated that his land is not likely to be forfeited?

I urge the Minister to reconsider this matter, and see if he cannot do something to help those settlers who have already paid their rent. There are men on these settlements who have borrowed money from their storekeepers and banks—

Mr. LLEWELYN: They would not help him.

Mr. SPARKES: Who would not?

Mr. LLEWELYN: The banks.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. member knows that the banks have been a very great standby to this country. Probably more people have gone down through the banks being over-indulgent than have succumbed because they were under-indulgent in the matter of advances.

I hope the Minister, even at this late stage, will accept an amendment that will afford some measure of relief to those men who have borrowed money to pay off these loans. Surely they are entitled to the same measure of relief as the men who have let the amounts run on!

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*) [3.16 p.m.]: I regret very much the necessity of introducing further legislation dealing with these Burnett lands. As a grazing area they were renowned throughout Queensland, and the Government thought they would be able to turn them into an agricultural area simply by cutting them up. The position that exists there to-day is a result of what took place in 1923. Mr. Theodore and Mr. McCormack were very keen on this settlement; but if they had taken the advice offered by members on this side of the House that settlement would have been a very great success. Many settlers were induced to come from Mount Morgan, owing to the closure of that mine, and many others came from the Cloncurry district who had no knowledge of farming. In a very short time we had a number of these people applying for assistance to the Agricultural Bank, and I think there is at the present time a great deal owing to that bank because of the failure of some of those who settled at that time.

In regard to this enormous area, I desire to quote from the report of the Land Administration Board, which inquired into the condition of this settlement in 1929. Until that investigation took place we were led to believe that a tremendous area was suitable for settlement. The total of the area comprised by the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley lands was 2,493,000 acres, but when one looks at the classification of the land—of which no information was given in 1925—one sees under the heading of "Agriculture" that in the North Burnett there were only 186,000 acres of first-class agricultural land and 400,000 acres of second class. In the Callide area the first-class agricultural land comprised 104,000 acres and the second-class land 391,000 acres. The Government of the day decided to undertake closer settlement in this area, which had been a complete success as a grazing area. I understand there were in the vicinity of 133 settlers on the area, on what were called "grazing homesteads." In this report one finds that of 2,493,000 acres, 1,412,000 acres

are grazing land and the Government expected men in some instances to make a living on 160-acre blocks! Allow me now to give the House some figures compiled by the staff surveyors under the heading of "Grazing lands" in the North Burnett. There are 498,000 acres of first-class grazing land as compared with 336,000 acres of second-class grazing land. In the Callide area there were 90,000 acres of first-class grazing land and 488,000 acres of second-class grazing land. These figures should show hon. members that the settlers in these areas who were placed on blocks that were far too small were faced with a very difficult proposition. Another handicap besetting them was the amount of rainfall in the district. The Government of the day should have adopted the advice of members on this side, who were specially asked to criticise the Bill. That advice was that the blocks should be of a larger size than was intended by the Government. The average rainfall of the Upper Burnett is only 29 inches per annum, nevertheless the Government required settlers to make a living in agriculture on 160 acres! How on earth could a man make a success of dairying or farming pursuits in a district where the average rainfall amounts to only 29 inches per annum? These settlers were up against a very thin proposition from the settlement of the land in 1923.

I consider that the time is ripe when the Government should give some relief, but what puzzles me is why they intend to afford relief to men who have not met their obligations to the Government and to give none to those who have made every endeavour to do so. It was very interesting to hear the hon. member for Port Curtis state that in his opinion they all should have assistance, and I am hopeful that when an amendment is moved from this side that justice, in the shape of assistance, be meted out to all settlers there, the hon. member will cast his vote with us and thus show the genuineness of his desire that every settler in that settlement should have assistance.

I should like some information as to how the assistance is to be given. The Bill provides that if the settler is two years or longer in arrears with his dues to the Crown he will receive relief, but I am very keen to know if the holder of a 360-acre block who has not met his dues to the Crown is to receive relief, whilst the holder of an 160-acre block—which is far too small—who has borrowed the money to meet his dues to the Government is going to be denied assistance. Is there to be any differentiation in the treatment extended on the one hand to the settler with a living area and a settler who was given an area that was far too small for his purpose?

The report from which I am reading sets out that one settler, A. J. Mack, held portions 130 and 131, parish of Bailev, area 191 acres. The cost of his bore or well was £53 12s. 2d., whilst the cost of the equipment supplied to the selector was £96 15s. Before a man can make a living from his block he must have water and in this case the cost of providing water amounted to £53. What chance would this man have of carrying this cost and making a living from an area of only 191 acres? I have quoted that case to show the seriousness of the present position and to intimate the success

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that might have been achieved had the Minister of the day accepted the advice that was invited and freely given from this side of the House. We have had some experience in land settlement matters and we were competent to tender advice to the then Minister. In 1923 I asked the then Secretary for Public Lands, Mr. Dunstan, how many people had been settled on the Upper Burnett and Callide area, and he told me that the number was 1,079. I then asked him how many forfeitures there had been, and he told me that 500 people had forfeited their blocks. What success could be anticipated from a settlement of 1,079 settlers when 500 of them had walked off their land and had forfeited it to the Crown? The position of this settlement is a very serious one indeed, but it is pleasing to me to know that the Government have decided to extend a measure of relief to these unfortunate settlers. So serious has the position become that I understand that a mass meeting of settlers is shortly to be held at Monto to deal with the Government for their failure to provide a measure of relief ere this.

**THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:** If you would hurry up they would get the relief.

**MR. CLAYTON:** If the Minister of the day had accepted the advice tendered to him in 1923 by hon. members on this side—some of which I shall now quote to the present Minister—there would have been no need to call a mass meeting of settlers, and there would have been no need for the present Minister to ask me to hurry up so that this relief might be given immediately. Speaking on the Upper Burnett and Callide Land Settlement Bill in 1923 I said—

“The method of settlement is not altogether what hon. members on this side desire; but it is gratifying to learn that the Minister has invited criticism concerning this method. The Minister invited criticism from this side of the House, and he has had the views of men with practical experience. Those views should go a long way to assist him to improve the Bill, and this improvement can be effected by his acceptance of amendments which will be moved from this side when we get into Committee.”

Later on I said—

“The Minister is also going to take upon himself the power to compel the settlers to comply with the Act by making such improvements as he directs.”

The then Minister undertook to see that improvements were carried out straight away. I have already pointed out the high cost of water facilities that had to be borne by the settlers.

Further on I stated—

“We have been told that the areas are going to range from 160 acres upwards. An area of 160 acres in a district where the rainfall is only from 28 to 30 inches yearly is not a living area. That has been proved over and over again. As proof of that, I only have to refer to the soldier settlement in my electorate. We have men there who have worked long hours and done everything possible to make a success of the land, but owing to the inadequate rainfall they have not succeeded.”

Then I said—

“If a man is going in for mixed farming on these 160-acre blocks as well as dairying, it will be necessary for him to employ labour. We all know that in the very near future the wages to be paid to the farmer's employee will be fixed by the Arbitration Court.

“Mr. Wright: Hear, hear!”

“Mr. CLAYTON: He may be compelled to produce from his farm and sell on a very low market, thereby not getting nearly the return from his products with a low market.”—

That also has come true to-day. We now know that the areas were too small. We heard the hon. member for Normanby referring to the fact that these men had struck low markets. We warned his Government at the time that the areas were too small and urged them to make provision for the low market that would occur in the future. I then proceeded to say—

“that he will be called upon to pay the men whom he has to employ.

“Mr. Bulcock: There will be no employment in this area outside the farmer and his family.”

There is truth in that interjection because the farmers to-day find it is absolutely impossible to get lads to leave the cities and seek employment on the farms. There are 10,000 unemployed single men in our cities and towns, and at the same time farmers are unable to secure labour. I had a letter to-day from a settler informing me how serious his position was, and saying that his wife, his family, and he were compelled to work long hours because he was unable to get young men to leave the cities to work on the farm.

Amendments will be offered from this side of the House when the Bill is being considered in Committee, and I trust that on this occasion the Minister will see the justice in them and accept the advice that comes from men who have been forced for many years to make their living from the land.

**MR. MAHER (West Moreton)** [3.33 p.m.]: I understand this Bill is framed in such a way as to give relief to settlers in any part of the State who may secure the Minister's approval, but according to the information given by the Minister himself the main object of the Bill is to provide relief to the settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley settlements. The Bill purports to give relief to these settlers by suspending payment of arrears and by spreading the arrears over a period of time, by adding arrears to the principal (that is, the funding of arrears) by the remission of penalties, by the extension of obligations due under mortgage and other Crown charges, and by the writing down of Crown dues generally.

I am prompted to ask: “What is wrong with this Upper Burnett and Callide Valley scheme that it is necessary to take such drastic action as this Bill proposes? There must be something radically wrong, and whether it be that the land was thrown open in too small areas at the beginning or whether the additional areas that have been granted since in consequence of the recommendations of the Land Administration Board have not fulfilled the requirements of the settlers is beyond me to say.

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Something must be radically wrong, for I notice from the report of the Land Administration Board, which held an economic investigation into the affairs of the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley settlements, that the conditions there—if we can judge at all from the report—do not vary at all from the conditions that rule in the old-established areas of the State where dairying and other agricultural activities are carried on.

Settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley areas have been extremely well treated in comparison with the old pioneer settlers in other parts of Queensland. It is interesting to note in the report concerning this settlement that £1,715,697 has been spent in the construction of railways in the area, whilst 634 miles of road and five bridges and causeways have been constructed at a cost to March, 1929, of £78,523, these roads and bridges being constructed free of cost to the local authorities concerned. It is safe to say that in land resumptions, railway construction, and road and bridge facilities approximately £3,000,000 of loan money has been spent in developing the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley areas. Will anyone say that is not a very fine start for a settlement? On top of that the Government appointed the Land Administration Board a commission to inquire into the troubles of the selectors, and many concessions were as a consequence granted. In its report the commission had this to say:—

“From a dairying standpoint the district compares favourably with the best dairying districts in the State. Witnesses who appeared before us had previous experience on the land, on the Downs, at Nerang, Lowood, Laidley, and Murgon. The consensus of opinion was that, with the aid of cultivation, a dairy herd in the Mundubbera district would return profits as good as in any of the other districts mentioned.”

The Mundubbera district approximates to the Eidsvold-Monto-Theodore area, a similar belt of country running right through, and whilst I have never been in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley area I have been in the Mundubbera and Eidsvold districts, where, undoubtedly, some excellent agricultural and dairying country is to be found. The consensus of opinion was that the land in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley district was equivalent to the land in my own electorate, Lowood and Laidley being specifically mentioned. In the electorate I represent men are struggling to maintain themselves on 70 to 100-acre blocks, where they have to grow maize and small crops as well as carry on dairy operations. These men are not making much under present conditions; nevertheless they are operating on small freehold areas, and so far have made no claim on the revenue of the State for assistance, whereas in the Upper Burnett district, for some reason which it is difficult for me to ascertain, we have men situated on 300 to 500 acres of land in the dairying and agricultural section of the settlement—country that, in the consensus of opinion of witnesses examined by the commission was equal to the fertile West Moreton and other areas. If that is the case, why cannot these men make a livelihood out of 300 to 500 acres? If men in my district are called upon to make a living

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out of anything from 70 to 100 acres, what is wrong with the Upper Burnett? The selectors there have received every possible encouragement from every Government. Apparently matters are not right yet, and as the hon. member for Wide Bay indicated this afternoon, a rumour is current that these settlers propose to hold a meeting at Monto and protest against the conditions—

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: Are you sure you are not inspiring it?

Mr. MAHER: The hon. member for Port Curtis represents the area, and none of the Opposition have much opportunity of going into that district; so that is not a very likely possibility. The principle whereby further concessions and help will be meted out to these settlers, but not to deserving settlers in other parts of the State, is very difficult for me to understand. Nobody who has any experience or knowledge of Queensland agricultural conditions can say that other parts of the State are not in need of assistance. The men who are engaged in agricultural and dairying operations in all parts of Queensland to-day are experiencing an extremely hard time, and it seems an extraordinary thing that the Minister who is charged with the responsibility of fairly and equitably administering the land laws of the State should single out one particular area for special concessions.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you say I should put those settlers off the land?

Mr. MAHER: I do not say that. There is no member in this House who has a greater measure of sympathy and consideration for the struggling man on the land than I have. If I could be satisfied that there were settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley in such a desperate plight as to need the assistance provided for in this Bill, I should be absolutely with the Minister in granting that help; but what I cannot understand is that witnesses who appeared before the commission that inquired into the qualities of this land stated that the soil was equal to that of the Darling Downs, the West Moreton, and the Stanley Valley. If the land is of that class, how is it these men cannot make a better livelihood there? If they are making a livelihood equivalent to that made by the agriculturist in my electorate, why is no provision made to help those people in the electorate I represent, and the dairymen and agriculturists in Queensland generally? I do not begrudge the measure of help it is intended should be given to the settlers of the Upper Burnett district. If they are in the plight indicated by the Minister, I hope they will be successful in their applications for assistance.

I hope this Bill is not an electioneering device. I may be expressing a pious hope, like the Leader of the Opposition, that it is not an electioneering device on the part of the Minister to lure the pioneering community in the Burnett area to the support of the Government. I hope the Minister means business, and that these people who are deserving of assistance will be able to get it even after the elections. I say definitely there are a large number of pioneering settlers in this State equally in need of special concessions as the farmers of the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley. Over 12,000,000 acres of prickly-pear lands have been reclaimed during the past few years in

consequence of the successful work of the cactoblastis and thrown open for settlement, and to-day more men engaged in pioneering work in the brigalow and belah scrubs than in any other period of Queensland's history. Those pioneer settlers are faced with many difficulties. They are working in areas where the rainfall is not as great as it is in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley, which, according to the report of the commission, was 29 inches per annum, as against 24 to 25 inches in these areas. The settlers on the brigalow and belah scrub lands have an uphill task. The timber has to be ring-barked and water facilities have to be provided, and a great deal of fencing has to be done, and for a considerable period practically no money can be earned. Those settlers in the southern areas of the State are just as much entitled to concessions as the settlers in the Callide Valley.

The commission makes reference to a point to which I wish to refer, the work of the old pioneers of Queensland:—

“In the early days of settlement a family would settle on the land, produce almost all its own requirements, and earn in actual money a very small income, which would be expended on articles which the farm could not produce. To live, rather than to earn or produce for the use of others, was the dominating purpose. Now all this has changed. The modern view is that, unless the income received from the products of the farm can approximate the money that would be earned from similar energies elsewhere, there is no inducement to settle on the land.

In former days communities established themselves by years of arduous pioneering work, with little outside assistance, and railways were provided only after the settlers had demonstrated the wealth productivity of their lands, and their capacity to provide the railway with considerable business. Now the position is reversed; public expenditure goes first and settlement follows. Such public expenditure must necessarily be unproductive for a few years.”

In the early days of settlement, the electors throughout the district I represent—the old German pioneers and, indeed, the old British pioneers too, the Germans predominating—went through tremendous privations and struggles in order to do just that which the Commission has touched upon—to live, to enjoy the right to live, not to produce for others. The early pioneers of the Rosewood scrub lived their whole life in order to produce a well and truly worked farm for the benefit of their sons and daughters. Such self sacrifice and pioneering work opened up this country for the benefit of those who have followed and therefore I say that such a spirit appears to have departed, although in many parts of the State heart-breaking struggles have been carried on by men who have undertaken its development. Much of that work is done without any call at all on the Government for assistance, and it seems to me, with all due respect, that the settlers in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley have been extremely well catered for by all Governments since the commencement of the settlement. I cannot understand why the Minister has decided, as he has stated to-day in this House, that the real object of this Bill is to give con-

cessions and special help to the settlers of that particular district, and that the State, as he naively puts it, is not sufficiently financial to render assistance to all who are in need in other parts of the State. It is far better to leave relief measures alone if the Government are not able to devise a measure of relief and assistance that can apply to all the dairymen and agriculturists of the State who need it. If they cannot do that the Government should leave it alone and not make fish of one and flesh of the other, which is the suggestion contained in this Bill. As has been already mentioned there is to be a differentiation in the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley itself as between two men living, possibly, side by side; the one man having shown initiative, effort, and enterprise and done hard work on the farm and struggled and met privation in order to meet his Crown commitments, and the other not having shown the same amount of determination, energy, or desire for hard work nor that character which makes him feel the need to meet his obligations to the Crown. The former may have raised money from the bank or storekeeper or some friend to meet his obligations to the Crown, or he may have earned the money from his property by dint of hard work.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Can the hon. member give any definite cases?

MR. MAHER: We see such instances day after day and I know such things happen. I know that in my own electorate, when the railway from Rosewood to Marburg was constructed, a guarantee was required. Subsequently a Labour Government removed the guarantee, but many of the farmers in the district had met their obligations in terms of the guarantee—and many had to raise almost their last pound in order to do so—whilst others did not meet their obligations. When the time eventually came the previous Labour Government decided to abolish the guarantee. It happened then as it will happen in this case.

The settlers who met their guarantee obligations received no benefit whatever, whilst those who had failed to do so received the benefit. That was a very sore point with many worthy farmers in my own electorate and precisely a similar case exists in connection with the Bill to-day. Side by side with farmers who have made every effort to meet their obligations to the Crown and other creditors will be found farmers more or less lackadaisical in such matters, but in this measure the Government promise to reward the lackadaisical and often wasteful type, whilst giving no consideration whatever to the most worthy type of farmer who has met all his obligations to the Crown. That is a very important point, in fact the weakest point in the Bill.

MR. FOLEY: It is wrong of you to say that the men who were unable to get financial assistance were lackadaisical.

MR. MAHER: I am speaking in a general way. Anybody with any understanding of human nature knows full well that the backslider is to be found amongst all sections of the community. We are all aware of the expression that “a willing horse gets the most work,” and so it is throughout life. The men who work hard and strive to meet all their obligations are to receive no consideration, whilst every assistance is to be

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extended to men of the lackadaisical sort who are indifferent whether they pay or not. There is also the type of person who practically refuses to meet his obligations. Under this Bill the Government propose to reward the less worthy type in that settlement and to penalise the best type of farmer.

That is my objection to the Bill, which I also base on the ground that so far as I can gather it has been introduced for the political purpose of trying to save the seat of the hon. member for Port Curtis. It is designed specially to grant a measure of assistance to farmers in the area who have not met their Crown commitments whilst the farmers in the other parts of the State—to use the Minister's own words—will not have much hope of securing relief. It has been contended by hon. members opposite that the financial resources of the State are not sufficiently large to give the same measure of relief to dairymen and agriculturists throughout the State. It is most regrettable that the Government should have introduced a Bill of this kind, and I join with the Leader of the Opposition and other hon. members who have spoken from this side of the House, in protesting against the objectionable features of the Bill to which I have referred. My sympathy goes out very strongly indeed to the settlers of the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley area who have made a hard fight since the settlement commenced and are now in need of assistance.

I understand that there is no need to introduce a Bill of this kind to grant a reasonable measure of assistance to struggling settlers, because the Minister already has sufficient power to extend generous help not only in this area but also in other parts of the State. The Bill has been brought in for the specific political purpose of assisting the hon. member for Port Curtis to retain his seat.

Question—"That the Bill be now read a second time" (*Mr. Pease's motion*)—put and passed.

#### COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Hanson, Buranda, in the chair.*)

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4—"Relief in respect of Crown dues; application for relief"—

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) [4 p.m.]: I move the following amendment:—

"On page 2, lines 17 to 19, omit the words—

'whose Crown dues are at the date of the passing of this Act in arrears for two years or more.'"

The object of the amendment is to leave the matter of granting relief an open matter. The omission of these words will give the Minister power to use his discretion in regard to any application of any settler under any Act. It is possible that the Minister has that power at the present time, but as there is a doubt about it the omission of these words will leave the matter entirely at his discretion. We have cases where relief is necessary all over the State and under every Act. We have selectors who have got into difficulties and are in just as great need of relief from the payment of their dues as any case in the Upper

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Burnett and Callide Valley settlement. The relief should be general. The Minister has shown almost extraordinary sympathy with settlers whose payments are in arrears. He has expressed a wish to deal leniently with every case. Every settler deserves consideration. If this clause is amended as desired the Minister will be able to use his discretion and show discernment between applications which are genuine and those who are not genuine.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This clause is designed to give a measure of relief to certain Crown tenants whose dues are at the date of the passing of this Act in arrears for two years or more. That principle was definitely affirmed on the second reading of the Bill. Therefore, it cannot be varied at this stage. I must accordingly rule the amendment out of order.

Mr. WIENHOLT (*Fassifern*) [4.5 p.m.]: I was very pleased to hear the Minister say that this Bill should not be considered in any party spirit; in other words, that it should be regarded on its merits and not from party standpoints. Coming from the Deputy Premier I take that to mean that hon. members on the Government side and, I hope, the Opposition, can look at this measure from a non-party point of view, especially in the case of the amendments that may be moved. It is very pleasant to have that feeling. The Committee will now be able to deal with any amendment on its merits and not upon party considerations. I did not speak on the second reading. This is an important matter indeed.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I take it that the hon. member is speaking on the clause now under consideration?

Mr. WIENHOLT: I am speaking on the clause—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: General relief is given in the Bill we passed the other day.

Mr. WIENHOLT: I understand that. We are very anxious indeed to see these people helped and we realise their difficulties, but an important question has been raised, and I hope the Minister will realise the seriousness of the case that has been stated.

Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*) [4.7 p.m.]: This clause makes provision for relief in respect of Crown dues that are two years in arrears, but what will be the position of the selector or lessee who is only twelve months in arrears?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He does not come under this Bill.

Mr. PLUNKETT: The question of efficiency or inefficiency arises. As in other sections of the community, some settlers will always pay their way, in sheer desperation, sometimes, while some of their fellows who find difficulty in paying consider that the Government are the last people who should be paid.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The previous Bill gives general relief.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I quite appreciate the fact that a line of demarcation must be drawn, but the Minister will see the injustice where an anomaly is created.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am faced with the alternative of wiping out the arrears or putting the men off the land.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I should be sorry to see the men put off the land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do not intend to put them off.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I am glad to hear that. At the same time, I am concerned at the anomaly that will be created where the arrears owing are less than two years, for apparently no relief will be given.

Mr. SPARKES (*Dalby*) [4.10 p.m.]: I agree with the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. What would be the position of a man who is only twelve months in arrears with Crown dues?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The relief this Bill gives is only open for six months. He can get relief under the previous Bill.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN (*Murilla*) [4.11 p.m.]: I suggest that the Minister amend this clause to provide for the man who has borrowed money in order to meet his commitments to the Crown.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I cannot make any amendment. The Bill distinctly sets out what will be done.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: My point is that certain men have borrowed money to keep faith with the Crown.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: While you were having a holiday we passed a Bill giving the Crown power to give relief.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The Bill referred to will not meet the case I have in mind. I want the Minister to assist the person who has incurred debt in order that he might meet his obligations to the Crown. Many people, especially men on the land, prefer to owe money to banking institutions and private individuals than allow any debt to the Crown to remain unpaid. On the other hand, some people reverse the position, trusting that the Crown will not adopt harsh measures. I should like the Minister to have power to deal with cases such as I have mentioned.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have the power.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The Minister has not the power under this Bill to assist a man who in meeting his obligations to the Crown has incurred private debts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We will consider that later.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: There is no time like the present. The Minister is setting a very bad example by limiting the provision to debts due to the Crown. Personally, I should prefer to incur an overdraft with the bank in order to meet my obligations. There are others who would prefer to owe quite a number of accounts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Agricultural Bank is making provision.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The Agricultural Bank is in the same position as other banks, it rightly deals with matters in accordance with the man's financial position. A man has no more chance of getting an advance from the Agricultural Bank than he has from a private bank. The Agricultural Bank must be conducted on business lines or the Crown would be committed to an enormous amount. We are pleased to know that the Agricultural Bank endeavours

to carry on its business in accordance with business principles. I feel sure that the hon. member for Port Curtis, who has a large number of these settlers in his district and who probably is more conversant with their conditions than anyone else, would like every assistance extended to these people.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why didn't you do that when you were a member of the Government?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: If the previous Labour Government had taken notice of what Opposition members said, this blunder would not have been made. The Minister was a supporter of the Government that introduced this Bill, and at that time I, as well as other members of the Opposition, pointed out what would happen if this settlement was undertaken, and time has proved the correctness of our statements. I predicted that these settlers would approach the Government time after time for assistance.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you recollect the time you met Colonel Evans on a visit to that district and you said cotton would grow beautifully on those areas?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: That was in connection with a different area altogether. The point I wish to make in regard to the matter is that hon. members on this side of the Committee predicted what would happen when the settlement of this area was first suggested.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In 1930, you had a chance of remedying the position.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: We had a chance of doing something and we did it—we did everything that was recommended by the commission in regard to that settlement. We did everything we thought was necessary. It is more than likely that, irrespective of what Government are in power, it will be found further assistance will be desired by these settlers. Does the Minister honestly believe that the effect of this Bill will eliminate the difficulties in regard to this settlement?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Then he is a super-optimist. I do not think that the assistance that will be given by this Bill will get over the difficulties. I feel sure that during the next three years further assistance will have to be afforded to these people. I feel sure their difficulties will not be overcome by this Bill. The settlement was a mistake in the first instance, and the Government have to bear the responsibility for the mistake made by their predecessors. This is not the only case where a land settlement has turned out a failure. Almost every land settlement scheme inaugurated has been a failure. I am one of those who believe that when people are settled on the land the Government should not hold out any inducement to them to look to the Government for assistance when they are in difficulties. Farming is like every other business, it is a case of sink or swim. The successful man will carry on and the man who is not adapted to farming will go to the wall, and no measure of help will make him a success. Farmers, the same as men of any other class, must be adapted to

*Mr. Morgan }*



the business in which they are engaged if they are to be successful.

This Bill may be assisting the man who perhaps rides into town in a motor car he has bought with the money he should have paid to the Crown in payment of rent, but the settler who has denied himself all luxuries and who has contented himself with a horse vehicle will not be entitled to relief. That is wrong in principle, and should not be tolerated by any Government. I intend to move an amendment, which I hope the Minister will accept. I move the following amendment:—

“On page 2, line 19, after the word—  
‘more’

insert the words—

‘or who is able to produce evidence to prove that he has incurred a debt in order to meet his dues to the Crown.’”

If a man can produce evidence to prove to the satisfaction of the Minister or others that he has incurred a debt in order to pay the Crown, the Government should assist him. I feel sure that the Minister will accept the amendment.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You know that is out of order.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I do not think it is right for the hon. member to make that remark.

Mr. SPARKES (*Dalby*) [4.20 p.m.]: I feel sure the hon. member for Port Curtis will bear me out when I say that many settlers in this particular area have incurred debts with their storekeeper—not only with the bank, but with their storekeeper—but who probably have paid their rents. Such a one should be protected, of course, as well as the other. It is the desire of the Government to help farmers who are behind in their commitments to the Crown for two years, and surely, if a settler has borrowed from his storekeeper sufficient money to meet his dues for rent, he also should be entitled to some consideration! The hon. member for Port Curtis knows this district very well, and is aware of the extent to which storekeepers have carried some of the farmers. These farmers are entitled to the same measure of consideration as those who say, “I do not care. I simply will not pay.” There are also other farmers who have made arrangements with private banks, and have thus met their obligations. As the amendment suggests, those settlers who find it difficult to reduce their indebtedness should have at least the same consideration as those who have deliberately and “drastically,” as the hon. member for Bulimba suggests to me, not paid their two years’ rent. I hope the Minister will accept the amendment. I see he is perusing it very carefully—I can see leniency written on his face—and with a little assistance from the hon. member for Port Curtis, I think he will give assistance to the settlers I have in mind.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [4.22 p.m.]: The suggestion is only that a settler who has borrowed money from a storekeeper or banker, or anybody else for that matter, in order to pay his debt to the Crown, and who can prove to the satisfaction of the Land Administration Board that he has incurred such debt, should receive assistance. Such a settler is in exactly the same position

[*Mr. Morgan.*

as those who have not met their commitments to the Crown, except that the debt is not now directly due to the Crown. The two classes of men are in exactly the same position—one owing the money directly to the Crown and the other owing some private firm or individual money he has paid to the Crown. Of course, the board will have to recommend some basis of relief, and the only difficulty that I can see, if it be a difficulty, is as regards the capitalisation of arrears to the Crown; but there are several methods in which that could be arranged. The amendment would not extend the obligation of the Crown at all, and is a reasonable suggestion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [4.23 p.m.]: The amendment is so stupid that it is not worth the time being wasted on it; but to demonstrate its stupidity, I will read the clause as it would appear when amended—

“Any selector or lessee (other than the selector of a grazing selection, or the lessee of a pastoral holding, or the lessee of any town or suburban land) of any land under the provisions of the Land Acts whose Crown dues are at the date of the passing of this Act in arrears for two years or more. . . .”

Mr. MOORE: Or—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He has to be two years or longer in arrears. How could he be two years in arrears if he borrowed money to pay his debt to the Crown? The principle of the Bill is that settlers in arrears for two years or longer can claim redress under the Bill, but how could a man who borrowed to meet his obligations still be two years or longer in arrears?

Mr. KENNY (*Cook*) [4.25 p.m.]: I think the Minister is deliberately trying to misconstrue the amendment. The amendment seeks to give an opportunity of redress to a settler who has gone into debt in some other direction in order to meet his obligations to the Crown. How many men have had to borrow over a number of years to meet certain obligations and have found it impossible to obtain the wherewithal to repay their debts? How many men have gone into debt to pay their obligations to the Crown?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He must be in arrears for two years or more.

Mr. KENNY: If a settler has gone into debt, and has been in debt for two years or more because he endeavoured to meet his obligations to the Crown then he is entitled to the same consideration.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are arguing from another standpoint.

Mr. KENNY: I am not. This man is entitled to the same consideration as the settler who has paid his outside debts but is in arrears for two years or more with the Crown. Apparently the Minister believes that the only person entitled to relief is the person who is in arrears to the Crown for two years or more, but we contend that if a person has been in arrears with his storekeeper, butcher, baker, or banker for two years or more and has thus been able to meet his obligations to the

Crown, he is entitled to the same consideration.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He must be two years in arrears with the Crown.

Mr. KENNY: It is useless trying to talk to the Minister in his present frame of mind. He will not even listen to what is being said, but keeps on repeating that he must be two years or more in arrears with the Crown. I know that, but I also claim that a man who has gone into debt to meet his obligations to the Crown should be given similar consideration. The amendment seeks to embody that alternative so that justice will be meted out to all and that no one person will get an advantage over another who has deliberately gone into debt to pay the Crown.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) [4.28 p.m.]: This Bill offers a strong inducement to every selector to get at least two years in arrears with his rent, otherwise he is entitled to no consideration from the Government. Immediately he reaches that point he will receive all the help that he wants. Is that not an open invitation to every selector in the country to be sure to get two years in arrears with the Crown? The Minister would not turn a man off his country if he were two years in arrears and it is hardly likely that he would do so with a man who is only one year in arrears. So that after this Bill is passed a selector will be quite safe in falling two years in arrears. After this Bill is passed the selector who pays his rent to the Crown is an absolute fool, because if he falls two years in arrears he will receive every consideration. Unless he can get into that position he is entitled to no consideration at all. If I held land from the Crown, then after the passing of this Bill I would fall two years into arrears. In two years I would be two years behind. Look at the reward I would get!

If I paid up I should be laughed at, but if I were two years in arrears I should get consideration. I should not be turned off my selection whatever happens! It is true that I might get threatening letters and all the rest of it, but the Minister has given his word that no one will be turned off the land for being in arrears for Crown dues. Every lessee of the Crown, even the grazing selector, can, by Order in Council, have this concession extended to him. With judicious organisation the grazing selectors all over the State can come under the provisions of this Bill by getting behind in their rent. After hearing what the Minister says, the selector will be an absolute goat if he pays any money to the Crown. Why should he?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Refrain from paying your own Crown dues and see how far you will progress. There is a big difference between "won't" and "can't."

Mr. DEACON: Unfortunately I bought my land from a private individual and he insists on my paying him. If I do not pay him his dues he walks in and I walk out. That is the position in which I and every other person who has purchased land under the freehold tenure stand. If I buy from the Government I can pay when I like! Now that the principles of this Bill have been explained by the Minister, all lessees of the Crown will know where they stand. The Bill specifically states that any Crown lessee

who comes within the definition of "selector" can make application for the benefits of this Bill. Queensland offers a glorious future for the selector. He will have no more rent to pay because, if he gets into arrears, they will be wiped off. This will be a great inducement for a man to surrender his freehold tenure because he will never be asked to pay anything under the leasehold tenure system. All that he will want is another ration or two.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: That is what he gets before an election.

Mr. DEACON: I am very sorry that the hon. member for Murilla should think of such a nasty thing like that, because it destroys all the joy of anticipation that I had conceived the selectors would have as a result of the passage of this Bill. At any rate, the Minister has said before an election—he has said it here when introducing this Bill—that this concession will be applicable generally, so any selector who does not stand up for his rights now and owes the Crown all the money he possibly can, does not know his business.

Mr. FOLEY (*Normanby*) [4.33 p.m.]: After listening to the arguments put forward by the Opposition one can only conclude that there is a very poor outlook if the farmers in the area for which this Bill seeks to provide relief are of the type depicted by hon. members opposite. Right through the debate members of the Opposition have depicted the men in this settlement as being shysters, boozers, and wasters—men who are sitting down waiting for their dues to accumulate in order that they can bring pressure on the Crown to give them relief, while the other fellow who struggles along and pays his way is to get no consideration. That is not the case in that settlement, where practically all the selectors are in the same position, not as a result of their being dishonest or loafers—

Mr. MAHER: Mr. Hanson, I rise to a point of order. I have heard this debate, and I have not heard one member of the Opposition term the settlers in the Upper Burnett or Callide Valley area shysters or boozers. I certainly did not make the reference or insinuation. As such a statement is offensive to me and is not true, I ask that you have it withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for West Moreton complains that the hon. member for Normanby has used words that are offensive to him. I therefore ask him to withdraw them.

Mr. KENNY: They are offensive to other hon. members, too.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. FOLEY: I withdraw the reference, Mr. Hanson, but I will repeat—

Mr. DEACON: Mr. Hanson, I rise to a point of order. The words complained of by the hon. member for West Moreton are offensive not merely to him but to every member of this party. No hon. member on this side of the Committee used those words and I ask that they be withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Normanby has withdrawn the expressions generally.

Mr. FOLEY: I think I made it quite clear that the inference could be drawn from the remarks of hon. members opposite

*Mr. Foley.]*

that these farmers were in the category that I mentioned. That is how I expressed myself. (Opposition dissent.) No one can draw any other inference from the remarks of hon. members opposite than that men in this particular area have been dishonest, that they have been sitting down loafing on their farms—while other farmers have been carrying on under adverse conditions and paying their way—in order that relief might be granted to them, and that they have used pressure on the Government to force the Crown to give them relief.

Mr. EDWARDS: Nobody said that.

Mr. FOLEY: That is the impression I gained after listening to members of the Opposition. Extracts from speeches delivered by hon. members opposite would confirm my view. The position is that the bulk of the farmers in this area are in practically the same position. As I pointed out at the introductory stage, settlers who at the commencement did not pin their faith to cotton growing only, but undertook dairying activities in conjunction with cotton growing were better able to meet the circumstances arising from small cotton crops and unfavourable prices. The other settlers were just as honest, but unfortunately had to meet the position created by failures in cotton crops for two or three years, in addition to which a burden was put upon them because of the depth to which they had to sink for water and because of the costly equipment necessary to bring it to the surface. Circumstances combined to make it impossible for them to meet their commitments, and on behalf of the settlers in the area I represent I strongly object to the expressions and inferences of Opposition members in this debate. Only one object is behind the tactics adopted by the Opposition; that is, to split the ranks of the farmers by an appeal to prejudice—to the prejudice of those who have been able to meet their commitments. However, hon. members opposite will find their appeal will fall flat, for those selectors who have been able to discharge their obligations to the Crown consider themselves fortunate to be in that position, and are doing everything possible to assist their less fortunate neighbours to overcome the adverse circumstances confronting them. I protest against the inference of members of the Opposition.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN (*Murilla*) [4.39 p.m.]: The hon. member for Normanby has made statements that are altogether untrue so far as the Opposition are concerned. Had this Bill given the same consideration to all settlers in the area the Minister would have experienced no opposition to its passage through this Parliament.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The Opposition desire that every individual in the State should get fair and just treatment—not that one section of the community should receive concessions, whilst another section, engaged in the same business and making many sacrifices, receives no consideration at all. The hon. member for Normanby forgets that this Bill may apply throughout the State, and that when legislation affects the State generally the Opposition are not concerned only with the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley settlers.

[*Mr. Foley.*]

My amendment provides an alternative—the Minister will note the word “or.” At the present moment the clause provides relief in respect of Crown dues that are two years in arrears. We do not oppose that, for we recognise that the method of settlement adopted in this area in the first instance was a mistake, and we pointed that out in 1923.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You had an opportunity to correct the position when you were in the Government.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Yes; and we did. No matter what Government may be in power in three years' time, further action will be necessary. My immediate point, however, is that the Minister should provide not only for those who have liabilities to the Crown in respect of dues that are in arrears for two years or more but also for those who in order to discharge their indebtedness to the Crown have incurred liabilities in other directions. We are trying to liberalise the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS interjected.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: That is the Minister's viewpoint, but it does not matter what the Minister thinks as long as the Chairman of Committees is satisfied that the amendment is in order. The Minister stated that this was a non-party Bill and he asked the Opposition to give consideration to the matter from a non-party point of view. Members of the Opposition have adopted a non-party attitude in regard to this measure, and have in every way endeavoured to keep the debate free from party bias, and when we move an amendment that would have the effect of freeing it further from the suggestion of party bias the Minister will not assist in that direction by accepting it. Generally speaking the Minister does not care whether a measure is non-party or not. Time after time he has told the Opposition that he has the power behind him to carry the Bill through; but to-day he went out of his way to plead with the Opposition to regard this as a non-party question. We have endeavoured to meet the Minister's wish in that regard, and we have refrained from criticism that might have been offered. We sympathise with those settlers who will get relief under this Bill, and also those settlers who will not get relief under the Bill; and we therefore ask the Minister to accept the amendment.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Vanango*) [4.45 p.m.]: I wish to put another viewpoint before the Minister. Different types of settlers have different methods of dealing with their financial obligations. I have known cases where a settler has received a letter from the Department of Public Lands or the Agricultural Bank in regard to rents or dues that were in arrear and stating that arrangements must be made within a certain date to liquidate the liability, and the settler has borrowed the money in order that he might do so. That sort of settler is so anxious to retain his home and is so conscientious in regard to the payment of money that he will borrow rather than allow these dues to remain unpaid. In one case a man rode over 20 miles at night on a push bike to see me in regard to a letter he had received asking for the payment of money due, and to ascertain whether I thought it

possible the Crown would take his property and how long it would allow him to obtain the money to meet his commitments. Another man may receive a dozen letters of the same nature and not be at all concerned about them; and that is probably the type of man this Bill will assist.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As the hon. member for Normanby said, you are decrying the settler.

Mr. EDWARDS: The hon. gentleman may get as much political kudos out of it as he likes—that does not concern me. I am endeavouring to assist the conscientious men who are worried if their debts are not paid. I think the Minister would be well advised to accept this amendment and thus help that class of settler. I trust the Minister will give careful consideration to that question and assist the men who may have borrowed money from a neighbour or store-keeper in order to meet their obligations. Surely, with all deference to what the Minister has said, that man should receive consideration and all the assistance that can possibly be afforded to him because he is the type of man that should be encouraged.

Mr. WILLIAMS (*Port Curtis*) [4.43 p.m.]: If my memory serves me rightly, a Bill is in operation that will meet the position of the settlers who come within the category mentioned by hon. members opposite in support of the amendment.

Mr. DEACON: What Bill?

Mr. WILLIAMS: The Bill that passed through the House within the last few days. The Secretary for Public Lands assures me that they can obtain relief or assistance under the provisions of that Bill. The contention of hon. members opposite in effect has been: Why should relief be given to men who have never paid their way, including Crown dues, who are the wrong type of settlers, and always have been?

Mr. DEACON: That is wrong.

Mr. WILLIAMS: I have written it down. Those are expressions of hon. members opposite.

Mr. DEACON: Those are not the expressions.

Mr. WILLIAMS: "Why give relief to men who have never paid their way, including Crown dues," who are the wrong type of settlers—"have been and always have been failures, and should not receive consideration."

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Who made them?

Mr. WILLIAMS: These are expressions made by different members opposite.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: That is not true.

Mr. WILLIAMS: The hon. member should look up the speeches. Those are extracts from the speeches of Thursday last and expressions used to-day. The Bill provides for relief of settlers who through adverse conditions have not been able to pay their way as distinct from that class of settler who owing to various reasons has been fortunate enough to meet his Crown dues. I am glad the hon. member for West Moreton is present because I am therefore able to remind him that the reason why the hon. member for Normanby put the case as he did was because of the fact that

at 3.55 p.m. to-day the hon. member for West Moreton stated, "This lackadaisical and often wastrel types will get these benefits." I should like the hon. member to state whether he used those words or not, which caused umbrage and gave rise to the remarks of the hon. member for Normanby.

Mr. BRAND (*Isis*) [4.51 p.m.]: This clause of the Bill is supposed to give relief to a number of settlers in the Callide and Upper Burnett districts.

Mr. WILLIAMS: And other parts of the State.

Mr. BRAND: The Callide and Upper Burnett districts—to those people who are two years in arrears. The Opposition have moved an amendment that seeks to give the same relief to those settlers who have incurred debts in meeting their commitments to the Crown. We have had two of the hon. members who are most vitally interested—the hon. members for Normanby and Port Curtis—endeavouring to show that members of the Opposition are antagonistic to the man on the land. I desire to know what their idea is, what is in their minds. Are they afraid of this amendment as disclosing that the Opposition realise the position and are desirous of giving advantages to selectors of whom they have had no thought at all? Are they endeavouring to make political capital? I have been in this Chamber fourteen years and I have never heard members on this side of the Chamber describe the men on the land as the hon. members opposite have tried to make out. We have always endeavoured to urge upon this Parliament that the lot of the man on the land is a very difficult one. He has to make a living under most adverse circumstances, and it is the duty of the Government of the day to do all they can to help him make a livelihood. I should like to see the Minister accepting this amendment. After all, the hon. gentleman is endeavouring to relieve the man who is in a difficult position with regard to his arrears of rent—he does not want to put him off the land—nevertheless that man who has incurred a debt to meet his rentals is in exactly the same position as the man who has not paid. The position of the two men should be considered one with the other. The amendment should commend itself to the Minister as one seeking to give assistance to the settlers who are heavily in debt.

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*) [4.54 p.m.]: The man who has found it necessary to resort to borrowing to meet his Crown dues is in precisely the same position as the man who has been unable to meet his dues. Both are in the same category and both are in need of help.

Mr. R. M. KING: They have changed their creditors.

Mr. MAHER: That is all. One man, in response to pressure from the department, seeks ways and means of raising the necessary money to discharge his debt to the Government. Some farmers live in deadly fear of an envelope with the letters "O.H.M.S." on it. I know of a case of one farmer who carried an envelope bearing the letters "O.H.M.S." round in his pocket for three weeks, frightened to open it, because he felt that there would be some dire disaster for him in an official envelope like

*Mr. Maher.]*

that—he was a simple-minded fellow, who had a fear of Government demands. So I claim that some farmers who receive a demand for Crown dues would make a desperate effort to borrow the necessary money. Their financial position and general circumstances may be no better than those of the men who made no effort at all to raise the money, and to that extent they are both on the same footing. Why should the Minister discriminate between these two classes of Crown debtors? The amendment is a test of the sincerity of the Government's desire to assist struggling farmers on the land. If the farmer is unable to meet his Crown dues and can prove to the satisfaction of the Minister that he had to raise the necessary funds to meet his obligation, then, to show his sincerity, the Minister should accept the amendment. The Minister would be well advised to reconsider the position, and to indicate to the struggling farmers in this area that he is prepared to assist them so long as they can establish to his satisfaction that they are in need of help and that their general circumstances are such that they had to borrow the money to meet their obligations.

The hon. member for Port Curtis challenged me to say whether I had said that some of the farmers in the different parts of the State were lackadaisical and wasteful. When I interrupted the hon. member for Normanby I objected to his saying that the term "boozer" or "shyster" had been used. In every farming district, as in every other walk in life, there will be found some men who are definitely lackadaisical. In fact, some people find a greater measure of satisfaction in delinquency rather than in meeting their honest commitments, and that applies in every walk of life. The whole demerit of the clause is that the Government seek to reward the man who has not striven as against the man who has. Every man is entitled to have his case considered on its merits, whether he has striven or not. This Bill has not taken that axiom properly into account, in that it seeks to reward, not the worthy and the thrifty, but those who have not made the same provision as the men who have met their obligations. That was the sense in which I used the phrase "lackadaisical," and I say again that it applies, not only to the farming world, but also to other vocations in life, and it is our bounden duty, as legislators, to give a greater measure of encouragement to men who are worthy and thrifty as against the unworthy. That is the spirit in which I oppose the clause.

Question—"That the words proposed to be inserted in clause 4 (*Mr. Morgan's amendment*) be so inserted"—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 22.

Mr. Annand	Mr. Moore
" Barnes	" Morgan
" Bayley	" Nicklin
" Bell	" Peterson
" Brand	" Plunkett
" Clayton	" Russell
" Deacon	" Swayne
" Edwards	" Wienholt
" Kenny	
" King, R. M.	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Maher	" Nimmo
" Maxwell	" Sparkes

[*Mr. Maher.*]

NOES, 25.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Larcombe
" Brassington	" Llewelyn
" Bruce	" Mullan
" Bulcock	" Pease
" Conroy	" Smith
" Copley, P. K.	" Stopford
" Copley, W. J.	" Waters
" Dash	" Wellington
" Foley	" Williams
" Funnell	
" Gair	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Gledson	" King, W. T.
" Hayes	" O'Keefe
" Keogh	

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Tozer	Mr. Cooper
" Taylor, C.	" Bedford
" Padden	" Taylor, G. C.
" Sizer	" Hanlon
" Walker	" Collins
" Daniel	" Hynes

Resolved in the negative.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 10, both inclusive, agreed to.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*): I move—

"That the Bill be read a third time."

Question put and passed.

#### MAIN ROADS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. A. Bruce, *The Tableland*) [5.7 p.m.]: I move—

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

At the invitation of the Opposition I gave full information in regard to this Bill at the introductory stages, and it is unnecessary for me to elaborate at this juncture. If hon. members will refer to page 1017 of "Hansard" for the current session they will notice that three pages are devoted to the explanation I gave of the contents of the Bill. I may repeat, however, that the main objects of the Bill are to provide secondary roads for the assistance of settlers, to provide access roads to assist miners who for many years have lacked these facilities, to provide tourist roads so that better advantage may be taken of the tourist traffic and better facilities afforded to all visitors to tourist resorts, and to relieve local authorities of certain commitments that they have had to meet in the past in respect of main roads.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN (*Murilla*) [5.10 p.m.]: The Minister mentioned that at the introductory stages of this measure he made a very long speech, but his very long speech was an historical review of main road activities in the State, put forward in an endeavour to camouflage the true nature of this Bill. The hon. gentleman had very little to say as to the actual contents of the measure, and though his very instructive and educational survey of main road history in this State may have appealed to the younger members of the House, those of us who have been members for many years

were not deluded by the extraordinary attitude he adopted in regard to one of the most important and most remarkable Bills ever introduced to an Australian Parliament. When we were able to examine the Bill we found it contained communistic principles never yet embodied in a Bill introduced in this or any other Parliament in the Commonwealth. (Laughter.) The Minister laughs, he may not think these principles are communistic or socialistic; but before I have finished I shall show the House that never before have such remarkably communistic or socialistic powers been embodied in a measure introduced in an Australian Parliament.

In the first place it can be honestly stated that the Bill sounds the death knell of the local authorities in this State, for when this legislation is enacted local authorities will have no other work to do than look after footpaths and make the necessary sanitary arrangements in the different towns.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They were very disappointed with you when you were in office.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: That remains to be seen. They may be very disappointed with the hon. gentleman—at any rate certain sections of the people have cause to be disappointed with him, more especially the railway employees, because the Minister appears to be doing his utmost to put the railway employees out of employment. The Minister in charge of the Railway Department does not appear to be endeavouring to counteract the actions of the Secretary for Public Works. We have heard very little from him; yet we do know where the Minister stands, because he stated that main roads did not in any way compete with the railways. The Minister informed hon. members of this Chamber that the road to Coolangatta would assist the railways; yet we find that that line, comparatively speaking, is losing more than any other line in the State, and if the Government decided to close any lines because of the loss incurred by them, it would be one of the first to be closed.

The Minister told us the railways were a thing of the past. I am of a different opinion. I believe the railways will remain as the chief means of transport in Queensland during my time and during the Minister's time. In every other country in the world—even in America, where the railways are privately owned—Governments have found it necessary to come to their assistance, and have imposed certain taxation on motor transport. That has taken place even in a country where oil supplies are found, and where the people are able to manufacture their own internal combustion engines. The same thing occurred in Great Britain. In that country, where the railways are privately owned and where the people are able to produce their own internal combustion engines, the Government have come to the aid of the private companies to a greater extent than the Governments in Australia have assisted the Railway Departments. In Australia we do not produce oil or manufacture internal combustion engines, and the result is that the competition against the railways is more or less of a foreign nature. A car that has to pay a tax of £6 a year in Australia has to pay £24 a year in Great Britain. When I was in charge of the Railway Department

I obtained information in regard to the methods adopted in Italy, France, and other countries in the world, and that information showed that those countries were doing much more to assist their railways, and to bring about a fairer competition between railways and motor transport, than is being done in this country. Is it reasonable that people should be taxed to maintain roads and allow more or less foreign competition on them to operate to the detriment of the Railway Department?

I think the Minister in charge of the Railway Department would be wise to reduce certain freights and fares; but I cannot deal with that question on this particular Bill.

The point I desire to make is that if the Minister for Transport wished—why he is called the Minister for Transport when he is only the Secretary for Railways, and the two departments of railways and main roads are separate, I do not know; that is a matter of course entirely in the hands of the present Government—he could conserve the interests of the railways. But to-day we have the spectacle of one Minister endeavouring to encourage people to use the railways in order to keep in employment the railway workers, and we have another Minister in charge of another department doing all he possibly can to put the railway workers out of work and employment. No co-operation between the two departments—one Minister journeying through the country informing the people that he is in favour of roads, whether such roads affect the railways or not!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is not true.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: One has only to read the report of the remarks made by the hon. gentleman at Warwick a few days ago.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I never said that.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The hon. gentleman may have been misreported. Purely and simply the position was that the hon. gentleman did not object to a road from Warwick to Goondiwindi, which would be really in competition with the railway. The hon. gentleman must be consistent. If he is in favour of constructing a main road from Brisbane to Cairns—and he has already stated he is, and has practically commenced portion of the road—it must not be forgotten that we have a very important section of our railways running from Brisbane to Cairns. We also have sea transport between the two ports and competition from aeroplanes. On the completion of the road there will be four different forms of transport which may be used between Brisbane and Cairns. If the hon. gentleman is in favour of constructing a main road from North to South then he must, if he is fair at all, be in favour of constructing a road from East to West. There is no more reason why a main road should be built in competition with our present railway system from Cairns to Brisbane than a road should be built in competition with our railway system between Brisbane and Charleville or from Rockhampton to the Central West. If the Minister is in favour of a road competing with our railway system running north and south then he must be in favour of the construction of a road running east and west, which will also compete with the railway system. The

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people would then be right in demanding from the Secretary for Public Works, who is in charge of main roads, that a good main road should be built from Brisbane to Charleville or from Warwick to Dirranbandi, or from Rockhampton to the West. If such roads be built, in certain respects one might close the railway system to such localities unless it is provided that those people who use the roads are placed under the same restrictions as have been applied to the railway system. The Commissioner for Railways has to obey the mandates of an Industrial Court award and the railway employees must only work certain periods, but men driving motor vehicles are at liberty to work twenty-four hours a day and on Sunday. They can work the clock round and are without any restriction. No doubt the Secretary for Public Works is one of those people who say that motor transport is the cheaper, but if that form of transport had to function under the same conditions as have the railways, including the forty-four-hour week system and a number of other restrictions, it would be found that there would be no motor vehicles running in competition with the railway system. The same restrictions should be placed on motor transport as upon the railway system, so that the fittest may survive. Has the Commissioner for Railways any chance of meeting his motor rival when he is told that his employers must work only a certain number of hours a day and he must pay a certain wage to the men driving his engines—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I am sorry. Both forms of transport should be placed on the same footing. It would then be a case of the survival of the fittest, and motor transport would go off the road. The Railway Department is, in some respect, overcharging the community. Place the railways and the motor transport system on the same footing without restriction and without favouritism to one or the other and ascertain which is the cheapest mode of transport in Australia. I ask the Minister to take notice of my contention that the passenger service in the railway department could be accelerated with safety; by this means it would be able to compete with the foreign form of transport. I am unable to visualise what position we shall eventually reach when one Minister is in favour of the foreign form of transport whilst another Minister is in favour of the Australian form of transport.

This Bill undoubtedly sounds the death-knell of local authority jurisdiction in connection with road construction. At the present time the Commissioner of Main Roads is empowered to construct State highways, main roads, tourist roads, and developmental roads, but it is now proposed under this Bill to empower him, with the consent of the Governor in Council, to construct secondary roads. Under this Bill every road constructed within a local authority area, no matter how insignificant it may be, can be regarded as a secondary road, because all roads in all local authorities now eventually link up with a State highway or a main road of some kind. Every man who leaves his selection to-day and traverses a road within his local authority area eventually comes out on to a State highway or a main road. I have no objection to the Government's constructing secondary roads

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with the consent of the local authority. The Government are perfectly justified in constructing a State highway or a main road through a number of local authorities without the consent of the bodies concerned, but the Government are not justified in constructing a secondary road, which, as I have already pointed out may be a road entirely within a local authority, without its approval. A local authority may not be prepared to call upon its ratepayers to pay a rate sufficiently heavy to meet 50 per cent. of the cost of construction and 50 per cent. of the cost of maintenance of a secondary road constructed within its area by the Main Roads Commission with the consent of the Governor in Council. Of course, the Main Roads Commission will consult with the local authority concerned, but if the local authority does not acquiesce in the proposal, then it can be absolutely ignored by the Main Roads Commission. Whether the local authority likes it or not the Main Roads Commission can, with the consent of the Governor in Council, construct secondary roads within its area.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Are you absolutely sober?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I do not drink as much as the hon. member. If the hon. member wants to swap insulting remarks then I am prepared to swap them with him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! But I am not prepared to allow it to be done.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, did you hear the Secretary for Public Works ask me if I was absolutely sober? Do you think that was an insulting remark? I was suspended from the sittings of this House last week for much less than that.

This Bill confers powers on the Commissioner to construct secondary roads in a local authority area whether the local authority concerned wants them or not. If I am wrong in my contention, the Minister can show me where I am mistaken. After the road has been constructed, one-half of the total cost becomes a debt on the local authority, which the taxpayers in the area must pay, notwithstanding that neither they nor their representatives were consulted as to its desirability. The local authority, in addition, must pay one-half of the total cost of maintenance. Notwithstanding that a local authority, in its efforts to carry on its affairs economically and without extravagance, may not desire to take advantage of offers of loan money from the Government, the Government can spend money on road construction within its area on the basis I have stated. This power will enable the Government to embark on a policy of road construction throughout the length and breadth of Queensland without consulting local authorities and compel them to accept one-half of the total financial burden. They will have no voice in the expenditure of the money. A more communistic principle was never introduced into any Bill. The Minister may say that such is not the intention of the Government; but, if not, why make provision for these powers?

This Bill also provides that the city of Brisbane shall be brought within its scope. I do not know whether the Brisbane City Council is aware of that fact. It was previously exempted from the provisions of the

Main Roads Acts. If the Commissioner so desires, the Brisbane City Council may be compelled to engage in the construction of main or secondary roads, whether it wants to or not.

This Bill also interferes with the powers of grazing district improvement boards, which were created recently under a measure passed by this House. This Bill, after the issue of an Order in Council, empowers the Commissioner to spend money on stock routes in destroying noxious weeds, erecting pounds, and impounding stock. Just imagine a Main Roads Commission having power to engage in an enormous amount of work on stock routes! It can take possession of stock routes and engage in the work mentioned at the expense of the people in the locality. That is not the work of a Main Roads Commission. No Main Roads Commission in any other State of the Commonwealth or any other part of the world has had its powers extended in that direction. This Bill will over-ride the powers which have been invested in grazing district improvement boards.

This Bill gives extraordinary power to the Commissioner of Main Roads in respect of land, whether it be freehold or perpetual leasehold, for the Commissioner, noticing a lagoon or lake on a man's property and regarding it as of some value from a scenic point of view, may recommend to the Governor in Council that the area be resumed. Indeed, no freehold land will be safe under this Bill. After it is resumed the land may be subdivided into town or other allotments and may form the nucleus of a town, for under this measure the Commissioner has power to establish tourist towns wherever he desires. Furthermore, the Commissioner has power to erect buildings of all sorts, including accommodation houses. Nothing in this Bill prevents him from building a hotel so long as he can get a license. He can build huts for tourists and lease those huts to people who desire to occupy them. All these powers are given to the Commissioner in respect of places that are not tourist resorts at the moment, but the Commissioner also has power in regard to existing tourist resorts to establish accommodation houses that will compete with existing accommodation houses. He can establish an accommodation house for which the present Government might obtain a license. Nothing in this Bill prevents the Commissioner from building swimming baths. In fact, the Main Roads Commission under this Bill is a new form of State enterprise. We have had experience of State enterprises and I remember the Premier stating that during his Premiership he would agree to no further State enterprises; yet in this Bill all kinds of State enterprises are capable of being created, including State hotels—

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: What about the local option poll?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: If the Government choose to have a hotel that the State will lease, the Government will get over the local option poll as they have done before.

This Bill makes provision whereby the Commissioner may with the consent of the Governor in Council establish wharves, piers, swimming baths, etc., and resume any private property despite the wishes of the

owner. In all respects this Bill is not the innocent little measure that the Minister in charge would have us believe. As far as the principles contained in it are concerned, the Opposition, in accordance with a plank of their platform—

Mr. WATERS: I didn't know you had a platform.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: The hon. member should know that our platform was sufficient to defeat the Labour Government three years ago and will be sufficient to repeat the performance in six months' time.

This Bill is as communistic as any Bill could possibly be. The thin end of the wedge has been inserted and now we have the wedge driven right in.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is where a wedge should be if you require to do any work.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Usually the first wedge is put in a little way and it makes a crack, and then you put in another wedge and that widens the crack, and that is what the Government are doing.

I have no objection to the Commissioner helping with the construction of secondary roads; but before these roads are commenced the local authorities should be consulted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You should read the Bill.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: If we are not familiar with the contents of the Bill it is due to the historical speech delivered by the Minister with the intention of camouflaging its contents. In my opinion the Bill should be amended so as to provide that secondary roads could not be constructed without the consent of the local authority, which is the body that will have to find the money. I have already stated that roads such as highways and main roads, which run through several local authority areas, are of national importance and one local authority should not be allowed to interfere; but in the case of a local road the local authority concerned has the right to have the last word. If the Minister will accept the amendments that will be moved in regard to this matter the Bill will meet with our approval in this respect.

In regard to the relief of shires, I remember that when I visited the North as Minister for Transport, particularly the area represented by the Minister for Public Works, I discovered that local authorities in that locality were very heavily in debt and unable to meet their responsibilities to the Government; nevertheless they continued to advocate a further expenditure on main roads. I informed a deputation that waited on me that I was not prepared to sanction the expenditure of more money in that area until they were in a position to meet their previous commitments. At a public function in that district, which was reported in the press, I was informed that the previous representative of that district—who was a Minister of the Crown—had advised them to have as much money as possible expended by the Main Roads Commission because, at a later period, if they got into difficulties, the Government would be prepared to introduce a Bill to relieve them of their responsibility. These people naturally availed themselves of the opportunity to expend an enormous amount of money on main roads in that district.

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Knowing that local authorities in many parts of the State had not had anything spent on main roads in their areas, I considered it would not be fair to sanction the expenditure of further money in this area—although the roads suggested were necessary—as they are necessary in other parts of Queensland as feeders to the railways—because the people there were unable to meet their responsibilities. This Bill will afford certain relief to local authorities, that have shirked their responsibilities—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: To all local authorities.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Not at all. In future, the local authorities will be charged one-fifth instead of three-fourteenths, which represents a reduction of one-seventieth in the total cost, which is practically not worth mentioning; but the local authorities that have expended an enormous amount and are unable to meet their responsibilities will be assisted by the Government. It will be subsidised, helped, and assisted by the Government, but such local authorities in different parts of the State as are under the control of men who are not prepared to go into debt and overtax their peoples, are not to receive any benefit from the provisions of the Bill. It is another example of the Government helping the extravagant child. Such local authorities as were prepared to accept and spend all the money that the Government were prepared to give now find that the Minister is prepared to assist them out of their difficulties, and I think the shire councils in the greatest difficulties are those in the electorate of the Minister. Speaking from memory, I think one shire in the hon. gentleman's electorate was extraordinarily deeply in debt and the Minister is bringing forward this measure to render greater assistance than has already been received by that local authority.

Mr. KENNY: This will not help; it is only 3d. in the £1.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: It is a gesture. Whether it helps or otherwise, it is a gesture. This Bill establishes a principle whereby the extravagant shire will benefit, and local authorities under the control of men of standing and those who care for the interests of the taxpayers of the different localities will not receive any benefit. During the Committee stage we intend to ask for two important amendments—namely, that the local authority concerned shall have the final decision as to the expenditure on secondary roads in its area, and another dealing with the resumption or confiscation of land. If the Minister will accept these amendments, then the Opposition will have no great objection to the Bill.

Mr. KENNY (*Cook*) [5.50 p.m.]: This Bill is one of many parts—some good, and some very dangerous.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is like the curate's egg.

Mr. KENNY: It is. However, one feature that stands out very prominently is the wide powers given to the Commissioner of Main Roads, which, in my opinion, are altogether too wide for the safety of the local authorities concerned. The Minister definitely stated in reply to the hon. member who has just resumed his seat that he did not actually know what he was referring to when he said the responsibility for a

secondary road could be cast upon the local authority without its consent. The Minister should know his own Bill. On page 17 we find this provision—

“ . . . The decision of the Commissioner as to the amount each local authority shall pay in respect of permanent work— ”

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not read the clause at this stage.

Mr. KENNY: I am not reading the clause. I am quoting the definite arrangement that the decision of the Commissioner of Main Roads is final and not subject to appeal to any tribunal whatsoever. That is the reply to the Secretary for Public Works.

I believe that motor transport has come to stay, and we, as a Parliament, and the Minister in charge of this department in particular, must consider the road system throughout the State of Queensland. I am not one of those who believe in the bolstering up of an obsolete railway system and putting back the clock in an endeavour to keep it functioning. The railway system must be looked at in the light of existing conditions, and the men in charge of it must look ahead and have vision. They must alter the incidence of the taxes that have operated in the past, in order to bring the railway system to a position where it will serve the needs of the people and compete with motor transport. The hon. member for Murilla stated that many restrictions in the Railway Department prevent the railways from functioning. The same restrictions are applied to motorists. Our roads are being built throughout the State to provide the people with an advantage; but we have a State Transport Board that prevents motor buses running in the cities from reducing their dues to the people making use thereof in order that the Railway Department may still make a greater charge on the railway. It is endeavouring to popularise the railways at the expense of motor transport; but it is a pity to construct a road system and then endeavour to tax people off it so that they get no advantage from it at all. In my opinion, we have not gone far enough with the road system of Queensland.

In the past we have followed a more or less haphazard system of road construction, responding to pressure here and to pressure there, but we have never formulated an orderly or planned system of road construction throughout the State clearly defining the responsibilities of the Government and the responsibilities of local authorities. We should formulate an orderly system of road construction, definitely laying it down that the cost of main roads and national highways shall be borne by the Government, whilst the cost of feeder or secondary roads shall be in part borne by the respective local authorities. I suggest that a conference be convened of representatives from all the local authorities, who should be invited to submit road proposals in the interests of the people in their respective districts. This Bill does not provide for any orderly system of road construction. The local authorities are not given power to plan their own road requirements, but the Main Roads Commission is given power to gazette secondary roads in local areas without the consent of the local authorities concerned. The local authorities are then called upon to bear the cost of the

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construction of these roads, and whilst the Bill enables them to object to any proposal submitted by the Main Roads Commission the decision of the Commissioner is final, and is subject to no appeal whatever. That proposal is unjust and unsound.

I object to the provision empowering the Main Roads Commission to cancel the gazettal of a State highway, to declare it a main road or secondary road, and to call upon the local authority concerned to bear the cost of construction and maintenance of the said road. That was never the intention of Parliament when the Main Roads Act was amended to provide for the construction of State highways. State highways were gazetted with a view to providing a road facility for people in localities not served by the railway system, especially in those districts where the people were unable to bear the cost of construction and maintenance of the road.

I admit that many arguments can be advanced in favour of extending relief to many local authorities in connection with their road commitments. It is well known that in many parts of the State the local authorities have pioneered main road construction and have borne the charges imposed upon them in the early stages of road construction in Queensland in connection with experimental sections laid down in their areas. In the early days of road construction in Queensland the undertaking was a costly one to the local authorities, and because of inexperience on the part of the Main Roads Commission many roads that to-day could be constructed for about £4,000 a mile cost originally £8,000 a mile to construct. Many local authorities are still bearing the cost of assisting the Main Roads Commission to obtain experience in road construction in this State, and they are entitled to some relief. The Bill, however, does not give the relief that the local authorities so urgently desire. Although the Minister may claim that the Bill will extend a measure of relief to local authorities in connection with charges for main roads the amount will be infinitesimal. Hitherto local authorities were called upon to bear three-fourteenths of the cost of constructing main roads, and it is now proposed under this Bill to call upon them to bear one-fifth of the cost, amounting to a reduction of one-seventieth, or three and one-seventh of a penny in the £1. What would that mean on a local authority indebtedness of £100,000? The Minister knows full well that the Tinaroo Shire Council has not been able to meet its road commitments to the Crown, and that only last week the Treasury had to fund roughly £13,000, representing interest in arrears. The local authorities are now called upon to pay interest upon interest, which means that usury is now being practised on the local authorities by our Treasury Department. It is now proposed to give the Main Roads Commission power to cancel the gazettal of State highways, and to throw the financial responsibility upon the local authorities, perhaps with the idea of assisting the Government to secure a few more votes at election time by conveniently placing a certain number of workers in a particular locality.

When this Bill was introduced I looked forward to giving it my blessing in all its parts, because I am vitally interested in road communication, as is every person in the

outlying portions of this State. That is why I am very pleased indeed to see provision for mining access roads. This will fill a long-felt want. It is going to satisfy a desire that many people in the outback have had for a long time. Local authorities in control of mining areas have not been financially able to build roads into localities where it is absolutely necessary to construct them. If this provision is sympathetically administered with the object of opening up mining fields, one cannot forecast what benefit it will be to Queensland and Australia, because one of the principal difficulties that many mining areas are suffering under is the lack of road facilities and transport. Road facilities will bring these mining areas much nearer the cities and towns and enable them to obtain supplies more frequently, thus making living conditions much better for the miners prospecting in the area and the cost of transport of supplies and output much cheaper.

Another clause that I can agree with is the provision for tourist tracks. No local authority should be charged the full cost of providing tourist roads in this State. The tourist trade is a trade in itself and has been much sought after in many countries of the world. New Zealand is seeking it, for instance. In North Queensland we have scenic beauties second to none in either New Zealand or any other part of the world. If local authorities are to be saddled with the responsibility of constructing roads and tracks into beauty spots then we are not going to attract the trade that we consider so desirable. Under this Bill tourist tracks can be constructed at no charge to the local authority concerned, but at a charge to the Main Roads Commission which derives its revenue partly from taxation of motor vehicles, and partly from loan money. This is a step in the right direction, but the benefit that will accrue to the State will depend on how the provision is administered. Although we have tourist reserves in many localities the first effort of the Main Roads Commission should be to provide facilities into those localities that are patronised the most to-day. The Government should centre their activities on those spots and make them worth while. By giving the people facilities to visit them the tourist attractions in this State will advertise themselves. At the present moment I am thinking of the beauty spots in North Queensland. Thousands of pounds can be spent effectively in building tourist roads and tracks to them that will be of lasting benefit to the State.

The next provision, with which I disagree, because I think it is unsound, is that in connection with the secondary roads I referred to earlier in my speech. I regret that this Bill does not contain a provision that will compel the Commissioner to consult the local authority affected before constructing secondary roads. When this Bill reaches the Committee stage an amendment will be moved from this side of the Chamber to make that provision. If we commence introducing legislation to give greater power to the Main Roads Commission and at the same time take away control from the local authorities, then we are going to undermine the confidence of the people in the country in their local authority administration. It is necessary that the present confidence of the people in local authority administration should be preserved. While

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this is one of the most important innovations of the Bill I think it is a step in the wrong direction. The Minister will be wise to view this question not from any political party viewpoint, or from the point of view from which he probably argued it in his own party room, but from the big point of view that we must preserve the authority we have to-day.

We know quite well that as a department the Main Roads Commission has the sympathy of a great section of the community. At the same time it is attracting the abuse of another section of the community. Those people who are standing behind the roads and motor transport systems of this State and are endeavouring to influence the authorities in charge of railway facilities in this State to make a change from an obsolete to a progressive system look to the Minister in charge of the main roads of this State not to do anything that can be used to the detriment of his department. I am one of those who intend to give the Minister my full support in any attempt he makes to improve road facilities, particularly in the outback portions of the State, but I am not prepared to go to the extent of taking power from the local authority and vesting it in the Commissioner of Main Roads. The Minister should give serious consideration to that aspect of the case before the Committee stage of this measure. Of course, from a political point of view the provision has much in its favour, but in some matters if we allow political considerations to prevail a disservice is done to the State. With power vested in the Commissioner of Main Roads to build secondary roads through two or three shire council areas without the consent of the local authorities concerned, the opportunity is given to the Government to put men in difficult localities if they desire to do so.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Before an election.

Mr. KENNY: Yes, it can happen before an election.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Are you serious?

Mr. GLEDSON: Where do you get that idea?

Mr. KENNY: A study of the Bill will reveal the opportunities afforded for the purpose I have stated. If service in this Parliament teaches one thing more than another, it teaches one to be cautious. I know that in the past Labour Governments have used the Railway Department before an election, and perhaps found it convenient to proceed with railway construction that was abandoned immediately the elections were concluded. A section of railway line in a locality that is weak from a Labour point of view would probably require repairs and thousands of men would be put into work on the eve of an election.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. KENNY: I merely cite that as an illustration of the opportunity afforded by the provision made in respect of secondary roads in this Bill. The old scheme adopted by Labour Governments of using the Railway Department prior to an election has been exposed in all its nakedness to the people of the State. Something new is required, and the provision in this Bill, if utilised in that way, will not be to the advantage of the State. I know that good arguments

can be adduced in favour of the provision, that more money has been spent in the cities of Queensland and that the outlying portions of the State have been starved so far as intermittent relief work is concerned, and certain privileges denied to local authorities. For example, the Government would have quite a good excuse for going to a local authority on the eve of an election and saying, "Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent in the cities. We are going to build a road in your locality and it will not cost you a penny"; but afterwards, in accordance with the provision in this Bill, the Minister or the Commissioner may impose a charge and no appeal can be made against the decision.

The Minister has asked me if I am serious. I can only reply that when I recall the conduct of previous Labour Administrations I find peculiar concessions being made just prior to an election. Before the 1925 election the same concessions were given, though admittedly slight. Again in 1928 another concession was given, and now in 1934, on the eve of an election, we have this concession—admittedly only a slight one, for it is only the difference between one-fifth and three-fourteenths, representing a reduction of one-seventieth in the charge to local authorities. It shows quite definitely that uppermost in the mind of the Minister was the political effect that this legislation would have. The effort is made to gain political kudos by the ability to say to local authorities, "We are relieving you of your burden," ignoring the fact that the relief is negligible.

Provision is also contained in the Bill for further relief to local authorities, but again the relief is negligible. In that connection I desire to cite the case of the Tinaroo Shire Council, whose indebtedness to the Treasury is approximately £87,000. They had to capitalise interest to the extent of roughly £13,000, and they will have to pay an added charge every year after that of £982. If they could not meet their commitments previously, how can they meet them in the future, when they have to pay an added amount of £982 a year? The council evidently does not expect this Bill will enable it to do that, because it has advised the Treasury that it intends to increase its rate in an endeavour to raise the extra money to meet its present commitments. Any person who is familiar with the Atherton Tableland knows that when the maize crop has dropped to 5,000 tons instead of 20,000 tons, these people are not in a position to pay, and they will not be able to pay next year. If the council cannot collect its rates at the present time, how can it collect the increased rates? That is a fair question to ask the Minister. If he has in mind relief to local authorities, will he tell us in pounds, shillings, and pence what relief it will be to a local authority that has an indebtedness of £80,000 and has had to capitalise interest to the extent of £13,000? If the Minister would let us have that information it would enable members to debate that clause from the point of view of the value of the concession. I am not going to condemn the Minister for any concession in that regard, because the Tinaroo Shire Council has done much pioneering work in regard to main roads, and the cost of its roads was greater than the cost of roads built in other parts of the State afterwards. It is entitled

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to some measure of relief; but I cannot see that any substantial relief will be afforded under this Bill.

During debates of this nature we have often listened to attacks on our party; but I point out that one of the first actions of the Moore Government was to reduce the charge to local authorities from one-half to three-fourteenths, which was a greater concession than the one that is proposed under this Bill. That was done during the first year of the Moore Government's regime, and not in the third year, when an election was near. The Moore Government recognised that some measure of relief would have to be given, and we still recognise that so long as the present system of finance is in operation and local authorities are allowed to borrow and build roads that in many instances should never be built, their indebtedness is going to be increased and the burden on the local people will be intensified. The Moore Government were responsible for one of the best actions, as far as main roads are concerned, of any Government who have held power in Queensland. They amended the Main Roads Acts in order to create State highways solely at the cost of the Government, and the local authorities concerned were only asked to pay half the maintenance charges. A Bill of this nature was necessary during those years when people had no means of proper access to their properties; but apparently the Labour Party were too busy seeking political kudos in the past to deal with the matter.

I am pleased to see that the present Minister has recognised the value of State highways, and several highways have been gazetted in other parts of the State. I regret that, whilst he has recognised the value of those facilities, he is detracting from their value by making them toll roads. When these State highways were gazetted it was not the intention of Parliament that a toll should be placed on them. It was never thought that a Labour Government, whose policy is opposed to the toll system—which has been referred to by some of its members as a method that goes back to the stone age—would institute such a system. It was not anticipated that there would be any need to protect the people in that regard; otherwise I am quite satisfied that the Act passed by the Moore Government would have been so framed that it would have been necessary to repeal it before a toll could be placed on State highways. The action of the present Government in that regard is to be deplored. I am sorry to see by this Bill that the Labour Party has thrown one of its principles overboard, and is going in for a system of tolls on wharves, ferries, and other transport facilities.

One of the worst features of the Bill is the divided control in regard to secondary roads. In my opinion the powers given to the Commissioner in that regard are far too wide. There may be something to be said in favour of the clause that gives the Commissioner power to go through two or three shires and have a definite connecting link between local authorities; but there is no argument to justify the taking of full control out of the hands of the local authorities concerned and not allowing them any right of appeal. The local authorities should have the opportunity of approving or disapproving. The clause is open to abuse by the

Commissioner. We know quite well that the trend of legislation to-day is to pass the responsibility on from the shoulders of the Government to those of the local authority concerned. Tracing the history of administration during the last couple of years we find a premium is placed on borrowing, and local authorities are encouraged to borrow beyond their capacity to pay so that they can obtain the advantage of the grant from the Government, pound for pound. In the early stages of that system a good deal could be said in its favour, but we have now reached the stage where local authorities are borrowing beyond their capacity to pay in order to take advantage of that system and the responsibility of relieving unemployment is being transferred from the shoulders of the Government to those of local authorities. That is a dangerous principle and local authorities must be protected. That is one of the reasons why we shall have to move an amendment to this Bill.

The division of roads into different classes shows me quite definitely that the Commissioner of Main Roads is commencing to see the advantage of a definite road system throughout the State. State highways are to be built at no cost to the people concerned, main roads and developmental roads at one-fifth the cost, and secondary roads at half the cost of construction and maintenance. There is, however, a provision which is dangerous and with which I do not agree, whereby the Commissioner of Main Roads may on his own initiative class a State highway in any other category. While the local authorities concerned may be receiving the benefit of a reduction from three-fourteenths to one-fifth and an advantage under another clause dealing with the ratable value or indebtedness, any benefit they may get will be reduced by the power given in this Bill to the Commissioner to gazette these roads in any other category than that of State highways. When that is done, as I interpret the clause, a greater charge will be put on the local authority concerned to meet the cost of construction and maintenance. I may be wrong. The Minister did not give us any information in that regard in his second reading speech. We are arguing in the dark, but we can only read the Bill and that is my interpretation of the clause as I find it.

Another clause in the Bill proves the contention of members of the Opposition over the last three years that there has never been any occasion—and it was unjust—to take £750,000 from the Main Roads Fund and place it in consolidated revenue. Under this Bill provision is made to charge the Main Roads Commission with interest on loans from the Treasury. The Treasurer is to receive the benefit of that £750,000 for the last three years, but the Commissioner will have to pay interest to the Treasurer on £750,000 of loan money to take the place of the amount transferred. That is an impost on the motor users of this State and the local authorities concerned, and the clause in the Bill justifies the argument of the Opposition. It is time members of the Government Party saw to it that no further transfers take place. I am afraid it will be the last opportunity they will have of transferring £250,000. After the next election it may be our privilege to return that £750,000 to the motorists of this State, to serve the purpose for which it was intended.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: Home to mother!

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Mr. KENNY: I do not desire to tell the hon. member for Enoggera where he is likely to go to, but I sincerely hope that he will not be occupying his present position. If my views are correct we shall not be worried by him—not that he worries us much. We pay very little regard to what he says.

There are many clauses in this Bill on which we expected to receive information from the Secretary for Public Works. We did not get that information. One was that giving power to construct wharves, jetties and tracks—anything at all—and to charge toll fees on them. No doubt the Minister has in mind the tourist spots in Queensland. He has a fine tourist resort in his own electorate, Lake Barrine, where there is a wharf, a swimming pool, a jetty, and tracks cut into the scrub. Under this Bill we find power for the Minister, through the Commissioner, to resume any land in any locality. The whole of that beauty spot could be resumed and controlled under this Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: As a national park.

Mr. KENNY: I thought that I might draw the Minister on the subject. He said that this place was a national park, but under this Bill power is also given to the Commissioner to deal with national parks. Here is an opportunity for him to commence a new State enterprise in the form of a beauty spot.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: A beauty spot?

Mr. KENNY: Does the Minister claim that Lake Barrine in North Queensland is not a beauty spot?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There are various kinds of beauty spots.

Mr. KENNY: I am looking at this matter in a serious light, and I should like the Minister to consider the matter in a serious way, too. I have already pointed out to him that at Lake Barrine a jetty, wharf, and a swimming pool have been constructed and that tracks have already been cut into the national park, but I should like to know why this provision has been set out in the Bill. I am in favour of private enterprise and I am definitely opposed to any attempt by the Government to meddle in State enterprise again, whether in the form of tourist resort, national park, State hotel, or anything else. These services can be better provided by private enterprise. I hope that when the Minister rises to reply he will give us all the information that we desire to enable the Bill to be effectively dealt with in Committee.

Mr. GLEDSON ( *Ipswich* ) [7.26 p.m.]: I am exceptionally pleased that this Bill has been introduced, the main purpose of which is to provide for the construction of roads into mining districts to enable mining shows to be operated successfully. The hon. member for Cook has accused the Government of introducing the Bill for political purposes, but a more preposterous suggestion could not be made. Practically all the local authorities throughout Queensland have suggested to the Government that they take power to construct roads at a lesser cost than main roads or State highways to enable produce to be brought to market, and because the Government have agreed to that request they are accused of introducing the Bill for

political purposes. Secondary roads are clearly defined in the Bill. They are to act as feeders to State highways, main roads, developmental roads, or tourist roads. In addition to providing a large proportion of the cost of constructing State highways and main roads, it is now proposed to liberalise the scheme of road construction by providing that the amount to be charged to a local authority on account of being benefited by the construction of a secondary road shall not exceed one-half of the cost of construction and one-half of the cost of maintenance. One-half of these charges will be borne by the Main Roads Commission. If it were not for this provision the whole of the cost of construction and the whole of the cost of maintenance would have to be borne by the local authority.

In addition we find provision to alter the status of a State highway or main road which, owing to the diversion of traffic, may no longer be used as such. It has been provided that instead of the whole of the financial responsibility of those roads being thrown on to local authorities, as it would be if this Bill were not passed, the Commission may declare a State highway or main road a secondary road. The Main Roads Commission will then be responsible for 50 per cent. of the cost of upkeep and maintenance of those roads, in addition to 50 per cent. of the cost of construction of such a road. State highways and main roads that have already been constructed have been paid for by local authorities and the Main Roads Commission on a fifty-fifty basis. The same measure of assistance will be given to local authorities in the event of these roads being declared secondary roads. Yet we are accused of bringing in this Bill for a political purpose in order to get votes! I do not know if that is all in the mind of hon. members opposite. Cannot the hon. member for Cook think further than that and see the good work which the Main Roads Commission intends to carry out?

No provision has existed prior to the introduction of this Bill to enable the Main Roads Commission to construct tourist roads and tracks for the purpose of enabling people to have access to beauty spots. There are some exceptionally fine beauty spots in Queensland, even at our own doors in Brisbane. There are some exceptionally fine beauty spots within a few hours of Brisbane, but lack of access prevents many of our tourists from visiting them. This new power which is being given to the Commissioner will authorise him to construct roads and tracks to enable visitors, as well as our own people, to have access to them. This work is in addition to the ordinary functions of the Main Roads Commission.

It is quite true, as the hon. member for Cook states, that some of the provisions of this Bill go a long way. It will enable the Commissioner to secure control of wharves, ferries, and other facilities at tourist resorts in order that they may be more fully developed for the tourist traffic.

Mr. MAHER: Why not leave that to private enterprise?

Mr. GLEDSON: Private enterprise has been operating in this State for the last seventy years, and has failed to give the facilities that are demanded by the tourist.

Mr. MAHER: That is ridiculous.

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Mr. GLEDSON: It may be ridiculous but nothing has been done to develop very many of our beauty spots for the benefit of the people. Take the National Park on Lamington Plateau. It is one of the finest National Parks of its kind to be found in the world. Even if the Commissioner provides access by roads and tracks, what accommodation is there there for visitors? Can any one take a party to that place at the present time and be confident of reaching it in a car? I understand that a motor car can only proceed a certain distance, then visitors have to walk, and then mount a horse and ascend the mountain. We must make some provision for visitors who desire to visit these parts. This Bill will fill that want. By that means the various tourist resorts will be popularised and visitors will be able to view not only our beauty spots, but our industries also, and in this way become ambassadors for this State.

The hon. member for Cook stated that the Commissioner of Main Roads can determine these matters without consulting local authorities. I have had fairly long experience in local government work, and I know that in the past no road has been gazetted as a main road, development road, or any other road without the local authority concerned first being consulted. As a matter of fact, plans are sent to the local authorities, and every opportunity given to consider the matter. An objection may be lodged by the local authority, and it will be apparent to hon. members that unless very good reasons exist for the building of the road the Commissioner of Main Roads is not likely to build a State highway, main road, development road, or secondary road in any local authority that objects to it, for the Commissioner can find hundreds, indeed thousands, of cases where roads are required and would be acceptable to the local authorities. Since the inception of the Main Roads Commission I have never known the Commissioner to gazette any road without the local authorities first being consulted and agreeing. Nor has the Commissioner neglected to submit plans to the local authorities and afford them an opportunity to approve or lodge an objection. As a matter of fact, the Commissioner at all times has been prepared to listen to any representation that a local authority might make, and if, for the sake of illustration, the local authority considered it preferable that a proposed road should take a different route to that suggested, the Commissioner would visit the district and, in company with members of the local authority, inspect the locus in quo before giving his determination. After all, a determination has to be given at some time or other; the matter cannot always remain in abeyance. Definitely all local authorities are consulted before a main road, State highway, or developmental road is gazetted, and I take it the same procedure will be adopted so far as secondary roads are concerned.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*) [7.40 p.m.]: Very wide and extraordinary power is given to the Minister and to the Commissioner in the Bill now before us, and it is questionable whether Parliament should give it. Certainly, up to the present, the desires of the various local authorities have not been overridden to any great extent, but this Bill provides that the Minister and the Commissioner may override them. Now,

the various local authorities are elected on a very broad franchise, and have successfully controlled the interests of local government, so that it may possibly be unwise to take power from them and vest it in another authority. Admittedly, as the hon. member for Ipswich has stated, the Commissioner of Main Roads has not undertaken work in a local authority area except with the approval of the local authority, but a perusal of this Bill will show that the Minister, on the advice of the Commissioner, may override any local authority. Moreover, the Governor in Council may acquire land, which is a provision that is not contained in any other Bill previously introduced in this House.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Under the original Act we could always acquire land.

Mr. CLAYTON: Yes, a specified width of land on either side of a road or proposed road, but in this Bill the Minister is departing from the powers given in the original Act. Land may be acquired for scenic purposes and the Minister may utilise the Main Roads Fund to pay the expenses of any such acquisition. In the past the local authorities had power to declare benefited areas, but under this Bill the Minister can override the authority of the local authorities in that regard. I understand that he can also bring about differential rating within the areas, and has power to abolish benefited areas and make the cost of construction and maintenance of a main road a charge on the whole shire instead of a division of the shire or the benefited area, as may be desired by the local authority. I think the Government are taking a great deal of power from the local authorities in this regard, and time will tell whether it was wise for this Parliament to delegate such powers to the Governor in Council.

I also notice that the Bill provides for the levying of tolls. I remember when the Moore Government introduced the Tolls on Privately Constructed Road Facilities Act, which provided for the placing of tolls on bridges and other forms of transport facility, the present Deputy Leader of the Government stated that we were getting back to the dark ages.

So far as main roads generally are concerned, I am quite prepared to support a policy that provides for the extension of our main roads programme. Queensland represents a vast area whose population is very scattered, and it is wise that we should engage in the construction of main roads to connect our various centres, and act as feeders to our railway system. It is pleasing to note, according to a statement made by the Commissioner of Main Roads recently, that he is opening each day in Queensland one and a-half miles of main road. That is very gratifying to the country people. I think it is our duty to endeavour as far as possible to promote the construction of these roads; and I think the Commissioner is seeking greater co-ordination with the Railway Department, and consideration is given to the effect that the gazettal of a road would have on railways. Some excellent roads are being constructed at the present time that will be of material assistance to Queensland and to the railway system. Queensland requires both main roads and railways as means of transport and the

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people are looking to the Government to provide means of transport by air. Governments have spent an enormous amount of money in increasing the facilities of travel by steamer.

Thus they are providing for four different forms of transport—that is, by water, air, rail, and road. When the Commissioner says it is his policy to study the railway question in connection with main roads I think he differs from the policy of the present Government, who have extracted from the Main Roads Fund £750,000 over a period of three years. That is a very unfortunate state of affairs, especially for the people in the country who are looking forward to the construction of a greater length of main roads. I consider that the policy of the Commissioner there conflicts with that of the Minister. The former moved in the direction of conserving his funds and I understand works on a five year programme. The Main Roads Fund had a credit balance of a large amount, but that is taken from the Commissioner and in turn the Government lends him £400,000 and charges interest on that amount. That is a very unfair action, and I am sure that those people who are looking forward to the construction of main roads are at variance with the policy of the Government in that respect.

In 1930 Mr. Kemp, the Commissioner of Main Roads, made a very broad statement when dealing with the question of main roads. He had been attacked by Mr. L. C. Morris in connection with the railway system and he replied in a very long statement which contained a considerable amount of very interesting material. In this statement Mr. Kemp dealt with the very large amount of tax that was being taken from users of motor cars and motor transport generally. He showed that the Main Roads Fund benefited by a very high tax on petrol in Australia. The rate is as high as 7d. a gallon as compared with the 1 1/5th pence to 3d. in the United States of America, and 4d. in Great Britain. This shows that we are more heavily taxed, I consider rightly so, when it is considered that we desire to open up this very fine State. Our motor users are contributing in a very large way to this fund from which, to a great extent, we are building our main roads. In Queensland the tax on petrol is 7d.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We only receive 2d.

Mr. CLAYTON: The Government may only receive 2d. a gallon, but the motorist is paying at the rate of 7d. a gallon.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: Why do you not talk to the Federal Government about that?

Mr. CLAYTON: The people of Queensland asked the Federal Government the other day some pertinent questions and hon. members opposite got their reply. I am satisfied if they are not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CLAYTON: Mr. Kemp showed that the motor trucks are feeding the railways to a great extent, and possibly do not enter into competition with them to the same extent as the hon. member for Murilla may consider. It was shown that a motor truck running 25,000 miles per annum consumed 4,000 gallons of petrol and the petrol tax on that vehicle amounted in the United States of America to from £20 to £50 per annum, and in Great Britain to £67,

whereas the man who is driving his truck in Queensland, and to a great extent beating the railways, is contributing £117 per annum. In addition to that the motor truck owner in Australia has to pay main road fees and other fees incidental to the running of that truck. In addition to the taxes I have quoted the farmer is paying through his local authority a land tax in connection with main roads. It will thus be seen that the farmer is paying a very heavy tax in connection with his main roads, but it is pleasing to note that at the present time he is receiving a greater service each year.

The Moore Government in 1929 realised the need of extending assistance to the man on the land who was heavily rated to bear the cost of road construction, and decided during their first session of Parliament to introduce a measure of relief. Prior thereto the local authorities were called upon to repay £35 per £1,000 per annum over a term of thirty years of the cost of constructing main roads in their areas, and this charge imposed a very heavy burden upon the ratepayers. The burden upon the primary producers in particular was so heavy that the Moore Government decided to reduce the cost to local authorities from seven-fourteenths to three-fourteenths, reducing the annual repayment from £35 per £1,000 to £14 14s.

Mr. GLEDSON: You are wrong. The local authorities did not have to contribute 50 per cent. before.

Mr. CLAYTON: I have already stated that the repayments were reduced from £35 per £1,000 to £14 14s. per £1,000 per annum.

Mr. GLEDSON: That is not a reduction from seven-fourteenths.

Mr. CLAYTON: The local authorities were still called upon to bear 50 per cent. of the cost of maintenance, but the Commissioner was empowered to grant relief in special cases, and it is pleasing to know that that power has been sympathetically used in various local authority areas. It is now proposed to reduce the annual repayments by local authorities from three-fourteenths to one-fifth, admittedly a small reduction, but something that will be of assistance to the primary producers. Prior to the advent of the Moore Government local authorities were required to pay one-half of the interest charge involved in the construction of developmental roads, but this proportion was also reduced by the Moore Government to three-fourteenths, representing another great saving to the primary producers. To-day the annual payments by local authorities in respect of interest in connection with developmental roads is £11 15s. 8d. per £1,000 spread over twenty years. The action of the Moore Government was warmly appreciated, especially by the primary producers, and I am very thankful that the present Government have decided to grant a further concession, although it is very much smaller than the benefit conferred by the Moore Government.

I regret that under this Bill no provision is made to extend relief to the local authorities who undertook the early construction of main roads on their own account, some of whom constructed long mileages, involving a heavy financial responsibility upon their ratepayers. Although provision was made to reduce the rate to 1 1/2d. in the £1, I now

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earnestly suggest to the Minister that some relief might be extended to them. A long mileage of main road constructed under conditions providing for a repayment of £35 per £1,000 spread over thirty years connecting two important centres passes a considerable distance through Crown land. Consider, for instance, the road constructed in the Howard district, in the electorate of the Secretary for Mines. That road is situated about 18 miles from Maryborough. There is no ratable land along that road for about 16 miles of its entire length. It is constructed through Crown land; yet the ratepayers at Howard are called upon to pay an exorbitant rate for its use. I understand that under this Bill the Minister will have power to give a certain measure of assistance when roads connect two important centres and runs through undeveloped land. I trust that this measure of assistance will be given not only in connection with the road connecting Howard and Maryborough, which runs through the Wallum Crown lands, but also that between Maryborough and Pialba and Maryborough and Boonaroo. These roads are of costly construction, but they connect two important centres. They do much to develop the country, and traverse long distances through Crown lands from which no revenue is received by the local authority.

In my electorate we have had gazetted a road from Goomeri to Kilcoy. The Minister has mentioned that connection. It will be of material benefit to the State as it will connect Goomeri on the South Burnett railway line with Kilcoy on the Kilcoy-Woodford line. To place the burden of the construction of that road on the local authorities concerned will impose a very heavy burden upon them, but I understand that part of it will be designated a national highway. Portion of this road runs through a valuable scrub. The Commissioner should endeavour to work in conjunction with the Railway Department and the Forestry Department, and has decided to gazette this road and bring it under the jurisdiction of his department. The local authorities concerned are the Kilcoy and Kilkivan shire councils. There are about 150,000,000 feet of matured pine in the Manubar scrub. The construction of this road from Goomeri to Kilcoy will permit the timber from this scrub to be taken to either railhead, but the cost of its construction is being borne by the Main Roads Commission and the Kilkivan and Kilcoy shire councils.

The Forestry Department should be called upon to make a contribution to the cost of the construction of this road because it will be of material assistance by enabling timber now under the control of the department to be drawn to the railway and railed to market. I should like to see some co-ordination between the Forestry Department, the Railway Department, and the Main Roads Commission in that connection. If part of this road is constructed as a national highway no portion of the cost of construction will be borne by the local authorities concerned. It will be a charge on the Main Roads Commission, but some assistance should be given to the Commission in the direction I have indicated.

The Commissioner is gazetting certain roads as main roads and national highways, and in doing so should give greater consideration to furthering the construction of a main road that will connect Maryborough

with the South Burnett district. The Minister should give serious attention to seeing that all important towns on the coast are connected with the road going from the South to the North.

Secondary roads have been mentioned in the debate. The Commissioner is seeking power to construct secondary roads, which will be roads of a cheaper type than the present main roads. Settlers are asking for these secondary roads to enable them to take their produce to the railway. This is another direction where co-ordination should exist between the Minister, the Commissioner of Main Roads, and the Minister for Transport.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! A very bad practice is growing of hon. members getting immediately in front or behind an hon. member who is speaking and talking in a loud tone of voice. It is impossible in these circumstances for an hon. member to speak to the best advantage.

Mr. CLAYTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry the interruption came from my own side, for they ought to know better. (Laughter.) When the rudeness occurred I was dealing with secondary roads acting as feeders to railways, and I should like to mention that recently I placed before the Minister in charge of main roads the following resolution that emanated from Miva, in my own electorate:—

“That this meeting, representing a large portion of the shire, think the time is opportune for the Main Roads Commission to use more of the money collected on registration of cars and petrol tax in building a cheaper type of road, radiating from railway stations in producing centres, to enable producers to get their produce to market and reduce the amount spent on expensive tourist roads.”

On receipt of that resolution, and following my usual practice, I immediately got into communication with the Minister, whose reply is as follows:—

“Dear Mr. Clayton,—Your letter of the 10th April, enclosing a resolution submitted by the settlers at Miva, has been discussed with the Commissioner of Main Roads.

“I now have to inform you that the type of road constructed by the Commissioner is governed by many factors, among which may be mentioned the nature of the traffic; the soil foundation conditions; country served, etc. In addition, consideration must also be given to the fact that one-fifth of the cost of most works of a permanent character undertaken by the Commission is payable by local authorities. For this purpose the councils' share of the cost is regarded as a loan with a thirty-year currency, and care has to be taken to ensure that the work is of a type sufficient to last for the duration of the loan period.

“It might be noted that on many of the Commission's roads where soils are suitable and other circumstances favourable, light work, such as clearing, formation, the provision of culverts, and other drainage facilities is undertaken. Also, in districts where traffic is light, the width of metalling is reduced to 9 feet.

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"In certain instances where works of a permanent character are not warranted, maintenance works are undertaken. Up to half the cost of such works is charged to councils and is repayable in the following year. Special maintenance, which is of a more permanent character than ordinary maintenance, is often carried out, and the costs of same spread over two, three, or even five years. Councils in general prefer permanent works, as they need less maintenance, and in most cases require less total annual outlay. The bulk of the work undertaken by the Commission is for the direct benefit of the primary producer.

"Yours faithfully,

"HARRY BRUCE,  
"Minister for Works."

"E. H. C. Clayton, Esq., M.L.A.,  
"Parliament House,  
"Brisbane."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: A very good letter.

Mr. CLAYTON: Yes; and I think it was dictated by the Commissioner. (Laughter.) These cheaper roads will fill a long-felt want; indeed, the Commissioner should have formulated the policy some time ago. Secondary roads will enable primary producers to get their produce to market at a much cheaper rate, and will assist the dairying industry particularly, in that cream will arrive at the railway stations in a cooler condition than at present. Moreover, the construction of bridges and culverts will be of very material assistance to primary producers in times of floods and heavy rains.

The Bill also provides for mining access roads. Mining is a gamble, as many of us know to our sorrow, and I trust the Commissioner will thoroughly examine every proposal to construct mining access roads so that unnecessary expenditure may be prevented. In some instances land that is suitable for cultivation is adjacent to these mining areas; and I am not opposing that portion of the Bill.

The Bill also provides for the construction of tourist tracks. I am very pleased to know that something is being done to encourage tourist traffic in Queensland; because motor cars are becoming increasingly popular as a means of transport by visitors from Southern States. Tourists comprise people who are generally in fairly good financial circumstances; and it is proper that we should provide facilities for them to visit our beauty spots when they reach this State.

I am not very favourable to the provision that gives the Commissioner power to take over jetties and wharves and establish resorts; because I consider that is reverting to the system of State enterprises that cost this State so much money. I should prefer to encourage private enterprise to undertake the establishment of these tourist resorts.

Pialba, which is one of the finest seaside resorts that can be seen, is situated in my electorate; and up to recent times provision had not been made for viewing the scenic spots that exist at that resort. When you, Mr. Speaker, or some of the Ministers desire to get away from the cares of office and the hurly-burly of politics and enjoy a

quiet rest where there is good fishing, I invite you to visit this seaside resort during the recess; if you do you will find that I have not overstated its attractions. I propose to read a pamphlet showing the facilities for travel from Brisbane—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is wandering.

Mr. CLAYTON: That is what I desire you to do, Mr. Speaker, to wander up there. With your permission I should like to read—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has not my permission.

Mr. CLAYTON: Very well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot read it; but I will take the liberty of laying the pamphlet on the table, which will probably be a greater measure of advertisement than if I had it recorded in "Hansard."

Mr. SPARKES (*Dalby*) [8.17 p.m.]: At this stage I do not propose to deal with every clause of the Bill because I shall have further opportunity later on. So far as the Bill assists local authorities it must receive the support of every hon. member in this House; but I do say, as I have said before, that the local authorities of Queensland will reach a stage when it will be utterly impossible for them to continue building roads or to maintain existing ones. We are very much behind New South Wales and Victoria so far as roads are concerned. Persons travelling from the South to Queensland are forcibly struck by the type of road that has to be travelled in Queensland especially when they enter the western areas of the State.

I was rather surprised to hear the hon. member for Murilla taking exception to motor drivers working long hours. Considering that that hon. member is a great believer in working long hours himself I should have thought that he at least would have allowed the motorist the right to work the hours that he desired.

In the western parts of the State the trouble of the local authority has been the cost of constructing roads over the black soil. In the coastal country road construction is much easier on account of the nature of the soil, but on the far-distant black soil plains the cost of constructing an all-weather road is practically prohibitive. I have always maintained that to enable this to be done the cost of construction should be entirely removed from the ratepayers, and I should like to see the provisions of this Bill extended so as to relieve the ratepayers of the cost of main roads and public highways—for my purpose I place them both in the same category. The day must come when the ratepayer will be relieved of the construction of such roads, but to allow of that being done every penny collected by way of motor and petrol taxation will have to be placed to the credit of the Main Roads Fund. There must be no pouncing upon that fund and taking away £250,000 each year. That, in my opinion, should never have been done.

I advocated many years ago the construction of a cheaper road for local authorities. That would be of great assistance to them. The type of road at present constructed by the Main Roads Commission is altogether too expensive, and unwarranted in many of the far-western districts. I consider the

[Mr. Clayton.

time has passed when a monopoly, as was suggested here, should be given to railway transport on a particular route. The railway system must compete with the motorist. I say that most definitely, and in the first session of this Parliament, during the debate on the Railway Department, I declared that the motorist should be allowed to travel and compete with the railway. If the department desires to obtain that trade then it must look to its laurels and carry freight at a cheaper rate. There would then be no difficulty in competing with road transport. The present freight charges of the Railway Department are excessive, and that is one of the things that are forcing people to use motor transport.

In regard to the roads in our western areas, once people from the South reach Toowoomba they are practically stranded. There is no opportunity of getting by road to our western country. However, to build these roads we must remove the cost from the ratepayers. Towns are clamouring for roads that the ratepayers cannot possibly construct. I feel sure the time is not far distant when the Minister will find that the ratepayers are not able even to maintain all the roads that are mainly used by through traffic.

The Bill proposes to give relief by way of construction of secondary roads which, I understand from the Minister, will be of cheaper construction than the present main roads. Great relief will be afforded to the local authorities by the construction of these roads, but the "through" roads should be financed wholly and solely from a tax imposed on motor vehicles and the petrol tax. As I have already stated, I have always opposed a monopoly. No one should enjoy a monopoly of any one thing, and consequently I consider that the railway should compete with motor transport and not endeavour, as has been suggested by the hon. member for Murilla, to get a monopoly of transport trade.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I never suggested that at all. The hon. member has not listened to my speech.

Mr. SPARKES: I listened very carefully.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I advocated putting them on the same level.

Mr. SPARKES: That is all I ask. Let the two forms of transport compete. A Bill was passed through Parliament the very first session I was here that practically prohibited the motorist from competing with the railway system. That Bill was so drastic that it was proved that it could not be put into operation. I took exception to that Bill which practically said that the motorist must go off the road altogether.

I am very pleased to see the toll system being continued. Under that system the person who uses a bridge or other toll facility pays for the convenience, so that if there is any fair means of taxation, it is the fairest. I congratulate the Government on keeping the toll on the Loganholme Bridge.

Mr. BARNES (Warwick) [8.24 p.m.]: I think I can safely say that this Bill has not been a surprise to anyone, because it was necessary to enable us to keep pace with road construction generally. The comparisons that are frequently made by travellers of the road services in this State

and other States are generally against us. Some degree of satisfaction is to be gained from the fact that roads have been constructed in Queensland in various districts between Wallangarra, in the south, and Cooktown, in the north, and that altogether a sum of £11,000,000 has been expended and 3,000 miles of roadway constructed. Although we are opening an average of 1½ mile of road a day the progress in road construction in this State is still very slow and, although the Bill suggests that we are making a forward move, the rate of progress is not equal to the advance that is being made in other places.

I am exceedingly glad that it is now proposed to construct secondary roads, which include mining access roads and tourist tracks. I know of one case where a sum of £1,000 was recently expended to provide a roadway to a mining venture and there was no justification whatever for imposing that charge on the mining undertaking. Secondary roads will serve a very useful purpose indeed in meeting the present requirements of settlers on the land. It has been said that the interests of local authorities are being overlooked by this measure, but some local authorities have not availed themselves of the opportunity to carry out a road construction programme, and if they are not prepared to do these things then they must be shown the way. I feel that there is a very keen desire on the part of most local authorities to provide the necessary road facilities, not only for settlers generally but also for tourists. One regrettable feature in connection with the construction of bitumen roads is that the building material must be imported from overseas. Is it not possible to establish an industry for the distillation of tar from coal or for the purpose of manufacturing a road building material from coal by a dehydration process.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We use all the tar that is produced in Queensland.

Mr. BARNES: I am very glad to know that, but is it not possible to establish a plant to produce sufficient tar from our vast coal deposits which are to be found practically on every hand? Wherever bitumen roads are being constructed to-day one can see hundreds of casks or containers of imported bitumen and it does seem an immense pity that we cannot utilise a locally manufactured road building material for the whole of our road requirements. I am aware that our own cement is being utilised to a certain extent in the construction of roads, but in many cases the cost of constructing cement roads is quite beyond us. We should be serving a very laudable purpose indeed if we could utilise a coal product to meet the whole of our road-building requirements.

Some hon. members have made reference to the staff of the Main Roads Commission and also the increased powers that this Bill will confer upon its officers. Speaking for myself, with a knowledge of years of the work performed by the Main Roads Commission, I am ready to trust it. The Commissioner and his officers are not likely to do anything that is antagonistic to the general wellbeing and good of the people. In view of the work that has been done and the manner in which the office is staffed, my confidence in them cannot be shaken. We are in splendid hands in the present personnel of the main roads staff, from the

*Mr. Barnes.]*

Commissioner downwards. We should be devoutly thankful that we have a staff that has rendered and is still capable of rendering fine service to the country. The Main Roads Commission, with its different types of roads, is certainly meeting the requirements of our country life. One of the early and main objections to main roads was the construction of bitumen roads. A lighter type of a graded gravel road meets the requirements of the people in our less-populated centres. Take the road from Warwick to the Border. This gravel road serves a very fine purpose and is in keeping with many of the roads of New South Wales. I could say more but the House is anxious to get on with other business. It is with pleasure that I express approval to a large extent of the work done by the Main Roads Commission and its programme for the future.

Mr. MAHER (*West Morston*) [8.32 p.m.] : At the outset I should like to say how much I appreciate the work of the Main Roads Commission and particularly of the type of man who presides over that commission in the person of Mr. J. R. Kemp. There is no doubt that the State is under a great obligation to him, for unquestionably he is one of the finest types of our public officers. His knowledge, not only of main roads construction but also of everything connected with our national life, is so great that he ranks amongst our most valuable public officers.

The work of the Main Roads Commission has expanded tremendously during the past few years, and evidence of the good work being done by the Commission is to be found in every part of the State. It is most agreeable now to travel through most of our settled areas and find the very fine roads, excellent bridges, and good causeways that have been constructed under proper conditions by the Commission. During the past ten or fifteen years Queensland has made enormous strides in this respect. This is no doubt due to the desire of the Legislature to provide good roads and other facilities, and also to the foresight and ability and fairness of the Commissioner and those associated with him. It would not be right to mention the Commissioner without taking into account the very excellent staff he has gathered together. He has also one of the finest equipments in dealing with main roads work that are to be found in any State in Australia.

The work of the Commission during the past year is reflected in its figures. I find that for the year 1933-34 roads costing £424,570 were constructed from loan money and roads costing £528,491 were constructed from revenue, comprising registration fees on motor vehicles and traction engines, fines, etc.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order: The hon. member must deal with the Bill that is before the House.

Mr. MAHER: I was just leading up to its provisions. However, in round figures I might say—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has not been dealing with the Bill so far. He has paid a compliment to the Main Roads Commission and has now proceeded to elaborate figures to illustrate the extensive nature of the work it has undertaken which, while very interesting in itself, has nothing to do with this Bill.

[*Mr. Barnes.*]

Mr. MAHER: I was about to connect my remarks with this Bill, but if you, Mr. Speaker, rule that they are out of order I will not proceed further along those lines.

The Bill now before the House is required to authorise certain extensions of activity on the part of the Main Roads Commission, the right being taken to construct secondary roads, mining access roads, tourist roads and tracks, etc. Undoubtedly, where new mining settlements are opened and give every promise of continuity it is right and proper that the Main Roads Commission should take steps to construct suitable roads to those mining centres. It is essential to the development of a mining field that proper facilities should be available for the transport of necessary machinery, foodstuffs, etc., and if no railway runs to the centre concerned it is only right to consider the construction of roads that will link up the mining field with outside centres. The principle of these access roads might be applied to the collieries of the State, of which there are twenty in my own electorate and in respect of which the transportation of coal to the railway is per medium of wretchedly bad roads. It would be of material advantage if the principle of access roads were extended to the coal-mining industry.

I am one of those who appreciate the beauties of nature, and feel it is only right to build roads to open up tourist attractions if the money is available for such purposes, but before tourist roads are taken into account I feel that in a country such as ours—a country so wide and so vast that people have often to traverse great areas—roads of practical utility should command the attention of the Main Roads Commission before roads designed to open up tourist resorts. Those who have had any experience of production in many parts of Queensland, particularly in the far-western districts where river and creek crossings are encountered and where long distances have to be travelled over difficult types of roads, will realise that it is difficult to make it clear to men in those parts of the country, who have to earn their daily bread and are really producing the wealth of the country, that their case must rank second to the case of those who desire to have the benefit of good roads to attractive tourist resorts. I dislike that part of the Bill that emphasises so much the necessity of spending money in opening up tourist resorts, not only in making roads to them but also in erecting buildings and providing facilities of all kinds for popularising them. It is clear that at the back of the mind of those responsible for framing this Bill is the definite intention of the Government, through the Main Roads Commission, to embark on some scheme of building hostels or accommodation houses in certain tourist resorts, for which decidedly hazardous undertakings the funds of the Main Roads Commission or the Government—no doubt loan funds—will be used. It has already been stated in this debate that to embark on schemes of that kind savours of a return of the disastrous State enterprises for which members of the Government party to-day were responsible in years gone by, and I sincerely hope that the Government, and the Commissioner too, will be guided largely by the experience of the past and will go very warily in the matter of expending large sums of money for the erection of palatial buildings designed to make certain tourist resorts more

attractive. Not only are buildings proposed, but in terms of this Bill jetties, wharves, landing stages, in fact all manner of undertakings can be embarked upon in order to popularise tourist resorts. That is something that was not intended by the framers of the Main Roads Act. It is as far removed from the real intention of the Act as my remarks were removed from the actual principles of the Bill under discussion when you, Mr. Speaker, called me to order earlier this evening.

A matter that the Bill deals with and is worthy of consideration is the care and protection of natural trees or those planted for ornamental purposes along certain main roads of the State. This is a public work that could be undertaken with great profit, not only to the people of our time, but also to future generations. In many countries of the world roads are beautified by the planting of ornamental trees on each side of them. Along the roadways of France, Germany, the United States of America, and Great Britain these avenues of trees continue for mile after mile, provide spectacles of great beauty, and are a source of keen pleasure to travellers. There is one road at least on which work of this nature could be undertaken with profit, and that is the road between Brisbane and Ipswich, which is more or less a bottle-neck, over which thousands of people pass every year. It is the main exit from the city to the western, south-western, and central-western portions of the State. In addition to ornamenting the road, such an undertaking would provide employment for many people in the planting of the trees and the subsequent caring for them.

I am not satisfied that the clause in regard to secondary roads will be a benefit to the local authorities. After all is said and done, I doubt if a secondary road of any practical value can be constructed at much under £1,000 per mile; so that a road of 20 miles would cost £20,000, and the local authority concerned would be liable for half that amount—namely, £10,000. Even if the road only extended for five or six miles, the cost to the local authority would be such that it would be disinclined to agree to any suggestion on the part of the Commissioner that it should become responsible for half the cost. In my opinion, the provisions that exist for payment as between the local authorities and the Commissioner in respect of main roads should apply to secondary roads. I think the producer is entitled to a better deal than this Bill provides for in regard to secondary roads.

At 8.45 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Hanson, *Buranda*) relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. MAHER: In regard to the building of big main roads in competition with the railways, which appears to be the policy of the Minister, I think it would be far better if the hon. gentleman were to curtail his desire in that direction and concentrate his attention on the building of secondary feeder roads from the principal farming and agricultural centres to the railways.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If you knew anything about the matter, you would know that has been done.

Mr. MAHER: It has not been done. The whole State is clamouring for roads of that nature.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They are getting them every day.

Mr. MAHER: There is evidence in every district that they are not getting them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You apparently know nothing about it.

Mr. MAHER: I do. The bulk of the roads that are being built are main roads, which are frequently in competition with the railways. The Minister is extremely keen on a great northern road. In fact, he has proceeded with the construction of a main road between Brisbane and Gympie, and that road will run parallel with the North Coast railway line. When in North Queensland in May of the current year I was forcibly struck with the fact that wherever I went the railway system was fully patronised. In contradistinction with the experience in the southern portions of the State it was difficult to obtain seating accommodation in a railway carriage, and my mind went back twenty years ago to New South Wales before the motor era. It was then a very difficult thing to secure a seat in the mail trains that left Sydney every night. I was surprised to see that condition in the North. It was all the result of the fact that there were no roads running parallel with the railway system. When the Secretary for Public Works completes his road from Brisbane to Gympie he will discover that the traffic on the railways between the two cities will fall away in the same ratio as it has fallen between Brisbane and Toowoomba in consequence of the construction of a main road parallel to the railway between these two points.

I have no objection to these roads being eventually constructed if they are considered necessary, but priority should be given to the construction of good secondary roads, feeder roads to the railway system on the same basis of cost to the local authority as is provided in respect of main roads under the principal Act and this amending Bill. If the Minister will do that, place the local authority in the same relationship to secondary roads as it is in the case of main roads in the matter of costs, then he will be doing something of extreme usefulness to the local authorities and the producers of the State. I submit that the hon. gentleman is entirely on the wrong road. The comparative costs to the local authorities concerned are as follows:—A State highway entails no cost to the local authority; a main road one-fifth of the total construction cost; developmental roads, one-fifth of the construction cost; secondary roads, one-half the construction cost; mining access road, no cost to the local authority, so long as it can be demonstrated by the authority to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that no benefit is accruing to it by way of the road passing through a farming or grazing district. If the local authority can demonstrate that a mining access road purely benefits the mining industry concerned, then the local authority escapes financial obligation, but if, on the other hand, the local authority cannot demonstrate it then the Commissioner of Main Roads is empowered to fix what is considered to be a fair contribution by the local authority concerned. In the matter of tourist roads the local authority concerned is not called upon to contribute anything. I therefore fail to see where

*Mr. Maher.]*

the producer benefits as a result of the proposal of the Minister in regard to secondary road construction. I consider that the producer deserves something better in an amending Bill of this kind than that proposed. There are, leading into every railway centre of importance in the State to-day, many important district roads that are not gazetted as main roads and that, in the ordinary terms of the Main Roads Act, do not qualify to be ranked as main roads, but are nevertheless important feeder roads leading out to large producing districts. I submit that it would be wise for the Minister and the Commissioner to consider the advisability of accepting amendments at the right stage that would provide that the financial provision so far as main roads are concerned shall apply to secondary roads. In other words, that good secondary roads, useful feeder roads, be proclaimed as main roads.

That will give the local governing bodies the right to secure roads on the basis of one-fifth of the total cost instead of one-half. Speaking at Warwick the other day, the Minister is reported by the Warwick "Daily News" of 17th November as follows:—

"He was an ardent supporter of main road construction and the present and future policy must be for more good roads and fewer railways."

That will provide interesting reading to the big body of railwaymen who depend for their daily bread on the success of the railway undertaking. If that is the policy of the Government then there must be a hard time coming for the railway employees. I have no doubt that if the policy of the present Government of building main roads at a cost of £3,000 to £5,000 a mile parallel to the existing railway roads is continued the hard times for the railwaymen are perhaps much nearer than they think. It is impossible to maintain a large body of men in employment in the Railway Department if there is not sufficient work for them to do. If these roads are constructed and motor vehicles are given an opportunity to compete with the railways a great proportion of the traffic that to-day goes over the railways will be won by the motor transport system and many railwaymen will find that there is not enough work to make their jobs safe. I agree with the Minister that we should have more roads, but we want to be very careful to see that the large sum of over £2,000,000 that was expended by the Main Roads Commissioner last year in the construction of main roads is spent in such a way as to give the greatest possible benefit to the producers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Where did you get that sum of £2,000,000?

Mr. MAHER: From the Auditor-General's report of the last financial year. If it is of any interest to the Minister the exact amount expended by the Main Roads Commissioner for the financial year 1933-34 was £2,157,265 13s. 6d. Of course that is from all sources—loan money, motor vehicle registration fees, grants from Commonwealth and State Governments, maintenance repayments by local authorities, Federal aid works repayment by local authorities, unemployment relief scheme and State Transport Act fees and fines. That was the total amount of money handled by the Main Roads Commission last year, and I think it is the

largest amount ever expended by that department in its history.

Mr. GLEDSON: Notwithstanding the transfer of £250,000.

Mr. MAHER: Notwithstanding the transfer of £750,000. It is quite easy for any Government to bolster up expenditure by the excessive use of loan money. More loan money was required for the construction of roads last year, because of the fact that over a period of three years the Government transferred £750,000 from the Main Roads Fund to consolidated revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The amount mentioned by you included the State unemployment relief scheme. We are reimbursed this amount.

Mr. MAHER: Yes. The State unemployment relief scheme accounted for an expenditure on road construction of £642,902. Does the Minister suggest that that amount would be repaid to the Department of Labour and Industry?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No. We are reimbursed that expenditure.

Mr. MAHER: Nevertheless, that amount was spent by the Main Roads Commission.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We are reimbursed that amount.

Mr. MAHER: The Main Roads Commission reimburses whom?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We are reimbursed.

Mr. MAHER: The money has been spent on road construction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You had better go and get some knowledge; there is something wrong with you.

Mr. MAHER: The money is shown by the Auditor-General as having been expended by the Main Roads Commission during the financial year 1933-34. I take it, therefore, that the money has been definitely expended for main roads purposes in accordance with the report of the Auditor-General. We must be very careful to see that this large sum of money being expended by the Main Roads Commission produces for us the maximum results. It is unwise to embark on big schemes of road construction parallel with the railway while there are so many secondary roads of major importance that should be built first, and could quite easily be built if the local authorities were able to have the most important of their secondary roads gazetted as main roads.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You were strongly advocating the construction of a section of Brisbane-Toowoomba road to me for months.

Mr. MAHER: I have never been in the office of the Minister advocating the construction of any section of the main Toowoomba road.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You were.

Mr. MAHER: Certainly there has been a large sum of money expended there, and a very fine road has been constructed, but never since the hon. gentleman has been appointed Secretary for Public Works have I waited on him in his office or anywhere else asking for any addition to that road.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You went to the Commissioner of Main Roads.

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Mr. MAHER: I introduced deputations to the Commissioner of Main Roads, but never have I made any plea to the Minister myself.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You advocated it to the Commissioner—don't quibble.

Mr. MAHER: I do not want to get out of it. It would be extremely foolish, after so much money has been spent on the construction of the Brisbane-Toowoomba main road, if the few remaining links necessary to complete it were not proceeded with. It would be sheer lunacy if that were not done. It would be irritating to the users of the road if 75 per cent. of it were completed and 25 per cent. left uncompleted. I am concerned with the principle. The principle is that it is unwise to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in constructing State highways and main roads parallel with our railway system when so much good work can be carried out by constructing roads as feeders to our railway system, which would also give service and accessibility to the producer who creates the wealth of the country. In the electorate of Carnarvon we have been battling for years to get a bridge across the McIntyre brook, which is actually a river, as it is a continually running stream. Each year in our own operations we have to use boats in order to get rabbits across the river. We have agitated for the construction of a bridge over that river for the past fifteen years, but it has not yet eventuated. On the same stream, at Whetstone, on the main road between Inglewood and Goondiwindi, a bridge has been washed away twice, and there is no bridge there to-day. These are things to which people producing the wealth of the country have to submit. What satisfaction do they get from the expenditure of £2,000,000 on the construction of the Kangaroo Point bridge, or £700,000 on the construction of a State highway between Brisbane and Gympie, or the construction of a big road project between Warwick and Dirranbandi?

Mr. GLEDSON: You advocated the construction of the main road between Marburg and Gatton.

Mr. MAHER: As I said, I am concerned with principles. If I had been standing in this position when the main road between Brisbane and Toowoomba was mooted my principles would have been the same. Instead of undertaking big schemes involving the connection by main roads of centres already served by railways the common-sense thing would be to provide money to build useful secondary feeder roads and to give local authorities similar concessions in that respect as apply to main road schemes. That is the point I wish to make in regard to this Bill.

I have covered as far as I can all the ground affected by the Bill. I hope the Minister will take into account the suggestion I have made that money shall be allocated to assist local authorities to build useful feeder roads, for that policy will bring support to the Minister from the best elements amongst the people of Queensland—the producing interests of the State—and will give the greatest possible satisfaction. This Bill will provide but small comfort for the men responsible for local government in the State, for when they have time to consider the nature and effects of this

Bill they will not see much at which to rejoice, whereas if the Minister were to adopt the line of action I have suggested the Bill would be of the utmost assistance to local authorities and to the people engaged in productive activities in the State.

Mr. NICKLIN (*Murrumba*) [9.8 p.m.]: I agree with most of the principles contained in this Bill, but serious objection can be taken to others. I have my doubts as to the wisdom of increasing the powers of the Commissioner in regard to local authorities, although I have the greatest faith in the Main Roads Commission and do not imagine for one moment that the powers would be abused. Certainly the action of the Commissioner to date would lead one to have confidence as to the manner in which this legislation will be administered.

I agree with the action of the Minister in continuing the good work commenced by the Moore Government in giving relief to local authorities. The reduction made is not great, but every little helps, especially at a time when local authorities are having great difficulty in meeting their liabilities.

Mr. GLEDSON: It amounts to a 7 per cent. reduction on their previous commitments.

Mr. NICKLIN: I know and I agree with it, my only regret being that the reduction is not greater.

I consider the provision for secondary roads is a wise one. In country districts, especially, as many roads as possible are required, particularly feeder roads to railway lines and existing main roads. In the past local authorities have considered very deeply before undertaking the construction of main roads in their areas, because of the great cost involved and because in many instances the cost under the original main road system was not warranted by the extent of the traffic requiring the facility. Thus, the construction of secondary roads will satisfy a very real want and I am sure will be eagerly availed of by local authorities. The construction of this cheaper type of road will enable many roads to be constructed that could not be undertaken if the provisions of the original Act had to be observed.

Comment has been made during the debate on the fact that some functions of local authorities are probably being transferred to other authorities, but not many local authorities are in a position to embark on the construction of any permanent works, their present resources being fully taxed in most instances in maintaining existing roads. Nor is there any likelihood of their constructing any works of a permanent nature, so that the provision in this Bill, whereby secondary roads can be constructed on quite favourable terms will be of great benefit to the country and will be eagerly availed of by local authorities throughout the State.

Much has been said in regard to tourist roads and tourist resorts, and although I agree it is necessary where possible to provide access roads in the country, particularly for the use of producers, we must not overlook the value of tourist traffic in Queensland. Tourist traffic is quite a valuable industry to the State, and will become more valuable as it is properly developed. In the last two or three years the Tourist Bureau has been very active in encouraging tourist traffic to the State, and last year over £50,000 passed through the Tourist

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Bureau as a result of the traffic which that bureau was able to encourage in Queensland. The possibilities of Queensland as a tourist State have not so far been fully exploited.

The further development of tourist traffic will be beneficial to Queensland. The money derived from tourists can almost be termed foreign capital, and it does not cost much to provide the facilities necessary to attract these visitors. Everything we can do to encourage tourist traffic in this State will react in our favour. I fully agree with the provisions in this Bill that give the Commissioner power to develop the various beauty spots in the State. In that connection I might mention a main road on the North Coast that passes a particularly attractive portion of palm scrub. For some unknown reason the owner of that palm scrub was not willing to allow the Main Roads Commissioner to acquire it as a permanent beauty spot. The land is really of no value for producing purposes, and this Bill will enable the Commissioner to take over areas such as this for the benefit of tourists. I trust that when resumptions of land are made the owners of such land will not be inconvenienced. There are people in this State who are developing beauty spots for the benefit of tourists, which is the work the Commissioner proposes to undertake under the provisions of this Bill, and people who are so engaged should not be interfered with. There is one place on the Blackall Range where there is an area of between 40 and 50 acres of standing scrub, practically the only virgin scrub left in that locality, and that area is being developed at the present time by Mr. E. T. Lawrence for the benefit of tourists. He is cutting tracks through it, and providing facilities. With the development of roads it will become increasingly popular, and if the Commissioner deems it necessary to resume that area, I trust every consideration will be given to Mr. Lawrence for his work in developing that property and popularising it as a beauty spot.

The provision to grant relief to local authorities in regard to the liabilities they have incurred in the construction of roads in their area is a very wise one. The local authorities that first took advantage of the provisions of the Main Roads Act undoubtedly paid for the experimental work that was carried out by the Main Roads Commission in those days. If the same roads had to be constructed to-day the cost would be perhaps 50 per cent. less than the cost to the local authorities at that time.

At 9.15 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. NICKLIN: There are three examples of roads in Southern Queensland where the cost of construction was very great because of the fact they were the first mountain roads constructed. I refer to the main roads to Maleny, Montville, and Tambourine. The experience gained by the Main Roads Commission in building these roads was, no doubt, of great benefit to it when constructing roads later on; and under the provisions of this Bill the Minister will have power to grant relief to these local authorities.

There is also provision in the Bill for the Minister to give relief where the industries in the district served by the main roads have declined. The fruit industry on the Blackall Range is not in a very flourishing condition

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at the present time; but when the returns from those areas were very good, the people there incurred heavy liabilities in regard to the construction of roads, and at the present time, owing to the low prices prevailing for citrus fruits, they are not in a position to meet their heavy liabilities. The provision in this Bill will enable those local authorities to receive consideration.

In regard to the declaration of benefited areas and the provision which the Minister is enabled to make in connection with alterations and extensions of them I hope that the hon. gentleman, when replying, will fully explain the action which can be taken. As regards the Maroochy shire particularly, this provision requires considerable elucidation. The benefited areas of the various roads overlap and in some of the benefited areas the ratepayers are paying a very high aggregate rate. I refer particularly to the Montville main road area where the ratepayers are paying up to 1s. in the £1 special rate for the Montville road, and on top of that 3d. in the £1 special rate for the Maroochy road. On top of these two special rates they have to pay 5d. in the £1 ordinary rates and other rates of that nature. It can be realised that it is an utter impossibility for them to meet their liabilities. Their land is valued at fairly high figures and the prices received for their products are perhaps at the lowest ebb in the history of Queensland. In cases like that the provisions in this Bill that enable relief to be given are indeed very wise and I feel sure will be appreciated by all concerned.

I agree with the hon. member for West Moreton in regard to the extension of the maintenance clauses of this Bill to the care of trees and traffic signs on main roads. Those of us who have had the privilege of seeing some of the roads in the older countries of the world and the beauty and the economic value of the trees that line the highways readily appreciate the effects of lining our highways with trees that can perhaps be utilised at a later date, if necessary, with great benefit to the State. The inclusion in the activities of the Main Roads Commission of the care and planting of these trees is indeed a very wise one. We have already an example in Queensland of a tree-lined road in the Redcliffe road. Unfortunately in the planting of the trees along that road care was not exercised in seeing that the right varieties for the type of country were planted. Nevertheless that road is up-to-date and certainly it is beautiful and gives us the necessary guidance in the matter of planting the right varieties of trees. I am aware that if the planting of trees along highways is undertaken by the Main Roads Commission every care will be used to see that trees of suitable varieties are planted, not only suitable from the aesthetic point of view but also, perhaps, useful from an economic standpoint.

Clause 14 of the Bill enables the Commissioner of Main Roads to extend his activities to wharves and various other facilities of that nature. I commend to the Minister's consideration the further extension of that clause to enable the Commissioner's activities to include ferry punts. These are very useful for the development of a district where for the time being traffic does not warrant the construction of an expensive bridge. I feel sure that the extension of that clause in the direction indicated would be of benefit.

There is one clause which, perhaps, needs careful consideration, that is, the one that gives power to the Commissioner to alter the status of a declared road. If care be taken it will be all right, but a local authority may be placed in a position of incurring very heavy liability. If a State highway be altered to a main road the local authority, instead of being liable for only 50 per cent. of the maintenance cost would become liable to one-fifth of the construction cost and one-half of the maintenance cost. I trust that in any action taken in that regard due consideration will be given to every factor and the local authority in the area will be consulted before anything is done. If action be taken indiscriminately and the status of the road altered it may mean a very heavy burden on the local authority.

Taking the Bill as a whole, I feel certain that it will be of great benefit to local authorities and will tend to rectify very many of the anomalies that exist at present.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [9.24 p.m.]: This Bill is a tardy recognition by the Government that their encroachment into the sphere of land taxation has made it impossible for local authorities to carry out necessary road construction work and that it is now necessary for the Main Roads Commission to undertake the construction of secondary roads as well as main roads and State highways. There are some very extraordinary provisions in the Bill giving enormous power to the Commissioner, and in several cases they come in conflict with the Local Authorities Acts. In some cases there will be dual control, and in other cases even triplicate control, which will not make for efficient working by the authorities concerned. When the Home Secretary was speaking the other day he emphasised the need for local authorities to adopt correct budgetary methods, but what earthly chance has a local authority of doing that when the Commissioner can at the end of the year, or practically at any time during the year fix the amount that has to be paid by the local authority for the construction and maintenance cost of permanent work? The local authority will be unaware of the amount of the precept, or whatever it may be called, that is levied upon it until it is actually received. Apparently the rate of interest is to be fixed from time to time by the Treasury.

I cannot see how the Bill is to be administered unless the Local Authorities Act is also amended. The Bill provides that when any remission is made to the local authority by the Main Roads Commission the local authority must reduce the rates on the properties served by the road in question. The local authority cannot do that; it cannot impose a differential rate in its area. If it is done then the people who are served by that road will be placed at an advantage over the other ratepayers. I do not know how it is proposed to administer the Bill in that respect. It is also proposed in the Bill that in the case of a benefited area the benefit of any remission to a local authority must be extended to the benefited area. What right has the Commissioner of Main Roads to interfere with local authorities by imposing these conditions which, under the Local Authorities Acts, it is impossible for the local authorities to fulfil? The local authority cannot impose a differ-

ential rate in a division, or where there are no divisions in portion of a whole area. The same rate must apply throughout. Yet the Bill provides that if a remission is made in respect of a benefited area the benefit must be extended to the properties served by the road. I do not know how it is proposed to administer that aspect of the Bill.

In many cases the power proposed to be conferred on the Commissioner is quite beyond his sphere, and the matters affected have nothing whatever to do with him. The question of erecting pounds and carrying out an impounding service does not come within the sphere of a Main Roads Commission, but is purely a local authority matter. The Main Roads Commission could make arrangements with the local authority to carry out the necessary impounding service, but there is no need for the Commissioner to erect new pounds or to call upon his officers to carry out additional impounding work.

In many cases the local authority is made absolutely subordinate to the Main Roads Commission. The Main Roads Commission may make recommendations to the Minister, and the local authority may do likewise concerning a benefited area, but if the Minister disagrees with the contention by the local authority the local authority has no redress. It must accede to his wishes. I cannot see the force of these provisions. The ratepayers elect their local authority to conduct affairs on their behalf, and I see no reason why an outside authority should dictate to them as to what should be done. The local authorities are now to be regarded as of absolutely no importance, and they will not know in what position they are to be placed, because another authority is to be permitted to interfere with their affairs. Under this Bill the Main Roads Commission may force a loan on a local authority. The Bill does not even say that the local authority is to be consulted. If secondary roads or other roads are carried out in a local authority area the rate of interest and the amount of repayment is fixed by the Main Roads Commission. That is not to be done by agreement with the local authority concerned. The obligations are put upon them to meet it.

I quite agree with the principle of constructing the secondary roads. I do not know why the Bill does not go further and say that secondary roads should act as feeders to railways, in the same manner as they are to act in relation to State highways or main roads.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is the intention.

Mr. MOORE: This Bill specifically sets out that a secondary road can be a feeder to a main road or State highway, but it does not say anything about railways. I suppose that omission can be overcome.

There are conditions attaching to the secondary roads that may make for difficulties in so far as local authorities are concerned. Another thing that might happen to a local authority is this: the Commissioner of Main Roads may declare a State highway to be a secondary road, or a main road to be no longer a main road but a secondary road. Presumably the local authority has got to pay the rate fixed in the Acts for that class of road.

*Mr. Moore.]*



There is another provision that it will be found very difficult to administer and probably cause a great deal of dissatisfaction. In the case of a State highway going through an area, that is not to be charged anything on the cost of construction, but only a proportion of the maintenance cost, but where any adjoining area is deemed to receive a benefit from that road it may be assessed in respect of that benefit and required to contribute that amount to the Main Roads Fund. That will be a most difficult calculation. It is also extraordinary that an area through which a main highway passes will not contribute anything beyond maintenance cost, while the adjoining area, that which is supposed to obtain a benefit from it, is to be assessed by the Commissioner to the value it should contribute to the Main Roads Fund each year.

There are several other provisions in this Bill that place liabilities on a local authority. I fail to see why all these provisions are placed in the Bill. A very doubtful position will arise as to the method of assessment the Commissioner will employ in assessing the value of a State highway to an adjoining area. This Bill should definitely set out the basis on which local authorities should contribute. The position will be rendered more and more difficult because one district will contribute on a different basis from another. Such discrimination always creates dissatisfaction. In the same way the Valuation Appeal Court creates dissatisfaction by altering one valuation and thereby compelling one man in the same district to pay on a greater value than another. That is one of the difficulties which this Bill will get us into.

I do not like the principle of placing the Commissioner in a position where by Order in Council he can resume any land not necessarily contiguous to a main road for a beauty spot. That area may be miles away. The Commissioner is also to have power to erect buildings, amusement places, or jetties, or to resume such buildings and sublet them on terms and conditions. There is not much advantage in giving the Commissioner this power and authority. In most beauty spots such facilities are already being conducted by private enterprise, which when the occasion has arisen has purchased them for that purpose. This Bill will give the Commissioner power to come in and operate these places. That is altogether apart from his duties. This department was not started to do this sort of thing, but for the purpose of providing effective communication between various points in the State. Its ramifications have extended a great deal from what they were originally intended to be. That has been inevitable owing to the increase in motor traffic and the impossibility of local authorities, with the restricted amount of money available to them, building the necessary roads for that class of traffic. This Bill is a recognition of this difficulty, but it is going infinitely further than that. The question of clearing stock routes, State highways or main roads of noxious weeds, for example, is not a province of the Main Roads Commissioner but one of the local authority.

There are several matters contained in this Bill which will be the subject of amendments proposed from this side in the Committee stage, and others upon which I desire information. I should like information on

the basis of assessment and as to how the orders of the Commissioner can be carried out. For the life of me, with my experience of the local authorities Acts, I cannot see how they will be carried out under the provisions of this Bill. Evidently conditions have been prescribed that are outside the provisions of the local authorities Acts and without any recognition as to the effect, for in three or four instances this Bill provides for action to be taken that would be diametrically opposed to the present Local Authorities Acts and that would necessitate validating legislation.

The financial provisions of the Bill are exceedingly indefinite, and it will be very difficult for a local authority to regulate its finances in accordance with the conditions laid down. Of course, it is recognised that local authorities that have incurred obligations through the construction of main roads will, under this Bill, as under the preceding measure of the same kind, enjoy opportunities for remission of payments, but I do not suppose it is intended that local authorities should continue indefinitely to incur obligations that will be too onerous and in respect of which they will seek some remission. I take it this measure is introduced because in the early years of the work of the Main Roads Commission, where the construction of main roads was an expensive proposition, local authorities in many cases entered into obligations without adequate knowledge as to the cost involved. In many cases the cost of work greatly exceeded the estimated cost, and local authorities incurred obligations of which they had no previous knowledge. Presumably when main and secondary roads are constructed in future it will not be supposed that local authorities will incur a greater obligation than they are capable of discharging. In other words, I assume this Bill will apply only to local authorities that have incurred obligations up to the present. If it means that this provision will be of continuous operation, then a different financial proposition arises. If local authorities reach the stage that a special rate must be levied and that when the special rate of, say, 1d. or 1½d. in the £1 is exceeded some relief may be expected, we are really encouraging a local authority not to bother about expenditure and to lean upon the Main Roads Commission to a greater degree than is warranted. Rather than do that it would be better to have a system of nationalised roads, because the experience of the last few days has taught us that when local authorities deliberately infringe the statutes and incur obligations it may be necessary to introduce ratifying legislation in this Parliament. We can readily understand what would happen if the practice became general. Rather than do that it would be infinitely better for the Main Roads Commission to undertake the construction of main and secondary roads according to the finance available without placing a financial obligation upon the local authority at all, for otherwise the position would be created of the Main Roads Commission expecting repayment from local authorities and finding that the inability of these authorities to make repayment in full would create a difficult financial position for the Main Roads Commission itself. Rather than that it would be better for the Main Roads Commission to have full control.

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At the Committee stage I shall look forward to information on many clauses, for some of them are very involved and enunciate principles totally at variance with those that have so far governed the road-making activities of local authorities. Many of them place obligations upon local authorities that hitherto have been unknown and do not afford the opportunity for a poll of ratepayers to decide on whether a local authority should undertake a loan obligation for certain work. I should like the Minister to explain how local authorities will be able to carry out the many provisions in this Bill without infringing the existing law and making necessary the introduction of validating legislation on the lines of that discussed in the last few days.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. A. Bruce, *The Tableland*) [9.42 p.m.]: I desire to express my appreciation of the generous support that members of the Opposition, with one or two notable exceptions, have given to the Bill.

The hon. member for Murilla made a remarkable speech, which was difficult to understand. The hon. member for West Moreton was one of the strongest advocates for the building of that section of a road parallel with the railway between Marburg and Gatton, although he tried to quibble by saying he had not come into my office. The hon. member made definite misstatements when he said the great bulk of our roads were built parallel with railway lines, and that I was an advocate for the building of roads parallel with railway lines. The Toowoomba road and the bulk of the roads running parallel with the railway lines were built long before I became Secretary for Public Works. At no time have I advocated the building of roads parallel with the railway lines. I have stated on several occasions that I thought there would be no need in the future to extend existing railway lines. I contend that the main roads will meet all requirements in regard to the extension of transport facilities in the future—that is, the carrying out of main roads from the termini of railway lines at present where that extension is necessary.

During my term of office, in conjunction with the Commissioner, who is keenly interested in this particular class of work, I have adopted a policy of building feeder roads to the railway lines. It is not possible for me to bring a map of Queensland into this House and demonstrate to hon. members the mileage of feeder lines to railways; but if the hon. member cares to go round to the office of the Commissioner, the latter will demonstrate to him that he was entirely incorrect in his contention in regard to our road proposals.

I would remind those people who quibble about the position of local authorities that during the time I have been in charge of this department hundreds of councillors have interviewed me, and they would much sooner accept the advice and suggestions of the Commissioner than that of hon. members who have quibbled in this House in regard to the interference by the Commissioner with the rights of local authorities.

The whole object of the Bill is to give relief. There is no sinister motive hidden in it.

The idea of secondary roads is that where there are bad sections of roads now in use

they should be metalled and improved, and as far as possible give the primary producers an all-weather road to carry their produce either to a main road or a railway line. That method has been advocated before me on numerous occasions by members of shire councils representing many parts of Queensland. As a result of those requests and representations, I, in conjunction with the Commissioner, have brought forward this proposal for secondary roads. Everybody knows that the cost of a bitumen road is very great, and if we can give access to these people to the railway line by a road that will not cost anything like the amount a bitumen road would cost, we shall be achieving our objective.

Mr. MOORE: The bitumen road is the only one that lasts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I would remind the hon. member that concrete lasts, too. Many experiments are being carried out at the present time, and there are classes of road that last as well as bitumen. The system has been improved greatly. Experiments have shown that less bitumen and a greater percentage of metal makes a better road.

I think there is something in the proposal mentioned by some members that the time may come when councils should be entirely relieved of the cost of roads. The method by which that would have to be done would be by having a comprehensive system of tolls and petrol taxes whereby those people who use the roads paid entirely for them. I do not suggest that is in my mind at present, but I do think the whole order has changed because of the introduction of the internal combustion engine.

The obligations that have been thrust upon the shoulders of the local authorities to-day are probably not entirely fair, and a comprehensive and carefully planned system of tolls may in the future almost, if not entirely, relieve the local authorities of the obligations which they are carrying to-day, very often in the interests of people other than themselves.

Any person who objects to the establishment of first-class main and other roads, under the Commissioner of Main Roads in Queensland, is very much behind the times. To-day New South Wales is sparing no expense to bring its main roads system to the borders of Queensland with the object of securing for New South Wales the trade from this State. Victoria is spending immense sums of money on main roads, and Queensland, as one of the most progressive States, with one of the largest areas to serve, should certainly not be behind the other States in the carrying out of a main roads policy.

Speaking on the tourist aspect of this amending Bill the hon. member for Cook mentioned that in my electorate there was a place called Lake Barrine. That is a very beautiful tourist resort, which Mr. Curry has leased and at which he has constructed up-to-date swimming baths and supplied all the necessities wherewith tourists can enjoy themselves. The hon. member asked if it would be the intention of the Commissioner of Main Roads to take over Lake Barrine. I answer certainly not—the Commissioner would not for a moment, nor would I, as Minister in charge, consider

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taking it over. Facilities have been supplied for tourists to enjoy themselves, and these assist in attracting the tourist traffic to North Queensland. But a few miles away from Lake Barrine is Lake Eacham, at which there is practically nothing in the way of giving access. Lake Eacham was under a trust, which was handicapped by lack of finance. The people on the Atherton Tableland, shire councils, and others are requesting the Commissioner to build a road to Lake Eacham and make it more accessible than at present. There is an instance where the Commissioner could make use of the clauses contained in this Bill to provide the same facilities at Lake Eacham as are provided at its neighbouring resort.

Mr. MAHER: Is there room for two?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Seeing that two lakes are there, there must be room for two. There is certainly room on the Atherton Tableland for two lakes.

Mr. MAHER: The hon. gentleman knows what I mean.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There is sufficient tourist traffic to enjoy the beauties of both these lakes. They are both wonderfully beautiful. I am not parochial. The hon. member for Cook raised the question, and gave me an excellent opportunity of demonstrating how the Commissioner of Main Roads could take advantage of the provisions of the Bill.

In regard to benefited areas, we find that local authorities on some occasions have declared a benefited area. They then come to the Government and ask that they be relieved of their commitments. Really they desire to make the State as a whole a benefited area instead of making the shire. Certainly we will sometime find that the majority of councillors in a shire desire to declare one ward of the council a benefited area, thus making a few ratepayers pay for the main road, while the remainder are enjoying the great benefit from it. It is absolutely necessary in the interests of the State as a whole that some control should be in the hands of the Government in so far as benefited areas are concerned.

The question of tolls I have already touched on. Interstate traffic travels over huge areas when cars can run up to 300 and 400 miles a day. When they run over the roads that we have built I consider the toll system is absolutely justified.

A great deal has been said about the Commissioner's resuming areas of land. The objective there is to resume areas where there are natural beauty spots, so far as our Queensland flora is concerned, and to conserve that so that tourists may view it, and so that even though the settlers behind it or the Forestry Department, or anybody else desires that the timber adjacent be cleared, we will still have blocks of the country to show to the people of Queensland and visitors. At Cunningham's Gap the other day I saw that practically the whole of the scrub, with the exception of a small patch, has been cleared.

The Darling Downs country is entirely different from the scrub country of North Queensland, but one patch of scrub country has been reserved at Cunningham's Gap so that the people of this and future generations will be able to visualise the original appearance of the locality. That is the

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object of the clause which enables the Commissioner of Main Roads to resume certain areas for scenic purposes. Any one who has travelled along roads where timber has been removed on both sides realise what a really monotonous and dusty drive it is, but the Commissioner of Main Roads is anxious to preserve the natural flora along the road so that motorists generally may have a more enjoyable experience in travelling through the country.

I assure hon. members that the Bill has been introduced with the definite object of conferring a benefit on the people. I could very easily have decided not to introduce an amending Bill this session, which would have saved me much time and trouble, but I deemed it necessary to introduce it for the benefit of the people as a whole. One hon. member suggested that it had been introduced to enable the Government to secure a political advantage by placing large bodies of men in certain electorates just prior to an election, but that is not an object of the Bill.

The hon. member for Murilla suggested that it was the best example of communistic legislation that he had ever seen, but the opinion of the hon. member on communism does not carry any weight at all.

In conclusion, I definitely state that the Bill has been introduced for the purpose of improving the conditions of the people on the land and in the mining areas.

Question—"That the Bill be now read a second time" (*Mr. Bruce's motion*)—put and passed.

Consideration of the Bill in Committee made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 9.58 p.m.