

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 24 OCTOBER 1935

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QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

Legislative Assembly.

FIRST SESSION OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH
PARLIAMENT

APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE ON THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF AUGUST, IN THE TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR
OF THE REIGN OF HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V., IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1935.

[VOLUME 2 OF 1935.]

THURSDAY, 24 OCTOBER, 1935.

SUPPLY.

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

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—
FIFTH AND SIXTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

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

ESTIMATES IN CHIEF, 1935-36.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

QUESTION.

AGRICULTURAL BANK INTEREST RATES.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*) asked the
Secretary for Agriculture—

“1. In what cases are mortgagors to
the Agricultural Bank charged a rate of
interest in excess of 4 per cent., and what
is the rate?”

“2. What is the total number of
mortgagors (a) charged 4 per cent., and
(b) charged a rate in excess of 4 per
cent.?”

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J.
Mullan, *Carpentaria*), for the SECRETARY
FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. F. W. Bul-
cock, *Barcoo*) replied—

“1. All advances involving the dis-
charging of liabilities attract interest at
the rate of 5 per cent. per annum.

“2. The accounts in respect of advances
at different rates of interest are not
separated. To obtain the desired infor-
mation would entail considerable
research.”

Question stated—

“That £56,773 be granted for ‘Depart-
ment of Public Lands—Chief Office.’”

Mr. RUSSELL (*Hamilton*) [10.34 a.m.]:
The absence of the annual report of the
department for the last financial year pre-
vents us, to some extent, from analysing the
progress of the department over that period.
The Minister occupied a considerable amount
of time in extolling the virtues of his
administration, but we should have pre-
ferred to see the report of his department
so that we might have had an opportunity
of examining the activities of the various
sub-departments. However, the Minister
has explained that the report is of such a
comprehensive nature that there has been
delay in completing its compilation, and
having it ready for this discussion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The
reorganisation of the department occupied
about three weeks of the time usually taken
up in the preparation of the report.

Mr. RUSSELL: This is probably the
most important department coming under
the jurisdiction of the Government. While
some contend that the jurisdiction of State
Parliaments is gradually diminishing—and
one must admit that eventually additional
powers must be conceded to the Federal
Government—the administration of the
lands must always remain the prerogative
of the State Legislatures. It is wise that
it should be so, because the welfare of
this State particularly is closely bound up
with the successful settlement of our land

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PAPER.

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

Report of the Chief Inspector of
Machinery, Scaffolding, and Weights
and Measures for the year 1934-35.

MINING SURVEY BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

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

Question put and passed.

So many important questions are interwoven with the administration of this department that if anything happens to the welfare of our rural community it is immediately reflected in stagnation in other circles. The allied Department of Agriculture also has very important functions, but it depends solely on the fortunes or otherwise of the Department of Public Lands. The question of closer settlement affects not so much the Department of Public Lands as the Department of Agriculture, because farming operations come within the purview of the latter. Nevertheless, the Department of Public Lands is intensely interested in the problems associated with closer settlement, such as the conservation of water and fodder as an insurance against drought—I hope to see this matter taken in hand very shortly—and the provision of water and the preservation of pastures on stock routes. All these are questions of very serious moment to-day, most of them of particular importance to our pastoral areas. These matters have been dealt with by the department in the last twelve months. There are many problems facing it, and it behoves both departments to apply themselves to the question of how we can increase the productivity of our land and bring about greater settlement in country areas.

There are some very wide questions now before the public—questions of great moment that are also acute in countries older in development than this State. One of these questions is the renovation of our pastures. It is alarming to see much of our native pastures going out of existence. Reports show that western areas are not so productive of these pastures as they were formerly. It is alleged that this is due to overstocking. This problem must engage the attention of the department. There is also the important question of the denudation of our timber areas. Like the older countries of the world, Australia is sacrificing its timber wealth. Whilst I advocate the marketing of a good deal of our timbers, I realise that a vast amount of unnecessary destruction is proceeding. This certainly must have a detrimental effect on our rainfall. It is already bringing about in some areas the erosion of our soils. Many of our western lands are less productive to-day owing to a decrease in our natural pastures, and the tremendous destruction that is taking place of our native timbers affects other lands. All these things must be taken into consideration by the Department of Public Lands if we desire to bring about great productivity in Queensland.

During the course of his remarks the other day the Secretary for Public Lands painted a rather doleful picture of the future of land settlement in this country. I think hon. members were taken aback when he stated that we had reached saturation point in land settlement, and the only land in the State that he was able to make available for selection to-day was remote, unoccupied land, reclaimed prickly-pear land and subdivisions when the current leases expired. The Minister went on to say, in effect—

“Our greatest problem to-day is to keep the people on the land who are there. We have no areas of land in Queensland that are not already occupied,

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therefore it is absurd to continue the loose talk and encourage and urge in the Press that we should solve the unemployment problem by placing people on the land. There are 429,000,000 acres in Queensland, and 325,250,000 are already under occupation, and there are only 43,000,000 acres unoccupied to-day, of which 10,000,000 acres can be considered uninhabitable.”

That is a terrible indictment of Queensland, considering that hon. members on both sides of the Committee are urging closer settlement. Members on both sides believe that some system of increase in population should be resorted to, and a few days ago I thought we were unanimous in agreeing to the project of encouraging boy scouts to come to this country, provided the necessary finance was found on the other side of the world. If that statement, made by the Minister, goes forth to the world as a correct description of land conditions here, it must have a very damaging effect on the agitation that most of us have fostered for many years of urging greater population for this country. When one analyses the Minister's statement, one is impressed by the serious aspect of the case he presented, if it is true.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Of course it is true. I would not say it if it were not true. I quoted it from the Auditor-General's report.

Mr. RUSSELL: If it is true that we have reached saturation point and there is no room for more settlement, there is no justification for blackguarding the Federal Government for their inaction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Because their policy affects existing settlers and is driving them off the land.

Mr. RUSSELL: When one considers that we have an area of 429,000,000 acres and fewer than 1,000,000 people in this State, it appears absurd to suggest there is no room for immigrants on the land. At any rate, the matter requires further investigation because the statement made by the Minister must have a very damaging effect. It has put a damper on our belief that there is room for a vast population in Queensland that could find a market for the goods they produced.

The Premier has been a strong advocate of the greatest development of Queensland, and he has been quoted by many of his admirers on the other side of the Chamber as being a great statesman, and the man who put the British public right in regard to the threatened policy of restrictions. On various occasions he addressed audiences in the old country, in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and London, and I had the privilege of attending two or three of those meetings. I remember one occasion in Glasgow when the Premier was entertained by the president of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Sir A. Steven Bilsland, Bt., at a function that I attended. In alluding to the policy of restriction, which was much discussed at the time, the Premier made these remarks—

“It had been suggested that Australian produce should be limited, and that they should be subject to quotas.

“They in Australia were perturbed about such proposals, because they were contrary to the aim and purposes of the Australian people. First of all, they regarded them as bad economics.

"He pointed out that in Australia there were hundreds of thousands of acres that were yet awaiting development. 'In these circumstances,' he added, 'for us to agree to any policy of restriction would mean that we agreed to arrested development, that the unemployed should have no opportunity of getting work, and, more tragic than anything, that boys leaving school would not be absorbed into useful industry.'

"We cannot agree to these things. We desire increased production, increased settlement, and increased development of our own country."

There is the policy enunciated by the Premier himself. I think he believes that. To-day he has arrived at the belief that we must make some serious attempt to gain more population of the right kind. On the other hand we have the Secretary for Public Lands informing us that we have no more room for any more settlers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I did not. There are 38,000,000 acres.

Mr. RUSSELL: Therefore, why should there be this agitation in regard to increased population and the berating of the leaders in the Commonwealth sphere for their inaction? The hon. gentleman complained that the Commonwealth Government had shown great inaction. To use his own words—

"Queensland has been the worst treated of all the States in the Commonwealth."

He complained that he had been hampered in his desire to keep people on the land owing to the Commonwealth Government's adherence to a policy of restriction of exports. The hon. member for Rockhampton, in his usual flowery style, declared that Australia had been sacrificed on the altar of alien interests.

The Secretary for Public Lands also stated, "Our Premier happened to be overseas at the time and everybody knows how he sprang into the breach." That reminds me of a story told of the O'Flahertys, when questioned about their genealogy. O'Flaherty was asked from whom they had sprung? He replied "The O'Flahertys don't spring from anybody; they spring at them." So the Premier sprang into the breach or at the breach. The Secretary for Lands is very apt to spring into breaches that are not there—to use an Irishism. The hon. gentleman is very apt to make use of public prejudices to belabour the Commonwealth Government. His attack on men of the calibre of Mr. J. A. Lyons and Mr. S. M. Bruce was totally unwarranted. The Minister goes on to say in regard to the Premier—

"The full measure of what he did for this State and Australia is not properly recognised."

If we have come to such a parlous condition why should we worry and ask for settlers for our land?

The Premier takes the credit for having induced the British Government to remove restrictions on some of our exports. He is very careful now to confine that to dairy produce. Of course, he proceeded to the old country, principally on the sugar question, and he received from the British

Government the assurance that nothing could be done until the expiration of the Chadburne agreement. As hon. members are aware, a conference will take place next year at which all the Dominions will be represented and when a new agreement will be made. I have no objection to the Premier's proceeding abroad. In fact I was a member of the Brisbane committee that attended the Premier's send-off. In my opinion it was not a matter of party politics. I think every Premier of Queensland should go overseas. At any rate, the hon. gentleman proceeded to England and looked into the sugar question, but we all know that nothing was done. He received an assurance from the British Government that the present agreement would not be disturbed in the meantime. Nobody expected the British Government to break their word, anyhow.

The same thing applies to the meat agreement. He was told that there would be no interference from Ottawa. We know that the Premier has tried to make much capital out of the meat question, just as he did out of bananas, Japanese sampans, and various other questions where popular prejudice could be exploited. The whole matter of the bananas ended in smoke. The Fijian exporters know that the Australian market is not a profitable one; costs are too high and they are unable to compete with the Queensland product.

Mr. H. H. COLLINS: That was not the intention.

Mr. RUSSELL: The intention was to allow Fiji to export bananas to Australia in return for allowing us to export certain products to Fiji. That arrangement did not suit certain Queenslanders who wanted everything but were prepared to give nothing. The Federal Government have been very humane and generous in their treatment of Queensland.

The Premier claims that he was responsible for the removal of the restriction on the importation into England of Australian butter. The British Government never intended to restrict the importation of Australian butter. They adopted the attitude that if the Australian people cared to send butter to the old country at low prices, that was their funeral, and that any restrictions on the export of Australian butter must be made at this end. The hon. gentleman's boast, therefore, is a very hollow one indeed and has no foundation whatever. Then again, he is reported in the Vancouver "Daily Province" of the 15th July, 1934, as having said—

"Objection to present conditions inspired my trip to England, and I consider that my achievement in removing restrictions on Australian dairy products is the first step in new Empire agreements."

Absolute piffle!

Despite the remarks made by the Secretary for Public Lands and the hon. member for Rockhampton, I contend that the Commonwealth Government have been most generous in their treatment of Queensland. I shall quote some of the steps taken by the Federal Government in order to assist the Secretary for Public Lands to solve his problem of closer settlement and development of our State. They agreed to prohibit the importation of sugar and entered

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into an agreement whereby a lucrative return was assured to the grower. The suggestion that they deprived the Queensland grower of £1,000,000 is nonsensical. We know that this Sugar Agreement met with bitter opposition throughout the rest of the Commonwealth. A large section of the Labour Party in the South were strongly opposed to the granting of what they called a preference to the Queensland sugar industry. Only this morning we read of a motion moved by a Labour member in the South Australian Parliament protesting against the agreement. The Women's Auxiliary of the Labour Party in New South Wales is strongly opposed to its renewal. When one realises the difficulties with which Mr. Lyons has to contend throughout the Commonwealth, one must admit that he was most courageous in ratifying the agreement for five years, without intervention from the Queensland Premier or anybody else. He took the risk and is standing to it. Let us be magnanimous and not throw a brick at the man who is doing his duty by the sugar industry.

Mr. FOLEY: What did he do for the cotton industry?

Mr. RUSSELL: The cotton industry is well protected. In fact, we have a record production this year.

We know that many go-getters rushed into the tobacco industry in an attempt to accumulate huge fortunes from selling land. The then Federal Government's action in providing a high protection, which was unnecessary, induced many people to rush into tobacco-growing on the most unsuitable land.

The Federal Government have imposed a duty of 6d. a lb. on the importation of peanut kernels and 4d. a lb. on whole peanuts. That duty has been responsible for keeping out all foreign peanuts. When there was a shortage of peanuts the board was allowed to purchase the required amount from abroad, and it distributed them amongst the buyers who required them.

We have an import duty of £16 6s. a ton on canary seed, the growing of which has proved a lucrative business on the Darling Downs. In the canned pineapple trade, by the payment of the sugar rebate, the canners of pineapples have been able to compete with Hawaii. In the butter and cheese industries, the stabilisation scheme has prevented the exploitation of one State by another. Before the introduction of that scheme it was common for one State to dump its surplus upon another State. That practice has now been stopped. The stabilisation scheme in the wheat industry will prevent Southern millers from dumping their surplus flour into Queensland.

The timber duties that have been imposed have given a fillip to that industry and with the reduction of the royalties by the Queensland Government have enabled mills to carry on. I think the Minister did the right thing, but he only carried out the policy the Moore Government decided upon. We have an Australian market now for hoop pine, and in this and many other items like it the Federal Government have been very generous indeed to Queensland. That Government are not asking for any extra credit because they consider they have done their duty. In all these things, it is wrong for politicians as the Premier has done to show petty prejudice instead of

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taking a wide Australian outlook. I say that Queensland has had a fair deal and the sooner we stop this petty squabbling the better. There is a big margin for tobacco growers between the import duty and the excise duty. This State is growing good tobacco and the growers are getting fair prices. The hon. member for Cooroora will bear me out in that.

In view of the statements made by the Minister we should at once set about the task of ascertaining what land we can honestly offer to suitable settlers. We want a greater population and it is idle to proceed any further in this matter unless we satisfy intending settlers that they can get land to settle on when they come to this State.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [10.59 a.m.]: I desire in the first place to reply to the very dishonest advocacy of the hon. member for West Moreton. In his speech he made an attack to the effect that we were loading up the Department of Public Lands with civil servants. He made it in a dishonest way.

Mr. MAHER: I rise to a point of order. I object to the use of the term "dishonest advocacy" by the Minister. I acted from a good motive, in the interests of the taxpayers of the State.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for West Moreton objects to the use of the term "dishonest advocacy," and I ask the Minister not to repeat that term.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hon. members opposite have a copy of the Estimates, and if the hon. member for West Moreton and other hon. members opposite who spoke in a similar strain had only taken the trouble to read them carefully they would have seen that owing to a complete reorganisation of the Department of Public Lands by the Public Service Commissioner the salaries of the officers of the Land Court are now included in the Chief Office vote. The hon. member for West Moreton did not say anything at all about that, although it was there for anybody to see. For the first time the salaries of eight officers of the Land Court, amounting to £2,550, are included in the Chief Office vote, and the officers are attached to that office. If the action by the hon. member for West Moreton is not dishonest, then I do not know what it is.

I should like to inform hon. members that the Public Service Commissioner and his officers have carried out a complete reorganisation of the whole of the Department of Public Lands, and if extra officers have been appointed it has been done entirely on the suggestion by the Public Service Commissioner in his report. If he is not the proper officer to do this important work, then who is? I wish to draw pointed attention to the fact that the hon. member for West Moreton, and other hon. members opposite who spoke in a similar strain, failed to explain that for the first time the salaries of eight officers of the Land Court are voted in the Chief Office vote this year. Three additional officers have been appointed to the Land Development Branch, an entirely new branch—not initiated by the Moore Government—but one established for the purpose of assisting the man on the land and providing useful

employment. Since this branch was established in May, 1932, it has handled advances approximating £500,000, enabling work to be found for 14,567 people. The hon. member for West Moreton did not make any mention of those facts. He failed to make full inquiry into the matter, but he knew that his statements were incorrect. Hon. members should also know that this branch is one of the most important in the department, not only because it is instrumental in assisting to improve the public estate, but also because it provides useful employment for a large number of people. Will any hon. member opposite contend that a considerable amount of detailed work is not necessary in handling that sum of £500,000, which was responsible for the employment of 14,567 men? Of course, it would be necessary to increase the personnel of the department, and three new officers have been appointed.

I remind members opposite that it was the Public Service Commissioner who made an examination of the working of this branch. I do not appoint the officers, nor does the Land Administration Board appoint them, nor the heads of sub-departments. For the first time for many years the Department of Public Lands has been completely overhauled by the Public Service Commissioner and his officers, with the result that extra officers were found to be necessary. Will any hon. member opposite contend that the old personnel of the department should be called upon to do the extra work, particularly that involved in the Land Development Branch? The branch must be properly conducted. An aggregate advance of £500,000 represents thousands of individual advances. The money is not advanced in large sums. Every application must be carefully examined, reports obtained, and marked for action. The new secretary of the Land Administration Board, Mr. O'Callaghan, worked night and day to try to put the office on a proper footing by allotting the clerical work in an equitable way. He really injured his health by working too hard. The Public Service Commissioner has agreed that three extra officers were necessary.

Let me offer further proof of the good work being achieved by the Department of Public Lands. The Public Service Commissioner also found that it was necessary to appoint an assistant cashier to help to handle the increased amount of money controlled by the department in connection with advances. The cashier was considerably over-worked in handling the increased amount of money passing through the department. Hon. members opposite should consider these matters very carefully instead of glibly criticising the appointment of a few extra officials without inquiring into the reasons why. To prove that the Public Service Commissioner was right in recommending the appointment of an assistant cashier to handle the increased money, I need only refer to the receipts by the department, which are set out at page 57 of the Auditor-General's report for the last financial year. The report discloses that the receipts of the department in connection with the consolidated revenue account increased by £34,397 last year, as compared with 1933-34, and in connection with the trust and special funds by £128,953. The only decrease in receipts was in respect of loan funds, where the drop was £16,831.

According to the report of the Auditor-General, the receipts handled by the cashier increased by £146,499. There are thousands of payments represented in those figures. Will anyone say those figures do not show the necessity to increase the strength of that office by another officer?

Let me now deal with the expenditure that had to be controlled by this office. The increases in expenditure under the various heads, according to the Auditor-General, were—

	£	s.	d.
Consolidated Revenue ...	13,337	11	5
Trust and Special Funds ...	177,645	11	6
Loan Funds ...	124,683	13	0
	£315,666	15	11

The increased receipts and expenditure handled, therefore, amounted to approximately £450,000. Will anyone say it was not necessary to put in another officer to attend to those payments? As a matter of fact, the actual payments into consolidated revenue increased last year by £34,397, and the expenditure by £13,338, so that the net increase in consolidated revenue receipts last year as compared with the previous year was £21,059. Every penny piece of those amounts had to be handled by the cashier. The Public Service Commissioner made a thorough investigation of the department. Any hon. member who has been a member of the Cabinet handling a department in the past will realise that when the Public Service Commissioner makes an examination of a department it is done in a thorough manner. It is not just done in a haphazard way. It is a job that is entrusted to experienced officers. The result of that investigation is shown in this vote by provision for certain additional officers who had to be appointed.

First of all I have exposed what may be termed, if not the dishonest advocacy of the hon. member for West Moreton, then the manner in which he made his statement. He knows that his statement was not correct. He did not advise this Committee that the appropriation for the Land Court officers for the first time appeared in the vote for the Chief Office.

Mr. MAHER: It is your job to explain that to the Committee, not mine.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Of course we all know that when the hon. member gets up to make a speech he simply does so to satisfy his own mind.

Mr. MAHER: That is what I want to do. (Interjections.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member's case cannot be a very good one, because he will not allow members of this Committee to get a true view of it. I will adduce further proof that the reorganisation of the department not only had the attention of the Public Service Commissioner but the State Service Union also. If hon. members refer to the "State Service" of 30th September, 1935, on page 16 they will see the following statement:—

"The Lands Department has now settled down after the disturbance. We feel it will be a better place for the reorganisation and reclassification."

Hon. P. Pease.]

I want to say as head of the department that I have now got a complete reorganisation of my department and its sub-departments, and I feel, as the official organ of the State Service Union states, that the department is now a better place because of the reorganisation and reclassification. To show what was meant so far as my officers are concerned—

Mr. MAHER interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member has had his say, and I am going to have mine. I desire this Committee to know the true position. He is always wrong, he is not fair and now I am showing where he was wrong.

In regard to the reclassification, twenty-four appeals were lodged. Of these ten were upheld unanimously, and three by a majority, and eleven were dismissed. While those appeals were being heard the heads of the sub-departments had to be available to give evidence before the Appeal Board and the result was we lost at least three weeks of the time of these officers. As the "State Service" says, the reorganisation of the department and all its branches has been completed. I agree with what is said in the journal. The department to-day is efficient from top to bottom, and I am satisfied that every employee in that department is earning his or her salary.

I also desire to reply to statements made by the hon. member for Hamilton. He first of all took me to task for pointing out—it is my duty to this Committee and to the people of Queensland to do—exactly what the position is regarding the lands of the State. The hon. member for Hamilton also was not fair in his criticism. He said that I said there was practically no more land in Queensland for settlement, and then he proved that I did not make that statement, because—I will give him his due—he read out what I did say and that proves that what he first said I said was incorrect. I concluded my remarks on Tuesday by saying—

"I have 48,000,000 acres in Queensland unoccupied, of which 10,000,000 are, in the opinion of my officers, inferior lands, and there are 38,000,000 acres of land left which is sufficient to settle a considerable number of people. That area is a fine asset for dairying and agricultural farming."

What I intended to convey and what I did convey—and the hon. member read my actual statement—was that there is no further land in Queensland available for pastoral and grazing occupation. That is what I said and that is what I wanted to convey.

Mr. RUSSELL: You did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I did say that and I will read what I did say. It was that of the total land in occupation of this State 57.02 per cent. was under pastoral occupation and 18.79 per cent. under grazing occupation, making a total of 75.81 per cent. under pastoral and grazing occupation. That is what I said. I pointed out that the total under pastoral and grazing occupation was 325,250,000 acres out of an area for the whole State of 429,000,000 acres. I want the people of this State to realise the situation. We have reached saturation point regarding pastoral land and grazing land, as things stand. Will anyone say that 325,250,000 acres out of a total of 429,000,000

is not a tremendous portion of this State? I have a map in my office that shows the different tenures in different colours, and I invite hon. members to look at it. They will see that practically all the unoccupied land is in the far North. That represents the 48,000,000 acres.

Anyone who has travelled over Queensland realises its tremendous area, and I think it is a great tribute to the department—not only of to-day, because we are only finishing the job—that it has carried out its duties and dealt with various difficulties in the way it has. Anyone who studies our land settlement from its inception and realises that 325,250,000 acres of this State's land are occupied under pastoral and grazing leases will realise what wonderful work the department and the administration in the past have done.

I want to impress on the Committee that the hon. member for Hamilton was wrong when he said that I said there was no more land available for settlement, because he stated when he came to quote my speech that I had said that there were 38,000,000 acres. That area is entirely in Northern Queensland, from Mackay north. Those 38,000,000 acres are left after eliminating the 10,000,000 acres that the department has classed as uninhabitable. That area of 38,000,000 acres is still available for settlement, which proves that there is plenty of land available for the immigrants it is desired to bring out—and that land includes some of the finest dairying land in the State. I invite the hon. member for Hamilton or any other hon. member who desires to observe the growth of settlement in Queensland to examine the map I have in my office. I wish to remove entirely the impression that may have been created by the remarks of the hon. member for Hamilton that the Premier went overseas and asked for immigrants, but there was no land here to put them on. I have pointed out there is an area of 38,000,000 acres, which will be sufficient to settle all the immigrants who may wish to come here.

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: And go to Cape York?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Much of this land is in the Palmerston and Eungella areas. The hon. member is decrying the land of the State. Thirty-eight thousand acres still remain, which the department points out is the finest land in Australia. To a certain extent it is remote. The Tory Governments of the past adopted unfair tactics and did nothing for North Queensland. The Governments of the past, more especially Tory Governments, did not consider the opening up of any land that was not within "cooee" of Brisbane. The present Government consider the whole of the State and are now developing the lands in the North which, as I have said, are some of the finest lands not merely in Queensland but in Australia. With 38,000,000 acres of land to develop we certainly have any amount of land for any person who desires to come and settle in Queensland from overseas or anywhere else. We have this large area of land available for dairying or mixed farming, but—I say it emphatically—as regards pastoral and grazing lands Queensland has reached saturation point. I desire to correct the hypocritical attitude the hon. member for Hamilton has taken up. He has adopted again this dishonest habit.

[Hon. P. Pease.]

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. RUSSELL: I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman is not right when he says I made a dishonest statement. I was not dishonest in any shape or form.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Hamilton denies he made any dishonest statement and I hope the Secretary for Public Lands will accept his denial.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Very well, but I desire to point out that it was most unfair for the hon. member to say what he did regarding land settlement generally, because the main difficulty in the Department of Public Lands arises from the fact that the great majority of applications received by the department are for pastoral areas. As I have said, it is not so much the urge for dairying and mixed farming lands that we are worrying about. With the opening up of the areas in the North we can satisfy these demands, but we cannot satisfy the demand for pastoral lands. We have not got such lands and one of the reasons is the fact that the Government of which the hon. member for Hamilton was one of the prominent representatives extended for ten years the leases of 13,000,000 acres of the best pastoral country in Queensland. Had that Government not made this extension of leases, we should have been able to do our duty by the youths of Queensland who desire to go on pastoral land. That Government deliberately tied up for many years 13,000,000 acres of the best pastoral country in the State and the result is that the demands of new settlers who require such land cannot be met. The past Government, by not making proper resummptions, failed in their duty to the State. That has been a vital issue and is one of the reasons why so many members on the Government benches, including Mr. Speaker and the Attorney-General, were returned unopposed at the last elections. The electors of the pastoral areas realise that only a Labour Government will give them a fair deal. They resent the unfair treatment they received when the Opposition were in office. An area of 13,000,000 acres would certainly have given the department a useful amount for pastoral occupation. Hon. members must realise that that is the position.

There is plenty of land for mixed farming and dairying, but how could an immigrant go into these industries? He would have to have a fair amount of capital. Dairying land cannot be taken up and cleared without a fair amount of capital. In placing unemployed on the land there will have to be considered not only the question of providing suitable land but also that of providing the necessary finance to keep them there. That is a tremendous problem. The money is not available. Hon. members opposite have already complained about the deficit in the finances of the State. Where can the Government find the necessary money for these new settlers? We are thus restricted in any land settlement scheme for the unemployed. If we place men on new land, we must provide them with capital, and without money we cannot do that.

The hon. member for Hamilton tried to make excuses for the Federal Government. He mentioned the sugar industry and said that the workers in Australia generally were against the Sugar Agreement. That statement is quite untrue. Every hon. member who knows anything about the sugar embargo

and the protection that the industry has received from the Federal Government must admit that the one organisation in Queensland that has stood shoulder to shoulder with the sugar interests in their agitation for that embargo is the Australian Workers' Union. The Australian Workers' Union—the organisation that represents the workers in the sugar industry—at every Federal convention for years past, passed a motion standing up for the sugar embargo. So that the organised workers of Australia are unanimous in their agreement with the embargo, which enables us to keep our men on sugar lands. Everyone who has followed the history of the sugar industry must realise that Labour's policy alone made this embargo possible.

One industry that is causing my department much concern is that of cotton growing. We are having tremendous difficulty in keeping the men on the land in the Burnett, Theodore, and Callide areas. The hon. member for Hamilton said that the Federal Government have done nothing but good for the cotton industry. I would inform him that under the protection previously given to the cotton industry the purchasers of cotton were able to pay the growers a flat rate of 5d. a lb. There was a guaranteed price of 5d. a lb. under the Federal Labour Administration, and we in turn were able to obtain a fine return from our land. The price has dropped over 2d. a lb. to-day under a Federal Tory Government. The result is that several settlers from the Burnett and Theodore areas find that they are unable to pay their land rent, let alone the dues to the Agricultural Bank. They are absolutely down and out. When the price was 5d. a lb. the growers were able to pay their rents and the dues to the bank.

Mr. BRAND: That was quite a good guarantee.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was a splendid guarantee, and it was Labour's legislation that made it possible. Queensland is the great cotton growing State of Australia. Cotton is only grown to a very small extent in other States. The problem has now become one for Parliament. It is the duty of Parliament to see that the settlers on the Burnett, Callide, and Theodore areas are not forced to go out of the industry because of the low price ruling. It is certainly a tremendous drop—3d. to-day as against 5d. in the early days. How am I to keep those 1,500 or 1,600 settlers on the land in the Burnett, Callide, and Theodore areas? Everyone can see the worries we have to contend with. Everyone will realise that the Commonwealth Government have not done their duty. Imagine allowing the price of cotton to the grower to drop 2d. a lb., and taking no action! The only action taken was taken by the Premier of this State when he was abroad and put the case for Queensland so admirably. If hon. members read the report of Mr. Webster, who controls the cotton ginnyery, they will realise where the blame lies. I blame the Federal Government for allowing the price of cotton to fall 2d. a lb. This is going to be a very serious matter. I am faced with dues owing in the Burnett and Callide areas to the extent of £30,000 or £40,000. The Agricultural Bank has advanced a considerable sum of money in those areas, and in the end the

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State is going to suffer. Those settlers are not able to pay. Unless something is done, I do not know what will happen.

It is the object of the Government to keep people on the land who are already there. I blame the present Federal Government for their inaction. Take the timber industry. Only the other day we had to send an officer of the department to the South to fight a case against the removal of the protection on certain classes of timber. Several exploiters of timber, in the Southern States particularly, desired to import timber cheaply from overseas. They did not care what they paid for that timber, nor did they care if the persons growing or handling that timber made a living. All they were concerned with was to make a profit. They wanted to import the timber into this country cheaply to the detriment of Australia and Queensland. I had to detail an officer of my department to go South and fight this effort for a removal of the protection. The hon. member for Hamilton said, "Look what the Federal Government have done for the timber industry." We are very concerned about its position. We are constantly going into the question in order to preserve the existing standards of the timber trade. From time to time hon. members will see photographs in the papers of ship loads of log timber coming here from various countries of the world to the detriment of our industry. The duty on timber is very low at the present time. We have to face the interests that are out to make a profit out of imported timber and destroy the meagre protection we have got. It is only the State of Queensland that is fighting.

The hon. member for Hamilton also spoke about the Irrigation and Water Supply Sub-Department. I should like to advise him and other members of this Committee that a complete reorganisation has been made of it. Possibly the member for West Moreton, when we come to that vote, will want to know why we have sixty-one officers as against forty-three. The position is that we have given to it the control of the Theodore, Burnett, and Callide areas. There is a great deal of irrigation in the Burnett and Callide areas. We have co-ordinated its work under a very capable engineer, Mr. C. E. Parkinson. Members generally must agree that in Mr. Parkinson we have a most capable engineer, who has a capable staff. If problems are to be effectively tackled in the interests of the hon. member for West Moreton and other members of the community, the staff must be increased. How can we investigate all the problems submitted by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber if we do not engage a capable staff for the purpose? For the past eight months officers of the sub-department have been actively engaged in selecting locations where water facilities may be established on the stock routes of the State. Whenever an hon. member submits a matter to the sub-department for consideration, an officer is immediately made available to go into the matter. Approximately £500,000 of subsidised loans has been made available throughout the State for the purpose of providing water facilities. The staff of the sub-department is increased this year to sixty-one for the reasons that I have already stated.

I should like hon. members to realise that the department has ample land available on

easy terms in North Queensland for dairying and mixed farming purposes, but there is no new land south of Mackay that the Government could make available. One hon. member opposite in referring to undeveloped freehold land—the Government have no control over it—really drew attention to the danger of the freehold system and the benefit of Labour's policy of perpetual lease. The undeveloped freehold land in close proximity to the city of Brisbane is really held by speculators. That is the evil result of the policy for which hon. members opposite stand and which they claim to be in the best interests of the State. I have already pointed out that if we had not adhered to our policy of perpetual lease we could not have extended a large measure of financial assistance to Crown tenants. Hon. members opposite have also asked about the prospects of utilising undeveloped freehold land in the southern parts of the State. Millions of acres are involved but they cannot be made available for settlement because they are held under the pernicious system of freehold. Hon. members opposite cannot have it both ways. The Government cannot control freehold land unless they resume it, and we have no funds for that purpose, even if we desired to do so. If we did attempt to resume the land without cash payment there would immediately be an outcry of "repudiation" from hon. members opposite. I could drive hon. members opposite to thousands of acres of unoccupied freehold land in close proximity to Brisbane for which the owners are asking exorbitant prices that the public cannot afford to pay. We cannot comply with the request of hon. members opposite to assume control of freehold land that has been removed from our jurisdiction by their pernicious policy of freehold. Again they have proved the wisdom of Labour's policy of perpetual lease.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY (*Bulimba*) [11.33 a.m.]: I was very pleased to hear the Minister reply so effectively to the criticism by the hon. member for West Moreton. The Estimates clearly set out why the staff of the head office has been increased. There is a special note at the bottom of the page which deals with certain expenditure previously voted under Land Court. The trouble in connection with the staff of this department is not the increase in the staff, it is in the high salaries paid to the high-placed officials. I do not think that there is any other Government department where the administrative overhead expenses are as heavy as they are in this. Even when the Moore Government were reducing wages and salaries so drastically, and the Chairman of the Land Administration Board, Mr. Payne, was struggling along on a salary of £1,500 per annum, the Moore Government increased his salary to £1,750 per annum. They gave him an increase in salary of £5 a week. He, and one or two other officers were the only officers to receive increases in salary from the Moore Government. Probably he was to be used in connection with the extension of pastoral leases and it was desirable to placate his feelings.

I desire to point out that there are nine senior officers of the Department of Public Lands who receive more money in salary than nine Ministers of the Crown. I also wish to point out that the three members of the Land Administration Board receive

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£4,100 per annum, and that in the department there are two other officers who receive £800 per annum each. The Chief Assessor gets £750, the Chairman of the Timber Advisory Committee £975, the Surveyor-General £1,000, the Engineer in Charge of Irrigation and Water Supply £1,000, and in addition three members of the Land Court receive £1,000 each. I did not include the three members of the Land Court in the salaries of the nine officials already mentioned, because they are members of a judicial body, and a court of review. If we include one of these members we find that ten officers of the department receive more by way of salary than do the Premier and the other nine members of the Cabinet.

The Government acted very wisely and the Minister in charge of these Estimates is to be commended upon putting through the reclassification scheme which has just been consummated. It does give some amelioration of their conditions to the junior officers of the department. When the Moore Government were in power these officers agitated for a considerable time to have their classifications reconsidered and new classifications made, but under the policy of that Government no application for an increase in salary or move for reclassification was considered. The Minister has got to grips with the problem and has endeavoured to do the right thing by the junior officers. Unfortunately—and I make this statement with full realisation of what it means—in the past too much favouritism has been shown by the ten or a dozen men at the head of the department's affairs. I say definitely that had it not been for the decisions on the appeals to the Public Service Appeal Board against a number of the appointments under the reclassification scheme this favouritism would have resulted in the penalisation of a considerable number of men. Let me say in passing that the Public Service Commissioner and departmental heads are generally right in their selection of officers for vacant positions. I have sat as a member on the Public Service Appeal Board and during my period I voted to uphold more appointments than I did against them. I have great confidence in the Public Service Commissioner doing the right thing.

Let us review the results of the appeals dealt with by the board. During the year 1933-34 twenty appeals were heard. Only three were won by the appellants, that is to say, three appellants were held to be entitled to the appointments they appealed against. In 1934-35, of fifteen appeals, four were won by unanimous decisions and two by majority decisions. But what do we find in relation to the appeals against the appointments made under the reclassification of the Department of Public Lands? Twenty-four were lodged and of this number ten were won by a unanimous decision. The board consisted of Mr. A. H. O'Kelly, Police Magistrate, Rockhampton, sitting as chairman, with Mr. F. M. Allsop as Commissioner's representative, and Mr. C. R. Muhl-dorff, representative. These are three men of integrity, capable of deciding what was the right thing. These three gentlemen agreed that the Land Administration Board and the committee that made the recommendations for appointment had not done the right thing in ten instances. It is a shocking commentary on the efficiency of the heads of that department, and of

their knowledge of the relative merits of the officers in that section of the service.

Mr. Melville was the acting chairman of the Land Administration Board. The chairman, Mr. Payne, was away and I want to mention that in fairness to him. Mr. Melville stated when giving evidence that he had a thorough knowledge of the Land Acts. If any hon. member in this Chamber takes the trouble to read the transcript of the notes of the proceedings at those appeals he will realise what a limited knowledge Mr. Melville had of the Land Acts of this State. The appointments were a poor commentary on those responsible for them; and I venture to say that if junior officers had made the mistakes and were responsible for the bungling for which some of the high administrative officers were responsible in connection with those appointments they would have been severely dealt with.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Mr. Payne dealt with the reorganisation.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: He did up to a point. The chairman of the Land Administration Board, I understand, was not present when these positions were filled.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was done before he left.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: I am not charging Mr. Melville wrongly. Mr. Melville was the responsible representative of the board that went into the witness-box to give evidence to justify the appointments. He took full responsibility for what he did, and the Appeal Board, by its decision, demonstrated that much bungling had occurred.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Varango*) [11.42 a.m.]: This is undoubtedly a very important question, and it is refreshing to note that hon. members are taking a keen interest in it. Unfortunately, the Minister appeared to endeavour to make as much political capital for himself and the party to which he belongs when discussing this vote, and that is entirely wrong of him. The Minister should confine himself to relating what the position is in regard to land matters. There has been very little criticism of the administration of the department on this side of the Committee. The hon. member who just resumed his seat has indulged in more criticism of the department than all the hon. members on this side of the Chamber who have spoken.

I am very pleased that the Minister has cleared up the matter of the amount of land available for selection. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman made himself quite so clear the other day, because undoubtedly hon. members received a different impression—as did the Press—from that which the Minister says he intended to create. I think I am right in saying that one statement appeared in the Press under the heading, "No more land available for selection." It is well that that impression should be removed, because it would be detrimental to Queensland if that statement were broadcast in the other States and overseas.

The difficulties that beset the man on the land are many and varied. I was pleased to hear the Minister remark that the producer was, after all, the backbone of the country. That is undoubtedly true, and although it has been stated by Government members that the city represents the arms and legs, the backbone is the vital portion of the organism. It is our duty to deal with

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the conditions affecting settlers in this State at the present time. It is a question that requires a great deal of concentration and serious thought in order to discover the best means of bettering the position. If the conditions were as they should be the position of the settlers would right itself once they were placed on the land.

So far as small areas are concerned the freehold versus leasehold tenure controversy arises. The Secretary for Public Lands has set forth the policy of the Government, which is, of course, the policy of the Labour Party. The question has arisen each year, but would it not be wise to analyse it still further? Holders of large areas are aware that some day portions of their holdings will fall back to the Crown, and consequently are in favour of freehold tenure. People living on the land should be encouraged to erect a home. From time to time we hear it said, "The whole of the land belongs to the whole of the people." Up to a certain point that statement may be correct, but any person who goes on the land must have some security for the result of his labours. A lease for a term of ninety-nine years may be all right, because that is a definite title to the holder. The land belongs to him, and certainly does not belong to the whole of the people any more than freehold land. After all, freehold land can be taxed or resumed. This has been done, and consequently there is very little in the argument put forward. But let us take two adjacent selections, one held on freehold tenure and the other on perpetual lease tenure. Should the holders of these areas apply to the Agricultural Bank or any other financial institutions for assistance, the Secretary for Public Lands and other hon. members know full well that the holder of the freehold tenure will receive some consideration whereas the application made by the holder of the leasehold property runs every risk of being turned down.

In my opinion the agricultural farm tenure is the best form of tenure for small areas that has ever been brought forward, but unfortunately—and Governments of different shades of political opinion are equally to blame—the unimproved value has been set too high. I am aware of instances—and this has happened not only under Labour Governments, where land was selected at from 30s. to £2 an acre, according to quality. However, owing to the large number of applications for these selections at the commencement the price of the few selections remaining were increased to £5. It will thus be seen that the selectors of the latter areas were in difficulties at the very commencement. These remarks apply also so far as perpetual leaseholds are concerned. The valuation is at too high a figure. Of course, hon. members know that it is immaterial whether there is a low valuation and a high rate or a low rate and a high valuation. This is the basis on which the Crown works. It is quite true that at the present time, owing to the grave difficulties that have beset many of the settlers on the perpetual leasehold areas, the Crown is reducing the valuation to a great extent, and also the rent. In order to show how agricultural farm tenure compares with perpetual lease tenure, allow me to take a good district like my own.

Mr. KING: Did you say "good"?

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Mr. EDWARDS: Yes, a good district such as my own and one well developed. Follow the increase in the unimproved valuations of the land over the last fifteen years. Other than road facilities—which the people obtain through the local authorities—the unimproved value of the land should always remain the same. The valuer sees area after area with miles and miles of well cultivated land—cultivated at great expense and sacrifice in many cases—and he bases his unimproved valuation on conditions as he sees them. That method is wrong. He cannot base it on conditions as they originally existed. He sees beautiful farms and estimates the unimproved value accordingly. That is the danger in perpetual leasehold. Reappraisal every fifteen years is not quite fair. Valuation based on the conditions existing at such periods has the effect of making perpetual leasehold land dearer than land held under agricultural farm tenure. The Moore Government passed an Act providing for an agricultural farm tenure of forty years. The settler under that Act was not faced with the prospect of having his rent doubled at the end of a twenty-year period. Unfortunately, however, certain wording was placed in the Act enabling the Department of Public Lands to refuse an extension of the lease unless the settler could prove that hardship had been caused. That wording has prevented many men from obtaining relief, and I suggest that the Government be very careful when framing any new Bills, to see that they are worded in such a way as to ensure that they will have the desired effect.

When we examine the question, we see that the difficulty is not with the man on the land. He is doing his job. The difficulty is that he still has to pay practically the same overhead costs as he did when prices were three times as high as they now are. An examination of the facts will disclose how that position is created. Customs duty is one item. The primary producer must import a big percentage of the material that is used for the development of his area. He pays direct Customs duty on that, but if he purchases an Australian product he is really no better off. The Australian manufacturer charges a price equal to the landed cost of the imported article, plus customs duty. Therefore, the man on the land has to pay for that. He has to carry out actual improvements on the land without producing anything, and you will find that he is beset with overhead costs all along the line, and until we can reduce those overhead costs to some extent, we shall not be able to get out of our present difficulties. We have only to look at the position of many clients of the Agricultural Bank, and realize the number of foreclosures during last year to appreciate the grave difficulties of the man on the land. Of course, when he is in difficulties, the State is in difficulties. Much has been said in this Chamber to the effect that general conditions are better, but no one would be so foolish as to say that they are not better now than they were during the depth of the depression—nevertheless, we have to admit, and we should be fair enough to admit, that that improvement has been in the main due to borrowed money. The position of the man on the land is not better. The Minister should

try to eliminate costs. I disagree very often with arguments put forward from the other side of the Assembly.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: And that side too.

Mr. EDWARDS: Possibly so, nevertheless there is one thing we should realise. It is one thing to fix high wages, it is another for the country to pay them. It is important to see that the country is able to bear these costs, and to see that they are just in the interests of the people who are on the land and in the interests of the people who are developing the State.

I want to discuss the position in regard to our forests. I realise that there has been a large development in the sale of our timber. That is true not merely here, but all over Australia. In Melbourne it is impossible to obtain a carpenter to put a board in a house.

Mr. HILTON: And it is more pronounced in Queensland.

Mr. EDWARDS: No. In Victoria there has been a rapid growth in the number of buildings being constructed. I know the position. I wish to mention the position in regard to some of our lands now held for forestry purposes. The hon. the Minister has interested himself in certain areas in my own electorate, and I know in other areas as well. I have in mind the Yarraman, Blackbutt, and Nanango districts. Public inquiries have been made from time to time with the object of reclassifying the land and making a portion available for closer settlement. Speaking from memory, I believe that the last report on the area was issued by the Land Administration Board, on which the Forestry Sub-Department is represented. I urge the Minister to give serious consideration to what I have said, particularly in the interests of the settlers now living within the area. They have to contend with very serious difficulties, especially in combating marsupials, noxious weeds, and other pests. Financially they are unable to fence against the marsupial or to resist the inroads of noxious weeds. The Minister should consider the matter from every angle. I hold the view that much of the land could be more economically used for agricultural purposes than reforestation. This area was portion of my electorate from 1920 to 1923, it was then excluded, but was again included at the last elections. Upon my return to that area I was sorry to hear the same arguments that had been used years before on the question whether the land should be retained for forestry or used for agricultural purposes.

It is contended by practical timber men who have lived in the area and watched the growth of timber that the Forestry Sub-department acts unwisely in destroying all the young growth when it decides to replant the area after the bigger timber has been removed. It has been the practice of the department to cut out all the small pine before replanting the area, but these practical men have expressed the opinion that it would be preferable to allow the small timber to continue to grow and thus resist the undergrowth to some extent. They are of the opinion that it would be in the best interests of the State to rely on the natural regeneration instead of destroying the young timber, thereby providing a splendid opportunity for the development of undergrowth,

and possibly bush fires. Again I ask the Minister to give the matter very serious consideration. There are a certain number of settlers in the district at the present time, and in their interests a portion of the area should be made available for closer settlement, so that they may enjoy the benefits of roads and schools and other social advantages so necessary for people struggling on the land.

The Minister regards the primary producer as the backbone of the country, but he should assist him to justify that reputation by administering the affairs of Queensland in his interests. When primary products are grown they must be conveyed by railway to the city and then carted to the market. Practically every other department is in some way indirectly affected by the policy and prosperity of this department. Therefore, its administration is of great importance. The Department of Agriculture is closely associated. I hope the Minister will realise the present position of settlers, and instead of looking to them for an improvement of the land position he will lend some assistance in the direction of cutting overhead costs, which are very burdensome at the present time.

Mr. HEALY (*Warwick*) [12.6 p.m.]: I am pleased to have this opportunity of paying a tribute to the officers of the department for their very efficient administration. After listening for the past few weeks to the many heated debates in this Chamber, it was quite refreshing to see that on this vote at least one member of the Opposition was big enough to pay a tribute where it was due. I was impressed with the well merited eulogy of the Minister by the hon. member for Isis, to whose capable administration of this department he paid a compliment. I heartily endorse his sentiments.

The future of a young country like Queensland to a great extent depends on the land policy of the Government and its sympathetic administration. In this regard the Government and the Minister have achieved results of which they may well feel proud. Not only is much of our progress dependent on land settlement; relief of unemployment can also in a measure be attributed to the sound administration of the department.

It is amusing to hear the argument of hon. members opposite on that hardy old annual, the freehold versus leasehold controversy. We on this side of the Committee have always roundly condemned the policy of freehold tenure. At election after election we have placed the policy of leasehold tenure in the forefront of our programme. In view of the fact that for seventeen out of the past twenty years the electors have endorsed that policy, surely it is time that our friends opposite gave freehold tenure a decent burial and gave us some new conceptions when this vote comes up for consideration!

It is seldom that I find myself in accord with the hon. member for Dalby, but I must confess that I agree with his remarks on this vote regarding the serious menace of the Alsatian dog to the sheep industry. I would not go so far as the hon. member, and say that the life of a sheep is more valuable than the life of a city child, but I say quite sincerely the Alsatian is a menace to both man and beast. We have already definite evidence in Queensland that the

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Alsatian will cross with the dingo. The adoption of a careless attitude in regard to the Alsatian will have serious repercussions on the sheep industry. Before this danger increases I strongly recommend the Minister to bring down legislation for the compulsory sterilisation of all Alsatian dogs with a view to their ultimate total banishment.

There is another problem affected by this vote that is also a serious menace to the grazing interests, that is, the dingo menace.

Quite recently the hon. member for Carnarvon and I met a deputation from the Warwick branch of the United Graziers' Association, members of which pointed out to us the extent of the menace in the southern and south-western portions of this State. It was suggested to us that we should represent to the Government the necessity for increasing the height of the present rabbit-proof fence in order that areas in the locality adjacent to the New South Wales border might be protected from the invasion of dingoes from New South Wales. The present fence is 4 feet in height, and it is suggested by men who have a knowledge of these matters that 2 feet should be added to the height in order to afford protection from that invasion. One sheep man in the Warwick electorate has lost 100 sheep during the last six months, and another 150 in the last twelve months, as a result of attacks by dingoes. Judging by those figures, it would appear that the losses in that part of the State from the dingo are very considerable. It is claimed by the owner of a sheep property in my electorate that if such a fence were erected the property could carry from 3,000 to 4,000 more sheep. That condition must apply throughout that portion of the State; so that, if the sheep men could get protection from the dingo, the carrying capacity of Queensland would be increased, and the national wealth of the State increased. I ask the Minister to look at this matter from a national point of view. The expenditure that would be involved in carrying out this work would be justified.

Mr. WALKER (*Cooroora*) [12.13 p.m.]: I realise the difficulties confronting the Minister, especially in regard to the tariff on cotton. I do not intend to justify the action of the Federal Government in any shape or form. I consider that by their manipulation of the tariff they have injured the industry in this State. The same condition of affairs existed when the McCormack Government were in power, and what applied then applies to-day. I wish to make clear what the position was when the Moore Government assumed office. We played the game to such an extent that the cotton industry never enjoyed two better years in its history. If it were not for the excellent and efficient system established by the manager of the Board, I venture to say the growers would be as badly off to-day as they were under the McCormack regime.

I have an official statement that I shall read that will convey some idea of the good work done by the Moore Government. When we came into power we guaranteed 5d. a lb. to the cotton-growers, and distributed £30,000 amongst them straight away. We realised that would not carry them on for long, and it would be necessary that they should have a bounty. The depression intervened and we had no money available; but we made representations to the Federal Government.

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I represented the Moore Government in the negotiations, and discussed with leading members of the Federal Country Party what would be the best thing to do. We arranged to meet the Acting Minister for Trade and Customs, Mr. Forde, and we did so. The result was that beneficial legislation was passed and we got protection. The cotton bounty came up, as it was due to expire in the following year, 1930. On the 20th February, 1930, I had an interview with the officers of the Commonwealth Department in conjunction with my own officers. We met Mr. Scullin and Mr. Forde in Canberra, and had a tentative discussion as to whether the Federal Government were likely to extend the existing bounty, substitute a bounty on another scale, or allow the legislation to become inoperative by effluxion of time in 1931. The Commonwealth Minister gave an assurance that sympathetic consideration would be given to the introduction of a new Bounty Act, subject to the State Government's doing something to assist the industry—at that time we had in mind the purchase of the oil mill and ginneries from the British Australian Cotton Association, Limited—and subject also to something being done to stabilise the business as between the Cotton Board, representing the growers, and the cotton spinners, who, of course, were the buyers of raw cotton.

On the afternoon of the 20th February, 1930, a large conference was held, at which all the sections of the industry were represented. The Queensland Cotton Board was represented by its very able and efficient manager. There were also present the directors of the various cotton mills, who purchased their raw material from all parts of the world. We endeavoured to induce them to fill their requirements with Australian cotton. The Queensland Department of Agriculture was represented by the Under Secretary, the Director of Marketing, and myself. After a long discussion we decided to proceed on sound lines, and the proposals I had received from the Moore Government were presented to the Acting Minister for Trade and Customs, Mr. Forde, who accepted them. That put the cotton industry on a sound footing.

There are only a few minutes left for me to speak under the Standing Orders, and I shall have to deal with a few of the details as quickly as possible. From 1932 the bounty on cotton was to be reduced on a diminishing scale, as follows:—

	Per lb. of seed cotton.		
	d.		
1932	1½
1933	1¼
1934	1
1935	¾
1936	½

In the meantime we were relying on the Commonwealth Government to come forward with some protective policy in regard to the import duty on cotton. The State Government undertook to render every assistance to the growers through the department, and also to provide by means of a State Government guarantee sufficient funds to enable the growers to purchase the ginnery and oil mill. That was part of the agreement. We purchased the mills from the British Australian Cotton Association, Limited, for £137,500, and guaranteed for the Cotton Board approximately £20,000 to modernise

the plant. The cotton-growers are, therefore, controlling not only their side of the industry, but also their own cotton mills, with absolute credit to themselves and to Queensland. This is the finest thing that has ever been done for the industry, and it was done by the Moore Government.

Hon. members on the other side must be fair in their criticism. The Moore Government have borne the sins of the depression and many others that we have had no right to carry. Here is an instance in which the Moore Government put forward a scheme of the utmost importance and greatest help to the industry. It has been greatly appreciated by all concerned in that industry. I say that the Secretary for Public Lands and other responsible persons should be quite candid and say, "So far as your Government are concerned, you did so-and-so, and you deserve credit for it. We do not want you to carry the sins of Sir Henry Gullet." Personally, I have no time at all for Sir Henry Gullet, because, although I went to Canberra and certainly got a modification, no thanks were due to Sir Henry Gullet. I had to make use of all the political strings I could pull. I had to make use of Dr. Earle Page and Mr. Bruce and Mr. Lyons in order to get some concession, and even then Queensland received only a small concession. The Moore Government did everything that was possible, and the previous and present Labour Administrations have done nothing equal to that done by the Moore Government.

Mr. CONROY (*Maranoa*) [12.20 p.m.]: As a country member, I am naturally brought into very close contact with the Minister and practically every officer of his department. I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to the Secretary for Public Lands, the officers of the Land Administration Board, and other officers connected with the department for the excellent treatment I have received from them in the past. It has been my duty to interview them on several important matters relating to the position of the man on the land, and while in some cases I have not been as successful as I should have liked, I must say that I have always received very favourable consideration from the Minister and his officers.

I have listened carefully to this debate. It seems to me that two hardy annuals are discussed in Committee on the Estimates. One is the controversy of freehold versus leasehold tenure of land, and the other that of day labour versus contract in public works. The latter does not enter into this debate. Freehold tenure has been very fully discussed in this Committee, and it is not my intention to deal fully with it now. I should like to point out to the members of the Committee what freehold tenure means and the result of the freehold tenures that were given many years ago to very large lessees of pastoral holdings. The greater portion of the holdings in the Maranoa electorate are freehold. The others are held on lease. That brings me to the question of closer settlement, and I shall refer to the leases in the Maranoa district. The railway passes through all of the leaseholds in that district. We had an example of what this freehold tenure meant when the Government decided to resume Mount Abundance. That repurchase was so expensive that the incoming tenants were unable to pay the necessarily

high rentals. There are several other holdings suitable for closer settlement, but, unfortunately, the greater portion are freehold, and can only be resumed on the same conditions as Mount Abundance. It would be almost impossible for the incoming selector to pay the rent required.

There is a good deal of land hunger in Queensland. I was very pleased to hear the Minister explaining the position to hon. members opposite this morning. The impression some hon. members opposite had was that no more land was available for settlement. They took in the general phrase of the Minister. The Minister explained this morning that there was no more available for pastoral settlement. That is very different from land for closer settlement.

The Department of Public Lands has done everything possible to assist the men on the land—the men whom I regard as settlers on the land. During last session this Parliament passed "The Land Act Amendment Act of 1934." Before that amendment was introduced some men with inadequate areas were penalised to a certain extent because they could not obtain further areas unless the land available for selection was contiguous or adjacent to their holdings. The amendment of the Act was of considerable importance to them, because it gave them the opportunity of applying for additional areas, even if the area they desired was not adjacent or contiguous to their own holdings. That was a very important matter, because I know that in the Maranoa electorate many people desired additional areas and were naturally entitled to them because the areas they were on did not constitute living areas. Owing to the conditions that previously existed they were unable to obtain additional areas.

I have heard the hon. members for Warwick, Warrego, and Dalby deal with the much-discussed question of the Alsatian dog. I shall not say that I have always felt a dislike for the Alsatian, but I have regarded the Alsatian, so far as the country districts of Queensland are concerned, as a menace. I brought the matter up in this Chamber three or four years ago, and I hold the same opinion now as I held then.

At 12.30 p.m.,

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

Mr. CONROY: Whether the people realise it or not, unless some control is exercised over the Alsatian dog it is bound to become a great menace to the interests of the people in the country. The dog is called an Alsatian, but its proper name is Wolfhound, and I am firmly of the opinion that any animal with the breeding of a wolf is not fit to be at large, particularly in grazing areas. If people in the cities and large centres of population fancy the animal as a pet, that is a matter for them. The Minister has stated that the question of exercising control over the Alsatian dog is primarily one for the Federal Government, but I think it is also a matter for the State Government. They should take definite action to prohibit the keeping of Alsatian dogs in country areas. The hon. member for Warwick advocated their sterilisation, and that may be the best way of overcoming the difficulty. We have not a great deal of evidence to show that damage has been done

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by the Alsatian dog, but the day is not far distant when the graziers will suffer considerable loss through the inter-breeding of the Alsatian with the dingo, unless definite action is taken to prevent it.

There is a matter in connection with the rabbit pest that I should like to bring under the notice of the Minister. When the Moore Government passed the Grazing Districts Improvement Act, the Carnarvon, Maranoa, Warrego, Mitchell, Gregory North and Burke Rabbit Boards were abolished. I never regarded that as a good move. I have read the report of the royal commission that inquired into the operations of rabbit boards, and whilst I agree that it may have had some justification for recommending that certain rabbit boards be abolished, so far as I could see—in one or two instances in particular—it was done because they had failed to carry out their work in a proper manner. That is to say, some of the members of the board and some of the clerks and officers had not carried out their duties in a proper manner. But to my way of thinking there is no reason why a board established for the purpose of carrying out certain functions should be abolished merely because its members or officers have failed in the performance of their duties. Take for instance the Maranoa Rabbit Board. Its operations were very unfavourably commented on by the commission. That was because it did not do its work properly. On that account the board was abolished. If members of a public body do not carry out their duties in accordance with the directions of the Act of Parliament and the department administering it, they should be replaced by others who will do so. The remedy is not in abolishing, but in reorganising it. That is the action invariably taken with departments that do not administer the statutes as the Government desire. No department is ever abolished; it is reorganised. The Leichhardt Rabbit Board is the only board in existence in the south-west portion of the State. As a result there has been an almost unhindered influx of rabbits from the South. The rabbit boards on the southern border of the Maranoa boundaries were also abolished. The Leichhardt Rabbit Board is engaged in a lone hand fight in exterminating and checking the onward progress of this menace. We are not doing fairly by it in its lone fight.

Mr. MAHER: You think it was a mistake to repeal the district improvement boards?

Mr. CONROY: I am not talking about district improvement boards; I am referring to the mistake made in abolishing certain rabbit boards because they did not work efficiently.

The following extract from the report presented by the superintendent at a meeting of the Leichhardt Rabbit Board, held on 1st October, 1935, lends emphasis to my remarks:—

“Indications now point to a heavy breeding season ahead, with young rabbits already much in evidence along the fence frontage. A big increase is also noticeable in the Mungallala district, with many areas now overrun with the pest, and rabbits even burrowing in back yards in the township south of the netting fence.”

That shows how serious the position is. It is apparent that because of the increase

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in the number of rabbits and the fact that no board is functioning in the Maranoa district, that they will eventually get through the fence. Hon. members who do not live in areas infested with rabbits cannot realise what this would mean. If the rabbits get through the fence of the Leichhardt Rabbit Board there would be no board northwards to check their onward march. The Leichhardt Rabbit Board has been doing wonderfully good work, and has even erected a check fence. My contention is that it was a great mistake in the first place to abolish certain rabbit boards because they were not working properly, and that its members should have been replaced by those who were prepared to do their duty according to the Act. If that had been done the influx of rabbits in the Maranoa district would have been checked.

Mr. HILTON (*Carnarvon*) [12.35 p.m.]: I should be lacking in my duty as a representative of a large tract of pastoral land if I did not take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the efficient and satisfactory administration of this department. I join very heartily with other hon. members who have preceded me in stating that the Minister is an ideal one for the position. He evidently knows his job, because he has carried it out with a very great degree of success. I also pay tribute to the officers not only in the department itself, but in the various sub-departments under its control. I have been very favourably and agreeably impressed with the sympathetic assistance given to me since my advent to Parliament by these officials. I am very happy in having this opportunity of expressing my appreciation in a public manner. There seems to be a general agreement in so far as the administration of the department is concerned.

I have listened attentively during the course of the debate on this vote and I was impressed by the fact that there was an absence of any criticism of the administration. Of course, that hardy annual, the leasehold versus freehold controversy, cropped up; and after listening to the arguments put forward one could not help being convinced that the opposition to leasehold as against freehold is more psychological than logical. During the debate some of the evils attached to the freehold system were forcibly impressed upon us.

I was surprised when I heard the Minister say that there was only approximately 48,000,000 acres of land left for selection in this State. I was not aware that land selection under the various headings had progressed to such an extent. Our population is approximately 953,000 and our ratio of population to the land selected, i.e., including pastoral and grazing holdings—city and town lands—is approximately one person to every 400 acres. Even if a policy of closer settlement was vigorously pursued on the remaining land available for selection the population of this State would not grow to the extent we consider desirable. The progress of science in the industrial and mechanical world has resulted in the displacement of man-power by the machine, and we cannot look to our secondary industries to promote a big increase in population; it is therefore necessary to continue a policy of intense and efficient land settlement for that purpose. There are thousands of acres of land lying idle in vari-

ous parts of Queensland, and the time is rapidly approaching when action will have to be taken to see that this land, whether freehold or leasehold, is fully utilised.

Much has been said about the provision of water on stock routes and water conservation. I am heartily in accord with the Government's policy of providing water on stock routes. An amount of £70,000 is to be expended in this connection, and I hope that amount will be followed by the expenditure of other substantial sums during subsequent years for the same purpose until our stock routes are amply provided with water at suitable distances. In my opinion a long range policy should be adopted in water conservation because that is one of the methods by which closer settlement will be stimulated. It would be work of a reproductive nature, and would provide employment for thousands of people who are now without it. Works of that nature would afford ample justification for the continuance of the relief tax or any other tax for a number of years. The various projects that have been mooted are all within the realms of possibility. Even with the meagre information available we know full well that if some of these projects were completed they would ensure a plentiful supply of water and a vast amount of fodder in various parts of Queensland in the event of a State-wide drought. I heartily commend the value of a long-range policy in this respect. I am pleased that so much has already been done and I feel confident that the present Government will continue a sound policy in this respect.

Speaking the other day on the Public Estate Improvement Branch, the hon. member for West Moreton either intentionally or unintentionally gave a wrong impression regarding the activities of the Government. He suggested that all the work supervised by this branch was being carried out in some electorates, whereas others were being starved. Reference was made to one particular area, the Billaa Billaa area situated in my electorate. I want to assure the hon. member that the Government have not overlooked access roads in that area. I have been busily engaged in connection with the matter and at the present time the Minister is having an investigation carried out. I merely mention this in order to correct any wrong impression that may have got abroad. It is not true that it has been overlooked. We are very much "on the job." I have urged the Government to do something, and I am very confident that so soon as circumstances permit all the necessary access roads in that area will be constructed.

I endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Warwick in regard to the dingo and Alsatian dog menaces. I was associated with him in the deputation quite recently from the graziers of the district. They view the dog pest with serious alarm.

Mr. MOORE: Two or three of the graziers have Alsatians of their own.

Mr. HILTON: They have and it is very unwise. I know that the Alsatian menace has been investigated by the Commonwealth authorities, who came to the conclusion that nothing could be done. They stated the ordinary dingo-domestic dog cross destroyed just as many sheep as the Alsatian-dingo cross. That may be true.

I have known the innocent little kelpie to kill sheep in a paddock twelve or fifteen miles from the home of its owner on more than one occasion. It is easy to visualise the greater menace of a cross between the dingo and the Alsatian. To some extent the matter has been investigated and the majority of people appear to hold the opinion that there is not much in the contention, but I say very definitely that there must be a remoulding of opinion otherwise the time will come when not only the sheep in the country districts, but the children on their way to and from school will be in danger of attack from such a cross. I make this statement advisedly, although I hope my prophecy will never come true.

As hon. members are aware, a soldier settlement was inaugurated in the Stanthorpe district many years ago. These settlers, in common with those on other soldier settlements, are not experiencing the best of times. A revaluation was made in years gone by and since the advent of a Labour Government a few years ago, another large concession has been granted to many of the settlers by way of the writing off of a large amount of interest. The Secretary for Agriculture visited the settlement and the settlers appreciated his interest, and the wonderful assistance that he has given them, but the position is still unsatisfactory, and I am of the opinion that these settlers will never be in a sound position until they get access to the Land Court and their improvements are assessed on the basis of the value they would be to an incoming tenant at the present time. We all know that many of these settlers have had to abandon their holdings and the capital value of the improvements was written down when they were re-selected. I contend that the writing down should take place before adverse circumstances force the existing settlers from the land. I urge that the Government pursue a policy in that direction, for I believe it is the only way of putting our soldier settlements on a satisfactory basis.

Mr. NICKLIN (*Murrumbidgee*) [12.51 p.m.]: The proposed rural improvement scheme is one to which I have no objection. It is a continuation of a policy introduced by the Moore Government. That policy enabled considerable assistance to be given in country districts, but there are one or two matters upon which I should like a little more information from the Minister. The scheme proposes to make money available to the country people on certain terms and conditions. Condition No. 2 reads—

"When the application has been approved, the landholder or the contractor shall forthwith engage through the Government labour employing agencies the necessary labour."

I have nothing against that condition, provided there is a labour agency in the district, and no other restrictions are placed upon the engagement of labour. Has the landholder the right to select his labour or must he take the men as they appear on the list in the Labour Bureau? Work such as scrub falling, ringbarking, and fencing is specialised work, and it would be dangerous and uneconomic to compel the landholder to take the man whose name appears on the top of the list and put him on to that work. If inexperienced men were put on to scrub falling, the landholder would

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probably have a couple of dead men on his property at the end of the day. Moreover, his costs would be heavier if he were compelled to employ inexperienced men to do such work as fencing and clearing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This money was previously paid out of loan funds. The next £100,000 will be paid out of the Unemployment Relief Fund, and naturally has to carry certain conditions.

Mr. NICKLIN: I realise that, but does it carry the condition that the landholder must forfeit his right to select labour?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He must take the men who are registered.

Mr. NICKLIN: If that is so, the development of the land will be very seriously hampered.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He can stand aside any man who is not efficient.

Mr. NICKLIN: If a man is on the list as a rural worker the landholder cannot tell whether he is efficient until he is put on the job.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I have allowed the hon. member a certain amount of latitude, but I must now ask him to confine his remarks to the matter under discussion. Provision is made on page 134 of the Estimates for a Country Lands Development Fund of £100,000, and the hon. member may deal with that matter when the Loan Estimates are being discussed.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am sorry if I am transgressing. I take it that this is a grant from the Unemployment Relief Fund, and not a loan.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I have given the hon. member my ruling in connection with the matter. When the vote is reached the hon. member will have ample opportunity of dealing with it then.

Mr. NICKLIN: I hope I shall have ample opportunity, and I am sorry I cannot discuss it further at this moment. It is particularly important so far as landholders are concerned.

Our national parks cannot be dealt with except by Act of Parliament. On the North Coast between Landsborough and Eudlo there are many national parks adjacent to the railway line which were reserved years ago to enable people travelling by train to see exactly what the country was like before its development. Since the parks were first established there has been a deviation in the route of the line, and several of them cannot be seen by railway passengers or from the road. Therefore, those parks no longer serve the purpose for which they were established. The areas set aside for this purpose were particularly small—in some cases 15 to 20 acres, and even as small as 5 acres. At the present time they act as a breeding ground for vermin to the detriment of the surrounding settlers. I invite the attention of the Minister to several of those national parks to see if it is not possible to do something in connection with them. They are not serving any useful purpose. Travellers or tourists cannot now see what beauties might remain in them.

The Minister and several other hon. members on both sides of the Committee have referred to the spread of lantana. The Minister said that steps were being taken to obtain from America, or some other part

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of the world, a parasite that would deal with the lantana plant in a similar way to that in which the cactoblastis coped with the prickly-pear. The introduction of this parasite might be effective in some parts of the State, but I should like to point out to the Minister that indiscriminate destruction by this parasite might also have a detrimental effect in certain sections of the State. The lantana plant is utilised very extensively, particularly by banana-growers, to renovate their lands. If there is a wholesale destruction of lantana by this parasite some of the banana-growers on our steep coastal lands might be seriously affected, and much of the land would go out of production, because this steep land is absolutely useless for anything excepting banana-growing. If the opportunity is not given to such growers of renovating their lands by the growth of lantana the effect on their means of livelihood would be serious.

At 2 p.m.,

Mr. O'KEEFE (*Cairns*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved Mr. King in the chair.

Mr. JESSON (*Kennedy*): The hon. member for Carnarvon hit the nail very forcibly on the head when he pointed out that many years ago the Liberal, or Tory Governments gave grants of large tracts of valuable land, representing the public estate, to private individuals and companies, and their actions are having serious repercussions to-day. The Minister has pointed out that large portions of the public estate are locked up under the freehold system, and cannot be made available to the public until the Government are prepared to resume them, probably at considerable cost. That is one factor in favour of perpetual lease as against the freehold system. If the practice of the old Tory Governments in making grants of large areas of the public estate had been continued tremendous areas of our most valuable land would have been handed over to combines at 2s. 6d. an acre, to become very valuable indeed as the years rolled on. The present Government are to be commended for their action in conserving the public estate for the people as a whole.

It is remarkable that although hon. members opposite condemn a policy of socialisation of industry they do not hesitate to advocate a policy of placing large areas of the public estate under the control of combines. If the contention by the hon. member for Nanango is correct, then we are also right in advocating that the working class should have some control of the industries in which they labour. Hon. members opposite condemn a policy of working class control in industry, but at the same time give wholehearted support to monopolistic control of the public estate by their political friends. Their arguments are irreconcilable, and in their own hearts they know that they are wrong.

The remarks by the hon. member for Nanango in connection with the timber industry are the most ridiculous that I have heard since I have been in this Chamber. The timber mills that were closed down during the action of the Moore Government were stimulated into activity under the wise administration of the present Government, even to the extent of working overtime to cope with the demand for timber. The Minister has received many letters and the

Labour Party increased political support from grateful timber people. There is nothing in the arguments by hon. members opposite, which seem to be based on the old nursery rhyme—

“If ‘ifs’ and ‘ands’ were pots and pans,

There’d be no work for tinkers.”

All their arguments are based on “ifs” and “buts,” particularly “buts” in the case of the hon. member for Nanango. Both the hon. member for Cooroora and the hon. member for Hamilton expressed the opinion that the cotton growers were on a good wicket; I want to disillusion them. They congratulated the ex-Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce, upon what he had done in the interests of the cotton growers. They call themselves the Country Party, but they are prepared to applaud a gentleman who does not hesitate to injure the man on the land. We all know that the cotton growers were crippled in the interests of Flinders lane, and the tobacco growers were sacrificed to the tobacco combine. We have endeavoured to do our best for these sections of the primary producers, and I warn hon. members opposite that the Labour Party will be returned at the next Federal election, and it will protect the interests of the cotton and tobacco growers.

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

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [2.5 p.m.]: I should like to offer some comment on the administration of this very important department. I was astounded at the garrulity of the Minister, who took up a considerable amount of time contradicting himself, making extraordinary suggestions, and then endeavouring to wriggle out of them. One can hardly imagine a Minister of the Crown making suggestions as he has done. I should like to know what the policy of the Government is. First of all, we have the Premier suggesting a policy of land settlement and making an appeal for boys to go on the land. He said that one way out of our difficulties was the settlement and the proper occupation of the land. He emphasised the necessity for that policy, and added that the only title we have to this vast estate was to put it to its proper use. Then the Minister gets up and says, “We have reached saturation point in land settlement, and if anyone came along and asked for land I do not know where to put them.”

Mr. FOLEY: You know he didn’t say that.

Mr. MOORE: I will tell the hon. member what he did say. First of all he said—

“The Auditor-General’s report shows that the total proportion of our land now in occupation is 84.29 per cent. That is to say, nearly 84.29 per cent. of the land in Queensland is now in occupation. He points out that 57.02 per cent. is under pastoral occupation and 18.79 per cent. under grazing occupation . . .”

He goes on to say—

“If hon. members will examine the maps that will shortly be available in the Land Administration Board’s report, they will see that what I say is correct. We have more cattle on the land in Queensland to-day than should be there

—that is to say, allowing for sheep and cattle lost in consequence of the drought. People say that the solution of the unemployment position lies in placing people on the land. Where are you going to put them? Quite recently we had a demand for putting boys on the land and providing certain money. The Bureau of Industry examined the proposal from A to Z. I ask: Where is the land? I do not know where it is. The only land in the State that I am able to make available for selection to-day is remote, unoccupied land, reclaimed prickly-pear land, and subdivisions of existing tenures when the current leases expire. If one resumed land from pastoral holdings to-day and opened up a few blocks one would have 1,000 people asking for a block.”

That is pretty definite, and when suggestions are made for putting boys on the land, the Minister says, “We have not got any.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I didn’t say that I did not have any. Read a bit more.

Mr. MOORE: I will do so—

“Mr. Edwards: You can get some real good land at Yarraman.

“The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have been up there, and I would class that amongst the land I have described as remote and unoccupied land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Quite true.

Mr. MOORE:—

“It is not fit to put a settler on under present-day conditions. We have had this land investigated, and it would not do to allow anyone to go on the land to make a living.”

Mr. JESSON: There is nothing unusual in that. The people do not want to be put on a desert.

Mr. MOORE: Does the hon. member call the Yarraman district a desert? It is some of the most fertile land in the State. It is absolute nonsense to talk in that way. The Minister has seen the land.

Mr. JESSON: You twisted what he said.

Mr. MOORE: I have not; I have read what he said.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not all of it.

Mr. MOORE: That is so. The hon. gentleman said—

“Our great trouble is to keep the people on the land who are there. I want to bring home the fact to this Committee that this Government are faced with saturation in land settlement in this State.

“Saturation in land settlement.” What does that mean?

Mr. JESSON: There is a dictionary on the table; find out for yourself.

Mr. MOORE: I am pointing out that the Minister made a definite statement, and I want to know what is the policy of the Government.

Mr. POWER: You want to steal their policy like you did before the elections.

Mr. MOORE: I do not want to steal the Minister’s policy. Don’t worry about that! I want to know what the policy of the

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Government is, because we have the Premier making one statement that we must settle our lands and the Minister making another statement that land settlement has reached saturation point. It seems extraordinary. We do not know what it is.

Mr. FOLEY: You have already quoted the actual position and the percentage of land occupied.

Mr. MOORE: I have done that, and the hon. member will recollect that in 1931 the royal commission on the development of North Queensland made a complete survey and report of the lands of the North. It said that North Queensland was largely vacant. The Minister, in speaking on land settlement matters the day before yesterday, talked of opening up 10,000,000 acres of land for selection in the North. The commission said—

“The territory with which we are dealing embraces an area of approximately 5,045,760 acres.

“The unalienated land consisted of—

	acres.
National Parks ...	80,040
Forest Reserves ...	891,272
Grazing Land ...	804,440
Vacant Crown Land	2,266,789
Total	4,042,541 ”

The Minister, when speaking on this vote on Tuesday, said in reply to an interjection as to what the tenure would be—

“Perpetual lease tenure with a condition of five years occupation, and all the timber in the area is to be used at the discretion of the settler. If he wishes to buy cattle, or do fencing, he may apply the value of the timber to that purpose. If that value is not used on the selection he must pay royalty. As I said before, we are opening land at the cheapest price in the history of Queensland.”

Which would lead anyone to expect that the timber was left on the land for the settler to use. Is not that a perfectly clear statement? On page 6 of the report of the Land Administration Board on the operations of the Department of Public Lands the following appears:—

“A further area of 6,018 acres will be made available as soon as the removal of marketable timbers has been completed.”

Further on on the same page the report says—

“The West Palmerston lands adjoining the above, comprising about 6,085 acres, have been designed into twenty-eight portions having areas of from 165 to 300 acres, and action to make these portions available for selection awaits the removal of marketable timber and the completion of access roads.”

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: What is wrong with that?

Mr. MOORE: Nothing. What is the use of the Minister's getting up and saying that when a settler goes on he shall have the use of the marketable timber for purchasing cattle and improving his property, leading anyone to expect the timber was left there? He does not say that in so many words, but

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that is the inference to be drawn from what he said. What he does say is—

“Perpetual lease tenure, with a condition of five years occupation, and all the timber in the area is to be used at the discretion of the settler.”

He does not say he has removed the marketable timber and that all the timber left can be used.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are not removing all the marketable timber.

Mr. MOORE: I am only quoting the hon. gentleman's own report. The Minister makes one statement and the report of the department another, and I cannot help it if the report is wrong. I point out that the Minister definitely made the statement that we had reached saturation point in this State so far as land settlement was concerned.

Mr. JESSON: In one particular regard.

Mr. MOORE: Not in one particular regard.

Mr. JESSON: That is the inference.

Mr. MOORE: It is not. I read out a few moments ago what he said and I will read it again—

“The Bureau of Industry examined the proposal from A to Z. I ask: Where is the land? I do not know where it is. The only land in the State that I am able to make available for selection to-day is remote, unoccupied land, reclaimed prickly-pear land, and subdivisions of existing tenures . . . ”

Saturation point! He repeats it three or four times. It is an extraordinary position when a State of such a size—

Mr. HILTON: You would not expect the department to send boys out to these remote parts?

Mr. MOORE: What I want to know is why the Premier makes a statement practically appealing for immigrants and for boys to go on the land and stating that that is one of the solutions of our difficulties, and the Minister says he has not got the land to put them on.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER interjected.

Mr. MOORE: Hon. members are trying to wriggle out of the position they have been forced into through the contradictory statements of two members of their own Government.

Mr. POWER: You are the best wriggler in this Chamber.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member took two salaries when he said he did not want to do it.

The Minister made another very extraordinary statement when he pointed out the advantage of leasehold tenure of land. He said the Crown had a wonderful record of giving concessions to the people—they were continually doing so. What do we find when we examine the facts? At page 1155 of “Hansard” for last year, the Minister is reported as saying—

“For the benefit of the Committee, and in support of my statement that the amount of money collected in land revenues last year was a record since 1929, which was the peak year of Queensland, I have only to state that the amount of money that went into the till from this source was £1,141,000. I claim

for my Government and my administration the credit for that achievement."

He was taking credit to himself for wringing more money from land revenues out of the people during a period of unprecedented difficulty and when prices were at their lowest. The Minister boasted that during that time he put more money into the till from land revenues—

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: There was greater settlement.

Mr. MOORE: The Minister said it had reached saturation point! He has wrung more money out of the people, according to his own statement, and yet he talks about concessions.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Where were rentals increased?

Mr. MOORE: There are increases very often.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How many and how much? We have not increased the incidence of land tax.

Mr. MOORE: You did not increase the incidence. Any increases made are made by the Land Court.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Persons listening to you would infer that we had increased it.

Mr. MOORE: I am not suggesting that at all. What I am suggesting is that although the Minister talks of the number of concessions he has given, the reductions he has made, and the amount of help he has afforded to the people of Queensland, he stands in this Chamber and boasts that he has in the same period put more money into the till of the State from land revenue than ever before. That shows that his concessions are purely mythical. I should like to know how many forfeitures there have been to the Crown and the Agricultural Bank and also to private people in that time. This morning the hon. member for Maranoa made a statement about Mount Abundance. That was sold under the land betterment system. That was a system adopted at a particular time in order to liquidate the cost of railways. Fifty-four years ago Mount Abundance was sold at 32s. an acre, completely unimproved. The money obtained by the sale of the land adjacent to each side of the railway was used for the construction of the line. After improvements such as fences and water and other things were put on the land, and after it had been used for a great length of time, it was sold to the Government at £2 3s. an acre. Hon. members can see that there was not much profit out of the deal. The land was in use all the time and the money expended in constructing the railway was obtained by the sale of it. The money was not wasted; the railway was built with it. The resumption was not exorbitant. At that time that estate was paying an enormous amount in income taxation and land taxation, but since its resumption there has had to be a writing down of the price paid for it on three separate occasions. Now, instead of the Crown obtaining revenue from that area it is very heavy losers. Certainly I am not cavilling at that. There are settlers there and they have had to face many difficulties. The position would have been exactly the same had the tenure been freehold or leasehold. The Government has had the use of the money all the time inasmuch

as they constructed a railway out of the proceeds of the sale of the land adjacent to the line.

Mr. JESSON: That is why in those days the Tory politicians did not receive any pay. They used to take it out of the land grants.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MOORE: I am not making any suggestion that anything crooked occurred. I am only stating the actual facts. The whole matter was investigated by the Land Court and all the usual formalities complied with. The hon. member is one of those unpleasant people who are always making statements that everybody is "crook." There is no suggestion that anybody was bribed. Surely hon. members can discuss the Estimates of the department without that kind of suggestion!

The dingo menace is of vital importance. The suggestion has been put forward in this Chamber that one of the solutions is a return to the system under which payment is made for scalps. Such a system was in operation for forty years. Over £1,500,000 was spent in dingo destruction, and the amount expended annually was continually increasing. During the five years prior to 1929, when the marsupial boards were abolished, 39,692 dingo scalps were paid for each year. It was owing to the continual increase in the number of dingo scalps that had to be paid for that an investigation was instituted by the Government. An inquiry board was established and on its recommendation they abolished the old system. The change was not made until after a most careful investigation had been made. Evidence was taken throughout the State by competent men. The board suggested that the Government institute district improvement boards. The following year the Land Administration Board reported that the newly constituted boards had done very excellent work. Practically every one of them showed conspicuous industry in the work of exterminating dingoes. Quite a number of them were very industrious in setting out baits and providing water and grass on stock routes, but because a Tory Government established these boards the Minister thought that was a reasonable excuse for abolishing them and putting the work on to the shire councils. The reports show that those boards were doing good work. It had been proved that increasing the price for dingo scalps did not have the effect of reducing the number of dingoes—dingoes had been increasing—but the reports of the various district improvement boards showed that after they had been in operation for eighteen months there was a considerable diminution in the number of dingoes, which proves that those boards had carried out their work with remarkable success, and that increasing the payment for dingo scalps does not mean that the country will be rid of the nuisance.

One suggestion in the report was that high payments for dingo scalps would encourage men to allow dingoes to grow and provide a source of lucrative income. That is one of the reasons for suggesting wholesale poisoning rather than increased payment for scalps. It is a great pity that those district improvement boards were not given a better opportunity to show what they could do.

Mr. JESSON: How do you suggest dealing with them now?

Mr. Moore]

Mr. MOORE: The best way of dealing with them is to continue the system inaugurated by the Moore Government. Instead of placing the work on the shoulders of the shire councils, whose main concern is not the extermination of dingoes. Local authorities have plenty to do without worrying about dingoes. A special board should be appointed to deal only with the conservation of water and grass on stock routes and the destruction of dingoes.

Mr. GLEDSON: You want more expenditure.

Mr. MOORE: I do not want more expenditure, but if the expenditure of a further £3,000 or £4,000 will assure the success of a scheme, is it not infinitely better to spend it? Chancesparing is no good if it allows the menace to increase. After all, who is to pay the expenditure? The people who are paying it to-day, the people who have contributed by means of rates or in some other way for the extermination of dingoes. The people will realise that it is cheaper to pay the small additional costs and get a satisfactory scheme that will exterminate the cause of their losses. Local authorities are not interested in the extermination of dingoes, or looking after stock routes. These are side issues with them.

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you say the local authorities have no interest in the extermination of dingoes?

Mr. MOORE: In many cases they have not.

Mr. GLEDSON: They ought to have.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, but in many cases they have not. In many cases, as the hon. member knows, the local authorities meet perhaps once in every month or six weeks, when they deal with all correspondence relating to roads, water, health, and other such matters. They have no time to devote their attention to outside issues. They are not concerned with the destruction of dingoes. They are more interested in the streets of their towns.

I was rather interested at the use that was made by the Premier of Dr. Page's figures in an endeavour to show that through the wonderful administration of the Labour Government there are more farmers, agriculturists, and dairy farmers in Queensland than any other State of the Commonwealth. The figures quoted by Dr. Page were copied straight from the "ABC of Queensland and Australian Statistics." They do not show the numbers of farmers but the number of those engaged in the industry. We know the numbers employed in the sugar industry from time to time—in the mills and in cancutting. Those people are not farmers. These are the numbers actually employed, but they do not go to show anything very much. A study of the figures in the latest bulletin, No. 23, issued by the Federal Government, shows that there is far more female labour in Queensland in those industries than in any other State of the Commonwealth. In the dairying industry for the year 1933-34 there were 29,803 males and 19,539 females. In New South Wales there were 38,353 males and 7,246 females, and in Victoria there were 41,433 males as against 8,466 females. Queensland has got considerably more females than either. In the same way there are more females connected with agriculture. To show how stupid the hon.

gentleman's suggestion is, a reference to the same bulletin shows that for the year 1933-34 there were in New South Wales 12,339,300 acres under agriculture; in Victoria, 7,809,956 acres; and in Queensland, 1,506,149 acres. That has been a misuse of figures to get political propaganda out of it. The whole trend of the Minister's speech was political propaganda. The Minister has been trying to get away with that and all sorts of extraordinary statements.

This morning the hon. gentleman quoted cotton figures, and he deliberately left out the amount given as a Federal bounty. He said that the price of cotton had been brought down to 2.5d. a pound. He did not say that there was also a Federal bounty that brought the figure up to 3.265d. a pound. He endeavoured to leave an impression in the minds of the people that the sum the growers were getting was 2.5d. a pound, when, as a matter of fact, in the Auditor-General's report that officer points out that the Federal Government's bounty came to roughly 2d. a pound. With the addition of that 2d. the price is brought up to 3.25d. a pound, which is quite a different figure from that the Minister quoted. The whole system he has been putting up is wrong. His idea is to create a wrong impression in the minds of the people that they have been swindled by somebody, and that this wonderful Government have been making up the difference by concessions. He has been endeavouring all the way through to do that.

Hon. members opposite have attempted to make a great deal out of the timber industry.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I said very little.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. gentleman might have said little, but others had a good deal to say. He has already talked for about five hours on his own estimates, and he spent one and a-half hours explaining he did not mean what he said.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [2.29 p.m.]: I admire the gentlemanly and the courteous manner in which the Leader of the Opposition has dealt with the Estimates. He has set an example to this Committee of how any hon. member can debate Estimates in a beautiful non-partisan spirit. I am satisfied that everyone will admire the keen way he has dealt with the subject.

My political experience convinces me that the man who prates about the need to make non-partisan speeches never fails to deal with every subject in the most partisan way. He ignores his own oft-repeated injunction that the Estimates should be discussed in a nice, courteous and kind way. The policy of the Labour Government with regard to land settlement does not vary from day to day. We have a progressive land settlement policy, but it does not change. It was placed before the people on the hustings, and it is the same policy that stands to-day. It is clearly set out in the policy speech of the Premier, and was forcibly enunciated by the members of the party during the election campaign.

How on earth are we to maintain a policy of progressive land settlement in the pastoral industry if no additional areas are available for settlement? I am not ashamed

[*Mr. Moore.*]

to admit that there are no new areas available for settlement in the pastoral areas. We have reached saturation point in that industry—and I defy anybody to prove otherwise—but that does not mean that land settlement in Queensland must cease. There are millions of acres of land available for dairying and mixed farming purposes which will provide work for many years ahead. The Government have endeavoured to place boys on the land, but not in the pastoral industry or on large tracts of difficult country in the far North. The matter has been investigated by the Bureau of Industry, officers of my department, and other experts, but they all realise that boys cannot be placed on difficult blocks involving the expenditure of a considerable amount of capital. For instance, they could not be placed on heavily timbered country and other difficult areas that call for the possession of strong mature muscles and plenty of capital, in addition to a stout heart, for their development. What the Premier and the Bureau of Industry had in mind were opportunities for placing boys on land adjacent to the city, but unfortunately it is not available unless it is resumed by the Government.

Again I point out the danger of continuing the freehold policy in this State. All the land adjacent to the metropolitan area that would be admirably suitable for the settlement of boys is held by speculators, and the only way in which it could be secured would be by resuming it. The present Government could not repudiate. Labour Governments do not repudiate. We always honour our just obligations so long as we are able. Where are we to get the money to pay the exorbitant prices demanded by the owners of freehold land in close proximity to the metropolitan area?

In his kind, courteous speech, the Leader of the Opposition contended that I continually explained that I did not mean what I had said, but did I not deal with the matter in an unbiassed way from the very outset of my speech, by quoting figures from the report of the Auditor-General? I quoted those figures deliberately so that I could not be charged with indulging party political bias. I pointed out that there was a certain acreage of land available for settlement in the far North. The Leader of the Opposition took me to task because he said I had made a mistake concerning the timber on the areas. There were tremendous areas of valuable timber on the Clump Point, Eungella, and Palmerston areas. The Leader of the Opposition excused himself by saying that he had only the report of the department to guide him in his criticism, entirely overlooking the fact that with every new settlement land opening conditions are clearly set out. The land opening conditions are a very important matter. Let me remind him of the land opening conditions in the case of one settlement—the Clump Point lands. They provide:—

“During the first five years of the term of lease, permits to cut and remove timber from the selections will be issued by the Land Commissioner only on condition that royalty is paid to the Crown at the ruling rate in the district.

“A refund of the full royalty will, however, be made on the application of the selector in respect of timber which has been removed from lands which have

been felled and grassed or cultivated within a period of twelve months from the date of the removal of the timber.”

It was absolutely necessary to include that condition, because every area opened up contained valuable timber. Hon. members, no doubt, read the statement of the Governor on his return from the North recently that he had visited the Palmerston area and saw the new selectors engaged in hauling timber from their selections. Some of that timber was the best timber in Queensland, for which decent prices were obtained. The selectors got the advantage of the value of that timber.

The Forestry Sub-Department has an obligation, not only to the Government, but also to the people of the State; and wherever land is opened for selection it naturally does its best, as custodians of the public estate, to get as much revenue as possible from the timber beforehand. No Government have allowed more timber to remain on the land than this Government. Large quantities of marketable timbers have been left in the Palmerston areas. The Land Administration Board to-day takes a more definite stand on this matter than at any other time in the history of the State. It recognises that it is necessary for the Government to do as much as possible for the man on the land. We have done it in this instance by permitting the selector to earn a living from the time of selection by marketing the marketable timber. That is why that splendid condition was included in respect of the Palmerston, Clump Point, and Eungella settlements. It would not be fair to allow the timber speculator to take up these areas. The idea is that if the timber is used in developing the area no royalty is paid, but if the selector sells the timber only and does not use that money in the development of the land, he must pay royalty.

The Leader of the Opposition again wanted to know where these concessions were that we were granting. If he reads a little further in the report of the department, he will see the cost of the wool relief scheme his Government initiated—I give them credit for it. The only reason why the hon. member's Government was able to initiate that scheme was because of Labour's policy of leasehold tenure. If—and the hon. member for Isis referred to the matter—our pastoral lands were held under a freehold tenure, the Moore Government could not have initiated the wool relief concessions. It is just as well that the Committee should understand how these concessions work out. They started on the 1st January, 1930, and have been extended up to date. The annual cost is £96,517. That is to say, the pastoralists of this State who have sheep for growing wool have been relieved of no less a sum than £96,517 every year by all Governments, and the total amount of these concessions up to last year was £423,883. I again emphasise the fact that it was only possible to give that relief to the woolgrowers because of the leasehold system. A freeholder could not get any of that relief. The freeholder could not obtain such concessions from the speculator from whom he purchased his land years ago. No hon. member has heard of these speculators, out of the goodness of their hearts, saying, “You paid me a certain amount for your land, and I am prepared to do for you what the Government have done for the holders of land under lease.”

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That is another striking instance of the benefits of leasehold as against freehold. The Government of this State have been able to relieve the wool industry alone to the extent of £423,883, and this year it will mean over £500,000.

We have given every relief we could. Last session hon. members sitting behind the Government pressed for assistance to the smaller settlers and we passed a Bill that gave relief from Crown dues to certain farmers. Already 490 settlers have received relief, and up to 30th June last it was worth £20,244. We of the Labour Party do not cater for only one section—that is, the big pastoralists—we are more concerned about the small man on the land. We initiated that legislation; it was not copying my predecessor, the ex-Secretary for Public Lands, the chief spokesman on land matters on the Opposition side. Hon. members opposite did nothing for the small man when they were in power although they professed to be so solicitous for him.

It is proper that this Committee and the people should note that the only men on the land whom the Opposition took care of when they were in power—and when they had every opportunity of doing something for the poor downtrodden farmers for whom they say they stand—were the big pastoralists, to whom they gave extension of leases and a reduction of rentals. Yet hon. members opposite get up and say how their heart bleeds for the poor unfortunate dairy and fruit farmer! They did not care about him when they were in office, but this Government have watched his interests.

As the result of representations by hon. members on this side of the Chamber representing farming communities, the first thing this Government did when they assumed office was to take care of the small dairy and mixed farmer, and already, as a result of relief legislation, the small farmer has been helped in one year to the extent of £20,244.

I would like to make a few remarks on the question of leasehold versus freehold. I wish hon. members to understand that freehold does not give any greater title to the land or any greater asset in the land. People sometimes think it gives greater security. I repeat what I said last session, because it is necessary that the new members in this Chamber should be aware of the actual position. Sums aggregating £50,000,000 have been invested in the wool industry and £30,000,000 in the cattle industry, making a total of £80,000,000 invested, not by small holders, but big financial interests not only in Queensland but in other States of Australia and the old country. The whole of the lease in those industries are held under grazing selection or pastoral leases for a term of years—and they are not as good conditions as perpetual lease selection—yet we have seen businessmen of Australia and overseas who have invested over £80,000,000 in them. They are not concerned about freehold.

I said once before something more than that and I repeat it. A little while ago the Commonwealth Government decided to try to do something for the pastoral industry generally, but particularly for the relief of the woolgrowers, and they called a conference of all the heads of the land administrations of the various States with that object. Mr. Payne, the Chairman of Queensland's

Land Administration Board, was invited by the Commonwealth Government to take part in that conference. This Government readily gave him permission, and a good deal of evidence was taken by the Commission that was appointed to investigate the matter. It made a report, a Commonwealth Government report, not a political report. The men on the Commission were drawn from the pastoral and banking circles of Australia and a tribute was paid to Queensland by inviting the chairman of the Queensland Land Administration Board to sit on the investigating body. A very great tribute is paid to Queensland in this report. One of the paragraphs reads—

“The reasonable rent at which Crown land is available enables wool to be produced in Queensland at 2d. per lb. less than in New South Wales or Victoria.”

I emphasise the fact that the industry has in Queensland the advantage of 2d. a lb. in the production of wool as compared with either New South Wales or Victoria, and that is because of the policy of land tenure adopted by Labour.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Are members of the Opposition listening?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They do not listen to these statements. They are not fair enough to admit these things. There is no part of Australia to-day in which the pastoral industry is receiving greater consideration in this period of depression than Queensland. I am pleased to say that a number of our new settlers are coming from the other States. The finest tribute ever paid in Australia to the system of land tenure operating in Queensland was paid by His Excellency the Governor of Queensland when he acquired a property for his son.

Mr. MOORE: He bought a freehold.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Of course; but he could not get a leasehold.

Mr. MOORE: Of course, he could.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The position is that he realised that there is better protection for the wool industry in Queensland under a good Labour Government than there is in either New South Wales or Victoria under a Government of the same political faith as hon. members opposite.

Mr. MAHER: You fell in there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I did not fall in there. The Opposition say that they are standing up for Queensland, but assert that I am decrying the State when I speak of saturation in land settlement. The Governor, whose son had been trained in another State, realised that Queensland is the only State where he would obtain a reasonable chance of progress. He put his son on the land in Queensland. Members of the Opposition say, “Yes, but on freehold.” I will tell hon. members why he had to put him on freehold. The Governor informed me that his son had put in for many land ballots, but had not succeeded in drawing a block. Personally, I should have been rather concerned had he done so. Some inference might have been drawn. The Governor's son had to take freehold, because he could not get leasehold.

Mr. MOORE: He could.

[Hon. P. Pease.]

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He could not.

Mr. MOORE: He could buy it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He could not get the leasehold he wanted. The leasehold he wanted was one direct from the Crown. The department does not allow transfers of leaseholds as easily as that.

Mr. MOORE: You make no objection.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We object very strenuously. As a matter of fact, we have done more to tighten up the transfer of Crown leaseholds than ever any other Government. In the Chief Office a department has been developed with the sole object of scrutinising the transfer of leaseholds, to see that nothing is done that should not be done, that no excessive values are paid in bonuses. The incoming man is not allowed to be made the victim of speculation. The Governor's son bought a freehold because he could not get a leasehold from the Crown.

Had the Leader of the Opposition been fair and carried on the debate in that gentlemanly spirit he desires to see in everyone else, but is never displayed by himself, either in this Chamber or on the hustings, he would have read from the report he made use of, that the Government have effected a good deal of settlement on the land in Queensland during the past year. He made the point that I had been screwing out of the people of the State—the poor, unfortunate farmers—money they could not pay. The Government have not increased the incidence of land rentals in Queensland. We are opening up land at the best prices in the history of Queensland, and the only increases in land rentals have been made on the land of men who have gone to the Land Court. This Labour Government did not appoint the Land Court judges. Each one of these officials was appointed by other Governments. I do not wish it to be inferred that I am saying anything unfavourable about the Land Court. The only thing I am concerned about is that they are perhaps a little too lenient. There is no suggestion that they are political Land Court judges, or that their appointments were political appointments.

Mr. MOORE: I never suggested that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: But you did suggest that we were getting more out of land revenue than we should.

Mr. MOORE: I suggested that you are grinding the last penny out of the people on the land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are not. We are doing what the hon. gentleman neglected to do when he was in power. We are bettering their conditions. That brings us back to the arguments used by hon. members on this side of the Committee. The farmer depends on the ability of the ordinary working people to make purchases. Take the wool grower as an example. If the people in the cities receive low wages—or no wage, as the Moore Government would have given them had they remained in power—they cannot afford to buy woollen clothes, they cannot even afford to buy sugar. I remember sitting on the Opposition benches and pointing out to the Premier, Mr. Moore, that he had reduced the people to the "dripping" standard. The point I

wish to make is that in the better living conditions of the people is to be found the reason why we are getting increased rentals from the land. We have not increased the incidence of rentals. The rentals for new openings are lower than ever before in the history of the State. The policy of the Labour Government is to increase the purchasing power of the ordinary worker so that he will buy more and the farmer will receive a better income and be in a position to pay his rent. Increase the purchasing power of the worker and you improve conditions for the farmer. If the Leader of the Opposition cares to think over the position he will admit that is the correct policy.

Mr. MOORE: Why do you have to spend all your time trying to keep the people on the land?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Members of the hon. gentleman's party have pointed out the reason—the drop in price levels. If he had remained in power there would have been no price level. Not only am I doing all I can to assist the man on the land, but the Government are helping me, because it is the duty of the Government to protect the State's revenue and see that the people have a decent purchasing power. We cannot have increased price levels until we increase the purchasing power. The more we increase that purchasing power of the people, the higher we raise price levels, and the more the man on the land receives for his product.

I want to answer the hon. member for Cook and other hon. members who suggested that there should be more co-operation between Government departments. Co-operation between Government departments is now very good. The main factor in this matter is the Bureau of Industry. There is a State consultation committee, attached to the Bureau of Industry, which is constituted of senior officers drawn from all interested Government departments, and presided over by the Premier. That committee is available at all times for the purpose of examining any land settlement scheme.

I have a few illustrations of how we are assisting land settlement. A committee comprised of the Land Commissioner for the Cairns district, Mr. Hassall, of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and Mr. Sharp, of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, was appointed to conduct an investigation into the tobacco growing industry in the Dimbulah and Chewko districts. I am satisfied, after reading that committee's report, that the main factor in the success of tobacco growing in those districts is irrigation. The hon. member for Cook and the hon. member for The Tableland made representations, and we met several deputations from the farmers in that district. I must pay a tribute to the tobacco farmers in those areas who stuck to their jobs. If ever hard toil and a stout heart were needed they were needed in that and other areas where these men were trying to grow tobacco. It is the duty of the Government to do everything to help such men as those, and I can assure all hon. members that every assistance will be given to them.

In the Clump Point, Upper Burnett, and Callide areas we are co-operating with the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock and

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have made available certain selected blocks of land for the purpose of experimenting with artificial grasses, and that policy will be continued throughout the State. I pay a tribute to my colleague, the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, for the way in which he has always helped me. I want also to draw the attention of hon. members of this Committee to the fine work being carried on by the Bureau of Industry. It is indeed a pleasure to any administrative head to be able to send any matter to that bureau to have it investigated by an expert committee. When one understands the ramifications of the Departments of Agriculture and Public Lands, one realises that there are hundreds of officers belonging to them scattered throughout the State whose duty it is to know the pros and cons of a great variety of subjects. No land opening or settlement takes place to-day unless it is done with the full concurrence of every department.

The Leader of the Opposition had something to say about dingoes. He insinuated that the action of this Government in removing the district improvement boards and placing the duty upon the local authorities was the outcome of a sort of political spite because it was his Government that initiated those boards. That is the type of man that the Leader of the Opposition is! That is the reason why he is in his present position instead of here as Premier. This Government have made the local authorities responsible for dealing with the dingo and have placed a minimum payment on scalps. Before the Government took this action, there was no minimum. Now no less than 5s. can be paid for a scalp. The Government are subsidising local authorities to such an extent that they are able to do a fair amount of work in exterminating the dingoes. It is not the fault of the Government if the local authorities are not going ahead with the job. As a matter of fact, the Government have under consideration a measure to extend their powers regarding the control of stock routes and animal and vegetable pests. Before introducing such a measure, the Government are waiting for the final report of Mr. Leahy because we do not believe in doing things without having first-hand information concerning them. He is travelling throughout the State and is making use of our officers to find out exactly what the position is, and upon the receipt of this first-hand information the Government will take action.

There is also another menace, the rabbit. All these things are under investigation by the Government. We have a Bill prepared, and I proposed to bring it before the House this session, but until I am personally satisfied that every avenue has been explored I shall not do so. It is better to wait a few months and, having possession of all facts, do the job properly.

Mr. MOORE: You did not do that when you did away with the district improvement boards.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. gentleman placed the Government member, the Land Commissioner, in the minority, and as a result the Government would have had to bear the brunt of anything done. It would have been better if there had not been a Government man on the board; he could not do anything on his own initiative. He was a servant of the

board, and as a matter of fact several of my officers got into difficulties because they did something in regard to cattle. There was one instance where some cattle were impounded, and the result was that the Department of Public Lands was inundated by letters of complaint from settlers and petitions asking the Government to remove the land commissioner concerned. The Leader of the Opposition put the land commissioner in a position where he could be shot at. I refused to permit an officer of my department to be shot at in any district. We took those duties away from him.

The Land Administration Board, one member of which is the Director of Forests, has assumed control of the national parks of the State. The hon. member for Murrumba mentioned national parks in his electorate, but I assure him, and other hon. members who have spoken on the subject, that the question of national parks will be very carefully considered in the future. We have commenced by appointing an officer to take care of the national parks in North Queensland, and it is the intention of the Government to appoint an officer to exercise similar duties in the South.

I wish to pay tribute to the National Parks Association of Queensland for what it is doing. Hon. members will have received—as I have received—a circular from the association directing attention to a week-end outing to one of our national parks, at Mount Byron. The association has voluntarily accepted these duties without any financial aid from the Government. Its aim is to draw the attention of the public here and elsewhere to the scenic beauty of our national parks. I commend it for its action, and I commend the hon. member for Murrumba, and other hon. members who have referred to the subject. The national parks are bound to become one of the best assets of the State. To-day, there is an urge to travel, and above all to see something worth while. Queensland is coming more and more into the picture because of her wonderful national parks. I commend the association for its public spirited action in arranging for outings and placing the necessary means of conveyance and meals at the disposal of interested persons at a minimum cost. I have much pleasure in expressing on behalf of the Government my appreciation of its endeavours.

Mr. MULLER (*Fassifern*) [3.2 p.m.]: It is refreshing to hear hon. members opposite tell us what they propose to do for the man on the land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We have done it.

Mr. MULLER: That may be, but the casual observer would imagine that the problems of the man on the land have been overcome for all time. I congratulate both the hon. member for Warwick, and the hon. member for Carnarvon upon having adopted the Country Party complex. It goes to show that representatives from country electorates soon realise that they must adopt the policy that is in the interests of people on the land. It is refreshing to observe their attitude. As the prosperity of the State depends upon the prosperity of the man on the land, it is the duty of hon. members to do all they possibly can to

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improve the conditions of the primary producer. During another debate it was pointed out by the Premier that boys were not offering for positions on the land and that it may be necessary to encourage English boys to settle in this State. I feel that the solution of that difficulty lies in the hands of the present Government. If they were prepared to improve the conditions of the people on the land there would be no need to incur an expenditure in bringing boys from overseas. I am satisfied that if conditions were improved not only should we be able to attract boys from overseas, but a surplus of native-born boys would also be tumbling over themselves in their hurry to take the positions.

Although the question of leasehold versus freehold may be a hardy annual, the fact remains that the present Government are to a very large extent adopting a policy advocated by hon. members on this side for a number of years. The Minister expressed the view that his Government were more concerned about the small man than the big pastoralist, and in the course of his remarks he said that considerable concessions had been given to leaseholders. I should like hon. members opposite to say whether the small men, carrying on agricultural activities, are doing so on leasehold or freehold land. The position as I see it is that a number of freeholders are called upon to pay the taxes of this State and provide all the necessary funds for consolidated revenue, and at the same time receive no consideration. The Minister admitted that in his reply, for he said that the pastoralists working a freehold would not participate in any of the concessions that applied to pastoralists working leaseholds. I know scores of small farmers who are paying very heavy land tax and super land tax.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We do not control the land tax; that is controlled by the Treasurer.

Mr. MULLER: That tax goes into consolidated revenue just the same. The Government of the day must accept the responsibility for having applied local government taxation, the land tax and super land tax to freehold land.

Mr. TAYLOR: How many primary producers pay land tax?

Mr. MULLER: Any amount of them. If hon. members opposite worked a farm for a year or two they would come here and tell us quite a different story from what we have heard this afternoon. Agriculture cannot be carried on without a fair amount of land. Practically the whole of the land on the coastal belt is held under the freehold tenure. The owner finds it almost impossible to carry the load the Government place upon him. The Government are throwing out an inducement to people to take up land under the leasehold tenure. It is impossible to obtain leasehold land on the coastal area. People are therefore compelled to buy freehold land to engage in general agriculture, that is, dairying and mixed farming. Immediately they purchase this land it is subjected to heavy taxation.

The Minister said that one way out of the difficulty was to increase the purchasing power of the people. If the Minister does not know, then he should know that the purchasing power is determined by the prices obtained on the world's markets for

our products. The few people we have in Australia are not in a position to determine that purchasing power. Take one product alone—butter. We export 80 per cent. of our butter and must accept the world's parity. We also export practically the whole of our wool. If we take these two big commodities as an example, how are we to increase the purchasing power of the producers?

I would congratulate the Minister on that paragraph in his report dealing with the loans made available for improving rural lands. Any money advanced for the purpose of developing and increasing the carrying capacity of our lands will create lasting assets. I have in mind that portion of the money that has been allocated to ring-barking and poisoning timber on some of our country. It has created a valuable asset.

I cannot for the life of me understand how the hon. member for Carnarvon could say that there are thousands of acres of freehold land unoccupied.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: My officers who have made an investigation say that there are millions of acres of freehold land not being used.

Mr. MULLER: Those millions of acres of freehold unoccupied land must be very poor land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. My officers say there are millions of acres of good quality land adjacent to Brisbane and other large centres.

Mr. MULLER: I ask you, Mr. O'Keefe, or any other sensible man: can you imagine a man possessing the slightest business acumen paying land tax and super land tax and holding that land? I can give the reason in some cases. I know of some cases, not isolated ones, where after freehold properties have been acquired the owners are compelled to retain them because they cannot sell them. The present policy tends to confiscate property. We know hundreds of cases where people have surrendered their land and others have sold cheaply rather than pay the taxation they were charged in respect of it. The Minister and the hon. member for Carnarvon assert that thousands of acres of freehold land in this State are not being utilised. I say those lands are held because the owners are not in a position to realise on them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have the report of the Land Administration Board pointing out there are millions of acres in that category.

Mr. MULLER: I have my opinion and the hon. gentleman has his. I have lived and worked on the land during the whole of my life and I cannot imagine any person of average intelligence holding freehold land and paying taxes on it if he could get rid of it. The man who will retain freehold unused land and pay taxes on it when he can sell it is fit for a lunatic asylum.

I was pleased to hear the remarks on the matter of the extermination of pests, particularly the Alsatian dog. I believe there is foundation for the remarks of hon. members opposite in regard to this menace, but nothing has been said as to what is likely to be done to remove it. We have other pests, and we have been dealing with them up to a point. It is very much better to

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deal with the Alsatian dog menace before it develops. If we leave the responsibility to the Federal Government or wait until some other State takes action in the matter it may be a very long time before anything is done. This Government should give a lead in the matter, and there is every possibility that other States will fall into line. If the Commonwealth or the other States fail in their duty in this respect the responsibility lies with them. It is the duty of this Government to endeavour to eliminate this menace.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was equally the duty of the Moore Government, and they had three years in which to do it.

Mr. MULLER: The Alsatian dog menace was not pressing when the Moore Government assumed office, and it was not as prominent twelve months ago as it is to-day. It is only within the last couple of years that the question has arisen. There is a grave danger of this dog's crossing with the dingo or domestic dogs, and one shudders to think of the possibilities. I feel sure if the Moore Government had been in power during the last three years legislation would have been introduced to deal with this menace. Hon. members opposite representing country districts are aware of the danger of allowing the Alsatian dog to breed indiscriminately.

I am disappointed with the policy of the Government in regard to the rabbit problem. The policy of leaving the stock owner to combat the invasion of rabbits is most unfair. An hon. member opposite representing an electorate in which a rabbit board operates spoke on this matter this morning. Portion of my electorate comes under the Moreton Rabbit Board. A very great responsibility rests on the residents in it, inasmuch as they have to maintain the rabbit fence. For this purpose a levy is made on them, although in the ultimate the benefit is shared by the whole of Queensland. That is most unfair. Furthermore, the method of collecting the taxation for the purpose is unfair. At the present time the whole of the fund required for that purpose is collected by way of a stock tax. Hon. members will recognise the serious menace the rabbit could be if it were given free access to the State of Queensland, not only to the stock owners but also to the vegetable growers, lucerne farmers, and the community in general. This is a national question, and it is not fair that the whole of the cost attendant on that rabbit fence, which has to be very effective, should be borne by one section of the community.

There is great room for an improvement in the control of noxious weeds. Whilst a number of shires throughout the State are alive to their responsibilities, a number are not. In some of the local governing areas the greatest offenders are the men holding office on the councils. They, therefore, cannot enforce the regulations on private offenders. There is, also, the fact that although one shire may be comparatively free of noxious weeds the neighbouring area may be infested and thus provide a source from which seeds may be carried to its neighbour. When a shire is not prepared to accept its responsibilities the Government should take action, and thus prevent the spread before it is too late. Queensland has been most fortunate in having the prickly-pear destroyed. A

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great deal of credit is due to the work of the men engaged in scientific research and investigation. Queensland is indebted to them for the discovery of the cactoblastis, but nothing has so far been discovered to deal with the burr and lantana. If local governing bodies are not alive to their responsibilities and carry out their duty, then the responsibility devolves upon the Government to see that they do so, or in the alternative, appoint a responsible body that will attend to work of that nature.

If the Government are really serious in their attempt to improve the conditions of the people on the land it will be necessary for them to offer a much better tenure than at present, and to give more sympathetic consideration to them than in the past. I hold that if Queensland or Australia is to progress and the empty spaces are to be populated, the only method is by way of settlement on the land. Personally, I cannot see any method of inducing people to go on the land unless the conditions of the people already there are improved. All the propaganda in the world will not do it. The most serious aspect of the whole business is that the people already there are leaving, and a number are compelled to do so because of high taxation. I hope that during the coming three years the Government will see their way to review their policy of land taxation. We have been informed that they are prepared to remit rental on leasehold land. I trust they will see fit to grant some relief to freeholders. To-day there are numbers of people who hold land on freehold tenure because they have no alternative. They cannot sell the land. Persons who hold land on freehold would be happy to exchange for a leasehold tenure if there were any possibility of their doing so. As I see the position the people who hold freehold land have ventured their life savings in that land, and consequently have no option than to hang on. They have chosen to invest their money in freehold land rather than put it into a bank. We now see the Government gradually confiscating that land and those people's life savings.

At 3.21 p.m.,

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved Mr. O'Keefe in the chair.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (*Port Curtis*): I should like once again to appeal to the Minister to give as much consideration as possible to the training in forestry of as many cadets as he can conveniently accommodate. I also ask him to consider favourably requests from small teamsters and mill-owners who are trying to compete against bigger concerns. Through lack of capital the small teamster is compelled to carry on with the old appliances, while the big teamster is able to purchase more modern equipment. The small millowner is in a similar plight. The big millowner is able to instal up-to-date machinery, but the smaller man cannot do so. I am sure the Minister will be sympathetic to any requests by hon. members representing country areas where forestry and milling operations are carried on.

I support the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern in connection with the control of noxious weeds. I am sure that more compulsion is necessary, together with strict

supervision over shires that offend in this respect.

When delivering my speech on the Address in Reply, I referred to the losses incurred through lack of food and water during periods of drought. I mentioned the suggestion put forward by the Secretary for Agriculture, and quoted articles appearing in various newspapers expressing regret that the scheme formulated by the Secretary for Agriculture did not meet with more approval. I feel sure, however, that the pastoralists recognise that his intentions were of the best. I quoted from the columns of the "Courier-Mail" in connection with this matter, which said—

"This is not a problem for the State Government alone. The Commonwealth Government is also involved. A national committee is needed composed of the best brains of all the interests concerned—engineers, stock and station experts, botanists, chemists, and financiers."

The author of that well-written article concluded by saying—

"We cannot sit idly by and see droughts claim our great heritage in the West. Probably millions of money would be involved, but it would be worth it—ten times over."

A number of speakers who followed me in that debate referred to the same matter, and pointed out that it was not a question for any individual member or any particular Government, but a national matter. I am pleased that several hon. members on both sides of the Committee agree with my contentions.

The hon. member for Normanby said—

"The position calls for some thought on the part of our administrators. If the pastoralist takes a stand and will not accept a scheme which, with small outlay to himself, would protect the industry, then action should be taken to force on him a scheme for his own protection, and that of the State, against such losses as have recently taken place."

I also referred to a letter appearing in the "Courier-Mail," written by a gentleman who had just returned from Argentina. In the article he said—

"CONSERVATION OF FODDER.

"I wish the farmers of Australia would follow the example of the Argentine cattle-growers in the matter of conservation of fodder. One would imagine that, favoured with such wonderful rainfall and magnificent pastures, the conservation of fodder in the Argentine would receive little consideration. On the contrary, this problem is considered one of the most important, and immense stacks of ensilage and clover hay are to be seen on every station. On several properties visited it is the aim of the management to conserve a ton of ensilage to every 2½ acres of land held."

I concluded by saying—

"What a profitable lesson we could learn even from Argentina!"

In conclusion, I would point out that the land belongs to the State, and not to the individual. The asset is worth protecting just as much as any other asset we possess. The purchaser of a worker's dwelling has to paint that dwelling at specified intervals

in order to preserve the asset, and I think the time has come when something must be done to force landowners to grow fodder and save starving stock and not depend upon nature or upon the Government to help them out. It is the duty of landowners to preserve the asset given to them in the form of land. They should grow fodder to save their stock in times of drought. This applies just as much to the small farmer as to any other class. He should be compelled in some manner or form to preserve his asset by using fertilizers at regular intervals throughout the year or at intervals of a year or two so that the asset in his possession can be preserved, not only to him, but also to the State. "Compulsion" is a hard word and it is not pleasant to have to say that it may be necessary to compel the farmer to do this. Some Government may come along that will have to compel him to do this. The farmer, the pastoralist, and the fruitgrower should take steps to see that the asset they possess is preserved.

Mr. MOORE: Some land lasts longer than other land.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: That is so. Citrus growers in the Central Burnett around Gayndah have purchased orchards that have been in existence for thirty or forty years. Some of the land is not now what it should be, as the valuable salts in the land have been taken from the soil by irrigation. I know of a number of citrus growers in close proximity to an orchard I own myself—or rather did own, and still have an interest in—who have purchased £950 worth of fertilizer in the last two years to replenish their land. This had to be done simply because the late tenant did not look after the asset he had, and did not spend a little each year to help nature and make the soil reproductive. I hope the time is not far distant when people in possession of the land will be called upon to help themselves and assist the State in the preservation of a very valuable asset.

Mr. NICKLIN (*Murrumba*) [3.29 p.m.]: I desire to ask the Minister a question. On page 70 of the Estimates of Expenditure, under the heading of Department of Public Lands, I see this—

"Less salaries £3,393, and administrative charges £2,000, Prickly-pear Land Commission (to be charged to Trust Fund) . . ."

and on reference to the Trust Fund at page 124, there is an amount of £3,905. Those two amounts do not coincide; there is a difference of £512. I should like the Minister to furnish me with an explanation.

Mr. WALSH (*Mirani*) [3.30 p.m.]: As one interested in land development I was interested to hear the speeches of hon. members representing country constituencies. They show that the members concerned, including hon. members on the other side, are prepared to give credit to the Minister for his able administration of this department.

One would not expect the hon. member for Hamilton or the hon. member for Toowong to give credit to the Government for their successful land policy, but it is pleasing to note that members who represent country areas are candid enough to admit that the Labour Government have done good work for the man on the land, particularly in land settlement. I noticed

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some facial disfigurement on the Leader of the Opposition when he was speaking which would indicate that he was speaking with his tongue in his cheek. Whether that was so or not I cannot say, but he did go to considerable trouble—so did the hon. member for Hamilton—to distort some of the statements made by the Minister. I have in mind his statement regarding the unoccupied land in the State. What he meant was quite clear, and if hon. members opposite cannot understand clear statements and analyse them for themselves, we cannot help it. It is obvious, as the Minister has pointed out, that we have reached saturation point in the grazing and pastoral areas.

Mr. MOORE: He did not say that.

Mr. WALSH: That is what he said—he quoted the percentage of land occupied by graziers and pastoralists. Nobody would be stupid enough to suggest that we had reached a point in land settlement beyond which we could not go. The Leader of the Opposition knows that a considerable area of land falls due for resumption every year, and naturally those areas will be made available for closer settlement. The Minister is quite correct in stating that it is not the policy of the Government to settle people on the land when there are no available markets for their products. That is a very important point to consider. What is the use of settling people on the land, particularly inexperienced lads away in the far North, if markets are not available for their products? It is idle for hon. members opposite to endeavour to lead the people to believe that the Minister has definitely stated that Queensland cannot go any further in land settlement.

Mr. RUSSELL: That is what he said.

Mr. WALSH: I am afraid that the hon. member has distorted his statement. Reference has been made to the Eungella land. The hon. member for Normanby referred to a man who inspected it after forfeiting a block he had taken up and worked elsewhere. I should like to remind hon. members that out of forty-three blocks submitted to ballot, thirty-nine were selected, which in itself proves that the land is good land. The officers of the department, who have a knowledge of the lands throughout the State, are in a position to know the quality of the Eungella land. They have intimated that it is equal to any other land in Queensland. We cannot act contrary to their reports; they are men of experience. I have inspected the Eungella land, and as one with land experience I can say that there is a great future for Eungella, not only in land settlement but also from a tourist traffic point of view.

The policy of the Government in making access roads before blocks are opened to selection is one to be commended, and probably that is why the northern areas are not being settled so quickly as hon. members opposite would like. The Leader of the Opposition quoted from the report of the Royal Commission on the Development of North Queensland, appointed by his Government, which intimated that something like 2,000,000 acres of land were available for settlement in North Queensland. If we are to accept the statement of the Minister—as interpreted by the Leader of the Opposition—that we have reached saturation point in land settlement, then the report quoted by the Leader of the Opposition indicates that

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the Minister has been successful in settling those districts during the three years that he has been in control of the department.

Mr. MOORE: No, he has not settled it.

Mr. WALSH: I am only taking the hon. gentleman's word.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The settlers are on the land already.

Mr. MOORE: They are not on Kirrama.

Mr. WALSH: If we take the statement of the Minister, as interpreted by the Leader of the Opposition, that land must now be settled. That is all by the way. We are quite satisfied after reviewing all the circumstances that the Government have done their best. That was evidently the mind of the people at the general elections last May. The people in the North, especially in the Mirani electorate, are quite satisfied with their policy.

It is not expected that we should indulge in back-scratching in a debate like this. Hon. members opposite would have us believe that because the hon. members for Carnarvon and Warwick were candid enough to express their opinions that it was an incident worthy of remark. Their attitude is not different from that of their colleagues. They are not afraid of expressing their opinions, and whether they represent country or city electorates is immaterial. Criticism, so long as it is constructive, is helpful to Ministers. That is why we offer it. On the contrary, there is not much of value in the criticism of hon. members opposite.

The Minister drew attention to the activities of his Administration in connection with the transfer of Crown leases. The hon. member for Isis interjected that the department was not taking any interest in the transfer of leases. Had he made a study of the sugar industry he would know full well that the department at the present time is taking a keen interest in transfers, and rightly so, too. I am concerned about quite a number of bona fide transfers that have been held up by the department because of a practice it has itself condoned for the last thirty or forty years. There is every justification for the holding up of some of these transfers.

Mr. MOORE: That is because of a special Bill that has been passed.

Mr. WALSH: It is not due to a special enactment, but to something the department should have been active in preventing for years past. Certain sellers of leases are in consequence suffering. These transfers are not being held up through any fault of the farmer or selector; the fault is with the lawyer or commission agent whom he engaged to do the work. Certain problems have arisen in the sugar industry necessitating the closest investigation into some of these transfers, for in several applications for transfers investigation by the department has disclosed the fact that some five or six transfers had previously taken place in respect of the same property and the department had not been notified. That is a breach of the law, and involves forfeiture of the lease if the court should so decide. Such a lessee considered when he engaged the lawyer or commission agent to attend to the transfer that everything was all right. Quite a number of these lessees have received a shock in the last few weeks because they have discovered that they are liable to lose their property owing to the laxity of their

agent. As the department has in the past condoned the omission the lessees should not suffer unless there is evidence of exploitation. I understand that the facts in some cases show every justification for the forfeiture of the properties. One case was brought under my notice where an endeavour at exploitation was made. A selector held something like 252 acres at an annual rental of £14 an acre, and another resident of the district wished to lease 8 acres, and the rental to be charged was £32 for the 8 acres.

Mr. MOORE: Was there any cane assignment?

Mr. WALSH: There was no cane assignment on that portion—the owner was holding the whole of the cane assignment. Of course, the department refused to agree, and it was then proposed that the 8 acres should be leased for £10, and that was refused. The department has taken a stand that I uphold, and that is that if such an area as that 8 acres is to be leased it should be leased at a rate proportionate to the rental paid for the whole area. That is just, and I do not cavil at the policy of the department in the matter.

Mr. MOORE: Unless the owner has improved it.

Mr. WALSH: It is not cleared; it is virgin land which was to be used for banana-growing. I consider the new office attached to the department to deal with these cases is justified. I should like the Minister to ascertain if transfers cannot be expedited. I have investigated several cases and I know the papers were quite in order, and I do not consider there was any justification for the department's holding the transfers up for months. These delays cause great inconvenience to people who desire to buy or sell.

There is a pressing necessity for a re-organisation of the Lands Office in Mackay. It is one of the most important land districts in Queensland, and a considerable amount of land settlement has taken place during recent years in that area. The accommodation provided for the officials at Mackay is scandalous. I had occasion recently to attend a Land Court sitting there and found myself in a room approximately 6 feet by 8 feet in which the Land Court officials, witnesses, and representatives had to assemble. I trust the Minister will investigate the matter with a view to providing more suitable accommodation.

The Mackay district also justifies the appointment of a land agent. The investigation that is taking place in regard to the transfers of leases will create more work for officials in that district, and it will be necessary to reorganise the staff.

The hon. member for Murrumba made reference to the Country Lands Development Fund. I quite agree with the hon. member that this has been a good fund. The money is made available for the purpose of improving Crown properties by way of water conservation and other works. I quite agree with the hon. member in regard to the restrictions in connection with the employment of labour. The selector has the right to have the work done by contract or otherwise, but if he desires to do the work by day labour he should not be called upon, if labour is available in the immediate vicinity, to get the necessary labour through a Labour Exchange 40, 50, or 60 miles away. That

aspect of the matter could be reconsidered to the mutual advantage of the department, the selector, and the workers. The man who is 60 or 70 miles away from the nearest bureau should not be forced to go to it to register for that class of work. I hope the Minister will give his attention to that matter if it comes within his control, and that if it comes within the control of the Department of Labour and Industry that he will take up the matter with that department.

Among the matters that have been mentioned during the course of this debate has been the allotment of £70,000 for improved water facilities and other improvements on stock routes. The hon. member for Keppel said the amount should be £1,000,000. I quite agree, but I cannot reconcile his statement with those made by other hon. members opposite from time to time. Quite obviously the money can be obtained only by way of loan or taxation. Members of the Opposition have time and again complained of the high taxation on the man on the land, and of the large amount of money borrowed by the Government. The Minister appears to be doing his best in this connection. There is a necessity for a survey of the stock routes of the State. In the Nebo district in my electorate graziers are at present faced with the problem of getting their stock through to the railhead. They have to travel stock through a considerable portion of freehold property on which the routes are sometimes only half a chain or a chain wide. This is not in the best interests of either the cane farmers or the graziers, and should not be allowed to continue.

The Minister should give consideration to this matter, not only in my electorate, but also in the interests of others. There should be adequate provision for the travelling of stock so as to encourage owners and drovers to make use of the railway.

Mr. DANIEL: It would be money well spent and the Government would get a return on it.

Mr. WALSH: I quite agree with the hon. member.

I do not know how the department can justify asking the people away in the north of Queensland, in the Blue Mountains, and Bolingbroke country having to pay a rabbit tax. I understand boards have been created, but that does not make it any the less absurd to ask people in the north of Queensland to pay a rabbit tax. I trust that the Minister will give the matter some attention. It is just as ridiculous as to have the cane farmers paying a dingo tax—and that is what they do.

To my mind the most interesting portion of the present debate has been the absolute vindication of the policy of leasehold tenure adopted by the Labour Party. I listened very attentively to this branch of the debate, introduced, I think, by the hon. member for Cook.

Mr. DEACON: What have you?

Mr. WALSH: I have freehold I candidly admit, but if the Government took it from me to-morrow and compensated me they could have it.

Mr. DEACON: Compensate you?

Mr. WALSH: Yes. The policy of the Labour Party upholds leasehold tenure, and

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we do not go behind the backs of people to tell them so. I understand the hon. member for Fassifern has stated that he is prepared to hand over his property also. That is an indication that freehold is not as successful as some hon. members opposite would like to make out.

Mr. MOORE: It proves that leasehold is very successful for the man who wants to avoid taxation.

Mr. WALSH: The taxation imposed by the Government on freehold land is negligible as compared with the amount taken from the freeholder by way of speculation. Most of the reasons advanced by the Opposition during the course of the debate have absolutely justified the policy of the Labour Party in regard to perpetual leasehold. It is only a matter of time when one of the foremost planks of the platform of the Opposition Party will be leasehold tenure. There can be no justification for freehold tenure unless on the ground that a reasonable price is fixed for the value of that freehold in the first instance, either by the valuator in the district or by a board competent to do so. What right has any individual to get away with what might be termed the unearned increment? That brings to my mind the fact that a Liberal Government apparently had the same view. They put railways through certain areas and levied on the landholders in those areas for the cost. That system was abolished later because it was thought to be a hardship on the small selector.

Mr. MULLER: But a land tax was imposed.

Mr. WALSH: There was every justification for a land tax. Despite what the hon. member for Fassifern may say, very few small farmers are paying land tax. An examination of the report of the Commissioner of Taxes will disclose that that is so.

Mr. MAHER: Tax the hotels.

Mr. WALSH: They are taxed in another way. I cannot see any justification for the individual's getting away with what might be termed the unearned increment. Land may have been selected at 2s. 6d. an acre, a road put through at public expense, a railway built at public expense, and in time that same land sold for anything up to £25 an acre. The selector has done nothing to earn that £25, apart from paying rates.

Mr. MULLER: He might have spent pounds on improving the property.

Mr. WALSH: I am suggesting that he is not entitled to the difference between his purchase price and the price created by public improvements.

Mr. MAHER: Who is going to determine that?

Mr. WALSH: I know the hon. member would not like that state of affairs to exist in his electorate. One can realise that such a policy will not suit the big interests as represented by hon. members opposite. Land is rented by the Crown at a very small figure. Goodwill is created by that small rent, and the leaseholder is prepared to go in and exploit other individuals by taking the difference above what he paid for the land.

Mr. MULLER: But they do not buy the land. That is a different question altogether.

Mr. WALSH: But they are endeavouring to adopt the same practice as was followed

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by the freehold speculator. I am pleased to see that the department is taking up the matter and will suppress this practice in the very near future.

Mr. MAHER: Where are these speculators?

Mr. WALSH: The Leader of the Opposition told the hon. member yesterday when he described the enormous rise in the price of land when sugar went up to £30 6s. 8d. a ton. The man paying for the product was responsible for the increased value. What did the individual do to improve values? We have an instance of an hotel being sold for £60,000. Who created that value?

Mr. MAHER: We do not know.

Mr. WALSH: The public created it. The man who buys a pot of beer is the one who creates those values.

Mr. MULLER: Why do you not tax him?

Mr. WALSH: He is taxed.

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

Mr. TAYLOR (*Enoggera*) [3.55 p.m.]: I have listened to the remarks of hon. members opposite, particularly to the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern, which struck me as being a criticism of the Government for something the Government have not done. He said that we should help the man on the land and make conditions better for the youth of the State. He suggested that the Government should give greater exemption in connection with taxation, particularly land taxation—which is, of course, the form we can discuss in this debate. Probably the hon. member does not know that this State gives the greatest land tax exemption of any State.

Mr. MULLER: That is not right.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is right. Queensland has a total exemption up to £300 on certain land and £1,500 on other land. Therefore, the minimum exemption in Queensland is, in effect, £300, and the maximum £1,500. New South Wales has an exemption of £240. Victoria has an exemption of £250, provided the property owned is not of a value of more than £500; if the property owned has a value of more than £500 there is no exemption at all. There is no exemption in South Australia. Western Australia has no exemption, except in respect of soldier settlements. Tasmania has no exemption at all. Those facts do not bear out the statements made by the hon. member for Fassifern.

As to the land tax collected from the various States up to the end of the year 1933, I should like to refer to the latest bulletin of the Commonwealth Statistician. I am not going to refer hon. members to statistics compiled by the Queensland Statistician; these were compiled by a Tory Government's statistician, and must be accepted by hon. members opposite—if they will accept anything. The hon. member for Fassifern must know that in the State of Queensland only 5 per cent. of the land is freehold, the rest being held under lease. He has been trying to prove that the freeholders pay a greater tax than the leaseholders. He has failed utterly in this regard, because the figures I have here show that Victoria—a State one-third the size of Queensland—collected £503,725 in land

tax in the year ended December, 1933; that South Australia collected £306,198, and Queensland £442,594.

Mr. MULLER: You told us only 5 per cent. of the land was freehold?

Mr. TAYLOR: I am trying to prove that we have only 5 per cent. under freehold tenure and that practically the whole of the Victorian land is held under freehold tenure. Ninety-five per cent. of Queensland land is held under lease, and Queensland—the leaseholders—do not pay the same amount of tax as the freeholders in Victoria. If the hon. member had known anything about the subject he would have given this Committee a different aspect of his case. Most of the people have agreed with the leasehold policy of the Queensland Government. If this were not the case, the Government would not now be occupying the Treasury Benches. The majority of members on the Government side come from country constituencies. Had the policy of the Opposition been of any value, Opposition members would have been on this side of the Chamber and not in the cold shades of opposition. I believe that the policy of the Queensland Government in this matter of land settlement will in the future be recognised as a milestone in the progress of the Commonwealth of Australia. In the future the people will not be subjected to the attention of "land sharks" and land dealers, particularly financial "sharks." I congratulate the Minister on his excellent administration of the department.

Item (Chief Office) agreed to.

DISTRICT OFFICES.

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

"That £54,206 be granted for 'District Offices.'"

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [4.1 p.m.]: I should like to draw attention to one matter that apparently has escaped the notice of the Minister. He complained that in granting concessions to the grazing industry, my Government had confined their attentions entirely to the large pastoralist, but I should like to remind him that an infinitely greater number of grazing farmers received concessions. Apparently he has forgotten all the reductions and other concessions granted in connection with the Upper Burnett and Callide areas, Jimbour, Cecil Plains and Maryvale, and other resumed estates. Investigations were carried out in a number of cases and the recommendations by the Land Administration Board were given effect to. Revaluations and reductions in rent were granted in every case.

Mr. TAYLOR: Your Government almost gave the Inkerman irrigation scheme away.

Mr. MOORE: What was the difference between allowing the farmers to take over the scheme and pay for it themselves and writing off the debt? The farmers paid £200,000 for the undertaking, which was estimated at the outset to cost only £198,000. I do not see very much wrong with the arrangements made with the Inkerman farmers. It was proved after an investigation carried out, not by my Government but by a previous Government, that a tremendous amount of money had been wasted in connection with the undertaking, and it was not fair to ask the settlers to

carry the whole sum. In any case, they could not have done so even if they had been asked.

An investigation into the Upper Burnett and Callide settlement was carried out by the district officer at Monto, and it was then thought that that would be the end of the trouble. Even the present Minister thought that that was going to end the trouble, but I am not so sure that it has been settled even yet. The Minister caused a further investigation to be made, and agreed to a further writing down of values, and we do not yet know whether that is the end of the difficulty. There is no doubt that a considerable sum of public money was wasted in providing some of the water facilities, and that there were instances where people were compelled to accept them when they did not want them. We still have the difficulty outlined by the hon. member for Normanby, despite the fact that there have been two or three investigations into this area, and one cannot tell where it is going to end. The question is a difficult one, but it has to be faced, especially when prices of primary products fall so steeply and new settlers are on the land. They are always prepared to take advantage of the fact that the Government is the landlord. They would not dream of making similar requests to private landlords. They realise that when their requests are submitted to the Government the Government will endeavour to carry them out rather than take the risk of becoming unpopular. When an investigator sets out the grievances of the settler succinctly and concisely and makes definite recommendations, there is no option for the Government than to carry them out. The Upper Burnett and Callide lands were carefully considered before they were opened and areas and prices decided upon, but conditions changed and the new settlers were unable to meet their obligations. Then followed a further investigation and a further writing down. The same thing took place in connection with Mount Abundance.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I should like to remind the hon. gentleman that the vote under discussion is "District Offices."

Mr. MOORE: All the matters that I have discussed have a direct bearing on district offices.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: "District Offices" is a separate vote, just as "Irrigation and Water Supply" is.

Mr. MOORE: I am not discussing the Irrigation and Water Supply Sub-Department.

The PREMIER: Hon. members agreed at the beginning of the discussion of the Estimates that a general discussion should take place on the "Chief Office" vote of each department, and that the discussion on the other votes of the department should be confined to those votes.

Mr. MOORE: I am very much obliged to the Premier for his information.

The PREMIER: The Chairman of Committees put that suggestion to the Committee.

Mr. MOORE: I am very grateful to the hon. gentleman for his valuable information.

Item (District Offices) agreed to.

Mr. Moore.]

FORESTRY.

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

“That £33,167 be granted for ‘Forestry.’”

Mr. NICKLIN (*Murrumba*) [4.7 p.m.]: I should like some information as to what steps the Sub-Department of Forestry is taking with regard to future supplies of case timber in fruitgrowing areas on the North Coast. A considerable number of cases are used in that area each year. In fact, they run into many thousands. This matter is therefore a very important one to this district. Supplies of case timber were obtained from pine tops and flooded gum timber. In certain areas mills have been unable to secure supplies of pine tops owing to their enhanced price, and consequently hardly any pine cases have been used for five or six years in those areas. The supplies have been drawn from local timbers. As a result enormous quantities of flooded gum and blackbutt have been used each year, but the end of the supplies of these timbers is in sight. A difficult position faces the fruit-growers of those areas. It is inevitable that the price of case timber in those areas will be considerably higher within the next few years if steps are not taken to develop supplies.

When the hon. member for Cunningham occupied the position now held by the Minister he initiated a scheme for the planting of an exotic type of pine in the Beerwah area. That scheme was further developed by the present Minister. These forests were looking particularly well, and if they had continued to develop as they did at first would have solved the problem. Unfortunately, trouble has occurred that makes it unwise to plant timber in that area until such time as it is overcome. This occurrence has further jeopardised the supply of timber for casemaking in this area. I suggest that certain timbers in the State forests at Mapleton and elsewhere that are not now commercial assets should be set aside for this purpose. Blackbutt is a good timber for cases provided it is used immediately. It is useless to keep this timber any length of time because it becomes very hard and splits when a nail is driven into it. Flooded gum is almost as good as pine for case timber. It might be possible by planting and regeneration of the natural forests to considerably enhance the flooded gum and blackbutt stands in those areas. Experiments could also be carried out with other timbers likely to be suitable for casemaking. The Sub-Department of Forestry has conducted some experiments along those lines. In view of the seriousness of the position facing the fruitgrowers of that area I ask the Minister to give the matter serious consideration.

I also desire to comment on the action of the Minister and his officials in initiating inquiries to exploit the possibility of establishing a wood wool industry in this State. The fruit industry and the egg industry are using considerable quantities of wood wool. At the present time this is being imported from Victoria and Tasmania. The pineapple growers in Queensland used over 100 tons of this product last year, and its use is increasing each year. It appears strange that a State that has such excellent timber resources should be importing this product

[*Mr. Nicklin.*

from the other States. I feel certain a wood wool industry could be successfully developed in this State, and I hope the investigations the Minister has instituted will bear fruit.

Another product I wish to refer to is tung oil. I understand the Sub-Department of Forestry has a tung-oil plantation at the Mary Valley. When we are investigating new avenues of production in this State, I feel attention should be given to its possibilities. It is a product of the tung-oil tree, and is used very extensively throughout the world for the manufacture of paints, varnishes, enamels, ducos, rubber substitutes, and linoleum, and there is an ever-increasing demand for it. At the present time in Australia we use in the vicinity of 500,000 gallons annually, which is imported from China and the United States. It appears to me there are great possibilities for developing the tung-oil industry in this State, which would at least supply a considerable portion of our requirements. Unfortunately, owing to the operations of some “go-getter” companies, tung oil is under a cloud, and many growers of this product do not regard it with great favour owing to the amount of money they lost through their operations. I invite the Minister to investigate the possibility of carrying out an experiment in growing tung-oil trees on the lands in the forestry areas he already holds at Beerwah and Glass House Mountains.

According to the bulletin issued by the Technological Museum, Sydney, the tung-oil nut grown in Queensland is superior to the tung-oil nut grown in other parts of Australia. According to experiments, the weight of the nut grown at Pennant Hills, New South Wales, was 33 grammes; that grown at the Wollongbar Experiment Farm, near Lismore, New South Wales, was 40.5 grammes; and that grown at Mr. K. A. Elder's, Landsborough, Queensland, was 41.51 grammes.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member's remarks would be more applicable during the discussion on the vote for the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Sub-Department of Forestry has a tung-oil plantation, and I suggest it should extend its experiment to the coastal areas. According to the experiments conducted by the Technological Museum with American seed supplied by Dr. L. A. Jordan the yield of oil was 43.5 per cent. From the Yangtse Valley, China—which is the test of comparison—the yield of oil from kernels was 52.7 per cent., whereas from the nuts grown by Mr. Elder at Landsborough the amount of oil amounted to 65.9 per cent. This shows there are possibilities in the growing of the tung-oil tree on the coastal districts of the State, and if experiments were made on the forestry areas at Beerwah and Beerburum they might be the means of building up an industry of some value to the poorer belts of land in the coastal areas. There are several small blocks of these trees in the vicinity of Glass House Mountains. They appear to be growing very well, but whether they will produce nuts of a commercial value remains to be proved.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) [4.16 p.m.]: I observe from the report of the Sub-Department of Forestry that during the past few years there has been a large increase in the timber cut on Crown land and that the

Government have benefited to a large extent. I am sorry to see, however, that this large increase in the timber cut from Crown land is to a great extent caused by the complete cutting out of private lands. We were given to understand that the timber trade is prospering, but judging from the contents of the report and from the general outlook the prosperity of the timber industry is not likely to be longlived.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It will see you and me out. I heard that about coal when I was a youngster.

Mr. DEACON: I do not know whether the Sub-Department of Forestry intends to go out within a year or two, but I can tell the hon. gentleman that I have no intention of cutting out within the next ten years.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As I have stated, the same pessimism was displayed as regards coal when I was a youngster. Dark pictures were painted of the condition of the country without coal; nevertheless at the present time there is a very small market for the coal available.

Mr. DEACON: The officers of the Sub-Department of Forestry are very capable men and good business men. They handle the timber business very well indeed, and from the figures they give it would appear that within ten years the timber cut out of the State will be considerably decreased. Supplies of hardwood on private land are practically non-existent and consequently a greater quantity is being taken from Crown land. This means that in a comparatively short space of time supplies will have to be obtained at a greater distance from the railway line and thus necessitate higher prices. That is not what we had hoped for and certainly not what the Minister led us to expect in the debate on the previous year's Estimates. According to his remarks last year the forestry industry would prosper for ever and there would be supplies of cheap timber for a very long period. Now it would appear that within a very short time timber will be dearer.

Mr. JESSON: That is only supposition.

Mr. DEACON: No. That is in the report of the department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It does not say that.

Mr. DEACON: It says something very much like it. It says that the cut on private land is almost exhausted; that the increase in the cut on Crown land is due to the exhaustion of the private lands.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We have not yet reached saturation point in our timber cut.

Mr. DEACON: No, but we shall shortly reach extinction point, and that is a serious matter for Queensland.

Mr. JESSON: You are crossing bridges before you come to them.

Mr. DEACON: I am only crossing bridges constructed by officials of the Sub-Department of Forestry. They are the experts, and that is their opinion. Hardwood is used to a considerable extent in Queensland. Our railways use enormous quantities for sleepers. Ironbark has been proved to stand up longer than any other timber when placed upon the ground. Experiments may be conducted in the future as to ways of successfully using soft timbers for this

purpose, but we are concerned with the present. We can really say that our best hardwoods are no more. We all know that this point would be reached sooner or later. It has been predicted for years by the Sub-Department of Forestry. Many men and women are dependent upon the timber trade, and we cannot shut down supplies while we have the timber. Our best course is to develop hardwood forest reproduction to a much greater extent than we propose to do even this year. Most of the lands that grow good hardwood are unsuitable for other purposes. Hardwood grows best in sandy soil or hard, gravelly, mountainous country. Those lands are certainly unsuited to the growing of any other crop.

We are planting softwoods more extensively, but when our natural forests are cut out we shall not be able to draw immediately from our planted areas.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The experts do not say that.

Mr. DEACON: They say that we can expect the end of our softwood forests within the next decade, at the present rate of cutting, and our planted trees will certainly not be ready for use as timber within that time. I know what members on this side of the Committee want, and I know also what members on the opposite side of the Committee want.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: You must be a clairvoyant.

Mr. DEACON: I know what the members representing the electorates in which the State forests are situated demand of the Minister. He has no need to tell me that. They want to cut them up and open the area for selection. Is that not so? At any rate, so far as I am concerned, I do not believe in cutting up the State forests. I say that we have not got enough State forests nor have we got the areas suitable for putting under forest. Much of our State forests are situated in mountainous country.

Mr. JESSON: It is only natural for forests to be in mountainous country.

Mr. DEACON: That is so. Experience all over the world shows there is a desire to strip the mountainous country of timber, but once you start to do that, you start to lose the soil. It slips away or is washed away, and in a very short time the land is not worth anything for any purpose. That has been proved at Helidon. Some mountainous country around there has been stripped of scrub to make the land available for grazing purposes. You will not see a blade of grass growing on the mountain side now whether you look in a good season or a bad. The land is bare, and the soil is gone, and that is happening all over the world.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: Rainfall would be affected, too.

Mr. DEACON: It would. It has been proved over and over again that once you strip a mountain of its timber the rainfall for that area is diminished.

Mr. JESSON: You do not believe in forestry?

Mr. DEACON: I do, and I am arguing that we should not touch the mountains at all.

Mr. JESSON: Do you mean to leave the trees there for all time?

Mr. Deacon.]

Mr. DEACON: Take what you want of them, but if you take one tree out put another in its place. I am referring to the indiscriminate cutting of the timber, which ruins the country.

I know that the Minister has marked out some areas for selection, and one of those areas is the Eungella district. For agricultural purposes this is poor country in the North.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You have not been there. I will take you up some day.

Mr. DEACON: I can take the hon. gentleman there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You might lose your way!

Mr. DEACON: No; I should not do that. I was guided through that district by the settlers there, and they took me to the best spots and showed me what had happened. The soil was analysed by an expert from the Department of Agriculture.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He said that it was as good as the soil at Atherton or Maleny.

Mr. DEACON: The analyses of the first samples disclosed that the soil was not good. In any case, the blocks are situated on a high mountain range and even if the soil were good it would be only a matter of a few years after the country was stripped of its timber till it would disappear. That will happen as sure as night follows day. The Minister is not doing the settlers a good turn. They are working an asset which depreciates as time goes on. They have to work hard to clear the land and there is no increase in the value of the land to compensate them for the denudation of timber. In Victoria, selections heavily timbered were made available on the Gippsland Mountain, and as high as £8 an acre was paid for the land in its virgin state. It was denuded of its timber and converted into dairy farms, and because of the initial success of the venture the land realised boom prices. According to the "Australasian" these blocks can now be purchased with all improvements at less than half the original cost—the depreciation in value has been so heavy.

We must not make the same mistakes as have been made in other parts of the world, and if the Minister is anxious to do his duty he will retain the forest country and not throw it open for selection. He will also see that an extensive programme of reforestation is carried out. Our forests can provide employment for a very large number of men and are doing so to-day. It is the duty of the Government to retain the forest country so as to provide employment for the workers and keep the saw-mills going. The timber areas are valuable assets and the Minister should make every endeavour to use the timber in the best interests of the State. Young trees will have to be planted. We cannot all engage in farming or raising sheep.

At the present time world markets for primary produce are over-supplied. The United States of America has adopted an agricultural adjustment scheme providing for the restriction of primary production over a period of years. For instance, there is an area limit and a bale limit for each man growing cotton. Tobacco, wheat, and other products have restrictions imposed by

[Mr. Deacon.

direction of the Government in an endeavour to permit some of the people to earn a living. We are approaching the time when we shall probably have to adopt a similar scheme. Already there is talk of limiting the amount of butter that may be exported to the old country. Every country in the world engaged in agriculture is considering the necessity of imposing restrictions on production, but here is one industry in respect of which no limitation on production is proposed, an industry that we can develop for our own requirements, and one that can find a ready market in Australia. Of course, I refer to the timber industry. We should develop it while we can derive some benefit from it, always remembering that it will be necessary to replant the area as the matured timber is removed. The State could embark with profit on the industry of farming land with timber. I commend that suggestion to the Minister.

Mr. JESSON (*Kennedy*) [4.35 p.m.]: I congratulate the Sub-Department of Forestry not only on its research work but on its wonderful progress during the last three years. The forestry exhibit at the Royal National Association's show in Brisbane last August excited the admiration of the many thousands of people who inspected it.

Mr. BRAND: It was the finest display ever exhibited there.

Mr. JESSON: In my opinion it was the finest display ever shown in Queensland. It reflected not only the enterprise but also the initiative of the Sub-Department of Forestry.

The hon. member who has just resumed his seat made pessimistic utterances about the timber supplies of Queensland cutting out within two or three years. He certainly has not travelled beyond the environment of his own electorate.

Mr. MAHER: His reference was to softwoods.

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member for Cunningham referred to hardwoods, too. He referred to all classes of timber.

Mr. DEACON: I said softwoods would be almost extinct in ten years.

Mr. JESSON: The Kirrama lands, which were recently opened up by the construction of a road, are estimated to contain 100,000,000 feet of various classes of timber. There is an abundance of all kinds of timber along the coastal area from Mount Spec to Cooktown. It is true that it may be a little difficult to work, but with the application of modern machinery and science those difficulties are not insurmountable. When I returned from the war fifteen or seventeen years ago I obtained a job on the road that was then being constructed to the Tambourine Mountain. Mr. Lahey was then operating a big timber mill at Canungra. I spent many of my Saturdays and Sundays exploring the scrubs for orchids and ferns. In doing so I saw timber situated in such inaccessible locations that it was not profitable to fall and convey it to the mill. I visited the locality again some time ago and was surprised to see that all this timber had been felled and milled. Modern science had surmounted the difficulties that faced the timber-getter years ago. It is only a myth that timber cannot be obtained in certain areas, as the hon. member for Cunningham asserts. It is only a stock

argument and a reflection on the department.

Mr. DEACON: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member said I made a reflection on the department. I did not make any reflection on the department.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Kennedy must accept the denial of the hon. member for Cunningham.

Mr. JESSON: I accept his denial. The timber on the coastal areas from Mossman and Daintree River to Cooktown have never been properly exploited.

At 4.40 p.m.,

Mr. KING (*Maree*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved Mr. Gledson in the chair.

Mr. JESSON: There are vast stretches of softwoods and hardwoods, particularly hardwoods, on those areas. When hon. members opposite speak as they did this afternoon, they are doing what they accused the Minister of doing on Tuesday—they are giving the State a bad advertisement. The State has sufficient timber in various stages of growth to supply home requirements and provide a considerable amount for export.

At the present time there are firms in Cairns and on the Tableland who go out into the surrounding scrubs and collect old roots and stumps of certain timbers, which are sent to America to be converted into veneers, and that trade has developed to such an extent that a very considerable amount of money is being derived from it, which is of assistance to the Commonwealth Government in their effort to regain trade equilibrium.

Regarding softwoods, it is estimated that there are 160,000,000 feet of pine in the Blackstone district ready to be removed. I inspected the Goodnight scrub, and there are many millions of feet of pine in that scrub fit for removal when the necessary road facilities are provided. I saw the pine in various stages of growth—from seedlings as big as a pencil up to the gigantic tree that had reached maturity. That scrub will provide a continuity of supplies of softwood for many years, which demonstrates that there is no foundation for the remarks of the hon. member for Cunningham. If one merely travels in the western country, which has large areas covered with sandalwood trees, and does not make investigations about the timber resources in other parts of the State, one may think there is a shortage of good timbers. There are forests in Queensland that have never been investigated.

Mr. DEACON: Where is the timber?

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member should have been listening. I invite the hon. member to come up North with me, and I will show him some of the timber resources in that area.

I take this opportunity of congratulating the sub-department upon the forestry display at the Exhibition. I spent many hours seeing the various timbers and the articles made from them, and I consider the display one of the finest I have seen. It is a pity it cannot be sent to Sydney or Melbourne.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It has gone to Melbourne.

Mr. JESSON: I am sure it will be a great advertisement for Queensland.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoong*) [4.45 p.m.]: The hon. member who has just resumed his seat referred to the beautiful display of timber by the Sub-Department of Forestry at the National Exhibition. In my opinion, the display was incomplete. These remarks are not made by way of carping criticism, but because I consider it is in the interests of the industry that I should mention this matter. I, together with many others, was much impressed by the display of beautiful timbers grown in Queensland. The timbers were well exhibited, but one important matter had been overlooked. There was no information displayed publicly or available to the public as to the cost per square yard or foot of parquetry or panelling, for instance. I would also remind the Minister that it would be a very good plan to arrange for the exhibit to be sent to Melbourne.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It has gone. During the last Melbourne Show the exhibit and the timbers received great praise.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Minister should see to it that the men in charge of the exhibit are in a position to give the public information as to the cost of the different timbers when used either for parquetry or panelling. As is well known, the first concern of a visitor in such matters is the effect it will have on his pocket. A comparison could then be made with the costs of parquetry and linoleum. I had the pleasure of hearing one leading citizen say that it was a very beautiful exhibition, but he also drew attention to the lack of information as to the cost of using the timbers. I congratulate the officers of the department upon their work and courtesy, and on the manner in which the exhibit was displayed, but if they could give the public the necessary information as to costs I have no doubt that there would be a great increase in the use of the woods. Certainly, at the Brisbane Exhibition no one could give the information.

Mr. BRAND (*Isis*) [4.49 p.m.]: The forestry industry is of importance to my electorate. In that area is situated the most unique pine scrub in Australia, certainly in Queensland. It is a pine scrub that is self-regenerating. The scrub will live in perpetuity and without reforestation will continue to produce pine. The question of reforestation is an important one generally. In the pine tree scrubs of Queensland after the timber has been harvested the trees must be replanted.

In Queensland there is to be found the finest of any cabinet woods in the world. Queensland timbers should therefore be preserved. We, on this side, have advocated that there should be a reclassification of the land in the forestry reserves throughout the State. I again urge this upon the Minister. A number of reserves have been denuded of their pine trees and other softwoods, and in many cases nothing has been done towards reforestation. Many areas may be found in these forest reserves that are not suitable for growing pine; they would be better if brought under agriculture and closer settlement conditions. For that reason I consider that a reclassification of the land in all these timber reserves would be the best means of assisting the Minister to do what is in the best interests of the State.

I understand that the hon. member for Cunningham mentioned that it was believed

Mr. Brand.]

that a report would soon be laid upon the table of this Committee by the Minister that would indicate that our softwoods would be cut out in ten years' time. I take it that that statement will be based upon an estimate of the quantity of pine that we have in Queensland. I have contended for many years that our pine wealth has been estimated on a very conservative basis. The reason of this is quite obvious. One little scrub in my area was estimated to contain 150,000 superficial feet of timber two years ago. The man who purchased that scrub has already cut over 1,000,000 superficial feet, and is still cutting. I believe that many of our forests will prove to contain much more timber than the actual estimates. In fact the experience of past harvesting operations proves this to be so. We shall have pine for a considerable number of years, and we are now cutting at the rate of over 100,000,000 superficial feet per annum. I am satisfied that we shall have sufficient pine for a number of years, not only for our own requirements, but also for export to the other States. Much of the pine that is harvested in Queensland to-day is finding markets in other States of the Commonwealth.

I should like to see the Sub-Department of Forestry persevere with its system of finding cabinet woods in the great forests of our State. It is true that the exhibit at the recent Royal National Association Show was one of the finest we have had in the State, and, I think, one of the finest ever seen in Australia. It disclosed that we have remarkable woods, and that we have a department that is discovering that timbers that were previously considered to be of little value are really magnificent for use as cabinet woods.

I desire to refer to the activities of the Minister with regard to that large forest reserve in my electorate known as the Goodnight Scrub. That forest contains something like 16,300 acres of continuous pine scrub. Quite recently the Minister for Transport took a party to that scrub, and the members of that party were able to see pine growing in its natural condition. They were very impressed with the large amount of national wealth contained in that scrub. The Secretary for Public Lands had visited it previously, but, unfortunately, private reasons prevented my meeting him on that occasion. I understand that the people there took the Minister into the heart of the scrub and showed him the wealth there. Since the Minister visited that place, he has taken action with regard to access roads to that area, and at the present time officers of his department are investigating the best means of opening up access roads. I think he should seriously consider the method of transport from that area. When the Moore Government were in power the settlers asked for an extension of the Goondoon-Wallaville line to a point called Morganville, which is 6½ miles from Wallaville.

The Moore Government recognised the tremendous national wealth in the scrub and built the line. I should like to tell the Minister that prior to the building of the line it was costing about 8s. 3d. a hundred feet to transport the pine from the scrub to the railhead at Wallaville, but to-day it is only costing 4s. 3d. to the railhead at

[*Mr. Brand.*]

Morganville. The State is therefore saving 4s. a hundred feet in transport costs alone, because of the extension of railway line. That saving is not only a wonderful help to the department but is also of great value to the settlers, who have been settled in the area for many years. I believe that in the transport of timber only one method is satisfactory, and that is by rail. It is impossible to transport timber economically any distance by any other known means. The days of the bullock wagon have gone, and motor transport cannot give the service that the railway has given. It is a great pity, I think, that the Government do not recognise a service is warranted that would bring to the State the greatest amount of wealth. In this respect, the people of that centre realise—and I think anyone who studies it from a practical point of view must realise—that rail transport would be of great value to the State as a whole. We have a fine pine scrub that only requires transport service and one or two men to care for the natural regeneration. It does not require replanting by hand as nature performs that service. It is a scrub that will continually add to the wealth of the country and I urge upon the Minister, after having visited that area, that he seriously consider the matter of urging upon the Government the building of a railway line into the centre of that scrub, thereby making available to his department the whole of the wealth of that area.

The hon. member for Kennedy has referred to his visit to that scrub. I think the Minister is thoroughly convinced that we have one of the finest scrubs that could be found anywhere, and I sincerely urge him to give the matter of transport very serious thought. He must recognise that there is only one means of transport for pine, and that is by the railway system.

There are many areas of marketable timber in my electorate, where sufficient quantities of young timber are being made available by hand planting. Some years ago the department decided to carry out reforestation on Fraser Island. I have had an opportunity to observe the benefit of that work, and I warn the Government that we should recognise our responsibilities in connection with reforestation so as to replace the timber that nature provided and we have used. As the hon. member for Cunningham has pointed out, the industry can provide employment for many thousands of people. During the past twelve months the Minister has recognised his responsibilities in some of the areas, but I would urge him to make provision for the requirements of future years whilst the present areas are being denuded. Fortunately, artificial reforestation is not necessary in the Goodnight scrub, where the young growth is being provided in abundance by natural regeneration.

Queensland hoop pine is recognised as the finest softwood in the world, and can even be classified as a special cabinet wood. We have many millions of feet of softwoods in this State, and the Minister should act judiciously in drawing on our standing timber supplies so that the people may receive the fullest value for the wealth provided by nature. We cannot afford to cut valuable timber indiscriminately. We must assume the important responsibility of replacing the valuable timber wealth of the people. Some

years ago the Labour Party severely criticised any suggestion that our forests should be denuded of their timber and consistently argued that Governments should preserve the natural wealth of the people. I hope that the Minister will continue to recognise that this wealth belongs to the people and that it should not be sacrificed for the purpose of enriching a few.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No freeholds?

Mr. BRAND: Timber land has been made available on the freehold tenure, but I understand that the amount of softwood drawn from private holdings to-day is almost negligible and that practically the whole of the softwood supplies of the State are in the hands of the Crown. We must recognise the necessity of providing employment by approving of some logging operations, and so long as the people are able to enjoy the greatest permanent return from their timber wealth no objection can be offered to logging operations, in some cases on a large scale.

I appreciate the activities of the Minister in his desire to provide access roads to the Goodnight scrub, but before any action is taken to provide a suitable means of transport to cope with heavy traffic, I should like him to consider the railway system as a preferable mode. I believe that the railway system offers a better means of transport to cope with the heavy traffic that eventually will come from this area. I am sure that the Minister for Transport will agree with my suggestion. In any case, he can lend a helping hand by urging the Government to move in that direction and thereby reap the greatest benefit for the State.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Enoggera*) [5.5 p.m.]: I take this opportunity of congratulating the Sub-Department of Forestry on the very excellent work it is doing, not only in reforestation but also in building up the timber assets of this State. I was forcibly struck some years ago by the action of Australian manufacturers, principally in the Southern States, in importing hardwood from Canada, particularly blackwood, to supply the requirements of local motor body builders. To-day, very little of that timber is being imported into Melbourne or Sydney. That is because Queensland timbers have been brought before the notice of manufacturers, who have found them more suitable than imported timbers.

I was in Sydney in 1912, in the shearing off-season, and secured a temporary job with Hardy and Sons, Pyrmont, one of the largest importers of timber in Australia. My job was to cart timber off the Darling Harbour wharf. At that time two single-horse drays were working day in, day out, week in, week out, year in, year out, carting timber imported from Canada to this mill. To-day that firm is using an enormous amount of spotted gum, grey ironbark, and mountain ash timbers that are grown on the northern coast of New South Wales and Queensland. Last Easter twelve months I had the pleasure of again visiting this timber yard. I found some of the men I worked with twenty years previously still working in the same job, and noted the added interest that had accrued through the development of the motor industry. I was struck forcibly with the manner in which hardwood grown on the northern coast of New South Wales and Queensland was being

used in the mill. That is evidence that the Sub-Department of Forestry is doing its work faithfully and well. It was also proved to me that its action in pushing Queensland timbers had added to the prestige of Australian timbers, and had demonstrated in a practical manner that spokes, felloes, etc., of wheels of motor cars, lorries, and trucks could be manufactured from them.

During the last twelve months I have visited various parts of the State, including one or two centres where the Sub-Department of Forestry has embarked on reforestation work and am satisfied with the work done. The main business of this department to-day is not only to market the timber required for Australian consumption and find revenue for consolidated revenue, but also to replace that timber with sufficient growth to provide for the future requirements of Australia. Some time ago, with several other hon. members on this side of the Committee, I accompanied the Secretary for Mines to Maryborough. We were there taken over one of the largest sawmills in the State, owned by Hyne and Son. I have a fair idea of what a sawmill is like; I found to my surprise that no modern methods existed for the handling of timber received into the sawmill. The supplies were received from Fraser Island.

That reminds me that the "districting" of mills by the department is another admirable feature of its work. It enables an area in which timber is grown to supply a mill in that district. That will probably save huge costs in transportation. It is essential to reduce the cost of production as much as possible. In that mill yard we were shown a room completely constructed of Queensland hardwoods, which were stained and varnished. For the purposes of house construction, particularly inside decorations, such as panelling and dadoes, our hardwoods are eminently suitable, and the result obtained is very pleasing to the eye. If hardwood is properly seasoned before it is used it will last almost indefinitely.

I trust the department will continue the good work it is carrying out, and that Mr. Grenning and his staff will be able, in three or four years' time, to claim still that the reforestation scheme in this State is just as far ahead of the reforestation schemes in other States as it is to-day.

Mr. RUSSELL (*Hamilton*) [5.12 p.m.]: There has been a long conflict between agriculture and forestry, and we see the result in other parts of the world where reforestation has been neglected. In South Africa large deserts may be observed that were formerly covered with dense forests. The same thing occurs in Asia and in Europe; but European countries go to no end of trouble to preserve their forests and increase their growth. In Australia, although we talk a good deal about reforestation, we are sadly behind. In Queensland we have disposed of our assets to the extent of £2,200,000, and of that sum a little more than a quarter has been utilised for reforestation purposes. As a matter of fact the Treasurer's deficit benefited last year to the extent of £167,000, that amount being the net surplus derived from forestry. Successive Governments have carried on the practice of transferring the net proceeds of the sale of these assets to consolidated revenue. I have always contended that money should be earmarked, either for the reduction of the

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national debt or for the creation of some new asset. The money has come in handy for every Treasurer, and the present Treasurer is no exception to the rule—he is glad to get such a handsome accretion to his funds as £167,000.

Last year was a year of great activity for the Sub-Department of Forestry. It had a record revenue of over £300,000, a record cut of softwoods totalling about 95,000,000 superficial feet, and a record cut of hardwoods totalling about 20,000,000 superficial feet, which was twice as much as the preceding year. The policy has been to put men into employment, and I agree with that policy because while reforestation should demand our attention we must give prior consideration to the present over the future. While we all regret that there is a gap between the selling of our logs and their replacement by proper reforestation methods, we cannot very well advocate a restriction of the activities of the department in finding a market for its matured timber.

The sub-department is now used chiefly as a money-making institution for the Government. It is quite likely that the revenue for the present year will be a record, although the indications to-day are that portion of the trade hitherto available may diminish considerably. It has been a phenomenal year. There has been tremendous activity in the local and export markets. There has been a big demand for timber for home building. A considerable quantity of hardwood has been thus utilised. Northern sawmillers, who had a very lean time up to last year, were able, owing to the cessation of the wet season and the return of suitable conditions, to overtake the accumulated arrears. There has been a good market in the South for hoop pine, largely brought about by the rebate in royalty on logs exported to the South. But that trade may not continue. In Victoria there have been large imports of New Zealand pine and Canadian Douglas fir, and that despite the fact that Queensland endeavoured to meet the situation by the granting of rebates of royalty and the Commonwealth Government by placing a high protective tariff on imported woods. There is a 10 per cent. duty and a 10 per cent. prime on Douglas fir logs, and on sawn fir the duty ranges from 10s. upwards per 100 superficial feet.

The softwood supplies from Queensland last year were 95,000,000 superficial feet, and the question naturally arises how long the supplies will last. The Sub-Department of Forestry is somewhat anxious as to the future of the hoop pine industry in Queensland. We are certainly not providing for the replacement of the supplies, inasmuch as only 12,000 acres have been replanted to date.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is increasing all the time.

Mr. RUSSELL: It is increasing very slowly indeed. The contributions from the forestry revenue fund in past years was comparatively small, and the present Government are only allotting £87,000.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Your Government were in the same position.

Mr. RUSSELL: All Governments have been very niggardly in their contributions from the Loan Fund towards reforestation purposes. Had the Governments of the past

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done their plain duty there would be no anxiety to-day as to the probable extinction of our supplies of softwoods in the near future. The hon. member for Cunningham gave it as his opinion that in ten years Queensland would see the end of such supplies. Even adding another five or ten years to that period, at the present rate of progress our supplies of softwood will soon be practically extinct.

Mr. MAHER: Read the report of the Sub-Department of Forestry.

Mr. RUSSELL: I have not read that report. The hon. member for Murrumba voiced the apprehension that in the near future we shall not have supplies of softwoods even for casemaking. While I regret that fact, we must not overlook this one—that there are other countries in the world that have practically inexhaustible supplies of softwoods. Queensland can rest assured that there is no fear for the next half century that there will be no supply of softwoods, because even if her own supplies cut out, supplies can be obtained from overseas.

It is questionable whether the reforestation of softwoods is a paying proposition. We all know very well that pine, naturally regenerated, takes a long time to mature. Some of the logs cut out of the scrub have reached the age of 400 years. Of course, we know also that when hoop pine is planted in the open it grows much more rapidly, but the quality is not as good as that of the pine grown in the natural scrub. Therefore, the question arises whether it is good policy to go on planting pine or whether it would not be better to rest on the policy of growing rapidly maturing softwoods for casemaking purposes. Experiments have been conducted in the past on the North Coast with quick growing softwoods, but I believe without much success. Country that is not needed for agricultural purposes could be used for the growing of softwoods that would mature at an early date and provide an ample supply of case timber. Pine planting has been conducted on a vast scale in South Australia, and it is anticipated there that plentiful supplies of softwood for industrial purposes will be available in a very short time.

While we regret the position with regard to the softwoods, I think we are not paying sufficient attention to our hardwood supply. Even though we still have fair supplies, the fact is that many of the Brisbane contractors are importing hardwood from New South Wales because of the difficulty of getting local hardwood within easy access of the Brisbane market. Reforestation of hardwood is a cheap proposition. Hardwood regenerates itself, matures very rapidly, and can be grown on areas of land that are totally unsuited for agriculture. In no other part of the world can hardwoods be found of a quality equal to that of the Australian hardwoods. In that we have a valuable asset—like the merino wool—that no other country can take from us. Therefore, I think we should devote more attention towards the reforestation of our hardwoods on a very large scale. Hardwood does not need planting out like pine. It regenerates itself, and all that is necessary is to go over the area, keep it clean, and cut out inferior species. That would provide an avenue of employment for many of our youths. I am pleased to see that over 100 youths are

already employed in our hardwood forests. There is great scope here for the employment of youths in an avenue that will provide sufficient hardwood, not only for our own requirements but also for export.

Another timber that is indigenous in Australia is the cypress pine, and its position is much more satisfactory. We have ample supplies of cypress pine to meet the building needs of the western country. It is a durable timber, though somewhat knotty, but it will withstand the ravages of white-ants. It also regenerates itself. We should see that this cypress pine is well cared for. In doing so we shall assure an ample supply of timber to meet the increasing needs of the people.

It is admitted that we have some of the finest cabinet woods in the world, but at the present rate of cutting we shall see the end of supplies within a very short time. One must realise that after having seen the enormous destruction of these timbers in North Queensland. It is a great pity that one is able to see vast tracts where beautiful black bean have been destroyed. Our replanting of the timbers suitable for these fine cabinet woods has not been rapid enough to make up leeway. These cabinet woods are well spoken of all over the world, and veneers made from them find a ready sale in the Southern States and in Great Britain.

One notable feature in the activities of the department is the phenomenal success that has been achieved by the Hoop Pine Plywood Board. When the former Administration were in office, and at the instigation of the present member for Cooroora, it was decided that plywood should be included as a commodity under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts. In 1933 the pool was consummated and every plywood manufacturer brought within its ambit, with the result that all the insane competition that took place prior to 1933 disappeared and the manufacturers to-day are receiving a good price for their product and have put into employment 900 men who are drawing good wages under the Veneer and Plywood Award. The board increased the output yearly; the following figures show the annual outputs:—

Year ending June,	Square feet.
1932	17,031,000
1933	31,653,000
1934	39,721,000
1935	49,000,000

The Crown exacts very high royalty from the logs, and it is a lucrative business to the Crown. It has turned out to be a good bargain for the manufacturers and many men have been kept in the industry.

A new industry has been established in Queensland in the manufacture of casein used in the process of glueing. All this casein was imported previously from Victoria. All the casein now used in the manufacture of plywood is manufactured in this State. The results that have been achieved by the Plywood Board might be extended to embrace the whole of the timber industry. I know that conditions amongst timber merchants to-day are unsatisfactory, despite the fact that they have been able to get a larger export trade. The mills' profits are not good enough, considering the amount of labour involved

and the capital invested in the business. There is too much price-cutting, and mills with up-to-date machinery employing large staffs of men earning good wages find it very difficult to compete with some of the smaller competitors; and they would be glad if allowed the privilege of combining together under a pool similar to the plywood pool. I do not know whether the Minister is sympathetic, but I come into contact with these people frequently and I know their conditions to-day are most unsatisfactory.

That takes me back to the Timber Industry Advisory Committee, which was appointed in 1931 by the then Secretary for Public Lands, the hon. member for Cunningham. He was chairman of that committee and I was deputy-chairman. On the accession to office of the present Government this committee was abolished and a new committee appointed, which practically carried out our suggestions. There was a proposal that the Government should introduce legislation similar to the plywood legislation by which all manufacturers would be brought into line. I have here the report of that committee and I should like to read an extract from it. It was recommended—

"That the Forestry Board, in conjunction with all interests involved, take early steps to organise the Queensland timber industry so as to effect greater cohesion than at present amongst saw-millers and others interested; to foster the creation of export associations in order to deal economically and effectively with overseas trade; and by co-operation with the industry to establish standards of quality that will readily and confidently be accepted by buyers (similarly to the method of the American export associations).

"That the whole question of stumpages be gone into thoroughly by the Forestry Board in conjunction with all interests involved, and necessary reductions in stumpages be made for stimulation of trade in Queensland timbers."

That has been done, and that is how we got the Southern trade. It continues—

"That with a view to stabilising prices in the Australian and overseas markets, and to maintaining the quality of production, the Government—

- (a) By proclamation extend the Sugar Acquisition Act to timber;
- (b) By proclamation acquire all such timber;
- (c) By Order in Council provide machinery for dealing with timber for home consumption and export;

and further recommends that should the Government be unable, through technical difficulties, to carry out the above recommendations, the Queensland Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act be extended to cover manufactured timber.

"The committee is unanimously of the opinion that the Queensland sawmilling and plywood industries are divided against themselves, with a result that they are engaged in price competition.

"It is considered that any attempt to voluntarily organise these industries would be only partially successful owing to one or more manufacturers breaking

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away or the refusal of others to join. This disorganisation has resulted in the closure of mills which were selling below costs to secure trade, in the supplying of inferior material, and finally in the loss of trade because of the unstable prices.

"Licensing of Mills.—The committee passed a resolution that the Government should take legislative action to provide for the following:—

(1) All mills for the sawing or treatment of timber, other than mills used exclusively for cutting firewood, shall be registered in the office of the Provisional Forestry Board.

(2) If any person (whether as owner, lessee, or otherwise) works a mill for the sawing or treatment of timber, other than firewood, whether such mill is situated on private property or not, without having such mill duly registered under this Act, he shall be liable to a penalty of £50.

"Prices and Quantities.—The committee passed a resolution that with a view to retrieving the lost markets in the South and to establishing markets overseas and thus creating employment for hundreds of log operators, sawmill hands and others directly and indirectly engaged in the timber trade, the key market price of logs to be reduced as follows:—

Hoop pine A class logs, 84 inches and over, 5s. per 100 superficial feet, with a pro rata percentage reduction on the other girth classes and on the whole of B class and bunya pine."

There was some slight opposition to that proposal. The committee was representative of every section of the trade. It was a most comprehensive one; it went to a considerable amount of trouble, and produced a report, which I commend for the Minister's approval. The minority opinion was that by reducing prices revenue would be affected and there would be a loss of employment; but the fact remains that by the creation of the plywood pool greater results have been achieved, more men have been placed in employment, there has been greater revenue for the Crown, a fair profit to manufacturers, and decent wages for the employees in the mill. I commend the matter to the attention of the Minister.

Generally speaking, we find that we have set aside about 6,000,000 acres for reforestation purposes, including national parks. That area is in accordance with the Empire Forestry Conference's recommendation. We are not reforesting our softwoods at such a pace as to be able to make up for the tremendous lag that must occur from year to year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are doing better than any other State.

Mr. RUSSELL: And so we should. We must remember that our hoop pine reserves are very limited, being confined practically to the Main Range and coastal districts. The demands of the agriculturists are so great to-day that it is impossible to resist them. We must confine our reforestation operations to the class of land mentioned by the hon. member for Cunningham—the mountain ranges and places where agriculturists cannot successfully carry on their businesses. When it comes to deciding between agricul-

ture and reforestation the claims of the agriculturists must, I think, take pride of place, especially in view of the statement by the Minister that he is having great difficulty in finding suitable land for people who are willing to engage in agricultural pursuits.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (*Port Curtis*) [5.35 p.m.]: I was pleased to hear the hon. member for Toowong refer to the very fine forestry exhibit at the Royal National and Agricultural Show. He also said that the exhibit lost much of its educational value because there was no indication to the general public as to the probable cost of lining a room, putting down a parquetry floor, or ceiling a room with the timbers displayed. You know, Mr. King, that it does not matter how effective a display may be, it loses its value if it is not replete with information the general public may desire.

I was pleased to hear that the Minister had seen fit to forward an exhibit of Queensland grown timbers to Melbourne. During the debate on the Budget I referred to the very fine exhibit of Queensland timbers in the Technological Museum, Sydney. I was so much impressed with it that although I had inspected it when I first visited Sydney to see my son in hospital, I paid it a second visit, and I heard so much of the exhibit from Sydney people that I induced a number of others to visit it. The sending of a similar exhibit to Melbourne would be an excellent advertisement for the natural timber supplies of Queensland.

I urge the Minister to give every possible encouragement to the utilisation of our little-known timbers. When I was a boy I saw timber that I thought was useless, but was afterwards converted into very many useful articles. Their durability was all that could be desired. I have seen felloes, wheels, pick handles, walking sticks, and furniture manufactured from these timbers.

These were timbers which we all considered useless. The Minister should sympathetically encourage any person who desires to utilise little-known timbers that in the past have been regarded as next to useless.

Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*) [5.38 p.m.]: I saw an exhibit of Queensland timbers when I was in London that had been arranged through the office of the Acting Agent-General. It was certainly displayed in a very good place, and for weeks there was always an interested crowd inspecting it. It was well worth viewing. That indicates that when we have goods to show they create an interest, and that interest, in turn, creates a demand for them. I could not let this vote pass without saying that this display in England was a very creditable one, and gave a practical demonstration that our timbers, when converted into manufactured articles, could compare very favourably with timbers from other parts of the world.

Mr. WALSH (*Mirani*) [5.39 p.m.]: The hon. member for Cunningham stated that the general opinion among the settlers on the Eungella land was that it was worthless. He apparently agreed with that view.

Mr. DEACON: I said that was my opinion.

Mr. WALSH: As against the opinion of the hon. member for Cunningham we have the opinion of Mr. Swayne, who represented the Mirani electorate for twenty-seven years,

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and I take it that his opinion is as good as that of the hon. member, if not better. Mr. Swayne has known this land since the 'nineties, and he is more qualified to judge its quality than the hon. member for Cunningham. He has stated that the land is as good as anything in that district. That is quite true. It was a forest reserve for many years, and difficulty had been experienced in inducing the various Governments to open it up. In support of my statement regarding the quality of the land I refer to a discussion that took place regarding these lands during last session. Mr. J. L. Wilson, Chairman of the Port Curtis Dairy Association, wrote to the Minister at that time and pointed out that he knew of no other area in Queensland more suitable for dairying settlement than Eungella. I received a letter recently from old established settlers at Eungella asking that the department should make available a further portion of the forest reserve there. There is abundant evidence to indicate the land on the Eungella range is of good quality. Mr. Gurney, the Government Analyst, described a sample of the soil from that area as equal in quality to the soil to be found at Atherton and Maleny, which are regarded as possessing the best soils of that class in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [5.42 p.m.]: I shall reply briefly to some of the questions raised by various members of the Committee.

The hon. member for Murrumba was concerned about the future of case timber supplies, but if hon. members read the report that appears in the afternoon papers they will see that the Government are doing everything possible to preserve the future of our timber supplies. We have just launched a scheme for the planting of 1,750,000 trees, which is the greatest planting in the history of the State.

The experiments with tung-oil trees are carried out in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture. The introduction of the tung-oil trees to Queensland is not really a forestry matter, but each department co-operates with the other. The Sub-Department of Forestry is carrying out these experiments on behalf of the Department of Agriculture on the various areas that the Department of Agriculture considers are suitable from a climatic point of view, because the suitability of climate is the major consideration in the successful growing of tung-oil trees. The Sub-Department of Forestry attends to the growing of these trees, and representatives of the Department of Agriculture visit the plantations from time to time; and in the near future we shall be able to give information to hon. members as to the progress the trees are making. The hon. member for Normanby and I visited the Theodore irrigation area a short time ago, and we learned that quite a number of the settlers there had planted tung-oil trees, but I do not think the climatic conditions prevailing in that area will allow of their satisfactory growth. I understand that tung-oil trees must have a climate where there is a good deal of cold weather. Hon. members will be made acquainted from time to time with the development of these experiments.

The ex-Secretary for Lands, the hon. member for Cunningham, was worried because the supplies of timber on private lands are running out. That is an argument

in favour of the policy of the Government in not permitting the land of the State to be converted into freehold tenure. The private owner of land is not concerned about the future of the State; all he is concerned about is making as much money as he can. He does not care what damage he does to the State—he sells the timber. By the perpetual leasehold system the Government retain control over the timber growing on the land, whereas we have no control over the timber on freehold lands.

A deputation waited on the hon. member for Bundaberg and myself outside that city on the way to the Goodnight scrub and urged a reduction in the cost of carriage of timber from that area into Bundaberg. I said to them, "Why do you want a reduction on the carriage of timber? The Sub-Department of Forestry is sending timber from the Goodnight scrub into Bundaberg and paying the same rate as for railway freight." They replied, "But we cut timber on private land and we are paying the freeholders two or three times the amount for royalties than the Government are charging in the Goodnight scrub." Hon. members will there see another instance of the danger of freehold land tenure.

Mr. MOORE: You can control it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We cannot control it.

Mr. MOORE: You compel the freeholder to sell.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We do not compel him. All the freeholder is concerned about is the making of money. He does not care twopence about the future of the State. Over leasehold land we can exercise a certain control. The hon. member for Cunningham, who served a term as Secretary for Public Lands, has again shown how necessary it is for the lands of the State to be under the control of the Government, so that everything on that land can be controlled for the benefit of the people of the State. The hon. member displayed a great deal of concern as to the future supplies of timber of Queensland. I can assure him that neither he nor I will be here when the supplies of timber of Queensland are cut out. I interjected at the time about the pessimism displayed when I was a youngster about supplies of coal. As a youngster—and that was some time ago—I was very perturbed on reading in the Press that at the existing rate of consumption of coal in a very short space of time the supply would be exhausted. I was very sensitive and I looked to the time when there would be no fires and I should be left shivering with cold. But what has happened? To-day we cannot find a market for coal in any part of the State. I can assure the hon. member for Cunningham and everyone else that there will be no shortage of timber because before that time arrives some substitute will have been found, in exactly the same way as petrol has superseded coal.

The department to-day is embarked on the largest planting operations in the history of the State. The scheme is carefully planned. The Sub-Department of Forestry designs and plants carefully. Nothing is done haphazardly in that department. I pay tribute to its officers, from the Director to the youngest junior, for the very efficient and careful work being performed. One thing I specially admire is the careful planning of

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all their work. The Director and his officers work all hours—they do not work by the clock—endeavouring to do something for Queensland in regard to forestry. In our Director we have a man who has now become one of the leading authorities in Australia and in the world regarding reforestation. No one need be alarmed, so long as the present Director and the officers of the department are there, that the Government will allow forestry lands to be opened for development without due regard to the future. A survey has been made of every part of the State. The areas that produce the various timbers are known and the needs of the districts are worked out. The Director has vision, and in years to come the people of Queensland will appreciate the fact that they had such a good man in charge of their forestry affairs. I would commend hon. members to read in to-day's Press the report issued by the department regarding its recent planting scheme. For the benefit of the Chamber I desire to draw particular reference to the passages concerning the Mary Valley and Yarraman districts—

“ Within the next few weeks the burning off of some hundreds of acres of recently fallen scrub in the Mary Valley and Yarraman districts will signalise another big planting campaign by the Queensland Forest Service, said the Minister for Lands (Mr. P. Pease) to-day.

“ The department's programme provides for the planting this financial year of 1,750,000 trees on 2,728 acres of land.

“ A notable feature of the programme this year is the use of deserted tobacco and banana lands in the Beerburrum and Mount Mee areas.”

That shows what a wonderful asset to the State the Sub-Department of Forestry is. This Government, in an endeavour to do something for the unemployed, decided to attempt tobacco growing at Beerburrum. That was an honest attempt to reduce unemployment. It cost a good deal of money, but it was an honest attempt, and, as Mr. Hughes said, when people were criticising the soldier settlements in Australia, “ If only one man out of every hundred is successfully placed on the land of Australia, something has been done.” Tobacco growing at Beerburrum may not have been a great success, but the Sub-Department of Forestry is now planting trees in that area, and in my opinion, its efforts will show good returns to the State.

For the benefit of hon. members who want to know what timbers we are planting, I quote the following from the report:—

“ The full programme for the year included the planting of 1,365 acres with hoop and kauri pines, 392 acres with eucalypts, and 934 acres of exotics, such as Caribacea, Taeda, and Platula pines, and 37 acres of other species, mainly maple.

“ These plantings would carry officers of the department far and wide over Southern Queensland. Abandoned tobacco farms at Beerburrum to the extent of 230 acres would be placed under hardwoods, blackbutt, ironbark, and tallowwood being the species selected for planting on these areas. The stocks had been raised and tubed ready for the

planting operations to commence at an early date. Banana blocks at Yandina which had produced first prize bananas for the Royal National Show were reverting to forest also. Some of these were planted up last year, and more would be occupied by young forest this year. At Woondum, near Kin Kin, and at Mount Mee, banana lands were being and would be placed under hardwood forests in the coming year, ironbark being the favoured timber in each case.

“ The hoop pine and kauri plantations would be more extensive than any other, as 1,365 acres, representing nearly 700,000 trees, would be added to the Queensland forest area in the coming year. The eucalypts would account for another 117,600 trees, while the exotics for another 750,000.”

I wish the members of the Committee to realise that the Sub-Department of Forestry is alive to the situation, and is doing very fine work. The hon. member for Kennedy, who, like myself, has travelled about the State and seen the development in this industry, congratulated the Sub-Department of Forestry upon its good work. He also spoke about the exhibit at the Royal National Association Show. I am very pleased with my officers who made that exhibit possible. Every officer, from the Director of Forestry down, worked long hours upon that exhibit, which I am sure everybody admired. I also wish to thank the various timber merchants of Brisbane, who co-operated with the Sub-Department of Forestry in the creation of that very fine advertisement of Queensland timbers. So proud were we of that exhibit that we sent it to the Melbourne Exhibition, and we were very gratified indeed to find that it excited the same keen admiration there that it did in Brisbane. The timber and cabinet trade interests in Melbourne co-operated with our officers in every possible way, because they were as interested as we in showing that Australia is capable of producing some of the finest timbers in the world.

MR. MOORE: Can you tell us what is being done about some of those diseases that are affecting our pine?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Sub-Department of Forestry is co-operating with the Department of Agriculture in an endeavour to combat that disease, but it was found necessary to go out of the State for a pathologist capable of coping with the problem. It has not yet been definitely established whether the source of the trouble is in the soil or in the trees themselves. We have found, upon inquiry, that they are not bothered with this disease in Brazil and other parts of the world from which these trees were imported; so it would appear that the disease is really in the soil. I was very pleased to see that the Director of Forestry was very concerned at the thought that we could not plant pine in the Beerburrum district. It would appear that Beerburrum and Beerwah are the two centres where this disease will vitally affect planting operations during the coming year. I am pleased to see by the report which he has issued to-day that he has evidently coped with the disease at Beerburrum to such an extent that he is now prepared to go ahead with planting. A few months ago he told me that he did not

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consider he could possibly take responsibility of spending money at Beerburum in planting because of the danger of that disease. It is gratifying to learn that through the work of the pathologist something can now be done.

The hon. member for Toowong also spoke about the display at the Brisbane Exhibition, and urged that it was necessary to distribute pamphlets showing the prices of the various materials exhibited. The department does not manufacture, and it does not enter into competition with private enterprise. It is not a State enterprise, and we believe in allowing private enterprise to exploit this business, and do whatever is necessary in the manufacture of timber into articles for sale. I want to say, however, that we shall certainly attend to this matter of the distribution of pamphlets in the future. The hon. member for Toowong, and other hon. members of this Committee, however, are not quite correct. Mr. Matyear and other officers of the department attended the display and did everything they possibly could in the way of explaining to the people exactly what was there.

Mr. MAXWELL: They did not explain prices.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They did. We realize that private people should do the manufacturing. Brett and Co. and other cabinet-makers quoted prices to inquirers, and also took orders. These companies were endeavouring to sell their products. Nevertheless, I will in future see to it that pamphlets are distributed. The Minister for Transport reminded me to-day that at the great Melbourne Centenary Exhibition two of the best displays, in the opinion of the people, were those of the Queensland Sub-Department of Forestry and the Queensland Tourist Bureau.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: They were, too.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am pleased to hear hon. members say that, because every department co-operated. There was co-operation between the Department of Agriculture and Stock, Department of Public Lands, and the Railway Department. These departments tried to place Queensland well on the map at that Centenary Exhibition. We realized that people from all over the world would come to Melbourne, and we were determined to do the best we could. The Minister for Transport was there—I was not able to be present—and he told me that the general opinion of the people and the Press was that it was a wonderful display. As a matter of fact, on meeting the Governor of Victoria and his Lady at Gatton recently, one of the compliments they paid me was on the wonderful display Queensland had made at the Centenary Exhibition in their State.

At 7 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member for Isis made mention of the Goodnight scrub and the natural regeneration of pine forests. I recommend any person interested in forest country to pay a visit to the area. When I paid a visit to the area recently, with the member for Bundaberg and others, we were shown trees that were 100 years old and we also saw naturally regenerated trees that were very little more than a day old. There is a

very heavy growth of naturally regenerated trees in the area. The Sub-Department of Forestry has adopted the policy of supplying logs from timber areas to the nearest sawmills and the very up-to-date mill in Bundaberg draws a considerable quantity of its log supplies from this area.

The hon. member for Isis also dealt with the very controversial subject of forestry versus land settlement, and, as hon. members will have noticed during the debate, there is a considerable divergence of opinion on the subject even amongst hon. members on the same side of the Chamber. The ex-Secretary for Public Lands, the hon. member for Cunningham, stressed the need for taking great care of our forestry areas, whilst on the other hand the hon. member for Nanango and others urged that the requirements of land settlement should not be overlooked. A complete survey is being made of forestry lands, but the duty devolves upon the Government to make very careful investigation before locking up lands for forestry purposes. Once an area has been designed for forestry purposes it can be alienated for land settlement purposes only with the consent of Parliament. Of course, the Government in power have the necessary majority to do what they like, but no Government would insist on forestry land being made available for land settlement unless they considered it was sound policy to do so.

Some hon. members—the hon. member for Cunningham in particular—referred to the opening of the Eungella land. We had repeated requests to open this land for settlement and we did what we considered to be the wisest thing. The development of the sugar industry had reached a point when it was considered inadvisable to approve of any new cane assignments. The Gladstone butter factory decided to open a branch factory at Mackay, provided cream supplies were forthcoming, but, as everyone knows, there was only a limited quantity of land on the coast near Mackay suitable for dairying, and if the new factory was to be supplied with cream new dairying lands would have to be found elsewhere. Eventually the Government decided to carry out a survey of the Eungella area for dairying purposes. The proposal was carefully examined by the Director of Forests, the Land Administration Board, and other officials of the Departments of Agriculture and Public Lands, and ultimately forty portions were alienated. A Bill was passed through this Parliament last session empowering the Government to make these portions available for land settlement. In spite of what the hon. member for Cunningham says, I agree with the hon. member for Mirani, and also the ex-hon. member for Mirani, Mr. Swayne, that the area opened for selection is good settlement land. We did not open that land haphazardly. We had two or three investigation committees. In addition to that the Port Curtis Dairy Company expended a good deal of capital in opening a branch factory at Mackay. Its officials also made an independent investigation of the area, the results of which it was good enough to make available to the department. These officers were quite satisfied that we were doing the right thing to make the land available for settlement.

Mr. JESSON: Mr. Fadden, the ex-member for Kennedy, also recommended it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is so. The proof of the pudding is in

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the eating. The fact is—and the hon. member for Mirani can bear me out—that when the land was opened for selection, forty to fifty applications, not only from Queensland, but from all parts of Australia, were received for one block.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: It must be good land.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is. It possesses a good average rainfall and a good temperature. As a matter of fact, the Surveyor-General, Mr. Harvey, who everyone must admit knows something about land—because his job is not done sitting in Brisbane, but travelling throughout the State—reported that the Eungella lands contained some of the finest land for dairy settlement that he had seen.

I can assure hon. members, however, that we have not overlooked forestry needs in that area. There is in the Eungella timber reserve probably one of the finest stands of cedar in Australia. As soon as the development that is taking place at Mackay in regard to the harbour is completed, which will cheapen the handling of timber, we intend to exploit the stands in that area. There is a very fine collection of woods in that area. To-day they are not in use. These timbers will aid in making the supply of timber, particularly cedar, more assured.

The hon. member for Isis spoke about the marketing of Queensland timber in other States. We have co-ordinated all phases of the industry. A board has been constituted on which are represented timber interests in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. Mr. Duffy, the chairman of the Timber Advisory Committee, who is the officer recognised as the trading expert in the Sub-Department of Forestry, is charged with looking after the export of timber and supplies of timber to local sawmills. That is a subject he knows a good deal about. We take great care to co-operate, not only with the timber interests in Melbourne and Sydney, but our own timber people in Brisbane, for the purpose of regulating price levels. We have a fairly good understanding. It is necessary to have an orderly marketing of timber. We have a very good market for timber, particularly log timber, in the Southern States. Several hon. members on this side of the Committee accompanied me on a visit to Cooktown last year. We saw samples of the wonderful timber that is now being despatched by Mr. Johnson to Sydney and Melbourne direct from Cooktown. He has secured the rights for that timber. None of that timber in that area was harvested until now.

I mention these facts to assure members that they need not be alarmed about the supply of timber. We are opening up new areas that have never been exploited before, containing, not thousands, but millions, of feet of timber. It is fitting that I should pay a tribute to Messrs. John Burke Limited, which controls the steamer service northwards of Cairns. Owing to the cheap rate of freight this company has made available from Cooktown to Sydney and Melbourne we are able to enter Southern markets and compete successfully with log timber from those areas. John Burke Limited does not belong to any steamship combine. It gives the timber people as cheap a rate as possible. Timber is "back loading" for it. I am pleased to pay this tribute to this company, which has rendered great assistance in marketing this product of Queensland.

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The traffic also gives a considerable amount of employment, which is a very good thing.

The hon. member for Isis spoke about the access roads to the Goodnight scrub and pointed out that he considered the methods of transport were not what they should be, because we were using roads instead of railways. That matter will have careful investigation.

I was pleased to have the congratulations of the hon. member for Enoggera because he has travelled the State a good deal and realises that the department is doing good work. From what he observed in the North he realises it is essential to reforest. I accompanied many Southern members to the North and showed them what we are doing in the Atherton district in the way of reforestation.

The hon. member for Enoggera also made reference to the activities of the Maryborough sawmills, and specially referred to the tribute paid by Messrs. Hyne and Son, Limited, to the Sub-Department of Forestry for what it has done. Anyone who has been to Maryborough recently will realise the great improvement, compared with a few years ago. The sawmills are now working two or three shifts, whereas previously they were idle.

Mr. MAXWELL: Hyne and Son, Limited, paid the same tribute to the Moore Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The fact is that they supported the hon. member for Maryborough at the recent election.

The hon. member for Enoggera has given some thought to the matter of restricting supplies to sawmills and pointed out that he thought it was a good thing for the Sub-Department of Forestry to zone its supplies of timber for the various mills. That is what we are doing. The Director of Forestry is carefully planning, and he has now got all the supplies of timber in the State zoned for the sawmills in those areas, and he is doing his best to see that each sawmill gets the timber from the nearest source of supply. That is a good thing.

The hon. member for Hamilton gave a long dissertation on timber matters. He is very interested in this subject and has a good knowledge of it. He referred to the revenue that was derived from timber and stated that we were perhaps diverting too much of that revenue to consolidated revenue. After all, by so doing we are diminishing our deficit, and no hon. member will argue that it is not a good thing to reduce our deficit, which would be considerably increased if we did not place the surplus revenue from timber sources to consolidated revenue. By so doing we are saving the State a considerable amount by way of interest, and I think that is a very good practice. After all, the revenue from timber increases employment, the increased employment means a greater purchasing power, business people benefit, and the State has a buoyant revenue. According to recent figures there has been an increase in the spending power of the people of Brisbane, as reflected in the bank returns, of £14,750,000 this year, which is a considerable sum.

The hon. member for Cunningham referred to the matter of reforestation. If, for the sake of argument, it took fifty years to

obtain a return, as it did in the past, it would not be a successful venture financially. No Government—and Governments are the custodians of the people's money—would be justified in spending that money in reforestation if it was going to take fifty years to get a return. If the money is worth 4 per cent. or 5 per cent., and the interest obtained was only 2 per cent.—which it would be on the basis of a fifty-year return—it could not be classed as good business. It is because of research and modern methods in forestry that the stage has been reached where reforestation and the growing of certain classes of timber will give a return in less than fifty years. In the display at the Brisbane Exhibition the Director of Forestry had timber in its various stages of growth, even down to twelve years old. We are aiming at reforestation on business lines. To provide future supplies of timber at a cost of twice as much as the timber is worth would not be a good business proposition, and whatever Labour Governments may do, they work on business principles. They conserve the money of the people and if they did not the Opposition would be quite justified in condemning them—for example, for expending on reforestation money that could be more profitably used in other ways. It would not be good business if the interest return on money expended in reforestation was not more than the cost of that money. Because of the increased efficiency in research the department is making reforestation a payable proposition.

The hon. member for Hamilton afforded me an excellent opportunity to show how fortunate the people of Queensland are in their timber supplies. The hon. member is a man in the business and should know. He stated that the demand for timber for home building had greatly increased. I agree with him, and in this connection shall quote from the latest report issued by the Brisbane Timber Merchants' Association. In that report they have a caption, "Build your home of wood." It then reads:—

"Brick and concrete construction of even poor quality is much costlier than timber construction of equal dimensions."

The report proceeds to give the average cost of dwellings in the capital cities of the Commonwealth between January and March, 1935—and I point out that this is an estimate by the people who are concerned—

Capital.	Cost.
Sydney	£1,208
Melbourne	1,030
Adelaide	948
Tasmania	838
Perth	591
Brisbane	503

The figures quoted for Brisbane would apply also to the major towns of the State. Hon. members will see that a house of the same dimensions would cost in Brisbane £503 and Sydney £1,208. The two cities showing the lowest ratio of cost are Brisbane and Perth, and it must be remembered that they are situated in the two States that have the greatest control of timber by the Government. This is not a report issued by the Government. This is issued by the Brisbane Timber Merchants' Association.

Mr. BRAND: What are the dimensions?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It does not give the dimensions. The hon. member for Hamilton can give the hon. member that information. It is the report of an association with which he is connected, and of course his association would not say anything that was not correct, any more than he would say anything in this Chamber that was not correct. The figures I have quoted are thus introduced—

"The average cost of dwellings in the capital cities of the Commonwealth between the months of January and March, 1935, compare—"

It then goes on and gives the costs.

Mr. BRAND: Of course, the house in Melbourne would probably be constructed of brick.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No one will deny that the house constructed in Brisbane will give equal satisfaction to the people who live in it as a house erected in either Sydney or Melbourne, irrespective of the material of which it is constructed. The efficiency, durability, and capacity to withstand the weather are just as great in the Queensland timber house as in the brick house in either Sydney or Melbourne.

Mr. BRAND: You have not had those figures checked by the Department of Public Works.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I would not think of checking figures issued by the hon. member for Hamilton. His association says that the lower average in Queensland is attributable to the State-wide use of wood in home building. I drive about this city a good deal and use my powers of observation to find out for myself what is going on, and I suppose I know as much about the city of Brisbane as any man who has lived here all his life. From my knowledge of Brisbane, I should say that the homes here are as attractive and just as efficient and useful to the people who own them as are the homes in Sydney or Melbourne. I have seen wooden buildings forty, fifty, and sixty years old in the North in which the timber was as good as when those buildings were first constructed. Thanks to our timber supply, the man in Brisbane is able to build a fair average house for £503. As the Brisbane Timber Merchants' Association says, the low average for the house in Brisbane is attributable to the State-wide use of wood for home building. The figures quoted are very illuminating and show what timber means to the people of this State in providing homes at a reasonable price.

The hon. member for Hamilton referred to the plywood pool, and I was pleased to hear that he was satisfied that the constitution of that pool was a good move. We were subjected to a certain amount of criticism at first, but Labour Governments do not worry about that. They just go ahead and do things! Some very hard statements were made about my department and myself when we constituted this pool. One member of the trade went to the Prime Minister and complained about our action. That very man is now a member of the pool, which is showing what orderly marketing means! I agree with the hon. member for Hamilton that orderly marketing is worth while. Every plywood manufacturer is a member of the pool. It is 100 per cent. efficient, and all manufacturers are striving to improve

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conditions; and what is not its least important feature—the price has not been increased to the people of this State. Price-cutting is no longer indulged in and all manufacturers are concerned in increasing efficiency and producing an article that can be readily sold. That plywood pool got in touch with plywood manufacturers in New South Wales and Victoria and showed them exactly what orderly marketing means. It means not only increased dividends—from which the State reaps a good deal of profit in the form of taxes and improved national income—but it has also increased employment.

Mr. BRAND: Has it increased the price?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not to any great extent. In my opinion, plywood is getting better and better, owing to the fact that the manufacturers realise that they must see that the public get the very best.

Hon. members spoke about extending that principle to sawmills generally. That question is now receiving consideration. The Government are probably more concerned with the timber industry than any other industry in the State, because the State owns the raw material. Privately owned timber is rapidly disappearing. If we are able to assure a decent return to the sawmills and plywood mills they are able to pay good wages and observe award conditions, and the State, in addition to receiving revenue by way of taxation, makes a profit out of the raw material. If the sawmillers are fighting one against the other and reducing rates, the Government have to consider a reduction in the rates on logs, so that, in the end, the State is more concerned about the orderly marketing of timber than any other commodity produced in Queensland.

Competition from overseas, as the hon. member for Hamilton knows, is very acute. We had the pleasure last year of a visit by the Tariff Board. Whilst in Queensland we took good care of the members. I saw that everything was shown to them in respect to the timber industry, and we had Mr. Duffy and Mr. Grenning placing before them the exact position. I am pleased to say that that meant a great deal to the timber industry, because the members of that board were good enough to see to it that we were not let down because of importations of certain timbers. We are watching the import of timber all the time, and we are taking care that Queensland's interests and Australia's interests are preserved.

The hon. member for Hamilton spoke about reforestation and the need for careful planning ahead. He is quite right. He seemed to think, however, that it would have been better if we had spent more money last year on reforestation. We are spending more money now than we have ever done before. Certain people say that we are not spending enough, but the Sub-Department of Forestry last year spent all it could spend. It is not possible without a complete organisation to spend a good deal of money; you have got to organise the nurseries and the various stages of reforestation gradually. Seed has to be obtained, the planting out has to be done, and there is thinning out to attend to. We have reached the stage when we can plant 1,750,000 trees for the current financial year. That is indeed a big step.

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The hon. member for Port Curtis spoke about a visit to the Technological Museum in Sydney and the utilisation of timbers not universally used in Queensland. The Government are doing a great deal in this respect. In Melbourne, too, research is going on all the time. I do not know whether any members have visited the Forestry Research Institute in Melbourne. Students, principally girls from the University of Melbourne, are classifying timbers. As a matter of fact, the director pointed out that it was hard to get young men to take on this work. He had students from the University, but it was found to be a bit tedious to the men, and he found that the best people for that class of work were the girl graduates. When I was down in Melbourne with Mr. Grenning I saw a considerable number of girls at work classifying thousands of timbers from all over the world, including our own, and what they could do was remarkable. Girls with experience could quickly tell you to what species the timbers they were examining under the microscope belonged. In addition to getting reports from that Institute, we send officers from the Sub-Department of Forestry to spend a period of six months in it for the purpose of being trained. We have had some of our prominent officers down there for six months, attending the Institute daily and collecting most useful information. I do not think many of us on this side of the Committee will be able to get to Melbourne, but if any of the members of the Opposition are able to get down for an interesting event coming off in a little while, I commend to them a visit to this Institute. The offices are situated close to the city, and I am confident that anyone who makes it a visit will be pleased. I desire to pay a tribute to the director of that Institute, Mr. Boas. I think he is well known to many members of this Chamber. He is in touch with the world situation in regard to timbers. Recently he was sent overseas to attend various conferences on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, and I pay a tribute to him for what he has done in the interests of the timber industry. He has demonstrated the possibilities of various timbers, and, generally speaking, has done good work not only for Queensland but also for the other States.

The hon. member for Albert, who recently visited England, complimented the Government on their forestry exhibit in the city of London. I desire also to pay a tribute to Mr. Pike, Acting Agent-General, for his excellent services in the interests of Queensland forestry operations. During the consideration of the Estimates for the Premier and Chief Secretary's Department, Mr. Pike was praised for his splendid services in other directions, but I should like to add that Queensland ought to be very grateful to him for the very fine work that he has done in connection with the timber industry. From the very moment he arrived in England, as secretary to the Agent-General, he interested himself in timber matters, and as a result orders are being received from overseas for Queensland timber, particularly for piles for wharf construction. At the present time we have an application for a considerable number of big piles for the construction of a wharf at Falmouth, and through the agency of Mr. Pike many other inquiries for timber are coming in. There is not a single phase of the industry that does not

receive the careful personal investigation of this gentleman. Through the splendid services of Mr. Pike the firm of Betty Joel, probably the greatest manufacturer of artistic furniture in the world, utilised a considerable quantity of Queensland timber in the manufacture of furniture supplied to the League of Nations. It gives me the greatest pleasure indeed to pay him a tribute for his splendid work in the interests of the Queensland timber industry. It clearly indicates that the people who argue that the offices of Agents-General should be merged into Australia House, on the ground of economy, do not know what they are talking about. Mr. Pike's interest in Queensland timber has been invaluable.

Reference has also been made to the employment of youths in the forestry service. The Premier has interested himself in the subject of "Giving the boy a chance"; unlike the previous Government, we believe in action not in words. There is one thing about a Labour Government—when it makes a promise it keeps it. The Premier has endeavoured to do what he can for the boys, and the Sub-Department of Forestry, among others, was asked what it could do to assist in this direction. I have received a report from the Director of Forests, pointing out that 108 youths have been appointed as cadet foresters. All are under twenty-one years of age and in receipt of an average weekly wage of £2 10s. Of course, this scheme could not have been inaugurated and maintained without the assistance of the Treasury, which has provided £14,000 this year to maintain the boys in employment. These boys are employed at Bundaberg, Fraser Island, Clermont, Dalby, Maryborough, Imbil, Yarraman, and Brisbane. When the House rises I propose to invite hon. members on both sides of the Chamber to pay a visit to one of the places where the boys are engaged. I should like hon. members to accompany the Director of Forests to the nearest centre to see the boys at work and to understand what they are doing. Hon. members can realise that 108 cadet foresters will be of valuable service to this State after they have passed through the entire course and have a thorough knowledge of planting, thinning, and so on. These boys are not allowed to waste their time. Later on, examinations will be held, and the boys who are successful in passing the practical tests will be classified and brought into the department, where they will be of great assistance to the State.

Mr. PLUNKETT: A very good scheme.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I hope that hon. members will be able to make it convenient to accept the invitation on the day that will be fixed. I undertake to convey them to the area, provide them with meals, and show them the work the boys are doing.

Mr. BRAND: What about going to the Goodnight scrub?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There are not many boys employed in that area, and the cost of conveying a party there would be rather high.

It was my intention to tell hon. members what we are doing in connection with reforestation; but I think that the article that appeared in the Press this evening deals with the matter very fully. I did not prepare that statement, nor did I know that

it was being prepared. It was handed to me by the Director of Forests. The report published to-day points out that 1,750,000 trees will be planted out by the officers of the sub-department. Is that not something?

We want to stand up for Queensland, show what we are doing, and place on record that her people can build houses of similar dimensions cheaper than those in other States. We want to encourage people to come here. A Labour Government is run on business lines. (Opposition laughter.) Absolutely! That is why we were returned in such great numbers and why the Opposition are so few in numbers. I undertake that the Labour Party received more votes from business people than did their opponents at the last election. I shall not go into the details of our reforestation policy, because the report of the department will very shortly be in the hands of hon. members.

Another innovation to Queensland has been inaugurated by the Sub-Department of Forestry. Hon. members will be interested to know that, thanks to money provided by the Home Department, a forestry prison farm has for the first time in Queensland been instituted at Palen, Mount Lindesay. The Home Department considered it preferable that first offenders should not associate with habitual criminals. In the past a young man, on making his first slip in life, was sent to a prison where he associated with lifelong and habitual criminals. That environment was not for his betterment. The idea is to separate first offenders from prison habitués. To that end the Home Secretary developed the idea of a forestry farm. He realised that it was far better to give men, particularly those who went astray early in life, a chance. New South Wales has similar farms. The Director of Forests and also the Home Secretary visited New South Wales and inspected them. The forestry farm at Palen consists of 74 acres. The timber has been felled and grass was planted by the Sub-Department of Forestry before it was handed over to the Home Department on 6th December, 1934. I understand from that department that the men there are doing good work. If any hon. member cares to visit this farm he will see a genuine effort made at reformative work by a Labour Government. The results so far are satisfactory.

I want to conclude by pointing out that during the year three additional national parks were proclaimed. As everyone knows, a national park, a State forest, or a timber reserve is proclaimed by Parliament, and can be used for other purposes only with the consent of Parliament. The three new national parks proclaimed are at Lake Barrine, Lake Eacham, and the jungle land on the Gillies Highway. These three national parks comprise 336,000 acres. It will be of interest to hon. members to know that the area of national parks, State forests, and timber reserves now gazetted in Queensland is 6,000,111 acres—the largest on record.

I want to pay a final tribute to the Sub-Department of Forestry for the work it is doing. I can assure the Committee that not only are we making careful provision for the employment of men in our timber industry by taking care of the sawmills, but we are also paying careful attention to the reforestation of the State. The hon. member for Cunningham can sleep comfortable

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to-night in the knowledge that neither he nor I shall be on this earth when the forests of Queensland are exhausted.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowoong*) [7.39 p.m.]: The Minister drew attention to the tributes that have been paid to his Government and his own department by certain sawmillers in Maryborough. I interjected that a similar tribute had been paid to the Moore Government on account of its work. The work done by the Moore Government on behalf of the sawmillers at Maryborough was done at a time when it was needed most. Unemployment was rampant at the time not only in Brisbane but also in Maryborough. The Moore Government did certain things that gave a fillip to the industry and assisted considerably to place it on its present sound footing.

I desire to draw the attention of the Committee to a letter that was sent to the Hon. A. E. Moore, M.L.A., when he was Premier of this State, by Messers Wilson, Hart, and Company, of Maryborough, which appears on page 492 of "Hansard" for 1934, and reads—

"Sir,—

"We desire to record our appreciation of the decision made by the Government a few days ago to further assist the saw-milling industry of this State by making a further drop of royalty payable on pine and hardwood and, in addition, to pay a subsidy of 5s. per 100 feet on rough and dressed pine ordered from the State. This decision will, in our opinion, give an impetus to the saw-milling industry, particularly in Southern Queensland, inasmuch as it will permit of our accepting orders for Queensland pine from the Southern States at clearly satisfactory rates.

"We believe the Government's action will be the foundation upon which a large export trade will be built within a comparatively short space of time provided, of course, the millers themselves handle the situation as it should be handled."

I also desire to draw attention to a letter received by the Hon. A. E. Moore about the same time from Messrs. Hyne and Son, Limited, Maryborough, which appears on page 493 of "Hansard" for 1934, and reads—

"We wish to tender you and your colleagues of the Cabinet our sincere thanks for your action in reducing royalties on both log pine and hardwood and allowing a rebate of 5s. per 100 feet on all sawn pine coming from Crown logs exported out of the State.

"We need hardly say that these concessions are very greatly appreciated and the assistance so afforded to the industry will, in our opinion, be considerable. We think that we should now soon be in a position to retrieve our lost Southern market, consequently placing us in a position to give more employment to many of our hands who have been working very short time."

I desire to let the Committee know that it was not only the Labour Government that did something to assist the sawmillers of Maryborough. During a period when those

sawmillers, like other people, were suffering from the effects of the depression the Moore Government came to their assistance, and the policy initiated by them in that respect has only been continued by the present Government.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*) [7.44 p.m.]: I desire to pay a tribute to the Minister for his ability in establishing a record for throwing bouquets during the course of a speech. I do not think a speech has been delivered in any Parliament in the Commonwealth in the course of which so many bouquets have been thrown over such a wide area—which practically embraced the world—as that delivered by the Minister to-night.

During the course of this debate the Minister has twice said the settlement on the Nanango-Blackbutt line was in a remote portion of the State. If the Minister desires to reach that area he can do so by road or rail after travelling a little over 100 miles from Brisbane. I hope the Minister will act on the report that he has in his office in regard to this matter.

The Land Administration Board and the representative of the Sub-Department of Forestry have written a very fine report. The Minister mentioned the butter factory at Mackay as having benefited greatly by the opening up of the forestry reserves near Mackay. The same argument could be used in respect of the land I refer to. Butter factories have been erected, railways and roads constructed and everything necessary for settlement provided, with the exception of the most desirable convenience of all, schools. Many of the settlers are unable to obtain schools or recreation grounds simply on account of the forests surrounding the areas. I trust that the Secretary for Public Lands will act upon the report sent in to the department. A certain portion of this area could be opened up for land settlement, without undue interference with forest lands. Primary production could go hand in hand with reforestation and this would create a balanced production for the district. The question is a very important one to the district and in addition the road and railway facilities between Ipswich, Brisbane, and the Southern Burnett.

I hope that it is not the intention of the Government to assist the large sawmillers of the State, against the small millers. The former control what might be termed, in some respects, a monopolistic industry, and are able to squash out of existence the small concerns, which have been experiencing a very hard time. The large monopolies are the purchasers of the timber, which in very many cases is put up in such large quantities that it is absolutely impossible for the small millers to make a purchase. The large millers are then in a position to ration out supplies to their smaller colleagues.

Mr. JESSON: Those are the people you represent.

Mr. EDWARDS: Those are the people the Government are representing on this occasion. We on this side represent the small miller as well.

Mr. WATERS: You have no right to say that.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is the position. The Government should realise that it is

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essential that the small millers should be kept going in their own districts because they are necessary to supply the local demand of sawn timber.

Another matter that merits discussion in connection with the Sub-Department of Forestry is the practice of taking from certain districts an enormous amount of money without returning a sufficient amount in the construction of roads. In certain districts the roads are being used for hauling timber, the proceeds from the sale of which is paid into consolidated revenue. Certainly, under certain circumstances money in that fund has been allocated for the construction of roads. In districts where forestry and reforestation operations are taking place, the forestry people in many instances use the roads much more than the settlers, yet the settlers are charged with their construction and maintenance. That seems to me to be most unfair and the position is aggravated when one finds that most of the money collected from the sale of timber is spent in Brisbane. A large sum of this money could be well spent on the roads and a percentage put back into reforestation. I admit that a certain amount of money is being used for that purpose, but by no means enough. I realise that reforestation is a big question, but it is one of the avenues in which the unemployed could be best absorbed, because a successful reforestation scheme will prove a wonderful source of revenue to the State. Too much cannot be said in favour of reforestation on suitable land. The lands to which I have referred are a different proposition. Large areas are available in Queensland for reforestation purposes, but, unfortunately, the Sub-Department of Forestry seems to be concentrating on those areas in which the timber has already been growing. I am certain there is much land which, if broken up and treated, would prove as suitable for reforestation as that on which the trees are growing at the present time. When one considers the enormous revenue derived by the State from the sale of timber and its carriage by rail for hundreds of miles in many cases, it seems rather sad that the railways have lost money on lines in timber districts. Roads have been broken up, and the settlers in many instances have been called upon to pay for the damage while the State has drawn an enormous revenue from this source. With careful handling of the finances of the State we should have been able to have constructed beautiful roads and to pay for the railways on which this timber has been hauled for a number of years, out of the revenue derived from the timber. Districts that possessed large forests should now be standing far above all others in Queensland.

Mr. NIMMO (*Ozley*) [7.53 p.m.]: The Minister delivered a very long speech on this vote. He indulged in a great deal of propaganda and did a good deal of advertising. I consider him the champion advertiser of the Government. He is a great publicity officer. Am I to understand the Minister to say that the Premier is employing 102 boys in this forestry work and has spent £14,000 in doing so?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. I said that the Premier found £14,000, and with that £14,000 we are employing 102 boys. Those boys are all earning their money.

Mr. NIMMO: It seems remarkable that I should find that the Commonwealth aid

for forestry is responsible for the employment of 102 boys in the Sub-Department of Forestry.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Premier had to find £14,000 of that money.

Mr. NIMMO: The Minister should have given some credit to the Commonwealth Government, who inaugurated that scheme. The Nationalist Federal Government have been responsible for the employment of the boys. The Minister was discreetly silent on that point. One wonders if he would give credit to anybody but a Labour Government, no matter what it did. I think the employment of those boys in forestry work is a wise move, but I think the Government who inaugurated the scheme should have credit for it. I find that the Sub-Department of Forestry is cutting out our timbers at a very rapid rate. The Minister has taken great credit for the huge sale of log timber last year. I think he said that 95,000,000 superficial feet of pine had been cut. I notice that a big amount of that timber is going South as log timber. I hope that timber is not being slaughtered or given away, because in a short time our people in Queensland will not have any timber here and will have to depend on outside supplies. I think I should be right in saying that within ten years Queensland will not have any soft woods of any consequence left. Our forests should be more carefully preserved and the full price obtained for the State.

Mr. JESSON: That is a damaging statement you have made.

Mr. NIMMO: By that log timber going South no work is provided in this State, and many of the smaller mills operating in Queensland are jeopardised.

Mr. JESSON: How do you make that out?

Mr. NIMMO: In a very short period these mills will be unable to get supplies unless they get them from the big importers of foreign timbers.

Mr. HILTON: Have you not travelled Queensland?

Mr. NIMMO: I have. What does the hon. member suggest?

Mr. HILTON: That you do not know anything about forestry.

Mr. NIMMO: I know more about forestry than the hon. member. In the Nanango area, certain timbers should have been preserved for the use of the people in that district, but the forests there have been wiped out completely and the land placed under farms. To-day the people have to pay very high prices in order to get timber. Nature has made certain places suitable for the growth of timber. The Minister referred to plantings at Beerburum. First of all, the Labour Government made a terrific mistake in placing returned soldiers on the land at Beerburum. The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock wasted much public money in tobacco—

THE CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member to confine his attention to the vote.

Mr. NIMMO: I will. The Sub-Department of Forestry is planting timber in the Beerburum area now. Three different experiments have been tried in that area and yet

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we find this department embarking on this project.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is only by experimenting that you achieve success—even in the woollen industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. NIMMO: Nature has shown us where softwood timbers will grow and the areas suitable for its growth should be preserved. I find that the Minister has claimed a record planting for the last year. It will take forty to forty-five years for that planting to replace the timber that was cut out last year, that is, at the rate of logging operations last year.

Mr. POWER: How did you work it out?

Mr. NIMMO: I considered the area planted by the sub-department last year and the quantity of matured timber cut. In many cases some of the trees would be 100 years old. When timber is sent South, particularly log timber, that does not provide any employment for our people in this State.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is rubbish.

Mr. NIMMO: Very little employment. The department should get a fair return for those logs. They should not be sold below a price sufficient to compensate the State if it has to purchase a similar quantity of timber by importing it from overseas. The Minister pointed out that a house could be constructed in Queensland at a cost of £503, and that a house of the same size would cost £1,000 in the South.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is so.

Mr. NIMMO: The Minister omitted to inform us that the house that would be constructed in the South would be brick, that it would last for many years, and that the cost of insurance, painting, and upkeep would be less. He failed to mention that after it had been erected for forty or fifty years it would probably realise its cost of construction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have seen brick houses deteriorate very quickly.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have seen houses come down when they were in course of construction.

Mr. NIMMO: I hope that the Department of Public Works will build better houses than that. The Secretary for Public Lands should be fair in his comparison.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I did not make a comparison of my own. I quoted the case cited by the Brisbane Timber Merchants' Association. I gave it word for word and line for line.

Mr. NIMMO: There is no comparison between the two houses.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You should tell the hon. member for Hamilton that his association was wrong.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the Secretary for Public Lands to cease interrupting. An hon. member is entitled to make his speech without interruption, but the hon. gentleman has been interrupting for some time.

Mr. NIMMO: Thank you very much, Mr. Hanson. The Minister stonewalled his own Estimates, and now he objects to his remarks being criticised. It is not fair to compare a wooden house and a brick house. In a

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warm climate like Queensland, wooden houses serve the purposes of the people very well; but the Minister knows that a wooden house of the dimensions mentioned by him could be constructed at a lesser cost in the South because of the rebates allowed to people who purchase timber. So his comparison cuts no ice whatever. I simply rose to urge the Minister to exercise caution in anything he may do. I pay a tribute to the officer in charge of forestry, Mr. Grenning. He is doing excellent work. He received splendid training under the faithful guidance of his old chief, who, I am pleased to say, now occupies the highest position in the realm of forestry in Australia. His services were lost to this State, but he is now happy in his important position in a neighbouring State.

Item (Forestry) agreed to.

SURVEY OFFICE.

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

“That £73,914 be granted for ‘Survey Office.’”

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN (*Dalby*) [8.5 p.m.]: I desire to enter my protest against the exorbitant survey fees charged by the Department of Public Lands. I think something should be done to reduce them. I am informed that the department makes no profit out of the fees, but that a loss is incurred. It seems extraordinary that survey fees of a considerable amount should be charged against a very small block of land. Some years ago, when the land in my electorate was heavily infested with prickly-pear, it was necessary for surveyors to employ men to slash their way through the pear for the survey lines. Owing to the extra expense this additional work entailed the fees were increased. This land is clear of pear to-day. It is the fees on the reclaimed land I am complaining about. Not only are surveyors relieved of the expense of engaging labour to clear a lane in the pear but the basic wage has also been reduced. Work that previously took the surveyor a week can now be accomplished in a day or two. Why are the fees not reduced? That is the important point. The selectors on this land are, generally speaking, not rich men with money to spare or men with heavy financial backing. They are men with limited means. If the survey fees were reduced by £5 or £10 it would considerably assist them. A reduction of the survey fees by this amount would enable such a man to obtain something urgently needed for his selection. That is why I ask the Minister to take the altered conditions into consideration. We also know that many of the commodities sold by these producers are from 25 to 75 per cent. lower in price to-day than they were three or four years ago. It is only right and proper that the Minister should go thoroughly into the matter with a view to bringing about a reduction.

Mr. POWER: Why didn't your Government do it during your three years of office?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I told the hon. member that the prickly-pear had not been eradicated at that time. He is excused for his lack of knowledge in that connection because, being a city member, he would know nothing about it. When he interjects on matters affecting the country he makes himself appear ridiculous.

This is not a party question. I am asking that this matter be investigated with a view to some relief to the small settler. Anyone who has had experience of land settlement realises that during the first year or two after a settler takes up an area he needs every penny he can get for the purpose of increasing the productivity of his land. Therefore, I ask the Minister to investigate the matter with a view to bringing about a reduction in survey fees.

Mr. JESSON (*Kennedy*) [8.11 p.m.]: The only objection the hon. member for Dalby has to the passing of this vote is that he considers survey fees are too high. There may be isolated cases where survey fees are high, owing to the situation and condition of the country to be surveyed. Despite what the hon. member says I know from experience that various local authorities have applied to the department to carry out surveys in regard to water schemes and other matters, and have thereby saved hundreds of pounds, which they would have had to pay out in addition to the charge made by the department if they had their work carried out by private surveyors. The hon. member has a single-track mind, and criticises the policy of the Government, irrespective of its soundness.

The hon. member made a ridiculous statement in regard to prickly-pear. He argued that it took longer to carry out surveys in previous years because the prickly-pear was so dense—before the Government introduced the cactoblastis that cleared it out. The hon. member appears to forget that the country on which prickly-pear grew in those days is all settled at the present time, and there is no need for surveying any of it.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: You know nothing about it. That is the only land available for settlement in the future.

Mr. JESSON: This is the first appearance of the hon. member for Dalby to-day, and I think it is a matter of Dutch courage.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hon. members are not entitled to make personal reflections on other hon. members, and I ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark.

Mr. JESSON: I withdraw. I trust, Mr. Chairman, you will keep the hon. member in his place while I am speaking.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: I reiterate my statement that local authorities and others have asked the department to carry out surveys for them, and they have thus saved hundreds of pounds.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [8.14 p.m.]: The hon. member for Dalby always makes the same speech on this vote. If hon. members will look up "Hansard," page 1183, for 1934, they will see the same speech, word for word, and in 1933 he made the same remarks. And I must make the same speech in reply as I made before. We do not make any profit out of survey fees. If we reduced the fees we should lose money. If the hon. member and his party are satisfied to increase the deficit of the State by making rebates on survey fees this Government are not. We have a duty to the taxpayers.

Mr. MAXWELL: You do not always recognise that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We always recognise it, and the hon. member and his party recognised it when they were on this side of the Chamber. During the three years his Government were in power and he was a Cabinet Minister he did not do anything to bring about a reduction. The Government are making a loss on the fees.

There is one matter in connection with the Survey Office to which I wish to draw the attention of the Committee. This year we have initiated a scheme whereby cadet surveyors are employed, and that provides work for lads in the forestry and other departments. Similarly we are training a number of cadets who later on will be competent surveyors. We do not intend to make them take the outside examination. As the boys progress they will find work on the staff.

Item (Survey Office) agreed to.

IRRIGATION AND WATER SUPPLY.

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

"That £30,049 be granted for 'Irrigation and Water Supply'."

Mr. BRAND (*Isis*) [8.16 p.m.]: This vote has been considerably increased and it is quite evident that there has been a reorganisation in the department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is so.

Mr. BRAND: The Minister has not made any explanation for the appreciable increase in the vote. The very first item in the vote is the Engineer in Charge. As compared with last year the salary of this officer has been increased from £600 to £1,000. This is a large increase unless in the scheme of reorganisation a new appointment has been made. Water supply and irrigation is one of the most important questions that this Chamber can discuss. Over a number of years every political party has considered water and fodder conversation as essential to the future economic life of Queensland, and I trust that the increased appropriation asked for will mean that some real work will be done and that we are not merely passing the increased amount for a staff that will sit in offices and collate information, valuable though such information may be to the State of Queensland. I hope that the Government intend to carry out some real water supply and irrigation work. It is a national question.

Every member recognises that the Commonwealth Government are interested in a matter of such national moment. Throughout the debates that have taken place on the Estimates for the Department of Lands it has been emphasised that in every particular the Commonwealth Government has come to the aid of certain industries. In the matter of road transport the Commonwealth Government have laid down a scheme to give the people of Queensland, through their local authorities, an assured means of securing better roads, which means cheaper and better transport. In irrigation and water supply the Commonwealth Government, who after all cannot burke the fact that they have more money and are in a better position to get money than this State, should recognise some responsibility in this great national question. The protection of the country from drought by means of water conservation is a national

Mr. Brand.]

work. In a country where drought so often racks the land and plays havoc with the national wealth, the Commonwealth Government must recognise that the State should have some help. I question whether there are any communities in Queensland that could embark on irrigation without some assistance. In fact, I do not think the State Government can give the relief that is necessary to the communities that embark on these undertakings unless they receive assistance from the Commonwealth Government. Therefore, I ask the Minister to endeavour to obtain the assistance of the Commonwealth Government in devising a scheme that will provide a practical method by which the people of Queensland can undertake an irrigation system that will protect this State from drought. By keeping the State free from drought, we shall add to the earning capacity of our country and to our national wealth.

My mind goes back to the time when the Government entered into such undertakings as the Inkerman and Dawson Valley irrigation schemes. The Inkerman irrigation scheme was estimated to cost approximately £130,000, but it cost a great deal more than that. Despite the fact that the Government handed the scheme over to the Inkerman farmers for £200,000 the amount of money written off the scheme exceeded £371,000, so that before the Home Hill and Inkerman areas could afford to take over that scheme, the Government had to write off a considerable amount of the first cost.

Although the Dawson Valley scheme did not reach the dimensions proposed by its originators, the community of Theodore were unable to meet the cost, and the Government have "carried the baby." We should be able to arrive at a scheme for providing water supply and irrigation to the people of Queensland without their having to stand the whole of the cost. As I said before, the cost is beyond their capacity to pay. It has been proved to be so in Queensland, and I think we are practical enough to recognise that it will prove to be so again. The conservation of water is a definite asset to the country, and its cost should be borne either by the State or by the Commonwealth and State Governments combined. If we could lock our water streams throughout the countryside I believe that it would be possible for the community to find some means of using that water and applying it to the land.

It may be possible to propound a scheme similar to that operating in connection with main roads, where a certain amount of the cost is borne by the people directly concerned. Besides benefiting the people who use the irrigation system, the scheme would be an advantage to communities other than those directly concerned. Only recently the Bingera district in my electorate installed an irrigation scheme, and since that time there has been no unemployment in that community. Further than that, that community has given employment to many more workers in the sugar industry than they were able to engage formerly. The irrigation system has also had the effect of providing the Bingera mill with sufficient sugar-cane to carry it over any seasonal difficulty. In fact, if there is any disability to be suffered through that scheme, it is in the fact that it has been the means of providing more sugar-cane than the mill can treat, up to its peak capacity.

[Mr. Brand.

Undoubtedly, in that area it has proved of great benefit, and in the Bingera area there is considerable prosperity. I believe similar schemes should be evolved for other parts of Queensland, but, again, I say I doubt the capacity of the community to pay for the cost of the work and the interest charges involved. I believe some national scheme will have to be evolved.

In the conservation of water, as in the conservation of fodder, some forward step must be made, and the appropriation we are asked to pass indicates, at least, some step in that direction. I should like to know from the Minister whether it is proposed to make some big step forward, more particularly in regard to the amount of money which might be available from the Crown for these works. No doubt he will be able to say in his reply whether the increased vote is only going to deal with the matter of water on the stock routes of Queensland. Whilst that is very desirable, and whilst we should spend money to enable stock to move in difficult periods, there is also the big question of the irrigation of our agricultural areas. In that respect, I urge the Minister to give thought to building up a practicable scheme of irrigation to protect the people in difficult periods. The vote is one I agree with. I believe we should spend money in this direction. There are many agricultural areas where an irrigation scheme would undoubtedly help in the solution of the great difficulties that confront us—that of unemployment, for instance, which has been regarded by all political parties as the most difficult we have to meet. In agriculture, without irrigation we cannot hope to employ men to an extent that will reduce unemployment. Only by irrigation can we hope to take men from the unemployed market and place them in work of a reproductive nature, to the advantage not only of themselves but also of the whole of the people of the State.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (*Fortitude Valley*) [8.29 p.m.]: The hon. member for Isis asked that a forward step be made in a policy for the purpose of conserving water and generally meeting the many difficulties that confront this State in times of drought. The hon. gentleman has probably overlooked the fact that the Government are making such a step. I am pleased to know that the Government intend to improve the water facilities on the stock routes, to enable travelling stock to be moved from place to place in difficult times. As one with experience in the West I think that is a wise policy and will have a splendid result. Generally speaking, irrigation and water supply demands the attention of every Parliament in Australia, but there are certain problems that affect this State in particular to which, I believe, this Government could give consideration with a view to devising a practicable scheme of relief.

But I do not think that any effective scheme of relief in this connection can be carried into effect by the State Government alone. If a policy of water supply and irrigation is to be successful, it will have to be carried into practical effect by the Federal Government. We have the evidence of the severe stock losses during the recent drought, and we have also the evidence of similar heavy losses down through the years as the result of a lack of a sufficient water supply. That prompts me to point out that although we have had these unpleasant experiences

time and time again, and are well aware of the economic losses through the ravages of drought, and although there is urgent demand for a scheme to avert these tragic losses in the future, there is a tendency on the part of the people, including those vitally concerned, to forget its evil consequences immediately after a drought has broken. They are satisfied to discuss the tragic losses in a casual way and to continue their industry with a feeling of uncertainty as to prospects in the future, not giving any thought to the question of mitigating the losses, until drought overtakes them again.

I have heard opinions expressed in this Committee and read others in the public Press on this all-important question. It is asked: how can water be successfully conserved in the rivers in the western portion of the State? I do not claim to be an engineer, nor do I claim to be an authority on this important question, but I know that during a wet season in the West an enormous quantity of water is allowed to flow to waste. If the problem is viewed as a national one and a thorough investigation is made, it may be possible to lock the western streams and so conserve the water for use during dry spells. I do not think that that is impossible. I have in mind the fact that by the construction of many weirs and dams in our western rivers it has been possible to conserve a limited supply of water for a period of one or two years, and if that can be achieved in a small way it may be possible to do it on a larger scale and eventually cope with the serious problem that arises during recurring droughts.

The general opinion is held that the rainfall in the West does not provide a sufficient quantity of water to justify the project, but it may interest some people to know that during a wet season, when Cooper's Creek overflows its banks, it is 40 miles wide at certain points. The other rivers overflow their banks also, and the water spreads for a considerable distance. In view of the enormous quantity of water that goes to waste during the wet season. I think it should be possible for engineers to devise some means of impounding enough for use in dry times. It could be utilised to supply the requirements of stock that would otherwise die from thirst, and it could also be utilised for irrigation purposes, perhaps in a limited way, to grow fodder that could also be conserved in our western areas. There are immense tracts of fertile soil along the western rivers, and it may be possible for engineers to conserve the water to irrigate lucerne, which could be set aside to offset the tragic consequences of droughts.

The problem is certainly a very grave and difficult one. If the State and Commonwealth Governments do not tackle it as soon as possible and droughts recur with their enormous losses the time will arrive when our pastoral industry will be almost valueless. The only method of tackling this problem properly is for the State and Commonwealth Governments to co-operate with a view to investigating it thoroughly by the appointment of prominent engineers and experts to make a complete survey of the whole position and lay down a definite policy. Such a policy has been successfully adopted in other countries, and it can be done in Australia. The sooner we take a step forward and adopt a policy, first, of water conservation, and, secondly, of fodder

conservation, the sooner we shall introduce the finest insurance scheme of all against drought. It would be the means of guaranteeing stability and continuity of production to our most important industry.

Mr. FOLEY (*Normanby*) [8.37 p.m.]: To-day's discussion, particularly on this vote, has been very interesting. It has been clearly shown that much can be done to bring about an improvement of conditions generally in our State by the adoption of a sound systematic system of irrigation. It has been suggested that the Commonwealth Government should combine with the State to bring to a successful issue some of the big projects that are possible of achievement at present. That is sound advice, especially in view of the fact that those irrigation projects that have been completed have shown the necessity for assistance other than what the State has afforded. Generally, when the State embarks on an irrigation scheme the aim is to make it as nearly self-supporting as possible; that is to say, to get sufficient revenue from the project to enable interest and redemption to be paid on the cost. That policy has become very burdensome for those settlers who desire to engage in agriculture.

Quite an honest attempt was made in the Dawson Valley district to try out the possibilities of irrigation. The project originally determined on was too great to undertake at once, and work of an experimental nature was first embarked on. On the advice of a Commonwealth expert it was recommended that Theodore should be adopted as a site for an experimental irrigation scheme. The result has been that the settlers, after working for a number of years, have found that their commitments cannot be met, and in consequence practically every settler is in arrears with his payments. Originally 3,526 acres of land were set aside for irrigation purposes. That area was divided into 264 irrigable farms of an average area of 13 acres each, and in the early part of the scheme each settler was restricted to two irrigable blocks. The rental charged for the irrigable land was laid down originally at 30s. an acre, and for non-irrigable land—that is, land that could be watered only at certain times—a charge of 5s. an acre was laid down for each watering. The rental charge to the selector for land adjoining the irrigation blocks was laid down at 2s. an acre. As a result of the difficulties that arose on that settlement a commission was appointed to investigate the cause of the difficulties of the settlers. A very extensive inquiry was conducted by that commission and certain recommendations were made to the Government. Although it recommended a reduction on the charge for dry land from 2s. an acre to as little as 4d. an acre, no alteration was made in the charge of 30s. an acre for the irrigable land. Since that recommendation was made to the Government quite a number of settlers have failed and left the settlement. Early in 1933 there were 111 settlers on the irrigation settlement itself, and 13 on what is known as the Plainby area. At the end of last year 77 were left on the irrigation settlement, and since that time quite a number of those have had to leave the settlement owing to the fact it was impossible for them to enter into any arrangement whatsoever with the department for the purpose of meeting their commitments.

Mr. Foley.

The matter is one that requires further investigation. If a commission, after thoroughly investigating the conditions obtaining on that settlement, comes to a conclusion that those settlers can pay 30s. an acre for irrigable land, and after that recommendation is made nearly half of the settlers are compelled to leave it, something is wrong. It has been said during the discussion on these Estimates that we have a very efficient body in existence known as the Bureau of Industry. That body was established for the purpose of thoroughly investigating projects placed before it by the Government. I suggest to the Minister that he refer the question, of rents particularly, to that body, asking it to make a further investigation into this matter to see if it is not possible to recommend a reduction to, say, £1 an acre, which would probably give those settlers a chance to make a living.

The position to-day is one of insecurity. I have read the discussions that have taken place at the meetings of the advisory board on the settlement. The Minister gave me permission to see the files and this question was discussed at one of the meetings. The consensus of opinion of the representatives of the settlers on that board was that a feeling of insecurity existed on the settlement. The cause of this feeling was the fact that 30s. an acre for irrigated land was too heavy. This condition of affairs is the result of the tremendous fall in price of the main products of the settlement, cotton and butter. There is no large market available to the settlement to allow of market gardening and the production of other crops that are raised in other irrigation areas throughout Australia. The settlers are compelled to grow cotton and do dairying and, as hon. members are aware, the ruling prices for these commodities makes it very difficult indeed to meet the rental charged. Were the Minister to make some helpful gesture, even though the result was a loss to the department, it would give some encouragement to those settlers remaining in the district to carry on their operations and in time prove that in Queensland land can be worked on the irrigation system.

Many of these settlers have come from as far afield as Great Britain, others from the Southern States, and though they have had farming experience elsewhere they have had to learn how to farm land under irrigation conditions. That takes several seasons. During his visit to the settlement the Minister asked one of the settlers as to his prospects for the future. He replied that they were fairly bright, but that it had taken him three years to learn how to work the soil under these conditions. That is just one of the small difficulties that beset these settlers. Of course, there are other problems that could be handled by the department, but on investigation it will be found that what I have mentioned is the main one.

The commission that investigated the circumstances of the settlement has drawn up a report and made recommendations to the Government, but the fact remains that since the issue of the report over forty settlers have been compelled to leave because of inability to meet their obligations to the Crown. As has been pointed out the settlers' representatives on the advisory board, now established on the settlement, contend that

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the rental charge is the greatest burden under which they labour.

I commend to the Minister the suggestion I have offered that if he is not prepared to take the responsibility himself he should at least place the matter before the Bureau of Industry for investigation and report to the Government.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*) [8.51 p.m.] : I have perused the figures for the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and they do not hold out much hope for irrigation in the future. Much nonsense was talked about irrigation and many glowing speeches were made when this, the original commission, was created. Some very expensive experiments were initiated, but no irrigation settlement in Queensland has been a success. The only success the department has had has been in finding water supplies in western areas and creating water supply systems for towns. We were very lucky that we did not go on with the Theodore dam. We stopped, and instead of losing about £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 we lost only about £750,000.

I notice that there has been a great jump in the estimate for this sub-department this year. The work is to be carried along on the same lines as its past successes, but the work performed does not seem to be worth the money expended, especially when we find an increase of over £6,000 in salaries alone. The expenditure in salaries for this year is practically double. I admit that the department has done some good work.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY : More than it did under your control.

Mr. DEACON : The hon. member for Bulimba is quite wrong. When I took over that department I certainly cut down expenditure.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY : That is easy to do.

Mr. DEACON : The department did as much useful work as was performed during the previous year.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY : That is not right.

Mr. DEACON : It is quite right, and I had better men at the head of affairs than were there previously.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY : That is not right.

Mr. DEACON : It is quite right. I put better men at the head of the department than were there before. It was at that time a mess, and it had to be cleaned up. The Minister in charge of the department at the present time would be well advised, before undertaking any expensive work in the way of irrigation, to make a careful examination of it. I do not believe in irrigation work in Queensland with the rainfall that we have. Irrigation in Queensland with the rainfall we have is not likely to be a success. Experience in irrigation work elsewhere in the world has demonstrated that.

Mr. JESSON : What about the Nile?

Mr. DEACON : Exactly. That is irrigation conducted in a dry country, but rainfall makes all the difference. If you irrigate and there is rain on top of it, the land may be spoilt. You can have too much water on the land and make it sour. We have heavy falls of rain one week and at the beginning of the next week we do not know what the weather will be. If you water crops too heavily and the wet season

sets in, your crops are ruined by too much water. Every farmer understands that. We have had crops ruined by rainfall in almost every area in Queensland. We are not likely to make a success of irrigation in any area in Queensland in the agricultural zone. I would not recommend any scheme as worthy of consideration unless it was on a small scale, and even then it would be no good unless the farmer choose his own system himself and was capable of working it. Before the Government spends any large amount of money on irrigation settlements they should read the story of the loss on the Dawson Valley scheme in the report of the Auditor-General for this year. So much was spent and so little obtained in return.

At 8.57 p.m.,

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

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: What was the percentage return on the money spent?

Mr. DEACON: It is easy for the hon. member to read the report himself.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: I thought you knew.

Mr. DEACON: I have read it, but I do not want to weary hon. members with figures. All hon. members have got that report and they have got the report of the department. They can read those reports themselves. They would have read them if they had done their job. If they have not had time they can read the report of the Auditor-General and see the record of the money wasted and thrown away. Men were ruined. They were brought here by glowing reports of the wonderful district they were coming to. They read the speeches made by hon. members of the Government, who boosted the scheme to the skies—without making any inquiry and without making an examination of the land and without an examination as to whether irrigation in that area would be a success, and not even making inquiries as to whether the dam site on which they proposed to spend £1,000,000 was a suitable site or not. It was only after borings had been made by the Commonwealth Government that it was discovered that the place where it was proposed to spend £2,000,000 was not suitable as a dam site. When the Development and Migration Commission came to this State and made inquiries into the project, with the object of assisting the State, it discovered that no borings had been made! The whole thing was a scandal.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: What do you think about the Western Australian policy?

Mr. DEACON: A very convenient subject for the hon. member for Bulimba to use to try to draw me off the matter under discussion. (Laughter.) We cannot get away from the vote, which deals with irrigation.

Mr. KING: You cannot get away from it.

Mr. DEACON: I shall not try to get away from it; it is a subject worth discussing. I want to save the State an expenditure that may not be warranted. I grant that the department employs good officers and that they have done some good work, but there is no justification whatever for the increased expenditure contemplated this year. I hope that when the Minister submits his reasons for increasing the expendi-

ture, he will not tell us that it is the intention of the Government to embark upon extensive irrigation works elsewhere in the State. We should at least make a thorough investigation before anything further is done in that direction. Past Governments have lost a considerable amount of money in wild-cat schemes in this State; let us lose no more.

Mr. H. H. COLLINS (*Cook*) [9.3 p.m.]: In irrigation we have a very important subject of discussion. The Minister is to be highly commended for deciding to increase the vote by a little over £6,000, which, I take it, means that it is the intention of the Government to carry out a greater amount of investigation work. That suggests to me that the State in the past has been placed at a considerable disadvantage through the lack of irrigation facilities. I have much pleasure in supporting the remarks of the hon. member for Isis and the hon. member for Fortitude Valley concerning the Western sheep country, and I agree that it may be necessary to seek the co-operation of the Commonwealth Government in the inauguration of a comprehensive scheme to prevent the appalling economic losses that take place during droughts that occur from time to time.

I agree with the hon. member for Cunningham that financial losses have been incurred and mistakes have been made in connection with irrigation schemes, but are we to decide that on that account we are not to make any further attempt to overcome many of the problems confronting the country? It is wrong to take up such an attitude on a matter of national importance. We are adopting an attitude of despair when we say, "We have done as much as we can, we can do no more. If millions of sheep perish through lack of water or grass we cannot help it." That is not an attitude that I am prepared to take up, and I am sure that it is not an attitude that will be supported by hon. members on this side.

Take what has been done in irrigation in New South Wales and Victoria. Some considerable time ago a scheme was propounded to increase the wealth of Victoria and New South Wales by locking the waters of the river Murray, and it was estimated that such a scheme would support a population of 30,000,000 in the Murray Valley. I believe that to be correct. It might be that their problems are more simple than ours. A numbers of rivers in those States are fed by the snows, which provide them with a normal annual supply of water. They are also more fortunate in having a more regular winter rainfall. Queensland possesses wonderful tracts of the most fertile country in the world, but it is a little differently situated. A great belt of our country is situated within the area between the northern limit of the winter rain and the southern limit of the summer rains. In some seasons the winter rains do not extend as far north as they do in other seasons, and likewise there are times when the summer rains do not extend as far south as at others. Then there are periods when this belt gets both winter and summer rains. There are other times when it is affected by periods of drought, through the failure of both the winter and summer rains. That is the reason why the rainfall is so uncertain throughout the whole of our Central district. The position is

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worthy of the fullest investigation by engineers. They can advise us what can be done to conserve the water that at times is so plentiful, and so valuable at other times when we are without it.

The question of the expense of such an undertaking naturally arises. Who can deny that the lack of water is not costing this State millions upon millions of pounds? The Estimates disclose that the Government have provided over £1,000,000 in rebates to the Western people on account of drought conditions. It would be very difficult to estimate the losses sustained by the great pastoral industry. It would not be an over-estimate to say that the destruction of our flocks has cost this State £10,000,000. We have to consider, not only the loss occasioned by the death of large numbers of sheep, but the loss also of the product of those sheep. We can visualise what the lack of water cost this State in the last year. Courage is needed to face this problem. Queensland stands more to gain by having a complete survey made of the possibilities of irrigation as a mean of protection against drought than any other State in the Commonwealth. That is why I believe the Minister is on the right track in providing for an increased appropriation in this vote. I should be very pleased if more money was appropriated.

The drought problem must be solved largely in that part of the country where it occurs. Bulk supplies of fodder are necessary to keep sheep and cattle in a healthy condition, and that fodder must be grown in the districts where drought occurs. A certain amount of the fodder, such as maize, can be brought in from the coast where rainfall is good, but the bulk of it must be conserved in the Western country, and I believe it can be. The policy of the Government of putting more water on the stock routes is a most commendable one, and one that must appeal to all the pastoral community. Water on stock routes is just as necessary as grass, but that is part of another subject.

The Inkerman sugar district has benefited immensely by irrigation. It may have cost the country a considerable amount of money, but I believe it is saving the country far more than it cost. The results of the scheme may be observed in the Home Hill and Ayr district, which is the heaviest producing district in Australia; and I believe as time goes on and we are able to absorb more of our sugar crop in this country a great many of the other sugar districts in Queensland will "go and do likewise."

Another phase of irrigation is the possibilities that offer so far as tobacco is concerned. The Minister has already caused an investigation to be made into the possibilities of irrigation in one of the tobacco districts in North Queensland, and has promised a further investigation into the possibilities of irrigation in the Mareeba and Dimbulah districts. Our tobacco industry should be worth £2,000,000 a year to this State at the present time.

Before we commenced growing any in Queensland we had imported tobacco to that value each year, over a period of years. It has been proved that parts of Queensland, particularly North Queensland, are capable of producing the best tobacco that can be grown in Australia; and possibly as time goes on and we cultivate a taste

for our own tobacco—as they have done in Africa and in other countries where tobacco is grown and used—we shall prefer our own to the imported article. Irrigation for the purpose of tobacco growing has more in it than meets the eye at first glance. The tobacco plant is one of the most susceptible to disease. Our rainfall throughout Queensland is very uncertain. Rain generally falls from the beginning of December, and growers set their seed-beds in order to have the plants ready to plant out when the storms come. If the first storms do not come when they expect them, they may have to keep their plants in the seed-beds for three or four weeks, and it is during that period that the tobacco plant suffers more damage than in any other period of its life. If it is crowded up in the seed-beds it is the prey of blue mould, bud worm, root rot, and many other minor diseases to which it is subject. On the other hand, with a certain amount of irrigation, whereby that plant could be established in the field the day it is ready to be planted out—and I claim a great amount of irrigation is not necessary—and permitted to establish itself, it would grow successfully, because once established it can stand a tremendous amount of dry weather. Like other delicate plants—cabbage or lettuce, for instance—it requires a great deal of attention at the delicate period of transplanting. Rain falls regularly every summer, and the fall is quite sufficient—with irrigation—to grow enough tobacco to meet the needs of Australia. It may be necessary to have a re-location of the tobacco settlements up there in order that they may be within a reasonable area for a system of irrigation, but with such a system we can make tobacco growing one of the foremost industries in North Queensland and of very great importance to Australia.

In fostering irrigation we are proceeding on the right lines. Queensland has more to gain from irrigation than any other State in the Commonwealth, and if we look carefully into all our resources and possibilities it will be found that it is not the insuperable task that many consider it to be at the present time.

Mr. MULLER (*Fassifern*) [9.17 p.m.]: I compliment the Minister on his initiative in launching out on some scheme of irrigation, but I ask him to give some explanation as to an item appearing in the vote. "Postage, telegrams, printing, and incidentals, etc." have been increased from £1,600 to £6,350. That is a very large increase for these usually small items of office expenditure.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The word "etc." covers quite a lot.

Mr. MULLER: It may mean anything, but the fact remains that practically the whole of the increase in the vote is covered by that item.

If the Government are sincere in their intention of proceeding with a scheme of irrigation I am prepared to give them my wholehearted support. I am sorry I cannot entirely agree with one of my colleagues, the hon. member for Cunningham. The time has arrived when we have to face the question of irrigation more seriously. There is not the slightest doubt about that. Very frequently 75 per cent. of our annual rainfall occurs within a period of six weeks or two months. The fall in the rest of the

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year is quite adequate, and nature is providing for it by a bounteous fall in the wet season. On the other hand we are not prepared to provide for ourselves. The recent drought cost the State approximately 6,000,000 sheep and 1,500,000 cattle, and had it continued for a further six weeks Heaven only knows the number of sheep and cattle that would have been lost. It made a great inroad into our wool industry, and was commencing to affect the dairy herds of the State. Had it continued for a further three months, one shudders to think what might have happened to that industry. We are proud of the fact that the dairying industry has eclipsed all other exporting industries. It would have been regrettable had it been wiped out in one sweep.

Perhaps, therefore, there was never a more opportune time to take up irrigation. The hon. member for Cunningham mentioned that the State had already embarked on a number of wild-cat schemes. I agree with my colleague in that. The hon. member for Normanby gave the Chamber a résumé of his experience of the Dawson Valley. Perhaps that is one of these wild-cat schemes. If we bolt headlong into the question of irrigation, regardless of the possibilities surrounding the areas in which we propose to dam our rivers and watercourses, we can only expect trouble. There are a number of sites in Queensland, particularly in the southern districts, where irrigation can be undertaken with no great risk. I have studied the effects of irrigation, and I can assure hon. members that the results are amazing when a system is installed in a locality where the water supply and the soil are suitable.

At 9.21 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. MULLER: One site particularly suited to irrigation is that in the Mount Edwards district in my electorate. I do not mention that because it happens to be in my electorate, but Governments during the past twenty years have spoken about it as being a suitable site. Like the Minister, who extended an invitation to hon. members to visit one of the scrubs of which he is very proud, I invite hon. members of this Committee to inspect the Mount Edwards site. I feel sure that when they see the natural basin in that locality they will be convinced that the site and the water are highly suited to a scheme of irrigation. The results obtained by farmers who have installed irrigation on the watercourses there certainly prove that it is successful in that locality. Some of those people have made fortunes during the last few years.

When dealing with any scheme of irrigation, we must consider also the water supply for the townships nearby. There is perhaps no better or cheaper method of providing a water supply than damming fresh watercourses.

I mentioned earlier in my speech that I considered this to be a most opportune time to carry out irrigation work. We are faced with the question of providing work for the unemployed, and I feel that they could not be engaged to better advantage than in building dams on our watercourses. The work could be done by ordinary labourers in almost every case. The material required would be manufactured in our own State, and we should certainly have nothing to

lose. Something like £3,500,000 is collected and used for the relief of unemployment, and the Government might well consider the advisability of expending that money on work of a reproductive nature. I believe that we have passed the experimental stages in irrigation, and that money so invested would create lasting assets for our State.

We have heard quite a deal of idle talk as to what we might do to guard against droughts. The Secretary for Agriculture recently submitted a scheme to the pastoralists of this State, and they, after very carefully investigating the matter, wisely turned it down. The pastoralists in the localities concerned could not be expected to agree to the levy proposed to be imposed upon the sheep and cattle owners. They simply could not find the money they were asked to provide. The fact remains that the stockowners were serious about the business, and were prepared to meet the Minister on various occasions in order that some solution of the problem might be brought about.

Irrigation is not a thing that should be carried out in any one district and the cost of the experiment confined to that particular district. To my mind, it is a national question. It would be impossible to levy on the land or the locality in the area it was serving to bear the whole of the cost of damming up a watercourse and preserving the water. Such a state of affairs would certainly be an impossible burden on the people living in the locality. If you asked them for their opinion, they would turn you down and say they were not prepared to take the risk. We have to go into this question sooner or later from a Queensland viewpoint, and set aside any petty ideas we may have of putting one district up against another. I believe we have to face this question of water conservation, and if we do not we shall lose, perhaps, the whole of our valuable stock. We must remember what happened quite recently. If the 1902 drought had continued a few months longer scarcely any stock would have been left. The same thing happened in the 1914 drought, again in the 1926 drought, yet again in the drought of 1935. We should take heed of the warnings we have received from those droughts and be prepared to guard against a recurrence. Let us get down to a sound proposition and put it into effect—something that will remain of lasting benefit to the State of Queensland.

Mr. JESSON (*Kennedy*) [9.28 p.m.]: I cannot let the occasion pass without commending the department for the investigation made in a little area I represent—the Woodstock-Major Creek area. That investigation was made on behalf of some tobacco-growers who are trying to wrest a living from the land. One of their main difficulties is the lack of water. Until five months ago they were very much neglected in this matter—it was neglect on the part of their representative at that time. He was a Tory representative, and he did not take the matter up. I have taken this matter up since I have been returned. I was fortunate enough to get a sympathetic hearing from the Minister and he sent Mr. Mulholland into that area to investigate the damming up of a gorge in the Major Creek district. It was found after investigation that to do this would involve a capital cost of £100 an acre. That cost was considered to be too high for those people to bear. There are fifty growers in the area waiting for an

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irrigation scheme, and if such an irrigation scheme was brought into being I am sure there would be 150 growers in the district in no time. The land is very fertile, but conditions in the North with regard to rainfall are changing. Townsville at the present time is in the throes of a very severe drought. I have approached the department again, and at the present time a report is being presented of a scheme whereby an effort will be made to get water from under the ground by boring. I cannot let the opportunity pass without thanking the department for its consideration and the assistance rendered to these struggling farmers.

The hon. member for Cunningham contended that irrigation would not be successful in this country because the rainfall was too heavy, but I most emphatically differ from that view. Let us consider the marvelous things achieved by irrigation in the Murrumbidgee area, where the rainfall is reasonably high. What has irrigation done for that part of Australia? What has irrigation done in South Australia? If it were not for irrigation much of the land under cultivation in that State would not be used at all. Let us take a longer stride and consider what has been done on the banks of the Nile in Egypt. It is reputed to be an arid place. According to publications that I have obtained from the Parliamentary Library, the rainfall in the Nile area is 8 to 10 inches a year and the capacity of the reservoir is 2,423,000,000 cubic metres. The "Stateman's Year Book" for 1934 says—

"The Nag' Hammadi barrage secures the irrigation of Gerga province and part of Qena province regardless of low flood. The barrage at Esna ensured adequate irrigation to a large area of basin land even in a year of low Nile."

That means that the volume of water for irrigation purposes comes from an area where the rainfall is high, as would be the case in Australia. The "Encyclopædia Britannica" says—

"In Alexandria and on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt rain falls abundantly in the winter months, from 8 to 12 inches in the year, but southwards it rapidly decreases, and south of 31 degrees north little rain falls. Records at Cairo show that the rainfall is very irregular and is furnished by occasional storms rather than by any regular rainy season: still, it is growing more frequent and approximates 2 inches in the year. In the open desert rain falls even more rarely, but it is by no means unknown, and from time to time heavy storms burst, causing sudden floods in the narrow ravines, and drowning both men and animals."

The argument by the hon. member for Cunningham cannot be sustained—that because we have a heavy rainfall in some parts of Australia irrigation is impossible. I can quote cases in the Ingham district where the rainfall is over 100 inches per annum—and then the wet season commences, as I am reminded by an hon. member on this side. (Laughter.) When one farmer in my district, Mr. G. Cantamessa, intimated that he intended to irrigate his farm, the whole district turned out to see what he proposed to do. I am convinced that it is not much use endeavouring to carry on

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farming operations if the rainfall is confined to one short period of the year. How are crops to be successfully grown unless there is a supply of moisture throughout the year? There is a reasonable rainfall even during the dry periods in North Queensland, but there is no reason why an abundant water supply should not be provided during the rainy season for irrigation purposes during the drier periods of the year. It is ridiculous to suggest that irrigation is not feasible when the rainfall in certain parts of the year are heavy.

The Herbert and Tully Rivers run practically throughout the year. Much of the water that runs to waste on the Darling Downs could be easily conserved for irrigation purposes and thus assist to settle more people on the land. There is no reason why the areas west of the Darling Downs should not be irrigated in the same way as the areas in the Murrumbidgee district, and thereby enable many hundreds of people to engage in farming operations on country now given over to grazing pursuits.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (*Port Curtis*) [9.34 p.m.]: I propose to devote the whole of my time to dealing chiefly with the subject of water facilities and other matters in relation to the Upper Burnett and Callide settlement. I shall not have dealt adequately with the subject unless I refer to certain information set out on page 71 of the Auditor-General's report on the Public Accounts for the last financial year. Under the heading of "Upper Burnett and Callide Land Settlement" he says—

"From inception to 30th June, 1935, expenditure totalled £677,940 7s. 6d. and receipts £104,031 10s. 3d."

The total expenditure, including such items as payments in respect of water facilities and miscellaneous costs to settlers, is shown at £128,628. There are other items of expenditure such as resumptions, amounting to £246,794; roads and bridges, £193,694; prickly-pear clearing, £12,305; water finding and test bores, £4,038; and railway concessions, £11,836. The receipts, which I have indicated include receipts from water facilities in that area, total £104,031. There is something radically wrong when receipts from that source aggregate that amount. The net expenditure on the settlement, as I have already indicated, including installation of water facilities, is £573,908.

On page 72 of the report we are furnished with the amounts written-off the indebtedness of settlers, and help given to them in providing water facilities to enable them to carry on. Under the heading of "Water Facilities" we find the following statement:—

"The subject of indebtedness of settlers for water facilities provided has been under review by the Government and reported upon by a committee of inquiry, the result being that substantial relief has been afforded settlers."

The report goes on to deal with the capital indebtedness, interest charges, and arrears of principal and interest due. At 30th June, 1935, the indebtedness of settlers comprising principal not currently due, instalments due on account of principal and interest, and miscellaneous amounts totalled £58,642. It is regrettable to note that an amount of £48,327 has been written-off accounts to

rebates and bore failures from the inception of the scheme.

There is some reason for this state of affairs, and it can be accounted for probably in a number of ways. First, many of the settlers, perhaps, were unfitted as settlers, and much of the land that they took up was unsuited to general farming. Then there were the low prices that have prevailed in recent years for products of the soil in this and other areas, which meant a lessened return to the farmer, which, in its turn, meant a lessened amount for him to be able to remit to the Crown in the form of repayments. Secondly, the areas were too small to enable them to grow fodder crops to tide them over times of drought without the aid of water facilities, the cost of which increased their indebtedness to the Crown.

I am in agreement with the hon. member for Normanby that for the first three or five years settlers in new areas where water facilities have to be provided, such as the Upper Burnett, might be allowed to work the land rent free. I am pleased that the Minister has seen fit to reduce the debt of many settlers, particularly in respect of the water facilities. The hon. gentleman has already helped them in this connection, and is still prepared to help them in other directions. I am glad that he has shown sympathy with these people, who have been saddled with water facilities and bores that were water facilities in name only.

I desire to congratulate the hon. member for Normanby on the outspoken nature of his remarks on Tuesday. What is more important still, I desire to support him in every way. We represent neighbouring electorates, and our troubles are similar because we both endeavour to look after the interests of settlers who were placed on that land—much of which was without natural water and necessitated the provisions of artificial water facilities. Many of these settlers have shown a true pioneering spirit, notwithstanding that they have been right “up against it” from the moment they arrived on the settlement.

I say without fear of contradiction that there has been a considerable amount of bungling and blundering in this matter of providing water facilities in many parts of the Upper Burnett and Callide Valley area. As the hon. member for Normanby pointed out, there was no watchdog in the early days to keep an eye on what was being done in providing water facilities, and in many cases settlers were forced to have a water facility on their land that was decided upon by Government officials, despite their protestations. At that time there was no co-operation between the departments concerned, chiefly the Department of Public Lands and the Department of Agriculture and Stock, as there is to-day. I could name a number of settlers who were compelled to have water facilities they did not want, and were told their holdings would be liable to forfeiture if they did not agree. Protestations by settlers to the officials were of no avail, even when it was clearly demonstrated that owing to the nature of the country that perhaps a dam would be more suitable than the one proposed. Many of the settlers signed under protest an undertaking to accept the facility decided on by the Government official. I regret to say that condition of affairs continued during the three years the Opposition were in power. This is not a

time for mincing matters, and I say that the water facilities that were provided on that settlement do not reflect credit on the officials concerned or the Governments, past and present.

I received during the last few days from the Council of Agriculture a letter relating to the case of one settler, and this is not an isolated instance. According to that letter, this settler, Mr. J. M. Talbot, of Mulgeldie, was compelled against his own desire or requirements, to sign an application for a water facility and equipment under a threat of forfeiture of the holding. A bore was subsequently constructed and equipped, and Mr. Talbot was informed that the water was suitable for stock. It appears to have been conclusively shown that this water was most unsuitable for dairy stock, and Mr. Talbot has had to purchase water from his neighbour, and at other times is compelled to drive his cows 3 miles to water. He contended that a suitable dam could be constructed for £100, and he furnished to the official in charge of the water facilities a practical demonstration of the truth of his contention by constructing with a wheel barrow a dam capable of holding an eight months' supply. The letter states—

“Whilst he was engaged in clearing his scrub block and growing cotton he was approached several times by the Superintendent of the Irrigation Branch and asked if and when he intended to put down a bore on his holding. He replied that he was not ready to provide a facility on his holding, and would not be needing one for several years. Finally the superintendent handed him a letter from the department stating that unless he took steps to provide a facility within twenty-one days his holding would be liable to forfeiture under the Act.”

Mr. DEACON: What is the date of it?

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: A moment ago I stated that I had received it a few days since. It is dated the 7th October.

Mr. MOORE: That was a few years ago.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: I am not concerned with hurting anybody's susceptibilities. Both Governments were to blame for the lack of supervision and lack of sympathy shown to these settlers. The letter continues—

“He signed the application under protest. The department advised him that their experts had recommended a bore as the suitable type of facility for his holding. The bore was constructed and equipped. Mr. Talbot was advised that the water would be suitable for stock in all except dry seasons. He was not provided with the results of the analysis of the water.”

Further in that report to the Council of Agriculture he states—

“Dry stock will drink the water in good seasons only. Milking cows are badly affected by it at all times. The effect on the latter is shown by a marked reluctance to drink the water; the cows hanging round the trough all day without drinking; heavy scouring; a scurvy and staring coat; a general appearance of debility and more than

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50 per cent. falling off in milk yield, when compared with production on fresh water."

A later paragraph in the report reads—

"The department did not supply the selector with a detailed analysis of the water on the completion of the bore, but merely stated that 'the water was suitable for stock, etc.' Even if the analysis had been supplied the selector would probably have assumed the department was competent to give a correct decision on such matters. The selector had no opportunity of testing the effects of this water on dairy cows until the facility had been equipped."

I am pleased that the present Minister is somewhat more sympathetically inclined than his predecessors. As I previously stated, this matter is being brought forward in this Chamber even at the expense of hurting someone's susceptibilities, in an endeavour to show that settlers should be consulted in such matters and that there should be some or more co-operation between the departments concerned in the interests and the welfare of the settlers, not only in the Upper Burnett district but elsewhere. There are a number of settlers who have had farming experience in England and elsewhere and some consideration should be given to their opinions and their advice should be acted upon if at all possible.

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*) [9.49 p.m.]: The past experiences of the Queensland Government in the matter of irrigation do not make the consideration of such schemes at all attractive. Great losses have been sustained in the Inkerman, Dawson Valley, Theodore and Callide areas that bear heavily on the taxpayers. In the final analysis it is they who have to pay the piper for the mistakes of politicians. The men in power thought that they could achieve great things by irrigating large tracts of country.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Theodore irrigation scheme was passed by Parliament. There was no division taken on it.

Mr. DEACON: It was opposed by members on this side.

Mr. MAHER: Everything, whether it is for good or evil, is passed by Parliament. The Government of the day set themselves to some big scheme such as an irrigation project or State enterprise, and having a majority in the Chamber they naturally pass their schemes, and the voice of experience and wisdom that frequently is raised on the Opposition side goes unheeded.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Did you say "frequently"?

Mr. MAHER: Yes. We have had tragic experience in big irrigation schemes, and the taxpayers have had to foot the bill. So that any new attempt to develop irrigation schemes must be examined with the utmost care and in the light of the very great losses that have been sustained in the past. As a matter of fact, those losses have not been confined to Queensland. I recollect two systems being started in New South Wales with heavy expenditure and concluding with great loss to the Government, although I believe that in the final analysis the production from those areas will outweigh the early losses. In the final analysis of our Queens-

land ventures also, no doubt the increased production will help to make up the leeway that was made at the beginning.

The hon. member for Kennedy dealt with an area of the State with which I do not think he was very familiar. The installation of an irrigation system in the Darling Downs areas would not be as simple as the hon. member would have us believe. Anyone who knows the geographical features of Southern and South-Western Queensland will know that nature, over the course of centuries, has evolved a natural scheme of irrigation. Rivers like the Warrego, the Balonne, and the Macintyre form natural irrigation systems. For example, the Balonne River, which is really a continuation of the Condamine, is quite a large stream when it passes through St. George and Dirranbandi, and after leaving Dirranbandi it opens out into a network of canals or smaller streams, such as the Bokhara, the Narran, the Culgoa, and the Ballandool. There are two others. They spread out like the fingers of one's hand over a wide area of country. So what was a big stream at Dirranbandi spreads out into a network of smaller streams. The heavy rains that fall on the Darling Downs and on the Main Range come down the Condamine and the Balonne, and empty out into these canals or smaller streams. They overflow their banks and bring fertility and irrigation to hundreds of thousands of acres. After dry spells the heavy rains that have fallen on the ranges fill the waterholes as the flood waters flow slowly westwards.

At 9.55 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: Under the provisions of Sessional Orders agreed to by the House on 28th August and 16th October. I shall now leave the chair and make my report to the House.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported progress and asked leave to sit again.

Resumption of Committee made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 9.56 p.m.

[*Mr. T. L. Williams.*]