

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 1937

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

TUESDAY, 5 OCTOBER, 1937.

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

QUESTIONS.

**UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF SETTLEMENTS, BEER-
BURRUM.**

Mr. NICKLIN (*Murrumba*) asked the
Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“1. What has been the total expenditure by all departments on the Government's Unemployment Relief Tobacco Settlement at Beerburum?”

“2. What is the total number of men allotted blocks under this scheme, and how many still remain?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE
AND STOCK (Hon. F. W. Bulcock, *Barcoo*)
replied—

“1 and 2. The hon. member is referred to the Annual Reports of the Auditor-General.”

FEEs UNDER STATE TRANSPORT ACT AND
HEAVY VEHICLES ACT.

Mr. WALKER (*Cooroora*) asked the Minister for Transport—

“1. What is the amount of arrears of fees due under the State Transport and Heavy Vehicles Acts?”

“2. What is the amount of such arrears due by persons who have received permission to continue operating their vehicles?”

“3. What is the annual fee payable in respect of the tank motors supplying petrol stations?”

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Dash, *Mundingburra*) replied—

“1. Total amount of arrears of heavy vehicle registration fees for the period 1st July, 1936, to 30th June, 1937, is £536 1s. 8d.

“2. The total amount of arrears due for the period 1st July, 1936, to 30th June, 1937, by persons who have received permission to continue operating their vehicles is £152 1s. 8d., but such persons are regularly paying current fees.

“3. The annual heavy vehicle registration fee payable during 1936-1937 in respect of the tank motors supplying petrol stations is £5,736 15s. 5d.”

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table and ordered to be printed:—

Thirty-fifth annual report on the operations of the Agricultural Bank, being for the year 1936-1937.

Report of the Queensland Meat Industry Board for the year 1936-1937.

Annual Report of the Health and Medical Services of the State of Queensland for the year 1936-1937.

Report by Government Analyst and Chief Inspector of Explosives for the year 1936-1937.

Report of the Commissioner of Police for the year 1936-1937.

Report of the Police Investment Board for the year 1936.

WAGES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. M. P. Hynes, *Townsville*) [10.36 a.m.]: I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Wages Act of 1918 (as amended by subsequent Acts), in certain particulars.”

The Bill is designed to correct certain defects that exist in the Wages Act. Prior to 1931, the year in which the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act was passed, the workers in the sugar industry were afforded a certain protection as far as their wages were concerned, but the passage of that Act removed that protection. One of the objects of this Bill is to re-enact section 38 of the Mercantile Act so far as liens on sugar-cane crops are concerned.

It is needless for me to point out the urgent necessity for protecting the wages of the workers in this respect. In recent times

a system has come into operation in the Northern sugar-cane areas whereby persons with a very small amount of capital buy sugar farms on a very low deposit; and the commitments of these people are such that it is almost impossible for them to observe the industrial laws or the awards of the Industrial Court. In one instance a purchaser of one of these liens was allowed 10s. only a ton of cane out of which to pay the whole cost of cultivation, harvesting, and cartage. It is quite obvious that that man could not pay the rates prescribed by the Industrial Court. When the worker seeks his wages he finds that the liece of the crop has taken all. While section 38 of the Mercantile Act operated, the worker was protected in the event of the mortgagor or lienor's not being able to meet his obligations for wages, because under that section the mortgagee or liece was responsible for the payment of those wages. This Bill seeks to reimpose that condition. I might add that the various cane-growing organisations are agreed that something should be done to give protection to the industrial worker. Another principle contained in the Bill is this: under the existing Act a worker suing for wages can only proceed in a court of petty sessions. There is a provision in the Bill that allows him to proceed in the Industrial Court, and it is very necessary that, as far as possible, all such actions should be taken in this court.

Mr. MAHER: At present he can only sue before a magistrate.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: Yes.

Mr. MAHER: What would be the advantage of proceeding in the Industrial Court?

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: There are certain powers conferred on the Industrial Court, and the amendment enables an employee to sue either in a court of petty sessions or in the Industrial Court, but not in both. In an action from Giru the industrial magistrate gave a decision from which an appeal was made to the Full Bench of the Industrial Court, and the appellant was successful by reason of the fact that action had been taken in the Industrial and not in the Magistrates Court.

These are the only principles contained in this Bill, and at this stage it is not necessary for me to give further information. That can be given at the second reading stage if it is desired.

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*) [10.42 a.m.]: On the surface it appears that what it is proposed to do is fair and equitable. It is right that a man who does work on a property should be paid, and it is wrong if he finds that he is not able to get payment because of a lien that gave to some business man the full proceeds of the crop. I can quite understand that under certain circumstances a farmer under heavy mortgage commitments might have only a restricted sum of money, and a worker would find himself in the position indicated by the Minister. It looks to me on the surface, therefore, as if the Bill would do justice to the worker. It is possible to visualise legal entanglements, however, and we should like to see the Bill before giving our support to it.

As to the second provision, which confers on the worker a choice of proceeding under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act or in a Magistrates Court, I cannot see

Mr. Maher.]

what the effect would be, but there may be good reasons for giving him that choice. When we have had the opportunity of reading the Bill we shall be in a better position to determine our attitude.

Question—"That the resolution (*Mr. Hynes's motion*) be agreed to"—put and passed.

The House resumed.

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

Resolution agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (*Hon. M. P. Hynes, Townsville*) presented the Bill, and moved—

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

Question put and passed.

Second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—TENTH AND ELEVENTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

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

ESTIMATES IN CHIEF, 1937-38.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

IRRIGATION AND WATER SUPPLY.

Question stated—

"That £34,500 be granted for 'Department of Public Lands—Irrigation and Water Supply.'"

Mr. CLAYTON (Wide Bay) [10.47 a.m.]: I know that all members of this Chamber realise the importance to the State of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, particularly at a time like the present.

For the year 1936-37 there were fifty-nine employees in this sub-department, and the vote was £29,734, but this year the number of employees has been reduced by two, and the appropriation has been increased to £34,500. I am not altogether in favour of decreasing the number of employees. Because of the diminishing rainfall we are experiencing in this State and the necessity to advise settlers with regard to irrigation and the conservation of water, I think we should have as many men as possible in this sub-department, so that they may be able to go out into the country and give beneficial advice to persons who are going through a very difficult time.

At 10.48,

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

Mr. CLAYTON: The acute position in regard to rainfall has been experienced not only this year, but for the past three years in the south-eastern part of Queensland. Many settlers in that area have been experiencing very dry times, because they have no facilities for the conservation of water. The rainfall of this State has been diminishing during the last few years, although statistics might not indicate the position in the south-eastern division to be as serious as it really is. During March last, for instance, we had excessive rains, and some creeks reached higher levels than during the

[*Mr. Maher.*

1893 flood, which was a record for that part of the State. Unfortunately, however, that rain fell during a period of forty-eight hours, and none of the water could be conserved. Since March we have had very little rainfall of benefit to pastoralists, dairymen, and other primary producers. Previously we used to have a more even distribution of rainfall.

Unfortunately, there has been almost a complete cessation of beneficial rains throughout the great dairying areas of southern Queensland.

To illustrate the position in which the dairymen are placed to-day as a result of low rainfalls and the absence of means of conserving water, I do not think I can do better than quote the amounts paid by the Maryborough Co-operative Dairying Association to the dairymen in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. That association has factories at Maryborough, Wondai, Kingaroy, Biggenden, and Mundubbera. In 1936 it paid to the cream suppliers £604,681. In 1937 the amount dropped to £494,766, a difference of £109,915 in the aggregate incomes of the cream suppliers in those districts. One factor that had a great deal to do with that decrease in revenue was the inability of those dairymen to provide for irrigation or water conservation.

During the past week I travelled through the South Burnett district and I can assure hon. members that the state of affairs there is appalling. Many dairymen for some time past have been driving their stock to water each day, but the condition of the stock is now such that they are faced with the necessity of carting the water to the stock if they wish to prevent them from getting any weaker. And in their efforts to save their stock the farmers are not observing any 40-hour week.

If something could be done for the conservation of water by constructing weirs across creeks, or by making advances to the farmers through the Agricultural Bank on long terms and at a low rate of interest much would be done towards overcoming the difficulties with which the industry is confronted. In order to construct these weirs, however, it is essential that the farmers should have the advice of experts, and I should like to see more men sent into the country districts from the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply for that purpose.

I do not suggest that we should have such large irrigation systems as those that we have been constructing in recent years in Queensland; all I desire is that the farmers be given the means with which to construct small weirs or dams across their creeks. The average farmer is not well versed in taking levels or ascertaining the correct height of a weir. There is no doubt that if too high a weir is put across a creek there is a likelihood of flood to neighbouring properties, causing friction and perhaps litigation. If the Minister could send more experts into the country to advise the farmers on this subject much good would result.

I believe, too, that it is possible to make advances to the farmers from the Unemployment Relief Fund for this purpose. The money that these farmers pay to the Commissioner of Taxes in unemployment relief tax should be expended in constructing dams

and weirs across creeks for the purpose of conserving water. The expenditure of that money in this way would be revenue-producing to the State inasmuch as it would help to keep cattle alive. If these cattle were in full production they would be responsible for the payment of a good deal of revenue to the State.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the officers of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply for the help they gave the settlers in the Murgon district when the bore casing of the Tableland bore became affected during the recent very dry spell. A large number of farmers in the district depended upon this bore for water for their cattle, but when it broke down, Mr. Parkinson, the engineer in charge of the department, moved without delay in the interests of the farmers and they were able to take advantage of the loan-subsidy scheme to repair the damage. The bore is again giving excellent service, but if it had not been repaired the position of the farmers in the district would have been serious indeed.

I have, however, to express my regret that the sub-department refused to send an officer to the Mount Bauple district to report on the practicability of conserving water for irrigation purposes there. The association had written to me asking me if I would make arrangements for an officer from the Department of Agriculture and Stock and an officer of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply to visit the district to report on the matter. During the absence of the Minister overseas I asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock if he would be good enough to ask the sub-department whether it would make available the services of an officer to report on the matter for the benefit of the Mount Bauple Mill Suppliers' Association. The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock kindly got in touch with the sub-department but the reply was that it had no officer available to report on a matter that was a private concern. The sub-department may have been strictly correct in regarding the work as being semi-private in character, but it certainly would have been in the interests of the farmers and the State if a favourable report could have been furnished. I have seen the water flowing in this district, and on behalf of the suppliers to the Mount Bauple mill I urge that an expert be sent to the district to advise them as to the practicability of locking the stream for irrigation purposes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why do they not do what the Bingera people did? The Bingera people did not ask the Government to do anything for them; they did it themselves.

Mr. CLAYTON: The Bingera mill is in a position to pay its shareholders or proprietors a very pleasing dividend every year, whereas the Mount Bauple suppliers are endeavouring to liquidate their indebtedness to the Government in connection with the purchase of the mill. If these suppliers had been encouraged to embark on small irrigation schemes at their own expense, the increased supply of sugar cane to the mill would have given them a better opportunity to meet their interest and redemption payments. That is why I appeal to the Minister to allow an officer of his sub-department to report on the proposal.

I trust the Minister will give consideration to the erection of small weirs for locking our watercourses for the use of dairy farmers, who are suffering severely to-day, and that he will permit a report to be made as to the irrigation of certain areas in the Bauple district.

Mr. WELLINGTON (*Charters Towers*) [11.0 a.m.]: During the visit of the Minister to North Queensland he paid a visit to Charters Towers, where he was accorded a civic welcome from the mayor. He was subsequently driven around the district, and inspected the fruitgrowing and dairying operations there. A deputation from the horticultural society subsequently waited on the Minister and asked if something could not be done to irrigate the Selheim scrub lands. The Minister acted promptly and had a survey made by his officer. The matter was also taken up with the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, an officer of whose department took samples of soil for analysis. I hope that the Minister will let the society know the result of his inquiries. The people of the district are very interested in this matter, and are hopeful that the inquiries will be successful, as they believe that a large area in the Selheim district can be successfully used for mixed farming.

Mr. DANIEL (*Keppel*) [11.2 a.m.]: Recently I had the pleasure of inspecting the Theodore irrigation area, including the weirs across the Dawson River and the adjacent creek. The weirs and bridges in this area are serving a large number of farmers.

Last session the attention of the Committee was directed to the need for co-operation between the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and the Main Roads Commission in the erection of weirs in conjunction with main roads. Benign Providence has been extremely bountiful in this area. The watersheds enjoy a minimum annual rainfall of about 25 inches, but unfortunately most of that rain falls in a short period in the earlier part of the year. Most of the water runs away to the sea without benefiting the district to the full. If instead of bridging these watercourses weirs were constructed they would serve the dual purpose of providing access for the people and conserving water. Conservation of water in this area would augment the spring flows in the streams, as well as eke out the sub-artesian and well supplies. Many of the wells give out during drought. If the water was conserved in our rivers, as I suggest, fewer wells would give out in such periods. If weirs were built across these streams—I am not suggesting irrigation on the lines of the Theodore system—the settlers could develop their own irrigation schemes. It is not necessary to irrigate a very large area to grow enough fodder to maintain herds during drought periods. Fifteen acres of irrigated land would provide ample green fodder for the average herd. By this means not only would our herds be saved, but production, particularly in the dairying districts, would also proceed with little interruption.

A place that merits particular attention is the Fitzroy basin, which drains a gigantic area of land. I maintain that such a system would be highly beneficial to the settlers in that district and to Queensland generally.

The irrigation system in operation at Marmor and Bajool broke down, partly

Mr. Daniel.]

because of lack of co-operation by the Government with the settlers, but primarily owing to the constant leakages in the cement pipes. I pass that country almost every week, and I notice that a very large area along the creeks where the water is weired is usefully employed in keeping the cattle alive.

Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*) [11.7 a.m.]: I have been interested in the speeches made on this vote, which have dealt chiefly with the loss of artesian water, and irrigation for crop production. The importance of the conservation of water near cultivable lands is more fully appreciated when we realise that Australia, particularly Queensland and the northern part of New South Wales, is subject to periodic droughts, and a shortage of rain is felt more severely here than in a cooler climate. If the State and Commonwealth Governments considered the losses in stock and production over the last three years as a result of inadequate water supplies they would realise that a big scheme of irrigation was imperative, and with the co-operation of all something could be done on an extensive scale. I favour a scheme whereby many of our creeks and rivers would be weired. During the last few years many persons have raised money in order to put in irrigation plants, but the continued dry weather has nullified their efforts to improve production and provide water for their stock. The result is that they are in a much worse position than if they had taken no action at all.

It is pleasing that the Australian Agricultural Council, composed of representatives of all States, and the Commonwealth Government have taken up this question, and I am very hopeful that it will be recognised to be a national work. It should be so, inasmuch as effective conservation of water results in greater production, the saving of live stock, and the promotion of the welfare of those endeavouring to produce the wealth of Australia. It is essential that some scheme be evolved that will ensure continuity of supplies of our exportable products. We cannot rely for this productivity on the natural rainfall only. There is very little advantage to be got if we can only export in the flush season of the year. There must be regularity of export. Our goods must be on the overseas market all the year round, and this can be ensured only by having conservation of water. The lack of water is a handicap to producers that must be guarded against at all costs.

The quality of our products also is affected in dry seasons, not merely because then the stock eat dry feed, but also drink inferior water. This deleterious effect on the quality of our products is reflected in lower prices.

At present a great shortage of water exists, and the dairy farmer is in constant fear of having to drive his stock to water, which not only interferes with production, but also causes him to run the risk of losing some. Weakened cattle are greatly affected when driven perhaps 3 or 4 miles from their ordinary watering place to new supplies. This discourages the dairy farmer.

Lucerne is the king of fodder crops. It can be grown quickly and used in various forms. Every facility should be given for lucerne growing on river and creek flats, and this can be done with a continuity of water supply. There are many localities in Southern Queensland in which lucerne has

[*Mr. Daniel.*

been grown successfully by irrigation. Expert opinion should be available to the farmers as to the methods of irrigation to be adopted. In the past some farmers have found that after they had irrigated their lands for a considerable time the land was more or less injured. They should be given advice as to the best method to be adopted and the amount of water required.

The farmer who wants to do something towards making his farm productive has to do that, otherwise he could not carry on. The expense is greater to-day than ever before. After all, he is really in the hands of the sub-department, which may send an officer to tell him that he cannot pump any more from the river or creek because the dry weather has caused a fall in the water. He has, therefore, to give up his irrigation.

It seems to me that such creeks and rivers could be locked by means of weirs, and thus a greater depth of water would be obtained, and more water would be available for the farmer. The officers of the sub-department should be able to say where weirs are practicable without interfering with the water-course in any way. Farmers would then be able to stand a siege of dry weather.

At the last Brisbane Exhibition the potatoes that gained first prize were grown on irrigated land, and were a fine example of what can be done if farmers have an adequate supply of water or some assistance can be given to them to carry out irrigation. This is a very big question and it must be driven home to those persons who take an interest in the production of our country that we in Queensland have suffered repeatedly from dry spells and droughts. Help could be given by the Government to enable farmers to conserve water. I do not think a fabulous sum would be involved. We could start in a small way and develop along sound lines. We should be producing more wealth for the country than we are at present. I say in all sincerity, knowing that the Australian Agricultural Council has taken the matter up, that I hope the Minister will take the view of the position as we see it in the country.

To-day we are still suffering from drought, and everybody knows that there are men in the country districts who are endeavouring to obtain water by putting down numerous wells. These farmers have been faced with a shortage of water for the first time. They have either to put down bores or wells or face the alternative of driving their stock to water, and once they adopt the second alternative that is the end of their production from those cattle. I suggested that the Government might look at this as a national matter and co-operate with the Commonwealth Government through the Agricultural Council, with a view to seeing what can be done with the water that now runs away in many of the creeks and rivers in Southern Queensland.

Mr. HILTON (*Carnarvon*) [11.20 a.m.]: I wish to deal briefly with a rather disturbing fact that has emerged from this debate—the decision come to by the farmers in the district mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that a mass meeting of producers at Gatton decided to reject the scheme for weiring the Lockyer Creek, even if it is given to them for nothing.

Mr. MAHER: That does not necessarily condemn weiring schemes on other creeks suitable for the purpose.

Mr. HILTON: That is the point I wish to raise. I do not know on what foundation those farmers based their opinion.

Mr. MAHER: The creek would not stand it.

Mr. HILTON: To the ordinary layman the Lockyer Creek appears to lend itself admirably to a system of weiring. If those farmers had enough data and scientific information to justify their decision, well and good; if not, they have done untold damage to the cause of water conservation in Queensland by rejecting the scheme without going carefully into it.

Mr. BRAND: How do you know they did not go carefully into the question?

Mr. HILTON: The Leader of the Opposition related the facts to the Committee. He said definitely that they held a mass meeting and rejected the scheme.

Mr. BRAND: That does not prove that they had not gone carefully into the question.

Mr. HILTON: It indicated that they had given the question only very superficial consideration. If weiring of the Lockyer Creek is to be condemned for scientific reasons, I venture to state that such a system must also fail in any other part of Queensland, because it is hard to imagine a watercourse in Queensland more suited to the purpose than the Lockyer Creek. If weiring is to be a failure there the ideals cherished by hon. members of this Committee and by hundreds of other persons interested in water conservation must crash to the ground.

Mr. MAHER: That does not follow. There are many creeks and streams that are suitable for weiring, but a system of weiring the Lockyer Creek, in the opinion of men experienced in the work, would not be sound.

Mr. HILTON: I understand that the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply thought very highly of the scheme of weiring the Lockyer Creek, and those competent engineers should be able to form a sound professional opinion of the project.

Mr. MAHER: The men who instigated the investigation, Mr. Jamieson and Mr. Ford, both agreed that the Lockyer Creek was not suitable for weiring.

Mr. HILTON: They requested that an investigation be carried out, yet at the same time they had it in their minds that it was unsuitable.

Mr. MAHER: They suggested a high storage dam at the head of the creek.

Mr. HILTON: That puts a different complexion on the matter.

I am one of those who wholeheartedly agree that there are many streams throughout Queensland where weiring could be carried out very economically and very successfully. The primary producers who live along the banks of two very important streams in my electorate, McIntyre Brook and Dumaresq River, would hail with delight a proposal to construct weirs there at a cost that would be fair to them. I draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that one group of tobacco growers are prepared to do something in this direction on their own initiative and at their own expense. They have applied to the department for permission, and it has been granted. Unfortunately, the New South Wales

authorities have to be approached too, as this is a border scheme, and so far the New South Wales department has withheld consent. I appeal to the Minister to use his best endeavours with a view to inducing it to give its consent forthwith, because this means a great deal to the crop for the coming tobacco season, especially if the present dry spell continues. I hope that the Minister will be able to prevail upon the New South Wales authorities to grant that permission, even if certain formalities have to be suspended for the time being.

The department has also considered a proposal to construct a big dam on the Dumaresq River near Mingoola. The investigations to date suggest that such a scheme would be very successful indeed. The construction of that dam in conjunction with a system of weirs further down the stream would ensure a continuous supply of water, and the fact that the work would have to be undertaken on both sides of the river means that the cost would be equally shared by the Queensland and New South Wales Governments, and so the capital expenditure to be borne by the respective Governments would not be very great. The area of land to be served on both sides of the stream is immense. It has already been established that it will grow all the crops that may be grown in Southern Queensland. Experience has shown that all other crops may be successfully raised in addition to tobacco which is grown so successfully. Furthermore, a hydro-electric scheme could be inaugurated later on, and electric energy supplied to the producers at a very cheap cost. When one looks into the scheme one finds that its possibilities are so great that one could talk about them for days on end. I sincerely hope that the conferences of departmental officers from Queensland and New South Wales that have been held from time to time will bear fruit in the not-too-far-distant future. In these days there is a growing consciousness of the advantages of such schemes, and the time has arrived when a move should be made to carry them into effect.

Apart from the project on the Dumaresq River, residents in my area near Inglewood and further along McIntyre Brook to Yelarbon have displayed considerable interest in such schemes. The chairman and engineer of the Inglewood shire, together with a number of producers living along the McIntyre Brook, have given great attention to the matter, and a preliminary report on the possibilities of irrigation there has been prepared. I congratulate those gentlemen on the initiative they have displayed, and in order to give the project greater publicity I propose to read from their preliminary report, because I feel that the more attention is drawn to it the sooner something definite will be done. The report reads—

“PROPOSAL FOR A WATER CONSERVATION SCHEME ON THE MACINTYRE BROOK BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH THE DUMARESQ RIVER AND THE TOWN OF INGLEWOOD.

“PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE SCHEME.

“This report has been prepared after a discussion with the chairman of this council and several owners of property on the Macintyre Brook, and at the

Mr. Hilton.]

present stage is only a suggestion for a possible water conservation scheme sufficient to supply the necessary water for tobacco, lucerne, and other crops along the valley of the brook. Considerable investigation and data would be required before a definite estimated cost and a scheme could be prepared. However, the following report will give some idea of what could be done if water were made available for use during periods of non-flow in the stream, and also show a probable means of supplying this.

"The Macintyre Brook is a tributary of the Dumaresq River, and with the exception of approximately 7 miles of one bank, lies wholly within the shire of Inglewood. Any scheme or work applied to the stream, provided it covered the whole distance from its junction with the major river, would not be detrimental to anyone.

"The stream in question flows continuously in normal years, but during prolonged dry periods ceases to flow for several months. It is this cessation of flow which makes the growing of tobacco and other crops too uncertain. I understand from information gathered that the soil along the banks of the stream is very well suited for tobacco-growing, very good leaf being produced at Yelarbon and Whetstone.

"The stream has cut a deep course through alluvial flats, which in many cases have a gradual slope away from the stream, making it ideal land for simple irrigation.

"Between Inglewood and the junction of the brook with the Dumaresq River there are 34 miles of stream bed. If permanent water were available there would be, at a very conservative estimate, 25,000 acres of irrigable land. Of this 15,000 acres would be suitable for tobacco. Assume only 8,000 acres as being absolutely safe, this would yield £800,000 per year (one acre of tobacco averaged £100 per year). Also assume that 5,000 acres could be put under some such crop as lucerne, sorghum, Sudan grass, etc., for dairy cattle, ensilage, and export. This should be worth £30 per acre per year, a total of £150,000 per year. Again assume that 5,000 acres of country be sown with grasses for fattening sheep and cattle, which would absorb land away from the stream or unsuitable for crops. This should be worth £15 per acre per year, or a total of £74,000 per year.

"The whole of the above values, if put into effect, would be worth £1,025,000 per year. Of course, it would take many years to develop the country to produce the above, but in the first year after water was provided 500 acres of tobacco would not be a large area to be planted. This, with lucerne, increased dairy produce, and sheep, an annual increased export value of £70,000 from the district should not be too much to expect.

"Given a permanent water supply for irrigated crops, the dairying industry would flourish, as the soil and climate are well suited. This would produce secondary industries such as pigs, and lucerne-growing for seed, chaff, and baling, which would find a ready market both locally and away.

[Mr. Hilton.

"Graziers adjacent to the brook would be assured of water for stock, and this may encourage a fat lamb export if suitable transport were available.

"The valley of the brook is also well located in regards to services for export, as there is a main railway line and a State highway running through the entire length embodied in this proposal. No landholder need be more than five miles from a railway siding and more than thirteen miles from the township of either Yelarbon or Inglewood.

"An increased tobacco and dairying industry would mean closer settlement, and thus a greatly increased population. An approximate idea of the increase in population from this proposal will be seen from the following figures. In tobacco-growing one man is required for every 5 acres. Thus 8,000 acres would employ 1,600 men, with their families, would mean 3,000 persons. Dairying industry, lucerne, etc., would employ 200 men, with their families, say, 300 persons; increase in shop assistants, carriers, and persons employed in public utilities, this would give an increased population of approximately 3,000 persons.

"If the above figures were put into effect it would mean an increase in railway freight by some 6,000 tons per year.

"Increase in population and production would mean an increase in the building trades, shop turnovers, and the establishment of thriving and progressive townships. A butter factory would be required at Inglewood. This could supply electric light and power for the town. Land values would increase. This would mean more access roads and better class main roads and highway.

"Proposal for Water Conservation.

"The bed of the Macintyre Brook rises 118.5 feet between Yelarbon and Inglewood, a distance of 34 miles measured along the stream bed. This is approximately 3 feet 6 inches per mile (the rise is fairly uniform). To supply permanent water to every property owner on the brook it will be necessary to place weirs across the stream bed in such locations that each weir backs water up to the weir above it. This would mean that fifteen weirs having an average height of 10ft would be required (this will depend on locations of sites, bed of stream, etc.).

"The banks of the brook are deep and well suited for weiring, although numerous types of foundations, abutments, etc., will be utilised as the banks and bed vary, but this can be overcome by design and investigation.

"The land made available for crops depends on the size and proximity of the weirs. This matter would require very careful study and investigation to provide an economical scheme for future development.

"It would be necessary to provide access across the brook at various localities. In some cases this could be done by using the weir crest as a roadway, but at least two bridges would be required; also twenty miles of new road construction and five miles of road resumptions to provide outlets.

"A very approximate estimate of cost is as follows:—

	£
15 weirs at £3,500 ...	52,000
2 bridges at £1,500 ...	3,000
Road resumption item ...	300
20 miles of new road at £60 ...	1,200
Total ...	£57,000

"Say £60,000 for the whole scheme.

"The annual cost for removing flood debris and repairing damage would be £500.

"The charge made to the consumers of water and landowners would depend on the subsidy provided by the Government and the terms of the loan required for the balance. As the scheme is a national one, the subsidy may be substantial. To cover the annual interest and redemption and maintenance costs I would suggest a flat rate charge to the landowner per mile of stream frontage, and a variable rate for each pump depending on its capacity. It is not possible to give any approximation of this until thorough investigations have been made into the possibilities of the scheme, and also the Government's attitude towards financing it.

"It will be seen from the above that the export value of crops grown in the first year after construction could be far greater than the total cost of the scheme.

"I would like to emphasise the fact that this report is merely to show what might be done with water conservation and a proposal for a scheme.

"H. A. LEONARD, Engineer."

The probable cost as estimated from a preliminary investigation is very small compared with the results that would be achieved. I commend the scheme to the Minister for thorough investigation by his officers at a very early date. Once a continuous supply of water was provided the townships in the area would begin to flourish, and become a great aid to closer settlement and that increased population that is so desirable. I hope that the day is not far distant when the conservation of water in these two important inland streams will be undertaken.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*) [1137]: This is a very important vote, and I have listened carefully to what hon. members have said. I desire to assure them that anything that requires investigation will be investigated.

I was impressed with the contribution to the debate of the hon. member for Charters Towers. I had the privilege of visiting the areas he mentioned, for when I was in Charters Towers the hon. member took me out to see the weir, a very fine structure, and what impressed me was that although drought prevailed in that part of the country the weir was overflowing. Investigation disclosed that this was due to the fact that there had been rain on the Herbert watershed, and surplus water had flowed into tributaries of the Burdekin, with the result that Charters Towers had an over-supply of water. That indicates the possibilities that exist of linking up tributaries of rivers to relieve an area that is drought-stricken. In

this case nature did the work, and no money had to be expended. The tributaries of the Burdekin were supplied from the overflow of the Herbert.

Mr. MAHER: That is unusual.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I think it is unusual in Australia. I have a picture of that overflow that I gave to the "North Queensland Register" for publication, as showing how a drought position could be effectively dealt with if it was possible to create in other places what is a natural condition in this area. If it were possible to bring down the over-supply of water at the Tully, for example, our drought difficulties in the West would be overcome. I never saw anything like it. The result is that the fruitgrowers mentioned by the hon. member for Charters Towers are in a very good position, and I am glad to say they are doing things for themselves.

The whole tenor of this debate discloses that the opinion is held in connection with the water supply of farmers that anything that is to be done should be done by the Government. I listened with alarm to such suggestions. There has been no suggestion that the settlers should do something for themselves. On my visit to Charters Towers I discovered at the places I visited in company with the hon. member that the farmers themselves had installed small plants run perhaps by second-hand motor car engines. One of the finest citrus-growing orchards in Queensland is in this locality, and the results achieved are solely due to the owner's efforts. He is not worrying about what the Government are doing. He gets busy and does the necessary work himself. He has made use of the river, and grows some of the finest oranges that it has ever been my pleasure to see. There is a ready market for his product. This farmer is also obtaining a considerable amount of money for the tobacco leaf he harvests off an acre of land.

I am satisfied that the success of tobacco growing depends on irrigation. At Mareeba the same thing applies. I repeat that I was particularly struck with what I saw when accompanied by the hon. member for Charters Towers in his electorate. The farmers there take care of themselves. No doubt this is due to the type of their representative in this Committee. He has the attribute of independence, and passes it on to the farmers. They do not worry the Government. The hon. member gives them his good advice and the result is they get busy with irrigation amongst other things. In times to come it may be possible to devise a scheme to convey water from localities in which there is an excess supply to drought-stricken areas.

The hon. member for Wide Bay referred to investigating an irrigation scheme at Mount Bauple. I am alarmed to think that hon. members in this Committee, particularly those of the Opposition, apparently hold the opinion that the Government should do everything. Why do not the growers at Mount Bauple follow the example set by their fellows in the Bingera area? The hon. member said that it could not be done because at Bingera there was a wealthy corporation and these were struggling farmers. There is ample power for the Mount Bauple growers to follow Bingera. The Mount Bauple mill could no doubt initiate a scheme, as was done at Bingera,

Hon. P. Pease.]

where the scheme was not altogether developed by a supposedly wealthy company. The growers have to meet their share of the cost.

Mr. BRAND: Where?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: At Bingera. The Bingera scheme was originally put forward by the proprietors of the mill, Gibson and Howes, Limited. They made an application for Government help, and proposed a scheme to the Premier. This was investigated, and found feasible, and the Government undertook to advance a certain sum of money. The mill management were not satisfied with the conditions. Acts of Parliament controlling water supply cannot be overridden and they found that, although they had invested money in the scheme, they did not have the powers they needed, and decided to refund the Government loan and proceed with it themselves. If the growers at Mount Bauple approached the Government with a sound and suitable scheme I think the Government would be only too pleased to do something similar for them.

The hon. member for Keppel referred to the Theodore area. I am very pleased at what is happening there. It has developed into a wheat and sheep growing district, as I mentioned on another vote. I believe that wheat growing, lamb raising, and the growing of lucerne in the irrigated area for the fattening of stock in times of drought may make Theodore a payable concern. I advise the hon. member to consult the engineer in charge with regard to the matter he raised relative to roads. If anything can be done it will be done.

The hon. member for Albert contributed a rather interesting speech to the debate, and I listened to him with great interest, as he struck the keynote of co-operation between the State and Federal Governments. Any scheme for the conservation of water must entail the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. As a matter of fact, I told the Premier this morning that I jotted down the items discussed by hon. members during this debate, and I found that instead of £1,000,000 being needed, as suggested by the hon. member for Dalby, a sum in the vicinity of £2,500,000 would be required if they were carried out. We can only obtain money by co-operation with the Federal Government, and the State Government cannot raise £2,500,000 for water conservation purposes without assistance from that Government. Up to the present time all work relating to the conservation of water and the obtaining supplies of water for stock routes and other purposes, has been done by the State Government.

The hon. member for Carnarvon spoke about matters involving the New South Wales Government, and the hon. member for Maranoa has for some years been endeavouring to get a weir built at Mungindi. That weir is now an established fact, thanks to the co-operation between the Government of Queensland and that of New South Wales. The Queensland Government paid half of the cost and the Government of New South Wales bore the other half, and the result is that the job is now completed. We received no assistance from the Federal Government.

Mr. BRAND: Why should we?

[Hon. P. Pease.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member for Albert told us that we should have co-operation between the Commonwealth and State Governments. The Opposition cannot speak with half a dozen voices. The hon. member for Albert must be right or wrong. I, for one, agree with him. At Mungindi all the cost was borne by the Governments of the States concerned and we received no help from the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. BRAND: How many schemes did you put up to the Federal Government?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I will give that information to the hon. member later, and at the same time I will show him how many were turned down.

Looking back on the history of the agitation in Queensland for the conservation of water, I find that a couple of months after a drought has broken the subject disappears from public discussion. There is a responsibility on dairy farmers, dairy associations, and the financial institutions that back them to make provision for water in times of need. Quite recently I came across a farmer who had provided water for himself. Loans made available by the Government for the purpose of conserving water—all State money—have been used in some instances for this purpose, and some farmers have provided for the future. When dry weather hits us they will be able to see it through, whereas the improvident who did not bother will find themselves faced with a shortage of water. I suggest to the hon. member for Albert that he take the matter up with the Council of Agriculture and try to get farmers' associations interested, with a view to providing for the future.

As an illustration, let me refer to what has happened in my own district. When it was decided to provide a town water supply for Tully, everybody thought that we were mad, because Tully has a rainfall of over 100 inches a year. It looked as if there would be about ten or twelve inches of rain on the day when I was to turn on the water supply. However, nature was good to me, and although there had been rain just prior to my going there, it ceased on the day I arrived, and the day was beautifully sunny, so that when I turned on the water the sun shining through the spray formed a rainbow, the rainbow of sunshine and happiness that Labour Ministers have brought to that area as to many others. The point I wish to make, however, is that Tully had a drought that year. As hon. members know, a drought there means no rain for one month. Everyone at once realised what an advantage that water-supply scheme was.

I know of two sugar farmers in the area who ordered irrigation plants immediately the rain stopped, and to-day there are at least two farmers there who at great expense to themselves are assured of a plentiful supply of water during the next dry spell. They did not ask the Government to do anything; they did it on their own. My electors are all independent, and that is why I happen to be their representative. They expended their money on these plants because they had it, and no one can convince me that the dairy farmers have not at times got enough money to do these things. Quite recently I visited the two farms that I have

mentioned to see what they had done. They have water laid on everywhere.

The debate really resolved itself into one concerning the conservation of water. I intend to read "Hansard" at my leisure in order to see what good may be taken out of the debate. After having listened to hon. members opposite I am wondering why something was not done during the three years of office of the Moore Government.

Mr. MAHER: How much loan money did we have then?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why did they not have all these debates at that time and go to their Minister to have something done? We should not have had this debate now, if it were not for the fact that we are going through a very unpleasant drought in the dairying areas. When the Moore Government were in power there was no drought, and they did not worry about water conservation. I have gone through "Hansard" very carefully to see what was said at that time by all those hon. members who have discussed the matter to-day.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: You did not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes, I did. I spent my week-end reading them, and I could not find anything about water conservation. Now those hon. members are asking this Government to do something that their own and other Governments neglected to do in the past. As a matter of fact, the only irrigation and water conservation schemes that have been introduced in Queensland were introduced by Labour Governments. Turn up "Hansard" and show me where any of the Governments of the past—and by "the past" I mean from sixty odd years ago, when money was cheap and when they had control of the note issue and could do whatever they liked—embarked on some of these schemes. If they had done so we should have had them to-day, and vast sums of money have been saved.

The Premier has been very concerned about this matter. Some months ago he had a conference with me about these schemes, and he gave instructions that every scheme that had been suggested by anybody at all—any hon. member of Parliament or any association—any scheme such as that about which the hon. member for Carnarvon has been speaking—should be investigated thoroughly. The officers of my department are doing that now, in addition to the usual routine, which cannot be departed from. Every suggestion will be investigated thoroughly—and we do not propose to pigeonhole the reports. The Government will take action. When those reports are made available to the Premier and discussed by him with his Cabinet, it will then be a question of money. Where are we going to get that money? The hon. member for Dalby talks about £1,000,000.

I asked the hon. member for Dalby where he would get the money, and all that he could say was: "You could get money for the Kangaroo Point bridge and the Stanley River Dam," but that was a few years ago. To-day the situation has entirely changed. When the Premier and I attended Loan Council meetings a couple of years ago, we could get all the money that we required for satisfactory schemes. The proposal to con-

struct the Kangaroo Point bridge and the Stanley River Dam were approved by the Loan Council, and I should like to remind hon. members opposite who cavil about this expenditure of that fact. All the necessary money was made available, but the position is different to-day. Why is it different to-day? It is different because the present Federal Government have decided that there shall be a deflationary policy.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I shall read a Press report of the Loan Council meeting that I attended in the absence of the Premier overseas. The report was telegraphed from Melbourne and published in the "Telegraph" of 16th April last. I attended that Loan Council meeting, and on behalf of Queensland I fought for more money, money that we required for the very schemes that are being discussed to-day. Mr. Menzies, as Acting Prime Minister, was chairman of that Loan Council meeting in the absence of the Prime Minister and Mr. Casey overseas. This is the report in the "Telegraph"—

"Mr. Menzies, as chairman and Leader of the Commonwealth representation, was adamant in his demand for a restriction of loan expenditure by everyone."

How can we carry out these schemes to-day when the Federal Government have laid that down as their policy? When I commented in the Press on the attitude of the Commonwealth Government at the Loan Council, the Leader of the Opposition, who was then in North Queensland, retorted: "What rot he is talking! The Federal Government do not dominate the Loan Council." The Federal Government do dominate the Loan Council, as this report in the "Telegraph" of 16th April also bears out—

"The States then set out to prune severely their loan programmes for the rest of this financial year. Queensland and South Australia and Tasmania objected to this proposal, but they were overruled in this and in their protest against the Commonwealth decision to dip into the pool for farmer debt relief and technical education for unemployed youths."

We objected to the proposal to scale down the expenditure on works, which included irrigation proposals. We objected to any Government's bringing forward a deflationary policy. However, Mr. Menzies laid that down as the policy of the Federal Government, and in effect said: "That is the position." The rest of the States had to accept because we were in the minority. Objections were lodged on behalf of Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania, and it can be seen that the objections were not prompted by political motives, because the Tory State of South Australia objected too, probably because it did not wish to scale down its expenditure on works which were, perhaps, similar to our own.

Mr. BRAND: What irrigation works had you in mind at the time?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Lots of them.

Mr. BRAND: Which one?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I will give the hon. member the list. We were scaled down nearly £750,000 on our loan

Hon. P. Pease.]

expenditure this year. We could have proceeded with quite a number of satisfactory schemes had the Federal Government not introduced their deflationary policy. However, there is only one remedy now, and that is for the people of Australia to be sane enough to return a different Federal Government at the forthcoming Federal elections. As the responsible Minister concerned, I strongly advise every member of the Opposition who has advocated the inauguration of irrigation schemes to see that a Federal Government are returned which do not believe in a deflationary policy, so that we can get the money. I undertake to spend the money on sound irrigation proposals at once, provided the Federal Government will give us the money.

Mr. MAHER: Where do the Federal Government find the money?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They can find the money. I say quite candidly that I will do the spending if they will find the money, but the only way to get it is to see that a Federal Labour Government are returned at the coming Federal election. The State has no desire to shift its obligations on to the Commonwealth Government if we can get adequate supplies of loan money. We do not ask the Commonwealth Government to bear any part of the cost. We have done it ourselves up to the present, and we are prepared to continue to do so.

The best test is to see what we are doing to-day. I am going to show what we are doing and prove that the work will be put in train, provided loan money is available, virtually without the help of any Commonwealth money. I say on behalf of the Government that we are quite prepared to go ahead with all the schemes propounded from this side of the Committee and by the Opposition provided they are found to be payable; that is to say, provided the expenditure on them will not over-capitalise the land. I have one scheme in mind that the Premier has already investigated. He has pointed out that experts are of the opinion that it will cost about 16s. 8d. an acre. I am quite prepared to go ahead with that scheme provided the money is available. We are not going to ask the Commonwealth to find the money.

Mr. MAHER: You are now referring to the Lockyer scheme, which will cost about 14s. 4d. an acre.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As I have said, the Government are prepared to go ahead with all irrigation schemes that will not over-capitalise the land. To proceed with a scheme that would over-capitalise the land would be foolish, and Labour does not do anything foolish. That is, of course, all contingent on our getting the money.

Mr. PLUNKETT: You cannot get the money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We can get the money, provided we can wipe out the present deflation policy of the Commonwealth Government. This deflation policy forced the Premier to scale down the loan money originally allocated to my department by £200,000 during the present financial year. I say distinctly that if loan money is made available we have many schemes to embark on.

[Hon. P. Pease.

When the hon. member for Enoggera was speaking an hon. member of the Opposition alluded to the financial aid promised by the Commonwealth Government. One hon. member went so far as to say that a wonderful scheme had been proposed by that Government. I have heard many Commonwealth Government supporters refer to that scheme. Let us see what it really is. The finance involved is analogous to the small amount made available for the farmers rehabilitation scheme referred to in this morning's Press by the Premier. The scheme involves a contribution of one-third by the Commonwealth Government, one-third by the State Government, and one-third by the local governing body.

Mr. BRAND: There is nothing wrong with that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is so, except the small amount of money made available. Just imagine the amount made available for Queensland! The Commonwealth Government said it would make available for Queensland £14,450 annually for ten years. What a wonderful amount! How far would £14,450 annually go in giving effect to the schemes that have already been proposed during the present debate. That amount of money, moreover, was made available under conditions. The State Government has no voice in what those conditions shall be. The amount thus made available would represent interest and redemption on an expenditure of £337,000. That is the total sum involved in the Commonwealth Government's aid to Queensland for water and sewerage schemes in Queensland. That sum could be allocated in a month in Queensland. Apart from that, the State Government and the local governing body must also find £14,450 each.

The Government's works programme for this financial year involves an expenditure of no less than £8,000,000, the greatest amount ever allocated for such purposes in the history of Queensland. It is a wonderful programme. With that sum the Opposition may compare, should they so desire, the £337,000 that the Commonwealth Government are providing. The rest of it is provided by the ratepayers and taxpayers of Queensland, although the Federal Government collect more in taxes than the State Government, if we take into consideration customs, excise, and similar duties. Now that you have the Prime Minister here, hon. members opposite should tell him that out of the £8,000,000 to be expended on works in Queensland this year the Commonwealth do not find more than £337,000.

Mr. MAHER interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I have called the Leader of the Opposition to order several times; I hope I shall not have occasion to call him to order again.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hon. members of the Opposition, particularly the hon. members for Nanango and Dalby, complained about the Government's alleged lack of spending outside the metropolitan area. I also notice the conference of the Chambers of Commerce of Australia, now sitting in Toowoomba, without troubling to get any details about the matter, has also condemned the Government for not spending a greater sum of money in the country areas. After I have outlined what the Government are doing in the country areas under this

vote I think hon. members will be convinced that there is no justification for the complaint. We have already spent £64,460 in providing water on stock routes. I have here a list of the areas in which it has been spent and it covers all the Western districts where water is required. Not one penny of that was Commonwealth money. Two years ago the Premier allocated £140,000, half loan and half subsidy, to be spent on the provision of water on stock routes. That was the amount considered by irrigation officers and experts, after they had made a careful survey, to be necessary to provide water on stock routes all over Queensland in order that stock could travel from any part of Queensland to the nearest meat-works. Realising that this was a work of national value, the Government made available £70,000 by way of loan and granted a subsidy of £70,000. That was the first time in the history of Queensland that any Government had attempted to provide water on stock routes. Hon. members opposite were in power three years, but they did nothing in that respect.

MR. BRAND: During the first three years your Government were in power you did nothing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We did not have the money. It cost us millions to do what hon. members left undone, and it was not until two years ago that we were able to make up the leeway. A remarkable thing was that for the first six months of the year, the work was held up owing to an excessive rainfall. I suppose nature said, "These puny mortals are trying to do something I can do, I will show them how puny they are."

MR. BRAND: How much did you spend?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We spent £64,460. Some of the amount will have to be provided out of the loan funds of this year, and owing to the deflation policy of the Federal Government I may have to cut down some of that.

I should like to read a list of the various places where work is being carried out. I will ask hon. members to have a look at it before they say again that the Government are not spending money in the country areas. Here is a long list of places as far distant as Jericho, a place I sometimes fell inclined to tell hon. members opposite to go to.

The ex-Secretary for Public Lands wished to know the reason for the appointment of a designing engineer at £900 a year. The works approved and under construction by local authorities, financed by Government subsidy-loan schemes, and supervised by the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, of which this officer is a necessary employee, amounted up to 30th August, 1937, to—

	£
Government loans and guaranteed by the Government	1,236,998
Government subsidies	1,168,307
	£2,405,305

That is a reply to those hon. members who ask: "What are the Government doing in the country areas?" The greater part of that is for water facilities, and the area in which this work is being done extends from Coolangatta, in the South, to Thursday Island, in the North, and includes the Northern, Central, and South-Western

districts. Of that work £1,000,000 worth has already been completed, and there are under construction all over Queensland works to cost approximately £1,500,000. There must be a designing officer. The work has to be checked. Hon. members know what happens when a local authority makes application for a subsidy-loan to the Government. It is examined, and the sub-department, because of the large amount of Government money involved, exercises control over it. To those who say, "Do away with the unemployment relief tax," I answer that it would have been absolutely impossible for the Government to find this sum of money for subsidy, approximating now £1,250,000, if it had not been for the Unemployment Relief Fund. Those who advocate the abolition of the tax should pause and think. Works to the value of £2,500,000 are going on in Queensland, most of it in country areas and nearly all in connection with water supplies. The number of local authorities concerned is forty-five. I intend to give the Committee the complete list to have it on record and show exactly the locality of the works. Hon. members opposite will not be able then to say with truth that the Government are neglecting the country areas.

The schemes include water supplies, reticulation, bores, weirs, water facilities, and drainage schemes. It includes six sewerage schemes, and also a scheme connecting the Baratta and Plantation Creeks, in the Ayr district, at a cost of approximately £20,000. That brings my mind back to the remarks made by the hon. member for Charters Towers about my visit to his district. It was put to the Government that if Baratta and Plantation Creeks were connected the farmers in the area would be ensured of a constant supply of water in drought times. The Government pointed out, as had been pointed out to the sugar-growers at Mount Bauple, that they could not carry this scheme; that it was one really for the local authorities. The local authorities applied for a subsidy-loan, half loan, over a long term of years, and the half subsidy, amounting in all to approximately £20,000. To-day the two rivers are connected, and the farmers have a constant water supply in periods of drought. That is the reason why I said earlier that people should help themselves. That is a tangible instance of helping yourself. The farmers were quite prepared to find some of the money, and their local authority rates contribute half the amount required.

There are seventy-one projects in all and over fifty in country areas, from Gatton, in the south, to Mount Isa, in the north-west. The list includes Longreach, Cloncurry, Quilpie, Windorah, Murweh, Booringa, Mingela, Morven, Waggamba, Jericho, Thursday Island, Roma, Dalby, Flinders, Hughenden, and Bulloo. No Government have ever shown more fairness to all parts of Queensland than have the present Administration.

The cities and towns number fifteen, and include Bowen, Cairns, Dalby, Goondiwindi, Hughenden, Ipswich, Mackay, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Roma, Southport, Toowoomba, Townsville, Thursday Island, and Warwick. There are thirty shires: Ayr, Booringa, Barkly Tableland, Barcardine, Balonne, Bulloo, Cairns, Cloncurry, Cardwell, Dalrymple, Douglas, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, Herberton, Isis, Johnstone, Jericho, Kingaroy, Longreach, Landsborough,

[Hon. P. Pease.]

Murilla, Murweh, Murgon, Paroo, Quilpie, Taroom, Tarampa, Winton, Waggamba, and Woothakata. Hon. members will see that almost every area of the State has been covered. All these schemes are big schemes involving considerable sums of money. I should have liked to read the whole list of works to show exactly what has been done.

The whole of that work is under the supervision of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply; how could we get on without a designing engineer? We have to see that money is spent properly. We are in trouble to a certain extent now because some of the water schemes, particularly those at Tully, Cairns, and Gordonvale, have proved to be unsatisfactory because of faulty pipes. The matter will be investigated, but the damage has been done. If men are not on the spot all the time supervising the expenditure of the State's money—the people's money—it may be mis-spent. I hope that the former Secretary for Public Lands was not cavilling at the fact that we had to have a designing engineer. We do not appoint high officials to responsible positions without first consulting the Public Service Commissioner. Before this particular officer was appointed the Commissioner went thoroughly into the matter and it was thought that, with an expenditure of £2,500,000, a designer was required. We did not want a cheap man, because hon. members recognise that a cheap man means cheap work. We advertised extensively for a good man, and the officer eventually selected held the highest credentials of anyone in Australia, and his selection was endorsed by the Public Service Commissioner. That officer is now in charge of this work, and whatever else happens we know that the job will be done properly.

I trust that hon. members of the Opposition will agree that this Government have done their duty by the settlers in the western and other portions of the State. Nearly all the schemes, with the exception of town sewerage schemes, are water supply matters. We are the only Government in Australia who have co-operated with another State Government—I refer to the weir at Mungindi. The Brisbane City Council is not included in this list because that council finds its own money. The hon. member for Hamilton knows what rates he pays; they include what may be termed a loan rate to meet the money borrowed for water works. People cavil at the Stanley River Dam project, the second greatest water scheme in Australia, but once it is established people will have no need to worry about the future water supply of Brisbane. This present dry stretch is demonstrating how necessary that work really is. The position in regard to finding the money by the Government was arranged three years ago, and we are very fortunate that it was so arranged. The Brisbane City Council is contributing 566/1,000ths, the Ipswich Council 34/1,000ths, and the Queensland State Government the remaining 500/1,000ths. This project again shows the advantage to be derived from the Unemployment Relief Fund, because if it were not for that fund this work could not be undertaken. I visited the area the other day in company with the engineer and I saw what wonderful work was being done. I pay a tribute to the engineer and men up there, as it is one of

the best jobs I have seen, and I have seen a good many all over Australia and overseas.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I can only allow the hon. gentleman to refer to the Stanley River Dam in passing.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: My point is that that is the position regarding irrigation and water supply schemes. The sub-department is working at high pressure in an effort to cope with the work. One hon. member in this Chamber complained to a certain extent that officers of my department were not available to look into a proposal by private individuals. The State comes first, and I cannot release any officer until State work is completed.

As I have shown by the list, our men are all over the State. At the present time our chief engineer, Mr. Parkinson, is away. I was told in Canada by many hon. members of the Canadian Government that they would be pleased to place all the information in their possession at the disposal of Mr. Parkinson, and they suggested that I send him over there. Owing to the courtesy of the officers concerned, in Canada particularly, I am quite satisfied that when Mr. Parkinson returns he will have a fund of information that will be of great value to the State. One matter in particular on which he should have important information is that of sewers. When I went to America and Canada I investigated the question of sewer pipes. Everyone realises that in Brisbane and other parts of the State, but particularly in Brisbane, sewerage pipes are not standing up as they should do. Acids and other chemicals that pass through the sewerage pipes of Brisbane are destroying them. It is just about two years ago that the Brisbane City Council asked me to make Mr. Parkinson's services available to conduct an investigation into the condition of the Brisbane sewers. Mr. Parkinson conducted that investigation, and he found that some of the pipes were in a very bad way. When I went to Canada I found that similar trouble had developed there twelve years ago.

Whatever else may be said about them, the Canadians and Americans are very wide awake, particularly in the investigation of such problems as these. They investigated the sewer-pipe problem twelve years ago. First of all they obtained vitreous clay pipes, but they found that they could be made only in certain places and had to be transported to where they were needed. Numbers of them were destroyed in transit, so that the cost was very heavy. Naturally, they set about finding a better pipe, and eventually discovered a cement that would stand up to all the acids and corrosive agents that we have in Brisbane to-day. I was told when I was there that these pipes would last for thirty years. Compare that with the ten years that our pipes have lasted!

Naturally, if that is the only thing that Mr. Parkinson brings back from America—a means of increasing the life of our sewer pipes from ten years to thirty years, the expense of sending him over there will be justified. As they pointed out over there, the cement is the trouble, and I hope that Mr. Parkinson will bring back the formula for a cement that will stand up to all corrosives, so that we may achieve at least what has been done in Canada, prolong the life of the concrete sewer pipes from ten to thirty years. It is very easy to make the

[Hon. P. Pease.

vitreous clay or the glazed clay pipes, but they are expensive. I was pleased to note that the company that was manufacturing this cement for the Canadian Government was the Kandos Company in America, and it has a branch in Australia. Therefore, we should have no difficulty in getting the right type of cement when it is needed.

Mr. NIMMO: You could get the same cement from Darra.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Of course we shall, but we must have the formula. No doubt there will be something to pay for the formula if we have not got it at present.

Another matter that was mentioned during the debate was the diminution in the flow of artesian waters. This is a serious matter, and it is now having attention. I wish to point out that in 1936, when I introduced the Bill giving me the powers that I now have to deal with that question, almost every hon. member opposite opposed it, saying that we were interfering unduly with the rights of those people who had these water supplies.

Mr. MAHER: You had all those powers before the Bill was introduced.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That may be the opinion of the hon. gentleman, but I can assure him that if my officers had gone into anybody's property and done what they are doing now they would soon have been put out. My officers would have had no right to do then what they are doing now. I shall refer later to the action that has been taken.

As I pointed out during the debate of 1936, a certain responsibility is on the owners of the bores. If hon. members opposite will only take the time and trouble to read what was said during that debate they will see that they wanted to throw all the responsibility on to the Government. Does no responsibility rest on the man who owns the bore to see that the water that he has from this source is not wasted? Has he to be told by the Government, "You are wasting your own water"? That is the true position, and he should have some responsibility. I should like to ask hon. members opposite what hope there is of ultimate success if they encourage the people of the State to throw all their responsibilities on to the Government.

The hon. member for Ipswich referred to a scheme to allow the sea to flow into Central Australia and thus form an enormous inland lake. I have read about that scheme.

Mr. MAHER: Spare us from that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I also read in the paper the other day that a scheme was being considered to drain the Mediterranean Sea. I do not know whether it is prompted by any nation, but the scheme was seriously put forward with the object of converting the sea bed into land that may be shared possibly by various nations. It indicates just what may be discussed under proposals dealing with drainage and the diminution of water supply.

Mr. TAYLOR: Was that scheme proposed by the Leader of the Opposition?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I should not be surprised if it was proposed by some propagandist nation. However, it was seriously debated in the Press.

What are we doing to control artesian supplies? At the present time my officers

are very much overworked, but I have been fortunate in obtaining this report by Mr. Sharp, Acting Engineer in Charge of the sub-department—

"Preliminary action has been taken in regard to trust bores in the South-Western district. Twenty of these bores have for the past eight years been brought under a regime of partial closure during the winter months (April to September), when the requirements for stock and wastage due to evaporation are reduced. The results to date demonstrate the practicability and usefulness of such a procedure, as also that there is no risk attaching to the closure of a soundly constructed bore."

A few days ago hon. members expressed the fear that bores would be damaged if they were closed down, but Mr. Sharp points out that twenty bores have been closed during winter months and no damage has resulted, provided, of course, the bores are soundly constructed.

Mr. Sharp goes on to say—

"Before moving in the matter of compulsory control of private bores full investigation of each individual case will be requisite.

"It will be necessary to establish surplus or waste in each case and also to ensure the soundness of the bore concerned."

Although the Act empowers me as Minister to do certain things I must also take care of the rights of the individuals concerned. Investigations are being carried out to see whether these things are being attended to.

Mr. Sharp further says—

"A considerable amount of work has been done in the co-ordination of existing information in a form readily available for use, and returns furnished by private owners have also yielded much relevant information which is being similarly dealt with."

The point I wish to make is that every possible method of controlling the diminution of water supply is being considered.

This debate has led me to a realisation of the fact that the Government have acted wisely in their land opening proposals. All the land that is now being made available is in North Queensland, where there is an annual rainfall of 60 inches, and thus there is no fear of drought. Therefore, in opening land for settlement it behoves me as Secretary for Public Lands to see that not only access roads are provided but also an adequate supply of water. In the past it has been our practice to provide access roads to new settlements before they are opened up, but it now appears that we shall also have to be satisfied that there is an adequate water supply.

It is pleasing to me to know that all the money that has been spent in providing road access to new lands, with one exception, has been spent in North Queensland. When I visit the settlers in the North it will be my pleasant duty to tell them that they are fortunate in not having to grapple with the problems associated with the lack of an adequate water supply such as exists in the South. However, no one expected that the problem of lack of water facilities would have become as acute as it is to-day, and I sincerely trust that the State will enjoy splendid rains in the very near future.

Hon. P. Pease.]

It must be realised that adequate water facilities cannot be provided in a few days, or even a few years, but the Government are taking every possible step to provide adequate supplies throughout the State.

The hon. member for Kelvin Grove had something to say about sand and gravel permits. These permits are controlled by the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply. Before any person can obtain sand and gravel from a river bed he must get a permit from the sub-department. The hon. member for Kelvin Grove complained that a company possessing a permit to obtain sand and gravel from Enoggera Creek was doing something very detrimental to the interests of the people in that area. He pointed out that this company was encroaching upon and endangering the rights of private owners on the banks of the creek. All these matters have been carefully watched by the department. Photographs have even been taken. The State Advances Corporation has also protested against the practice complained of, as it tended to endanger workers' dwellings and workers' homes built on land adjacent to Enoggera Creek. We received a letter dated 2nd August last from the State Advances Corporation advising that it approved of the action of the department. This is what has been done: at the end of this month the permit to take sand and gravel from Enoggera Creek expires and the department has decided that it shall not be renewed.

I appreciate the contributions that have been made to this debate, but I suggest that the Opposition compare what has been done, and what is being done in making provision for water supplies, the conservation of water, and water facilities on stock routes with what was done previously. Some of this work was never contemplated before in the history of Queensland. I intend to continue with this work until the whole State is properly equipped with water facilities, provided we have a Commonwealth Government that will not continue the present deflationist policy, but will enable the Government to obtain that financial assistance which is so necessary to embark on this great work successfully.

Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*) [12.32 p.m.]: The Minister misconceives the points made by hon. members on this side of the Chamber. He kept reiterating, "Where will the money come from?" He went on in an attempt to prove that we desire the Government to spend a considerable amount of money. That is not so. No settler has a right to interfere with the watercourses running on the boundaries of his property. That is a matter controlled by the Marine Department. Hundreds of farmers would engage in expenditure to lock some of these watercourses in order to irrigate their farms if they had the power to do so. My point is that it is a Government obligation to inquire into what can be done to conserve water in the southern areas I alluded to. I did not ask that the Government should irrigate the property of any individual. The settlers do not expect or want that. The Minister, by raising that point, makes it appear as if he desired to sidestep the issue. The Minister all the time said, "Where is the money going to come from?" We know that the Government are committed to the expenditure of much money in different ways.

[*Hon. P. Pease.*

Is the Minister indicating that the Government are finding a difficulty in financing the various undertakings? That is the only deduction to be drawn from his remarks.

The Minister also dwelt on the contention that the difficulties of the Government were accentuated by the deflation policy of the Commonwealth Government. He said this policy deprived the Government of loan money for water schemes. I suggest that instead of getting rid of the Commonwealth Government and their alleged deflation policy, we get rid of the present Government and the present Minister to enable other steps to be taken which will bring about greater wealth production in this State. I do not want to keep on saying that, like the Minister.

I appreciate the fact that the Government have done good work in making provision for conserving the artesian and sub-artesian supplies of water in our western areas. The Minister said all this work had been done in the last two years, and that while the Moore Government were in power they did nothing. The present Government were in power nearly five years before they embarked on these schemes, notwithstanding that they had a liberal supply of loan money. I give the Government credit for opening up the stock routes in the West by providing water facilities. That is of advantage to Queensland. But I think, notwithstanding what the hon. gentleman says, that a great deal more can be done. The injurious effects of drought demonstrate clearly that we are living in an area that is subject to seasonal conditions that reduce its productive capacity. I regard this matter as a national question, and that is why I invite the co-operation of the State and Commonwealth Governments in a national work that would bring about a great increase in our wealth production.

I do not think the Minister was quite fair in some of his arguments, and he evidently did not appreciate some of the suggestions I had made.

Item (Irrigation and Water Supply) agreed to.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (*Hon. P. Pease, Herbert*) [12.36 p.m.]: I move—

"That £1,000 be granted for 'Miscellaneous.'"

Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

CHIEF OFFICE.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (*Hon. T. A. Foley, Normanby*) [12.37 p.m.]: I move—

"That £20,241 be granted for 'Department of Mines—Chief Office.'"

This vote shows an increase of £1,649, which is principally due to increases in salaries of £701 and increase in the contingency vote amounting to £948. The salary vote includes increases to fourteen officers out of a staff of twenty-six, representing £293, and the alteration in the rate of salary reductions accounts for £408, making a total of £701. Provision asked for under the heading of Contingencies is £11,243, and is greater than last year's vote by £948, but less by £62 than the actual expenditure of last year.

Included in this Estimate is necessary provision for surveys of new leases on the recently discovered fields of Bartle Frere and Paradise Valley and also for an approved contribution to the Imperial Institute, London, in connection with mining statistics, and expenses in connection with the arranging of a number of exhibits at the last Brisbane Exhibition.

Mr. MAHER (*West Moreton*) [12.39 p.m.]: I wish to take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister on his elevation to the important portfolio of Mines. This is the first time since his elevation to that important office that we have had the opportunity of meeting him in the Chamber as Minister in charge of his Estimates, and I express the hope that his term of office will be fraught with much good for the advancement of the mining industry of the State. I feel sure the Minister's long experience in mining matters and his great knowledge of the country districts generally will stand him in good stead in his new sphere of activity.

One of the noteworthy events in the mining industry is the recent substantial increase in the prices for base metals.

It must be very heartening to the Minister and his officers and to all who have the wellbeing of the mining industry at heart to note the tremendous increase in the value of gold as well as of base metals.

Of course, the rise in the price for gold has intensified the search for it, not only in Queensland, but also in other parts of the world, and it has caused gold to be brought from its hiding places in India, France, and other countries, where it has been hoarded for centuries. It is interesting to note that Queensland stands second in the list of the gold-producing States of Australia. For last year our production amounted to 121,174 fine oz., valued at £514,000, an increase of 20,000 oz. and £120,000 over the production of the previous year. This value is at the standard rate of £4 4s. 11 5-11d. an oz., but at the average London price of £7 0s. 3d. an oz. the value of our gold yield for the last year expressed in Australian currency amounted to £1,062,000. This is a substantial contribution to the wealth production of the State. The mines at Cracow, Mount Coolon, Mount Morgan, and others of less importance in point of volume of production have been responsible for the increase.

It is rather interesting to note that not so long ago Queensland held the premier position of the gold-producing States of the Commonwealth, but latterly Victoria has forged ahead and now stands at the head of the list. In 1936 Victoria overtook Queensland with a production of 128,806 oz. Victoria is expanding more rapidly than Queensland, and this gives rise to the question whether we in this State are doing all that is possible to encourage the discovery and mining of gold within such a great mineral State as ours.

The following extract from the Victorian budget is interesting:—

"Boring plants are in constant use for the purpose of testing auriferous areas. Provision has been made for an expenditure of £63,000 in connection with the mining industry, £44,000 from consolidated revenue and £19,000 from unemployment relief money. This provision will be supplemented by a con-

tribution of £18,700 from the Commonwealth."

Much is heard in this Chamber from hon. members opposite of asking the Commonwealth Government to do this and to do that, and passing on to that Government the responsibility for some failure on the part of the State Government to recognise their own special responsibilities. It is, therefore, just as well to take into account when on this important subject of the metalliferous mining industry that the Commonwealth Government provided aid to the extent of £500,000 to all the States, Queensland's share amounting to £130,000. That was a very notable contribution and a recognition of the important part that mining plays in the wealth production of the nation. It is as well to emphasise that point in view of the continuous barrage of interjections and references we hear from hon. members opposite, who would throw the responsibility for their own failures and ineptitude on to the Commonwealth Government.

Here is another extract from the Victorian Budget in regard to mining development in that State—

"There has been a substantial increase in the production of gold in Victoria, the gross yield for the calendar year 1936 being 128,806 oz., an increase of 27,828 oz. over that of 1935. As 71,735 oz. have been produced during the half year ended 30th June, 1937, the yield this calendar year will probably exceed that of 1936."

It will be seen that the Victorian Government are showing a great deal of enterprise. They have employed boring plants extensively to test the auriferous areas of the State; and they are getting results, because they have jumped to the forefront of the gold-producing States of the Commonwealth. It looks as if another record would be established when the figures are available for the current year. Those figures must make us pause and reflect whether we are doing all we can in Queensland, which has such great promise from a metalliferous point of view.

I think, when we take into account that we spent £3,000,000 last year from the Unemployment Relief Fund, the greater part of which was more or less wasted from the viewpoint of increasing wealth production, that we could draw on that fund more fully than we have been doing for the important work of prospecting. Prospecting, of course, has been carried out effectively by capable old miners—experienced men—without a great deal of help from the Crown. Modern methods should accelerate prospecting work, and in this respect we should take a leaf from the Victorian book in the employment of boring plants. We could provide funds for testing the auriferous areas and put only skilled men on that class of work. We know the localities suitable for testing and investigation, and so we might accelerate the gold production of the State.

After all, the search of gold is highly speculative—it is a form of gambling—but it pays handsome dividends once success attends our efforts. The high price of £7 0s. 3d. ruling for gold last year should encourage us to do everything possible in the search for it. Low-grade mines can be worked with profit to-day. I am wondering whether we are doing all we can in giving aid to competent prospectors. I feel that we have unproven mineral resources and there

Mr. Maher.]

is a heavy obligation on the Government to facilitate the work of prospectors by providing the necessary mechanical assistance for such men. Upon reflection, it seems to me that huge sums of money have been spent in useless, unremunerative, and unproductive work, from funds collected from the taxpayers of the State by means of the unemployment relief tax. A great deal of this money could be spent in giving a generous measure of employment and assistance to accelerating the rate of gold production in the State. We should do our best in that respect whilst the price of gold is so high, because no one can say how long it will remain at its present level.

After all, Great Britain and the United States of America are the only purchasers of gold in the world to-day. Great Britain has something like £750,000,000 worth of gold, while the United States of America have £2,408,000,000 worth. Last year £250,000,000 worth of gold was newly mined, and this is expanding. Therefore, within the next five years, with a stimulation of high gold prices, who can say what quantity of newly-mined gold will come into the possession of the only two countries in the world that are still buying it? It has to be remembered, too, that Great Britain and the United States of America are purchasing gold from the whole world by the use of lean money. They are adding substantially to their public debt in that way. So it is a moot point just how long the people of Great Britain and the United States of America will be prepared to tax themselves to maintain the high level of gold prices throughout the world.

It is a very great and intricate problem. It is a fascinating one in all its ramifications, because it seems undeniable that the higher the price of gold the more response there is in higher prices for base metals and all other commodities. As the price of gold rises it seems to be inescapable that world markets become more attractive for the goods that the world has to sell. It seems to me, therefore, from a study of the world position in this respect, that the high price for gold is being maintained by only two countries, and if any circumstances should arise whereby those countries were not prepared to keep on buying the ever-expanding amount of gold produced and those high prices collapsed as a result, there would be a disastrous fall in the value of all commodities, and it is possible that we should be faced with a depression similar to that which we knew in the years 1931-32. It is a very intricate problem. It seems to be a well-established fact that we are having a measure of prosperity throughout the world because Mr. Roosevelt, in formulating his New Deal proposals, increased the price of gold from, I think, 21 dollars to 35 dollars an ounce, and this country, in concert with Great Britain, has succeeded in bringing about a world recovery because the price of gold has been maintained at these high levels.

The very interesting thought then comes to us: "Let us make hay while the sun shines." Whilst gold is at a high price, and whilst countries are prepared to pay us over £7 an ounce for it, let us produce as much as we possibly can. Let us improve the shining hour. That is why I say that in any well-considered policy for mineral development the Government would be well advised to allocate ever-increasing sums from the Unem-

ployment Relief Fund for the possibly reproductive work of gold discovery and increased gold production. Even if no gold is recovered, the money so spent cannot be expended worse than it is to-day, for there is no possibility that the weed chipper's hoe is going to discover a mineral field. It is a matter worthy of further consideration by the Minister in order to see how far he can have funds allocated from the Unemployment Relief Fund—which is exceptionally buoyant to-day—for this important purpose of exploiting our mineral fields with the object of promoting gold recovery.

I note from the report by our Agent-General, Mr. Pike, that during 1936 there was a spectacular rise in the price of lead. I have already pointed out that the prices of all base metals have risen considerably. For example, the price of electrolytic copper rose from £39 5s. a ton early in 1936 to £54 a ton as at the first of this month, lead rose from £15 10s. in the beginning of 1936 to £19, 4s. 4½d. a ton as at first of this month, and tin rose from £217 17s. 6d. to £243 a ton. These increases in prices show the general trend. Lead is of importance to us because of its production at Mount Isa. Mr. Pike, in a most interesting review of the lead market, points out that although rearmament in Great Britain and other countries has been primarily responsible for the substantial advance in the prices of lead and all other base metals, even if there was a slackening down in the special armament expenditure, there is an ever-increasing peace-time demand for lead. He quotes a number of instances in industry where the use of lead is expanding year by year. Those facts give us cause for great satisfaction because there are prospects for the success of the big mining project at Mount Isa. This mine might be worked for a number of years and thus contribute very materially to the wellbeing of not only North Queensland but the State as a whole.

As I have said, the price of tin has increased substantially, and when I was at Herberton during my tour of North Queensland in June last I was pleased to note the optimistic feeling that pervaded the tin fields. Business people and miners were all very satisfied with the trend of prices and with the air of recovery that they had imparted to the old and important tin-mining fields of the Herberton district.

The price of copper has also increased and this will be of advantage to Cloncurry and the other copper-producing areas of the State. Therefore, generally speaking, we can look back on the past couple of years with a great deal of satisfaction and, although the high prices for base metals are primarily due to the sale of these metals for purposes that we all abhor—the need for rearmament to meet possible war requirements—it can be said that "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good." We have profited very materially in our mineral fields of late. There has been a tremendous amount of activity, a great amount of expansion, and a great deal of effort. Generally, a hopeful atmosphere pervades all those areas.

The only discordant note that I should like to strike is that the Minister would be well-advised to increase the allocation of money not only to help prospectors to live

[Mr. Maher.

but also to provide modern mechanical contrivances so as to help with scout-drilling or boring—whatever it is termed—in areas likely to be auriferous.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. T. A. Foley, *Normanby*) [2 p.m.]: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his congratulations and good wishes. I trust that as time passes I shall be able to say that I have realised all the hopes I entertain for the future of the mining industry and that, incidentally, I have been able to bring about the conditions that the hon. gentleman suggests should obtain in the department.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the general mining activity that exists throughout the State, which he attributed principally to the increase in the prices of gold and other metals. That is true in a sense, but I can assure him that the valuable aid rendered by the department during the past few years, particularly in the last financial year, has been a contributing factor in the increased wealth production recorded in our statistics.

It is true that increased prices are a valuable incentive to mining. Recently, I visited the Northern mining districts, including Wolfram Camp, one of the greatest wolfram fields in the world, which has seen its good times in the past. The town had been in a very dilapidated condition. Every building was a wreck. The school building had been taken down and re-erected elsewhere. Only one or two old inhabitants remained, and only one or two parties worked the very rich deposits. As a result of the increase in the price of wolfram to the unheard-of price of 148s. a unit, operations at Wolfram Camp have assumed large proportions again. The previous price was 52s. 6d., although 70s. was the highest price recorded during the Great War.

Quite a number of old wolfram miners acquainted with the field and its deposits returned with the advance in the price and attempted to reopen the old mines. The first problem that confronted them was the water supply. There was no such thing. There were two water-supply sites on the old field, but the miners did not have the necessary capital to clean them out, retimber them, erect pumping machinery, and storage tanks. The department was able to give them help and the result is that the miners are now in a better position to carry on their activities.

The next problem was to pump out the abandoned shafts, many of which were very deep. Representations were made for assistance in that respect. As a result of the policy of the Government, as carried out by the department, miners are not forced to abandon a mine when they have reached the water level and find the water is too heavy to cope with by bailing. We assured these men that assistance would be rendered to enable them to get the necessary facilities to pump out these wolfram mines. When the officers of the department investigated this matter, they found that owing to the pipe formation in which the wolfram deposits occurred and the fact that the miner has to follow those formations, in order to recover the metal, it was difficult to design a suitable pump; however, as a result of the efforts of an experienced and efficient staff and with the help of machinery firms a pumping plant was designed that was found suitable for pumping out these

shafts, which are so different from the ordinary mining shaft that the average person would find them quite strange.

The considerable improvement in the export prices for metals, with the assistance rendered by the Government, has caused general activity in the mining districts. The Trekelano mine, in the Cloncurry district, is supplying the bulk of the supplies required for the Chillagoe smelters. At the beginning of the year, when the low price of £39 5s. prevailed, Chillagoe smelters were operating for one shift, and now they are operating for twenty-four hours a day; and if there is a much greater improvement in supplies we shall have to institute a roster system and work every day and every night in the week.

The increase in the price of lead will encourage the Mount Isa Company, which showed a loss of approximately £5,000 on last year's operations. I urge any hon. member who happens to be in the Cloncurry district to visit Mount Isa and inspect the mines. He will see the latest mining methods in operation. Every improvement that is effected in mining operations is applied at Mount Isa—where, taking it on the whole, the deposit is of low grade—in order to reduce costs as much as possible.

At the beginning of the year tin was £217 12s. 6d. a ton, but stood at £233 2s. 6d. a ton at the end of the year, and consequently many deposits, both alluvial and lode, that were not worked, owing to the low prices prevailing, are now being worked by miners at Irvinebank, Herberton, Kangaroo Hills, and all through the northern areas of the State.

At Herberton and Irvinebank I found that the main cause of hindrance to development was lack of facilities for the transport of the ore of the average gouger or small party to the treatment works. In addition, there was the disability of lack of modern methods for breaking up ore. The old idea of a hammer and drill is still being used by the gougers, and consequently the ore must be above the ordinary grade to permit of successful working. The Government, wherever possible, are helping the miners with machinery and plant.

At Irvinebank we were interviewed by a party who had a very large low-grade proposition that was but barely paying with the stone-age methods employed by the miners owing to their want of capital. They were given financial aid for a compressor and a jack-hammer, and this machinery will make for a cheaper working of the ore. The treatment works at Irvinebank have reached such a degree of efficiency they can treat .6 per cent tin ore a ton, and show a profit, provided that transport costs are not too heavy. With the facilities available and the prices ruling at present, these districts can look forward to a period of prosperity.

The assistance rendered to prospectors last financial year was greater than that in any other year in the history of Queensland. The total sum distributed from all sources amounted to £75,392 4s. 1d. From loan funds, Unemployment Relief Fund, and the Commonwealth fund the amount distributed for aid to prospecting was £52,632 7s. 2d. The amount distributed as a State subsidy under the heading of assistance for road repairs and water supply was £4,642 9s. 3d., and £1,263 17s. 5d. was allotted under the Mining Machinery Relief Advances Act. The Unemployment Relief Fund contribution to

Hon. T. A. Foley.]

the Commonwealth scheme was £1,863, and the grants for roads and bridges represented a further sum £1,475. These figures embrace assistance and advances for road work to enable the miners to reduce transport charges from mine to treatment works, as well as for buying pumping and haulage machinery and compressors and other machinery necessary for the efficient working of mines. In general, wherever a reasonable proposal is put forward by miners and the mines inspectors are satisfied it warrants help and that the mine can be carried on with some prospect of a return, assistance is rendered.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that Victoria is striding ahead at a pace that will eventually enable that State to catch up with Queensland in gold production. I do not know the position in that State, nor do I know its system of assistance to mining, but I do know that they are giving about 10s. a week to men there as against £1 a week for single men and £2 a week for married men given by the Mines Department in Queensland.

With regard to the suggestion that we should do more in scout boring and drilling, I point out that we have already spent a very considerable sum of money in that respect. For instance, in the Mount Garnett district some little while ago a dredging company started operations, but through various causes, such as using the wrong type of dredge, had to cease operations, and almost went into liquidation. Mr. Newman, of Caboolture, who has had some experience in tin dredging in the East and is generally recognised as an authority on the subject, took an interest in the area. He proposed to spend £3,000 in boring and approached the Department of Mines for aid to the extent of £1,000. The proposal was favourably reported upon and the aid was given. The result has been that the company has been formed with a capital of £246,000. It is proposed to erect a dredge costing about £125,000, and it is estimated on the value disclosed that seventeen years' operations are possible under modern dredging methods.

We have also been helping at Miclere, in the Clermont district, where a considerable amount of boring has been going on. To a certain extent miners have been blind-stabbing to locate leads. My department knows whether certain areas are worth sinking in, and much valuable help has been given in that way. Many sites have proved useless and costly to the department, and boring has saved a tremendous amount of energy and time that would otherwise have been wasted by the miners in sinking in certain areas. As a result of boring along certain lines in a particular field it has been established definitely whether prospects were bright.

In the Croydon district we propose to carry out a further programme on the advice of the geologists and geophysicists of the northern survey organisation, to test out certain anomalies disclosed by the instruments used by the geophysicists. On the recommendation of that particular body we are also carrying out drilling operations on what is known as the Dugald River to test the findings of the geologists and geophysicists. We intend doing the same at Trekelano, in the Cloncurry district, a valuable copper ore deposit that has been one of the biggest sources of supply to the Chillagoe smelters. Certain drilling opera-

tions are being carried out there by the department and this organisation to determine whether further supplies of ore are available.

The activities of the department in general have been concentrated on giving the fullest measure of aid to miners throughout the State, and with the funds that are now available, hon. members can expect quite a good programme for the ensuing financial year. To what extent we can improve our present policy depends entirely upon funds. If, for instance, the Commonwealth Government saw fit to make available a sum greater than the £130,000 that they now grant to the States, it is obvious that we could carry out a more extensive programme. Naturally, our own funds are taken from the loan funds of the State. If the Loan Council, in its wisdom, decides that a deflationist policy must prevail and that the loans to the States must be gradually decreased over a period of years it is obvious that the amount that can be allocated to mining must be decreased, and the same applies to every department of State.

Mr. NIMMO: Your Treasurer is a member of the Loan Council. He agrees to that, surely?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He is only one member of the Loan Council. He has already put forward suggestions to that council, as the hon. member will see if he cares to read the reports that are presented from time to time. If abundant loan funds were available we could do all those things that the Leader of the Opposition claims should be done—engage upon a programme of extensive drilling operations where they are warranted, as well as continue with our present policy—but if those funds are not available we must cut our cloth according to measure.

Mr. McLEAN (*Bundaberg*) [2.23 p.m.]: I desire to take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister upon his elevation to Cabinet rank. I wish also to congratulate him and the officers of his department for the very comprehensive and informative annual report that they have tabled for the benefit of hon. members.

I should like to ask the Minister if he intends to do what his predecessor, the late Mr. Stopford, proposed to do, that is, visit the Bundaberg and Mount Perry districts. The hon. member for Isis is interested in mining activities in those areas and I am sure that he joins with me in asking that the Minister visit there as early as is possible.

I hope that the Minister will endeavour to bring to fruition the scheme, upon which his predecessor was engaged, of making Howard the central power-generating station for the supply of electricity to the Childers and Bundaberg areas. I believe that that scheme is sound and I urge upon the Minister the desirability of following the line taken by his predecessor with a view to seeing if something cannot be done to bring it into successful operation.

It was with the deepest regret that I read in the report of the depression in the mining industry in the Gympie area.

During my mining days on the Gympie field Monkland and Inglewood reefs were important producers, but the department has decided, after an investigation by its officers, that they do not offer any further field for

[Hon. T. A. Foley.]

development. I noticed from the report that attempts have been made to develop the northern end of the field. Although I have no desire to criticise efforts in this connection, I believe that payable deposits of gold are still to be located in the southern area. When we visualise the rich returns that were obtained from the South Glamire, Monkland, the No. 2 South Great Eastern, and the Scottish Gympie mines, I am satisfied that gold-bearing reefs still await development in that area. I stress particularly the Inglewood reef because it was the forerunner of the important gold-mining development in the area, but unfortunately the reef has been lost, and although the Oriental shaft was sunk to a certain depth, it failed to locate it. I am satisfied that if this area was developed it would help considerably to revive Gympie as a gold-mining field.

We should bend our efforts in the direction of increasing our gold production, especially in view of these figures showing the value of output during the last three years:—

	£			
1934	...	...	...	490,490
1935	...	...	...	437,473
1936	...	...	...	514,717

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is at standard price.

Mr. McLEAN: Yes. The increased value of gold production is due very largely to the increase on the standard price, but it has also been influenced by the expenditure of money made available by the department to prospectors, which is money well spent.

A new mine has been sunk near Goomeri, in the South Burnett district adjacent to the old Lord Nelson mine, and according to reports it is proving a success. There is room for development of new areas in the Mount Perry district. Gold is also being obtained at Boolboonda and New Moonta, two old mining fields in the electorate of the hon. member for Isis. An old University man named Lane discovered a molybdenite mine near Wonbah, and virtually went into exile for the purpose of developing it. He succeeded to a certain extent, but Schultz and party have now taken it up, and the hon. member for Isis, who travelled through the district recently, will be able to tell us what has been done there.

The extraction of oil from coal is attracting the attention of many Governments and many experts. During my visit to Sydney at Easter I listened to an address on this question by Mr. R. James, the Federal member in the House of Representatives for the Hunter district. I hope that the Opposition will not charge me with transferring the responsibilities of this important question from the State to the Federal Government. We must all admit that a very wide field exists in Queensland for the recovery of oil by the hydrogenation of coal, as the following extract will show:—

“When we started this enterprise and planned an annual production of 100,000 tons of petrol from the hydrogenation of coal and 50,000 tons from tar oils we knew that, particularly with regard to coal, we were pioneering in a new technical field, and that we were therefore incurring all the attendant risks of such a step,” said Lord McGowan. “For general commercial reasons it is not the practice of the company to disclose the financial results of any particular activity.

All that I can say in regard to the hydrogenation plant is that up to date it has not shown results which would justify its description as a good commercial proposition even with the advantage of the existing Customs duty. Without that protection, of course, the industry would be uneconomic.

“These results are explained by the fact that we are in the early stages of a new industry, the first of its kind in the world, in which we have met with more difficulties than we anticipated. We are still convinced that we took a right decision when we embarked on this enterprise.”

It is necessary that the closest co-operation should exist between State and Federal Governments to obtain oil from coal through the hydrogenation process.

Mr. NIMMO: The Federal Government again.

Mr. McLEAN: I am not criticising the Federal Government. I draw the attention of the hon. member to the fact that Senators Arkins and Hardy, and Mr. Thompson, the Nationalist member for New England, have criticised the Federal Government for not doing the things they ought to have done—in other words, for having fallen down on their job. We are not the Federal Government's critics; they are to be found in their own ranks.

It is deplorable to read in the report of the department of the great number of accidents that have occurred in our mines. The officers of the department say that despite the fact that they have insisted on the necessary precautions, accidents have occurred with loss of life. Some very serious statements appear in the report to the effect that mining companies defy the department. Drastic action should be taken by the department and its officers to secure the safe working of our mines. I have read with deep regret that old schoolmates were among the men who have been killed. The loss of such lives is a serious matter, particularly to their homes and their families, for they were the breadwinners.

I take this opportunity of urging the Minister and his officers to take action against the companies that violate the laws for the safety of miners. It is regrettable to think that things that were done when I was mining many years ago and that the law now prohibits are still being done by some companies.

Mr. WELLINGTON (*Charters Towers*) [2.36 p.m.]: I am pleased the Minister and the Under Secretary for Mines took the opportunity during the recess to visit the mining fields of North Queensland, where they came in contact with the various wardens, mining registrars, and inspectors of mines. At Charters Towers our only regret was that the Minister had not more time to stay with us. On his arrival on a Saturday afternoon he was met by the mayor and leading citizens and driven to the State crushing mill, where he received a deputation. On the Sunday morning he received further deputations, and in the afternoon he was driven round the locality. The following day he visited the Swedenborg mine, which is subsidised by the Government, and the Black Jack.

When we review the figures relating to the value of gold produced in Queensland

Mr. Wellington.]

we realise the value that this industry has been to Queensland. The total value of gold produced in Queensland up to the end of 1936 amounted to £87,513,805, and the total value of minerals was £77,102,943, making a grand total of £164,616,748. The increased values returned for gold and other minerals indicate that the future is very promising.

Charters Towers is the largest producer of gold in Queensland, producing more than one-third of the total amount. Up to the end of 1936 the fields under the jurisdiction of the warden at Charters Towers had produced 6,699,719 fine oz., at a value of £4 4s. 11d. per fine oz. In addition, the neighbouring Ravenswood field for the same period produced 889,836 fine oz. The highest production of gold in Charters Towers was reported in 1899, when 319,572 fine oz. were obtained, and the lowest amount obtained was in 1928, when 147 oz. were produced. The increase in production since 1929 is indicated in the following table:—

	Oz.
1929	219
1930	367
1931	1,355
1932	2,415
1933	3,880
1934	4,670
1935	5,441
1936	7,994
1937	7,657*

* For eight months.

The most important mines in Charters Towers are those the Government have assisted. The Swedenborg Company, one of these, was opened in 1934 and began operations immediately. Early in 1935 the Government approved of an advance of £550 for the carrying out of developmental work, but actually the company drew only £320 and a repayment was made in a few months. From the commencement of operations to 30th June, 1937, 2,532 tons of ore were treated for a gross return of 4,837 fine oz. of gold, valued in Australian currency at £43,637. The figures for the crushing completed in August are—

	Value of Gold.	
	£	s. d.
322 tons 7 cwt. ore ...	1,616	0 7
Sands	1,148	1 8
Concentrates	1,830	11 8
Total	£4,594	13 11

In addition, 35 tons 2 cwt. of ore were railed to Chillagoe, the value being £2,133 13s. 7d. The total value amounts to £6,755 7s. 6d., or an average of £18 16s. 9d. a ton. This was the first mine in the Charters Towers district to pay a dividend for a long period, and the directors of the company showed their appreciation by despatching the following letter to the Department of Mines:—

“The Swedenborg (Charters Towers) Gold Mine No Liability.

“117 Pitt street,

“Sydney, 23rd July, 1937.

“The Under Secretary,

“Department of Mines,

“Brisbane, Q.

“Dear Mr. Staines,

“You will no doubt have seen that the Swedenborg Mine is paying a 6d.

[Mr. Wellington.

dividend, and you will doubtless recall that this will be the first dividend paid from a Charters Towers mine in many years.

“Incidentally, and as an evidence of the interest of present (and past) residents of Charters Towers, the whole of the board and most of the shareholders do, or did, live on that field.

“At the time of the board's decision to declare a dividend, appreciative reference was made to the fact that, although the shareholders had put in £16,900 for the exploration and development of the mine and (until recently) all money won from the mine, yet the present position is in large measure due to the loan made by (and long since repaid to) your department under its policy of making advances to aid genuine prospecting in Queensland.

“It was unanimously resolved by the board that I, as its chairman, write and convey to you the sincere appreciation of the Board of the very real and (may I write!) wise help extended to this company at a time of need, and that I discharge this duty with a particular and real pleasure.

“With kind regards, and again the thanks of the board, both for themselves and the shareholders.

“Believe me,

“Yours very truly,

“(Signed) Grosvenor A. Francis,
“Chairman.”

Mr. Francis is a well-known solicitor of Charters Towers, and was the member for the Kennedy electorate in the Federal Parliament at one time.

I have previously mentioned a second mine in the same locality that received aid for the purchase of machinery from the Government, and eventually refunded part of the amount. The figures of the assistance rendered to the Black Jack Gold Mining Company No Liability are as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
For purchase of machinery, etc.—			
Approved—			
May, 1935 ...	1,500	0	0
May, 1936 ...	95	0	0
	1,595	0	0
Interest—			
To 30-6-36 ...		68	2 5
To 30-6-27 ...		79	15 0
		1,742	17 5
Repayment—			
Interest to 30-6-36	68	2	5
Instalment due on 22-7-37 ...	500	0	0
	568	2	5
	£1,174	15	0

The instalment of £500, due on the 22nd July, 1937, was paid on 3rd August, 1937, and on the 28th September the balance of £1,174 15s. was repaid with interest. I am stating these facts to prove that this company has received no small assistance from this Government, and it has done its very best in repayments. I quote these figures so that they will appear in “Hansard” and will give the people some idea of what the Government have done. The company controlling the Black Jack began

operations in June, 1933. The financial assistance made available was £1,742 17s. 5d for the purchase of machinery, etc., and £1,557 15s. 2d. for underground developmental work. The subsidy-loan for developmental purposes is repayable at the rate of 10 per cent. of gross proceeds of ore won.

The production from the Black Jack mine since operations began has been 3,414 tons of ore, which gave a gross yield of 2,388 fine ounces of gold, valued at approximately £20,890 in Australian currency. The first four crushings, put through the Venus mill, for the period August, 1924, to February, 1936, returned a value of £3,185 4s. 4d. The average of the four crushings was £4 16s. 9d., £4 19s. 9d., £7 5s. 9d., and £8 8s. 9d. a ton, respectively. Since the company's mill began operations 3,168 tons 10 cwt. of stone have been crushed, and 232 tons 2 cwt. 3 qr. 7 lb. of concentrates produced of a total value of £15,042 14s. 1d. One or two of the last parcels of concentrates included in the above figures are only estimates as to values, the assay not having been agreed upon with the Chillagoe smelters. The sand treated amounted to 1,086 tons, the gold won to 818 oz. 2 dwt. 8 gr., of a value of £3,554 14s. 11d. The total value of the gold produced since the operations began is £21,728 13s. 4d. This little mine is one of the most developed mines in the Charters Towers area.

Mr. W. J. Congdon, who discovered the Midas mines at Lolworth Creek, Charters Towers, on 13th July, 1934, was in receipt of intermittent relief for mining. Since then he has crushed 1,580 tons of stone from the mine, including 276 tons of headings, for a total yield of 2,236 oz. Joe Congdon was a man of fine type. When he received his first money out of the crushing he put in his resignation, stating that he did not need any more funds. Since then he has been employing labour himself. Latterly he has bought a site at Mount Stewart and intends erecting a battery there for the benefit of those unfortunates who are doing as he was doing, working on intermittent relief mining.

I maintain that far greater sums should be allocated by the Secretary for Labour and Industry for the purposes of intermittent relief to miners. It must be remembered that it is not a question merely of helping one man to find gold; it is a question of employing others in the mines should they prove successful as well as giving employment to woodgetters, motor carriers, and employees in mills, and relieving unemployment in other directions.

At the Daybreak mine a Mr. George Gorton, who was in receipt of intermittent relief, is working, and states that the mine is looking well going down. That mine is only a small one, employing five men, but it is payable and the reef in the under-look looks promising.

Mons Meg, at one time the greatest mine of them all, was taken over by Holdings Limited, a Brisbane company, and is believed to be developing satisfactorily. Prior to the 12th April, when the present company took over the workings, the vendors had received 1,175 oz. of gold of a standard value of £3,987.

There are many other mines that deserve encouragement. Only recently a deputation waited upon the Minister in connection with

working on one of the dumps. The Government agreed to make a grant of £20 to sample the dumps, if the men would find £20 for themselves, and upon condition that the crushing took place in Charters Towers under the supervision of the inspector of mines. I am pleased to be able to say that the department advises me that the crushings exceeded the expectations of the miners and the inspector.

The Government have given some aid to the Eureka mine at Ravenswood. Recent concentrates sent to Chillagoe proved the crushing to be payable. I think that the present owners of Eureka will come to some arrangement with the Minister for the removal of the battery to a place in Ravenswood for the convenience of the public. I think that such an arrangement would be successful and that those engaged in the industry in Ravenswood will avail themselves of the convenience thus provided for them.

There have been many complaints and requests for an up-to-date plant at the Venus mill. The small returns of the last three years show that an up-to-date battery would not be warranted. Of course, we shall always have the man who will say that a battery is no good if the crushing is a duffer, and, on the other hand, if the crushing is all right, he will say that the battery is a good one.

I am of the opinion that the Minister treated the deputation that waited on him recently at Charters Towers quite fairly. He may not have given them all that they asked, and I should not agree with them to that extent either. I often did not agree with their views. Generally speaking, his visit to Charters Towers was greatly appreciated, and I, for one, can confidently say that in his position as Secretary for Mines he has done his job well.

Mr. BRAND (*Isis*) [2.55 p.m.]: Personally, I am pleased to see the present Minister in charge of these Estimates, and I congratulate him on his elevation to office. Hon. members on this side trust that his great experience in mining will stand the State in good stead. We want him to be guided by the experience of the past. It is admitted, in minerals, that Queensland is one of the richest countries in the world, in which it holds a world-wide reputation, but we want the Minister to remember that after a very long period of Labour misrule in this State, up till 1929, our great mining industry was down and out. There were then really no mining operations in this wonderful State, flowing with milk and honey as it should be. The hon. member for Charters Towers unwittingly recognised that fact when, in his speech, he quoted figures that showed that the great increase in gold production in Queensland took place after 1929.

I listened with interest to the statement by the Minister that the Government had spent £75,000 last year under various headings in aid of mining, but I do not want him to forget that the various headings under which the money was spent were established by the Moore Government between 1929 and 1932, when they realised the importance of mining to this State and decided to revive the industry. The Moore Government decided to help the prospector and fossicker financially so as to urge them

Mr. Brand.]

to do even greater things in the interests of mining.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We did not know what a Commonwealth grant was until it was obtained by the late Mr. Stopford.

Mr. BRAND: A Commonwealth grant comes from a beneficent Federal Government that realises the benefits of mining to Australia and so are prepared to help this State financially. I want the Minister to continue to give sympathetic attention to the mining policy inaugurated by the Moore Government in 1929. It has helped considerably to develop mining. More particularly do I want him to recognise the importance of his responsibilities to-day when metal prices are increasing throughout the world. The industry has had its ups and down, and it behoves him to encourage the industry to take advantage of to-day's upward trend. There is no reason why, under the guidance of a sympathetic Minister and sympathetic department, the mining industry should not develop to such an extent as to become once again one of the most important industries in the State. I hope the department will shoulder its responsibilities by giving the aid that is due to the prospecting companies in their fight to recover our hidden mineral wealth.

The Minister referred to several phases of the industry, including tin mining. He said there was a great prospect ahead of tin mining because of the increased values now obtained for the metal. The report of his department states—

"The tin output of Queensland for the year 1936 was valued at £157,889, as compared with a production valued at £187,234 during 1935 and £179,404 during 1934."

During the last year there has been a considerable decrease in production of tin. I hope the coming financial year will lead to a greater development, and that the enhanced price will encourage the miners, who, in turn, will receive every encouragement from the department.

The hon. member for Bundaberg referred to the Lucky Last molybdenite mine at Wonbah, near Bundaberg. This mine is held by many to be one of the best molybdenite lodes in the world. It produced good metal prior to 1920, when a fall in price saw a cessation of operations until two years ago. During the last two years Johns, Schultz, and party have been working the mine, and indications show a great future ahead of it. Production is being carried on under very crude methods, owing to lack of finance. After paying wages the party is not able to instal an up-to-date plant.

The report of the department shows that in 1935 10 tons of molybdenite were produced in Queensland of a value of £1,876, and that in 1936 17 tons were produced, valued at £2,888. The price of molybdenite has considerably increased. Consequently, there should be a considerable development in the mining of this mineral. I echo the invitation extended to the Minister by the hon. member for Bundaberg to visit my electorate and see the activities in the Mount Perry mineral area. If he does so I will show him this molybdenite mine. Such a visit might encourage him to give the necessary financial aid to this party to enable it to dewater the mine economically and so

[Mr. Brand.

produce wealth that would be of benefit to the community and the State.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you know that molybdenite is used principally for the hardening of steel, and that unless a war is raging it is practically valueless?

Mr. BRAND: I do. The price for molybdenite is now very attractive, and although operations at the Lucky Last mine are being carried out under the crudest methods its owners are able to make good wages.

I wish now to refer to another branch of the industry, coalmining. Queensland is very fortunate in having coal deposits to supply our wants for the next century and also provide for the export trade. The business acumen that has been applied to this trade would make the export of coal payable if fair prices prevailed. Unfortunately, prices are against us at the present time, and I hope the Minister will give careful attention to that branch of the industry.

It is a matter of extreme regret to me to learn, according to the Auditor-General's report, that the Bowen coalmine showed a loss on last year's operations. The Minister may be able to give us the reasons that brought about that loss.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in referring to the Bowen coalmine on this vote.

Mr. BRAND: Am I not entitled to refer to the administration of it? I referred to it only as far as the administration of this department is concerned.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not entitled to refer to the operations of the Bowen coalmine on this vote.

Mr. BRAND: I was under the impression that I was entitled to refer to it from the managerial point of view. My object is to urge upon the Minister that the administrative officers should give some attention to the losses that are occurring on certain undertakings.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I have given my ruling, and I hope the hon. member will observe it.

Mr. BRAND: I accept your ruling. I have no desire to discuss anything but its administration. I wish to urge upon the Minister the necessity of endeavouring to ascertain why these losses occur in order that they may be mitigated or completely eliminated. The department having control of the mineral development of our State has a great deal to do, and I feel sure that its officers will see that all unnecessary losses are prevented.

I believe that we are about to enter upon a greater activity in the various branches of mining. The Minister suggested that hon. members should make a visit to Cloncurry and visit the silver-lead mine at Mount Isa, where, as a result of excellent management, they are winning great wealth from what is known as the lowest-grade lode of silver-lead in the world. In the far north-west of Queensland the company has established great refining works and is responsible for the large township of Mount Isa. I appreciate the work that the company has done for the development of this State. There is great prosperity in the future for this mine, inasmuch as prices have increased,

and this advance will enable this company to make the profits it so richly deserves. Over a long period its shareholders have not received a dividend, but with the prevailing market prices they should now be on what may be called "a very good wicket."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Are you putting up a plea for the poverty-stricken now?

Mr. BRAND: I am doing nothing of the sort. I am not putting up a plea at all, but am suggesting that it is a good thing that the persons who have invested money in this State have now a chance of getting something in return. If all the mining companies working our existing fields made a success of their operations a great deal more capital would be available to develop other fields that are known to exist in Queensland.

Mr. RIORDAN (*Bowen*) [3.12 p.m.]: In the Press recently one read that a gentleman by the name of Umeda, representing a large national interest, has been making a survey and investigating the possibilities of the iron ore deposits of Northern and Western Queensland. In the light of latter-day events, the Government should be extremely careful as to any action they take in connection with these lodes. They should not allow any country to have access to our iron ore deposits. In fact, permission should not be granted for the export of iron ore at the present time. One could not object if this material was to be used for the purpose of industrial development in these other countries, but the clamour made by Japan for iron ore is, I believe, the result of her wish to use it for other purposes. Moreover, the fight in Spain is a fight for raw materials, principally its iron ore deposits. Japan is experiencing a shortage of iron ore and her representatives are coming to Australia with the express purpose of investigating the fields of Northern and Western Queensland where they know millions of tons of iron ore exist. But when we learn that the purpose underlying their investigations and surveys, or what I believe to be their intention, is that this ore is to be used in the manufacture of war machines—machines recently used in the invasion of a peaceful country and the slaughter and murder of defenceless women and children—I do not think that Queensland should put itself in a position where it might be charged with being an accessory to the fact. Every precaution must be taken to ensure that none of our iron ore shall be used for such a purpose, whether by Japan or any other nation. As we saw illustrated in the papers of a few days ago, innocent women and children were being brutally slaughtered by a war-mad Fascist country. There is no question about that, and the notes sent to them by other nations or the League of Nations will be of no avail, because this country has a set of morals that do not recognise the standards set by other countries of the world. Its people have always pursued their objects by striking terror into the hearts of their opponents.

What is wrong with Australia and Queensland's making use of this iron ore itself for their own purposes? At the present time we have a shortage of iron and steel in this country; as a matter of fact, the world is crying out for iron and steel. There is a shortage in every other country, and lately our doors have been thrown open

to other countries for the importing into this country of iron and steel. We can produce iron and steel in Australia as cheap as they can be produced in any other country in the world, if not cheaper. After this mad rush to rearm there will be a shortage of iron and steel for many years to come. Agitation should be set afoot in this State for the development of the iron and steel trades.

Some years ago Mr. Theodore set a move-ment afoot for the building of an iron and steel works at Bowen, but on account of happenings over which he had no control—opposition from powerful financial interests—the scheme was not carried to fruition, along with many other things that gentleman set in motion. Instead of having a flourishing industry in North Queensland, employing thousands of Australian citizens, we find ourselves obliged to import iron and steel into this country when our lands abound with these natural deposits. I desire to bring under the notice of the Government the fact that Bowen has all the natural facilities for the establishment of iron and steel works. We have a deepwater harbour, second to none in the State, we have coal fields at our back door with an unlimited supply of coal. In fact, we have everything that goes to the making of iron and steel. These facts were known when an attempt was made to establish these works at Bowen some years ago.

There is no reason why we should import iron and steel. We should aim at developing our own industries. Our activities have been curtailed in the past, but I hope that in the course of a few weeks that a Government will be returned to the Federal benches with an Australian outlook and that it may be able to build up these industries so that we shall not have to continue to import. I should like to see the State Government approach the Federal Government with a view to obtaining a loan at a low rate of interest for the purpose of establishing iron and steel works somewhere in this State, and thereby give employment to thousands of our citizens.

Mr. NIMMO: As a State enterprise?

Mr. RIORDAN: Hon. members opposite ask that the Government do everything else. Why not establish something that will pay the State handsomely? The Broken Hill Proprietary Limited and all other iron and steel companies are making huge profits and paying huge dividends. Had that iron and steel works been established in Bowen it would have been paying the State handsomely to-day. Even if it was not paying dividends it would at least be providing employment for thousands of men in the State.

The Leader of the Opposition said this morning that he had some respect for prospectors, but that he thought that science would take the place of the old prospector. I make bold to say that the mining prospector will never go out of date and that he will always be seen in this country. I think that the prospectors, particularly the married men, are suffering an injustice. They go out voluntarily for the purpose of prospecting and of trying to develop the mineral wealth of this country. I take it that 95 per cent. of those married men go out on a grant of £2 a week. Many of those men, if they remained in the cities on intermittent relief, would be entitled to

Mr. Riordan.]

£2 10s., £2 15s., and up to £3 5s. a week. I think it would be fair if the Secretary for Labour and Industry, and the Secretary for Mines, between them made up the amount of money allowed to these men to a sum at least equal to what they would be entitled to receive if they remained in the towns on intermittent relief work. Bona-fide prospectors are entitled to that. It is much better to have them out prospecting in an attempt to do something to increase the wealth of the State than to have them scraping weeds off footpaths, or used by unscrupulous councils on maintenance work on which previously they were employing men on full wages. I know of a council that was employing seven or eight men all the year round. To-day, it employs two men! One is a motor truck driver and the other a foreman over the intermittent relief workers. Bona-fide prospectors, men who are sincere in their endeavours, should be given every encouragement that it is possible for this Government to give them. Their allowance should be raised to at least what they would be entitled to receive if they were on intermittent relief work.

Another suggestion that I commend to the Minister is that he extend the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act to cover these bona-fide prospectors. The work that they do is more dangerous than most other callings, yet when they are hurt they get no compensation. They cannot go out prospecting, they receive no relief or wages of any kind and, consequently, I maintain, should be brought under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act.

Although I know the grant for mining access roads is not as big as I should like to see it, I point out that there are many mines in this State, and many potential mining districts, that could be developed to an enormous extent by the building of access roads. Anything that can be done to help the bona-fide prospector should be done, because he is the backbone of the mining industry.

I should like to call attention to the fact that during 1936 Bowen produced more than one-quarter of the total amount of Queensland coal that was sold, or more than half of the production from the Ipswich district. It is also pleasing to know that in the production of this coal the Bowen field provided work for about 262 men. The importance of the field cannot be too strongly emphasised, especially when we remember the benefits that it confers on the Bowen coke ovens, the Railway Department, and Mount Isa. All these three undertakings benefit from the existence of the Bowen coalfield, and therefore it is important that it should be developed in a way that will cater properly for future requirements. When the Minister recently visited the coalfield the miners asked that he sink a shaft with the object of deciding on future developmental work, and the suggestion is worthy of the utmost consideration.

I should like to see the Minister visit the various undertakings associated with his department in the Bowen district more frequently, especially because I know that during his short stay there the feeling engendered between the men, the Minister, and his officers was very much better than that which previously prevailed. Most of the miners knew the Minister personally,

[*Mr. Riordan.*

many of them worked with him as a coalminer, and in being able to tell their troubles to a man who actually knew the job they were confident that some redress could be obtained. I am satisfied that as the result of the visit of the Minister to the field and his friendly talk with the men much misunderstanding about bad treatment and other matters was removed. It is to the credit of the Minister, the Government, and the men themselves that they are able to carry on huge undertakings like the Bowen coalmine, the Styx coalmine, the Bowen cokeworks, and the Chillagoe smelters with really no friction between the men and their employer.

Such men are giving a splendid service in sparsely populated areas of North Queensland that I know well, areas that at one time carried a fairly large population. I refer now to such places as Irvinebank, Stannary Hills, Wolfram Camp, and Chillagoe, large mining centres in years gone by. I trust that with sympathetic treatment by the Government through a practical Minister we shall once again see the old fields booming and coming into their own. The Bowen coke ovens have placed the hallmark of quality on Bowen coal in that they have proved it to be one of the finest coking coals in the State. This undertaking was inaugurated by the previous Government. It consists of forty-five ovens, costing approximately £50,000, with an annual capacity of 30,000 tons of coke.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing the Bowen coke ovens on this vote. He will have an opportunity of doing so on the Trust and Special Funds Estimates.

Mr. RIORDAN: I now want to refer to the aid granted by the department to the goldmining operations at Kelsey Creek, a few miles outside Proserpine. The department advanced £200 to build a road to open up this field, and last year 700 ounces of gold were won in this area. The field was discovered by a couple of prospectors, and at present twenty-nine men are employed on it. These are producing £1,000 worth of gold a week. That is an example of the wise policy adopted by the Government, and shows how an expenditure of £200 can lead to the development of a prolific goldmine.

Normanby goldfield is an old field situated 40 or 50 miles from Bowen. The Minister made a sum of money available to build an access road to it also. I do not think that sum was enough, but we must thank the Lord for small mercies, hoping that as more money is received by the Government, particularly if a new Government are elected in the Federal sphere with more practical sympathies for the States, the Government will be able to pay more attention to this road.

Mr. MAHER: The Government obtained £130,000 from the Federal Government to aid metalliferous mining.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

The RIORDAN: The Committee will notice that Mount Coolon, which is in my electorate, was the means of adding 21,611 ounces of gold to the quantity produced in the State last year. I am informed that the value of this gold in Australian currency is £189,000.

I hope that the Minister will continue his present beneficent administration, and that as the revenue of the Government increases aid to mining will also increase. The Minister's practical knowledge of the industry enables him to lend a sympathetic ear to requests for its development. I hope that he will give more help to small prospectors and small shows than has been given in the past. They are the people who need Government aid, not the big companies or the big interests.

Mr. NIMMO (*Oxley*) [3.34 p.m.]: I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to ministerial rank. I am sure that had the members of the Opposition a voice in the filling of the vacant ministerial post caused by the death of the late Hon. J. Stopford as against any of the members of the Government Party its hon. members would have voted for him. With him we at least knew just where we stood. He has not been afraid to speak as he thinks on any subject, and although we have disagreed with him we must give him credit for being consistently sincere.

The department is not a very big one and the Minister should have plenty of time to investigate the various matters coming before him. The mining possibilities of Queensland are tremendous, and a great deal more can be done to develop them than is being done to-day. When the Moore Government came into office they found the industry in a dreadful state. After fourteen years of Labour rule mining was almost at a dead end. Gold mining had so languished that production was almost negligible, and it was essential that something should be done to stimulate it. The beneficent results of the work of that Government are reflected in the increased production to-day.

Before the advent of the Moore Government Labour had embarked on a system of State enterprises, and huge sums had been wasted. At Chillagoe and Mungana a sum approximating £2,000,000 was virtually thrown away, but the State has still to pay interest on that amount.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in referring to the Chillagoe smelters on this vote.

Mr. NIMMO: I was referring to the State enterprises that had been carried on by the Labour Government during the fourteen years they were in office and to the deplorable condition of the mining industry when they left office.

The figures disclose that the gold production for 1935-36 reached a total value of £437,473 and for 1936-37 it was £514,717. If we leave out of consideration the production from the mines that the Moore Government were responsible for bringing into operation and continuing in operation, the amount of gold production is negligible. The Moore Government were responsible for bringing Golden Plateau, Mount Coolon, and Mount Morgan into production. I remember that an application was made to the Moore Government in respect of Mount Morgan, and Sir Herbert Gepp was sent up to investigate the position. He recommended that an advance of £25,000 be made, and that was approved by the Government. The money was advanced, and has since been repaid by the company.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You left it to us to give it to them.

Mr. NIMMO: The hon. gentleman's party came into office after the cheque had been signed but before it was posted. The Minister knows that the Moore Government had made all arrangements for the advance of the money. The Minister must also admit that Mount Coolon was established as a result of the policy of the Moore Government of encouraging private enterprise by easing industrial conditions and removing unfair taxation. The same remarks apply to Cracow.

It is astonishing that Queensland has produced so little besides the production from these three mines. It is evident that something should be done by the department to stimulate gold production in the State. It is all very well to give grants on a £1 for £1 basis. It is essential that greater help should be rendered. It is imperative that the department should show greater activity than it has shown during the past six years. A few months have to elapse before the Minister will very likely be put out of his present position, but there is time for him to get busy and stimulate production.

Hon. members opposite continually decry the Commonwealth Government for not making larger amounts of money available for various purposes, but I find that during their term they have assisted the mining industry of Queensland to the extent of £132,000. At the last election the Lyons party gave a promise that if returned to power they would help metalliferous mining in every possible way. They have redeemed their promise, but of course the amount received is naturally not enough for the Queensland Labour Government. The Secretary for Mines is generally candid and honest in his criticism, but even he has now remarked, if the Commonwealth Government gave him all the money he wanted what wonderful work he could do! That is the attitude generally adopted by hon. members opposite. They are continually apologising. Oh, what they would do if the Commonwealth Government or some fairy godfather would give them tons of money! It would be spent and Queensland would flourish. But Queensland can be made to flourish without this continual begging for loan money.

No person can be satisfied with the progress made by the coal industry of Queensland. There has again been a decline in production, and it is very unfortunate that more encouragement is not forthcoming from the Government. They were responsible for the passage of a Bill which, although welcomed by certain colliery proprietors, created a monopoly. All my life I have been associated with the coalmining industry, and during the passage of that Bill I said that it was not a good thing for it. A monopoly was created, and so consumers of coal investigated the possibilities of other fuel. Numbers of coal-burning engines have been converted to crude oil, and others have been displaced by electrically driven machines. It may be contended that coal is the generating power of an electric plant, but the point is that before the conversion to electricity a number of manufacturers in the Brisbane area had to have reserve supplies to meet their requirements. To-day, with electricity, the minimum power required is used, and consequently coal consumption has decreased.

Mr. Nimmo.]

The Minister may contend that the use of these other fuels is economic, but the coal-miners of Queensland are being displaced from employment. An industry consuming a large amount of coal has recently converted two-thirds of its plant to electrically driven machines. Why has this been done? Not altogether because of the price of coal. I admit that in Queensland this is very high, but this industry is not quarrelling as to the price, but because certain coal must be used owing to the legislation passed by a Labour Government, which created a monopoly. Companies that have in the past bought certain coal must still continue to use that certain coal, although the quality may have deteriorated. No choice whatever is left to them. I trust that the Minister will investigate this matter. It is a big factor in industry in Queensland to-day. A large works that was not satisfied with the coal it received made efforts to obtain a supply of another coal, but has been informed that it must continue to take its supplies of coal from a particular mine or do without coal altogether. The coal is too fine, and the colliery is evidently working near a fault. The coal is such that it is falling through the firebars, and only about half is being used. It is vitally necessary that they should be supplied with a different coal altogether. Why should a Government bolster up an industry by saying, "We will give this colliery the sole right of supplying coal to that company for all time, and no other colliery will have the right of supplying their coal"? This is rather a serious matter, and although we have such things as excessively high taxation in the way of preventing companies from starting here, the Department of Mines is retarding the establishment of further industries in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Have you gone into the matter?

Mr. NIMMO: Yes, I have.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You do not show much knowledge of it.

Mr. NIMMO: I listened carefully to the speech delivered by the hon. member for Bowen and I congratulate him upon it. I do not very often congratulate hon. members on the other side of the Committee. There may have been a good deal of the parish pump in it, but I subscribe to nearly all the arguments he advanced. I agree that we should conserve our iron-ore deposits and not make them available to foreign powers. Nature provided us with staple articles for the development of this country and they should be retained for the benefit of the few people here and also for the large numbers I feel sure will ultimately occupy this country.

There were, however, one or two things in the hon. member's speech that I cannot agree with. The suggestion that a State enterprise should be established in connection with the iron and steel industries is one. Nature has been lavish in her provision of raw materials in Queensland, but the trouble is that we have had a Labour Government in power for so long, who have increased taxation to such a height that men cannot and will not establish industries here. If the Broken Hill Proprietary Company was asked to come to Queensland and establish itself at Bowen, do you, Mr. King, think they would come here?

Mr. JESSON: They are already.

[Mr. Nimmo.

At 3.48 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. NIMMO: No, of course they would not, because taxation would be so great as to make it impossible to carry on. The hon. member for Kennedy interjects by saying they are here now. They may be getting the raw material sent down to their works in the South, but the incidence of such high taxation makes it impossible for industries to come here. I believe that the hon. member for Bowen was on the right track, and the only way we can get over our trouble is to encourage industries to come to Queensland, and give them further encouragement once they have been established.

That hon. member referred to the Bowen coke works. I cannot subscribe to his remarks in praise of the Moore Government. Although a member of that party I opposed the establishment of the works there, because I thought they should not have been a State enterprise but established by the Mount Isa Mines Limited.

I trust the few remarks I have made in connection with the Department of Mines will be accepted by the Minister in the spirit they were offered. I do not wish to say anything against that department. I believe, if the coal business was investigated and the practice of compelling users to take coal from one mine only is altered, and more encouragement is given to general mining activities in the State, a very useful department can be created. I trust during the remaining term of his office the Minister will do all he can in those directions.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: (Hon. H. A. Bruce, *The Tableland*) [3.50 p.m.]: I congratulate the Labour Party upon having secured the Hon. T. A. Foley as Secretary for Mines. It is a peculiar but very satisfactory thing about the Labour Party that no matter what the vacancy in the Cabinet may be, it always has a suitable man to fill it. On this occasion we have been as fortunate as on previous occasions. In the hon. gentleman we have a man who has had practical experience in mining. That is another advantage enjoyed by the Labour Party. It has practical men in every walk of life to fill any vacancy that may occur. That, unfortunately for them, the Opposition do not enjoy. On this occasion the Labour Party have been successful in having appointed to the position of Secretary for Mines a man who has had an early training in mining, a man who knows the industry from the bottom to the top. His early experience has given him that understanding of conditions which is essential to the successful occupancy of his office. He has an experience of the industry that is not enjoyed by company promoters, etc.

I heard an hon. member this morning express the wish that the Minister would visit various parts of the State when he has the opportunity. The Minister has not occupied his position for very long, but I remind hon. members that he has already made a comprehensive tour of the mining areas of Queensland. During that tour he showed his appreciation and understanding of the conditions existing in the industry. Undoubtedly he saw areas with which he was probably not in touch before, and he saw types of mining with which he had not been associated previously.

I think the hon. member for Isis was the first speaker to mention molybdenite. I interjected during the hon. member's speech, but I want it to be understood that I did not interject with the intention of spoiling his speech. Molybdenite is a metal that is used largely for the purpose of hardening steel. Very often in times of peace the price of the metal is so low that it is hardly worth investing money to develop that branch of the industry. During the great war, however, molybdenite reached such an attractive price that private enterprise was very glad to exploit molybdenite deposits and to invest capital in its recovery, because it showed enormous profits.

The hon. member for Isis also mentioned that all that was required to get an overseas sale for coal was business acumen. If that be so a very serious reflection is cast upon those business people who own coalmines in Queensland. I think, however, that there are greater difficulties than that.

Some of the activities that have taken place in mining operations in Queensland will be of interest to hon. members of this Committee. Reference has been made to Chillagoe State smelters. The position is that employees numbering 131 were paid wages aggregating £39,590 during the last financial year. The copper and gold ore smelted amounted to 25,525 tons, for a production of 2,284 tons of copper, 11,650 fine oz. of gold, and 43,581 oz. of silver, worth approximately £250,000, or a quarter of a million pounds of new wealth. While the industry has been in the doldrums in other parts of the State it is interesting to know that the ore they treated came from widely separated districts, and so successful were the operations that the losses were reduced from £44,622 in 1934-35 and £32,000 in 1935-36, to £7,747. On a conservative estimate, about 4,000 persons are affected by the continuance of this plant, and it is the only place in the State where complex ore can be treated.

The policy of continuing operations at Chillagoe has been severely criticised, but had the works been closed down the development that has taken place in, say, the Gulf Country would not have been possible. To-day ore supplies are drawn from the far-Western districts, and from the Peninsula, and thus indirectly a considerable amount of employment is provided for people in the North—and in the South, too, in that supplies are sent from the South to Chillagoe. The Chillagoe smelters are responsible for the maintenance of a large number of people. The State treatment works at Irvinebank have been the subject of criticism, too, but the improvements that have been carried out have brought this plant to such a high state of efficiency that the treatment of 0.6 per cent. tin has yielded a profit to the producers. I am not suggesting for a moment that it would be advisable for men to develop a new field of 0.6 per cent. tin, but I do know that parcels of 0.6 per cent. tin have been treated at Irvinebank.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The vote for "State Battery and Treatment Works, Irvinebank," is to be found under Trust and Special Funds at page 144 of the Estimates, and a discussion on Trust and Special Funds is out of order on this vote.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not production?

The CHAIRMAN: The whole of the operations of that institution are covered by Trust and Special Funds.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Such as production?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Last year the production of tin in the Herberton district amounted to £157,000, but that fact is not generally known to the electors of Queensland, and it is worthy of emphasis. While we realise that Queensland stands fairly high in comparison with other States as a gold producer, the value of the production of tin is not generally known. Reference has been made to the value of the production of coal, copper, silver, and lead, but it is of vital importance to the State that the Herberton district produces tin to the value of £157,000.

I believe it was the Leader of the Opposition who said that with the adoption of more up-to-date methods the old prospector was gradually disappearing. When we sat in opposition the Secretary for Mines in the Moore Government seemed to have that idea firmly implanted in his mind too, but during the various debates of that time I resisted the idea and strongly claimed that the prospector had not by any means disappeared. The geophysical survey parties did not discover the new gold-bearing lode at Bartle Frere. It remained for the prospector to do so. It was very difficult indeed for the prospector to discover it, but the whole credit of that discovery must rest with him who has made it possible for the big capitalist to come in and develop it. No one but the prospector would have found the Bartle Frere lode. Up to the present time the prospector holds the record of being the only man to discover that and any other fields.

During a very slack time at Chillagoe recently the smelters depended on ore won from the Ti-tree lode. This lode originally contained a fair amount of iron and a little gold. It was discovered by an old prospector who surprised several natives by digging holes in the hills. I do not know who was the more surprised, the prospector at escaping from the natives without injury, or the natives at seeing a man digging holes in the side of the hill. My whole object is to show that this is the type of men to whom credit must be given for opening up our mining fields.

I recently made a visit to Stannary Hills in my electorate, where thirty or forty men are mining tin-bearing ore. Although the tin recoveries to date are not very great the men are buoyed up by the hope of some day winning something worth while. They are the men who are of real value to the country. These men could come to the city and get unemployment relief work, but prefer to remain in the sparsely-populated districts and prospect for our hidden wealth. They deserve all the support and encouragement that can be given to them.

A number of men in the Innot Springs district are engaged in tin-scratching. They are making a living. Even though this living may be a hard one, they prefer to do that than come under the unemployment relief scheme. I have a great admiration for men of this type. It is these men who are always

Hon. H. A. Bruce.]

prospecting and who sooner or later make discoveries of benefit to the State.

I was pleased to notice that a man who was prospecting eighteen months ago obtained a return of £5,000 from a tin mine he discovered. Such illustrations are to be found right through my electorate. Again, it was the prospector who has caused a big company to spend £4,000 at Mount Garnet in work preliminary to the introduction of a tin bucket dredge at a cost of £125,000, which will give employment to over 100 men. Quite a number of persons are unaware of the good work that such men do. We hear a great deal how new country is opened up by farm settlement by the Government, but more often than not the work of the miners in opening up and developing the country is overlooked. Mining to win various kinds of ore is just as necessary to supply the wants of the man as the growing of foodstuffs.

Fortunately, Queensland possesses almost every variety of ore that the world requires. On my last visit to North Queensland I waited for three days in the hope of inspecting the new gold find on Bartle Frere. Unfortunately, continuous rains caused me to abandon my intention. Men whom I could rely on told me there were very large lodes there. When I was there no real development work had been done, but gold has been produced. These lodes can be easily mined by tunnels, and until a tunnel is put in, until the miners drive north and south and treat a bulk sample, we shall not be able to say definitely whether Bartle Frere will be the rich field many people expect it will be. It has been established beyond doubt that a considerable amount of gold will be produced there, but it may turn out—as we hope it will—to be something out of the ordinary. There is no question that the production of gold is vital for Queensland.

I visited the North just after the Minister had been there, and I found that where aid to prospectors was warranted it was given, and many small grants have been made for the purpose of making access tracks. The Minister has done excellent work, and I do not think the department is one that should be depreciated. One hon. member opposite said it was a very small department and the Minister would have much time on his hands. I point out it is not the small department people think it is. On the contrary, it is a department in which an active man can find plenty of scope, it is a department that will increase in importance as the demand for minerals arises, and as a result of the activities of the keen Minister in charge, I am satisfied great development will take place in the mining industry of this State.

Anyone who has visited the outback and become acquainted with prospectors, must return with a keen appreciation of their remarkable independence and the asset they are to the country. The average young man who wants to attempt something would be better off out there even under the prevailing conditions than he would be in the cities or towns. There are openings in the North for a considerable number of young men of adventurous spirit. On the mining fields in the Herberton district I have met young Englishmen who had only been in this country two or three years, and there is no reason why Australians should not do the same thing.

[Hon. H. A. Bruce.]

I compliment the Minister on the work that he has done; and I look forward with complete assurance to a continuance of the excellent work he has begun.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Vanango*) [4.9 p.m.]: I very much appreciate the remarks of the Minister who has just resumed his seat. If the same sentiment in regard to stimulating an independent spirit permeated the policy of the Government we should have nothing to complain about. It would be to the advantage of Queensland if that spirit of independence was fostered in every sphere of activity. I agree that the life of a miner is subject to many hardships. The fossicker, who may be aptly termed a pioneer in the mining sphere, has to face many difficulties and live under hard conditions. But every encouragement should be given to young men to go out into the mining districts and every provision made to enable them to remain there. The Minister remarked that many young men would be better off there than collecting rations in the cities and towns. The hon. gentleman understands the position. There are numbers collecting rations on the coastal areas that could be engaged not only in mining, but in other primary industries. From that point of view we are at one with the hon. gentleman—every encouragement should be given to men of this type to go out into the country.

One never knows where a new mining field will be discovered, or where mineral wealth may lie, and the development of many a mining field has been the first step towards the development of that part of Australia. For instance we have Bendigo, Ballarat, and Stawell in Victoria; Gympie and Charters Towers in Queensland. These districts were first opened by the miners. Miners can be compared with timbergetters in the opening of areas for development. At Charters Towers, Gympie, Bendigo, Ballarat, and other places, when mining activities diminished or ceased altogether, other primary industries began and the districts progressed. As indicated by the Secretary for Public Works, every encouragement should be given to our youth to show a spirit of independence and go out and do something for themselves. They will be helping in the development of the State.

I congratulate the Secretary for Mines on his elevation to Cabinet rank, and trust that the department over which he exercises control will progress under his direction. It is a very important section of the administration. Mining is in the interests of the whole of the community. It is a means of development and a field of activity our youth should be encouraged to enter instead of constantly making for the large centres of population.

Mr. GLEDSON (*Ipswich*) [4.15 p.m.]: The Secretary for Mines has certainly shown a very keen interest in the administration of that department since his appointment to the office.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about prospecting for rare minerals and suggested that the department might "get a move on." He said that they should get a diamond drill to discover where gold was. If the hon. gentleman had had anything to do with diamond drills and bores going down into the earth he would know perfectly well that you could put down 1,000 diamond drills and still miss the lode although it might be right alongside. The only diamond

drill that is successful is the prospector with his pick and shovel, following the lode wherever it may go. I think it would be better if the Leader of the Opposition went out with a pick and shovel and did some of this prospecting work in the State instead of suggesting that the department was inactive. Such work has been done by many hon. members on this side of the Committee.

The department has set itself to follow the right lines by helping men with a knowledge of how to find minerals. These men have thus been encouraged to go on with their prospecting. In the olden days of mining in Queensland it was the man who went out that found the gold. Sometimes he did not reap the rewards of his labour, as others came in and robbed him of the fruits of discovery.

To-day there is a great deal of activity throughout the mining fields of the State. I took the opportunity in August last, when the House adjourned for a period, of going to North Queensland and seeing some of the fields that are developing. On every hand the department is being commended for its work and for the help it gives to the men who are endeavouring to carve out a living in some of these fields. Some of the old fields are reopening and activities are brisk. In boom days in the North, gold, silver, copper, and wolfram were mined, thousands of men were engaged in mining, and much wealth was derived. Fair prices were obtained in those days, but since then a slump has occurred. During the war we had a market for wolfram, molybdenite, and bismuth, and mines on those minerals were able to do well. After the war there was less call for them, and in many instances fields were abandoned. Owing to the assistance given by the Department of Mines and better prices many of these fields are reopening and are able to resume work.

Men engaged in mining always create work for others. If 500 men are employed in a given mining area the value of the wealth won finds work for three times as many indirectly.

Another matter with which I wish to deal is the attitude adopted by the hon. member for Oxley, who never loses an opportunity of attacking the coalmining industry, saying as he does so, "I have been associated with the industry all my life." The hon. member's association with the industry was that he had a business in a coalmining district, and from the coalminers' wages he was able to get the money that put him in the position that he now occupies. Now the hon. member decries the men engaged in that industry. It is all very well for the hon. member to come into this Chamber and tell us these things, but we know the real facts. I have been in that district nearly all my life, and I say that the hon. member for Oxley never did one day's work in mining in the whole of his life.

Mr. NIMMO: That is untrue.

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member was engaged in a business there, selling his goods to the men who were working in the mines, getting his money from them, and he has never worked in a mine at all.

Mr. NIMMO: Your knowledge is very poor.

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member poses as an authority on these matters, and tells us what he thinks the position to be. He complains that the Coal Production Regulation Act is operating to the detriment of

the people of Australia. Why does the hon. member make such statements? Because he draws dividends from companies that have to pay a fair price for the coal they are using. If he as an hon. member of this Assembly can do anything to defeat the provisions of the Coal Production Regulation Act or to defeat the men who are engaged in the coalmining industry and get his coal for next to nothing—as he has done at certain periods—it means an increase in the dividends paid by the companies in which he is interested. The less they have to pay for the coal the higher the dividend that the hon. member can draw.

Mr. NIMMO: You know that is not true.

Mr. GLEDSON: It is true. If the hon. member can say anything to the contrary let him get up and say it. The cheaper he can get his coal the better it is for the companies in which he is interested. The hon. member does not represent a mining district. There are no coal miners in Oxley electorate. Where are the coal miners living in Sherwood, Graceville, and Corinda? Yet the hon. member gets up and speaks for whom? His constituents, dividend-drawers from the companies that are desirous of getting their coal virtually for nothing.

Let us see what the report of the Department of Mines says. On page 1 we find this statement:—

"The District Coal Boards under the Coal Production Regulation Act of 1933 are giving satisfaction to colliery proprietors and the coalmining industry generally, and it may be stated that they are functioning with, if anything, greater confidence, for they have the satisfaction of knowing that their activities have stabilised coal production and increased employment."

What does the hon. member say about it? He says that the colliery proprietors can say to a customer, "You have got to get your coal from this particular colliery, whether it suits you or not," and he has to take that coal or none at all.

The hon. member for Oxley was a member of this Parliament when the Act was passed. Its object was to do what is stated in the annual report of the department to have been achieved—the stabilisation of the coal industry. How was that stabilisation brought about? The Act provided for the constitution of a central coal board consisting of representatives of colliery proprietors and miners. Mr. Ferry, a member of the Industrial Court, was appointed chairman, and in his official capacity of Commissioner of Prices he could prevent the undue inflation of the price of coal. The central board really governed all the matters that came within the jurisdiction of the Act, but in addition the Act provided for the constitution of district boards in the various coalmining districts, also comprising representatives of colliery proprietors and miners. The district boards decided the quotas of coal to be supplied by the different mines to their customers. These customers had drawn their coal supplies from these collieries for years, and the Act did not make any alteration in that respect. These customers could continue to draw coal of the type they required from these mines and from the very seams, but the district board allotted to the various mines the quotas of coal that they could supply from those collieries. The

Mr. Gledson.]

Act really prevented indiscriminate competition by small mines, particularly new mines opened with the object of developing easy seams, thus undercutting the fair price that should be charged for coal. It was the price-cutting war of the small mines that reduced the industry to the deplorable position that it was in in 1931 and 1932 under the McCre regime, when neither coalowner nor miner knew where to turn to earn a living. It cannot be denied that that was the actual position confronting this Government when they were returned to power and decided to stabilise the industry in the interests of all concerned.

Their policy of stabilisation has brought about a greater volume of employment, but it might be asked why the production of coal has not increased. I think it is unnecessary to point out that when coal is removed from underground the asset is destroyed and cannot be restored. In forestry operations trees may be planted and the crop harvested when they reach maturity, but coal is consumed once and for all. Prior to the introduction of the Coal Production Regulation Act it was the practice of some of the collieries to develop the easier seams and to pay no attention whatever to development. In coalmining operations it is necessary to sink shafts, drive underlies, tunnels, headings, and dips, but prior to the passing of the Act competition was so keen that the proprietors could not afford to spend money on such work and the industry was allowed to fall into a deplorable state.

Mr. NIMMO: That is not true.

Mr. GLEDSON: That was the position that confronted the Government when they were returned to power in 1932, and something had to be done to rehabilitate the industry. The hon. member for Oxley has friends in the coalmining industry and he should be able to get this information from them quite easily. I could go into this matter in greater detail, but I am content at this stage to say that if by the introduction of the Coal Production Regulation Act the Government have done nothing more than stabilise the industry and help it to keep its head above water and carry on developmental work, they have done something worth while. It is very necessary that this should be done. Anyone with a knowledge of coalmining knows that not only has the developmental work to be done that I spoke of, but air must be carried to the face for the dilution of gases in order to make conditions safe for the miners and enable them to work under satisfactory conditions.

Quite a number of accidents have occurred in our coalmines. The chief cause is explosion of gas or coal dust. No matter when a man enters a coalmine, he may come into contact with one or another form of gas. Only last week a very bad accident occurred in the Ipswich district which resulted in the death of a miner. I take it that the department will thoroughly sift the matter and see if something cannot be done to prevent a recurrence of these accidents. They seem to be all too common. In this case a young man went to his work in the morning and his corpse was brought home a little later. Very many accidents in coalmines are caused from gases that are peculiar to coalmines and do not occur in metalliferous mines. There is carburetted

[Mr. Gledson.

hydrogen gas, which is the explosive gas called firedamp—the most common cause of explosion. Then we have the carbon monoxide gas, or white damp, and carbon-dioxide gas, CO₂. I understand that the recent accident was due to a combination of gases—carbon-dioxide and carbon-monoxide. Carbon-monoxide is a deadly poison, and once you get a sniff of it life is extinguished. It takes a very small amount to produce fatal results. My inquiries go to show that the recent accident was due to this cause.

I should like to know if the Minister has any report to give the Committee as to the production of oil from coal. This subject has been discussed very frequently and has assumed some prominence in the affairs of nations. If anything can be done to produce oil from coal, we shall not only make Australia self-contained so far as oil supplies are concerned, but provide much work in this State for our coalmines. A debate on the subject in the Federal Parliament recently was interesting, because of its importance to Queensland. I should like to read from a report that was published in the Sydney "Sun" of 27th August last of an interview with Mr. Pike, the Agent-General for Queensland—

"GERMAN OIL FROM COAL.

"SELF-SUFFICIENCY EXPECTED.

"From our Special Representative.

"London, Thursday.

"Germany will soon be independent of foreign oil supplies, the Agent-General for Queensland (Mr. Pike) declared to-day.

"Mr. Pike, who has just returned from a month's tour in Germany, said to the 'Sun,' 'I was much impressed by Germany's progress towards self-sufficiency in oil. It is anticipated that in a year or two German plants will be producing 200,000,000 tons annually from coal, brown coal, and coke.'

"Mr. Pike visited the Fischer plant in the Ruhr, which is carrying out tests with Queensland coal.

"Final judgment has been delayed owing to the recent improvement in the treatment process.

"Mr. Pike will shortly submit a report to the Premier of Queensland. He understands that the Victorian coal is to be tested also.

"The Germans claim that production is now on an economic basis."

I would like the Minister to tell us whether that report has been received from Mr. Pike in reference to his visit to Germany, and give us any information he has dealing with the Twickenham-on-Lees undertaking. I understand that the production of oil from coal in England in 1935 was 95,000,000 gallons, and about 30,000,000 gallons of oil was produced from shale.

This is an important matter, because every country in the world is carrying out experiments. The Federal Government were asked to take this matter up, and according to the reports that I have seen they decided it would be too costly to erect a plant for the purpose. I point out that the disaster that would result from a closure of our present avenues of oil supplies would be far more

costly than a plant for the production of oil from coal. If we were shut off from our present supply of oil we should be unable to carry on an effective defence against an enemy. If the Federal Government will not undertake this work, we should explore all avenues, and ascertain whether the reports of some engineers to the effect that oil can be produced from coal at a much less cost than the Federal Government figure of £11,000,000 are reliable. I understand, according to the reports of some engineers, a plant sufficient to produce the requirements of Australia could be erected for about £1,000,000. If that is so the money would be well spent.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Broggera*) [4.39 p.m.]: I congratulate the Minister on his appointment as Secretary for Mines. I think it was a very wise choice by the party, and I believe the Minister will do justice to the job. His knowledge and experience will be of great benefit to the industry, particularly the miners, for whom he has a fellow-feeling.

Mining is an industry that calls for hard work and sacrifices from those engaged in it. Those who follow it do perform a great deal of arduous labour. It is to be hoped that the Government will continue their policy of the last two years of giving prospecting grants, and will, if possible, increase the grant. This would be a recognition of the sacrifices undergone by the men in the industry. The amount expended could be returned tenfold to the State by the increase in mineral production.

The report of the department indicates that the gold production of Queensland has not only been maintained, but slightly increased in the last financial year. It is very encouraging to know that Queensland remains second on the list of the gold-producing States of Australia. That is something of which the department can be justly proud. Climatic conditions of Queensland are more or less different from those of Victoria and New South Wales, and do not encourage men to go to work on our mining fields, but the returns in the report are more gratifying, inasmuch as any person who knows anything at all about mining is aware that a great deal of the money expended in mining operations goes out under the heading of wages, which are a very prominent item in production costs.

I take this opportunity of pointing out that in my opinion the present conditions of mining at Mount Isa are the most modern and scientific that it has ever been my lot to come in contact with. In November last, during the by-election campaign for the Federal Electoral District of Kennedy, I visited Mount Isa, after a two years' absence, and noticed a great development.

There is no question that mining is a more or less risky occupation, and a man who follows it is a credit to the State and the nation. He works under conditions altogether unknown to the average city dweller. He risks his life more than any man in any other industry, and therefore I draw the attention of the Minister to the desirableness of giving consideration to a liberalising of the conditions for compensation for miner's phthisis, one of the most dreaded diseases associated with the calling. Sufferers from it are more or less under sentence of death. These men have contributed to the wealth of the State, and the department should co-operate with that controlling the payment of workers'

compensation with a view to investigating the possibilities of giving greater benefits to those unfortunate men who have contracted the fell disease.

Then there is the question of a greater application of science to the elimination of plumbism. I know that the members of the medical profession at Mount Isa are doing everything possible to take advantage of every development of medical research to check the disease suffered by men engaged in lead mines. I know that the Anglo-Asiatic Company at Mount Isa is doing what it can by the introduction of mechanical devices to eliminate the scourge as far as possible, but no matter what is done there will always be a tendency for this disease to be prevalent in silver-lead mining areas, and seeing that we cannot eliminate it altogether, we might give consideration to the question of paying greater compensation to those men who succumb to it. Having worked for four or five years in the Broken Hill area and a year or two in the Ballarat district, I know the miners' working conditions, and I know what a man's life is worth who contracts plumbism or miner's phthisis. The time has arrived when the people, through the Government, should recognise the sacrifices these men have made and the conditions of life they have lived.

I also think the time has arrived when all the forces of science and Governments in Australia should be concentrated on the question of obtaining oil supplies from our coal deposits and other sources. I believe that the Gepp report, issued after a two-year's survey of the mining areas in Queensland, offers to Governments, both State and Federal, the solution of one of Australia's greatest problems—the obtaining of petrol supplies for Australia and the production of that spirit by Australian labour. I understand the Blair Athol field contains one of the greatest areas of brown coal in Australia. If the Gepp report can be accepted as correct there is a field to be exploited that offers a solution of the problem of transport in time of war for the defence of Australia. If other countries of the world can produce power alcohol and sell it at 1s. a gallon, and produce oil from coal and sell it at less than 1s. a gallon, surely we, in Australia, with a price on our imported oil of 1s. 10d., should be able to do something to put into operation a scheme to produce oil from coal. We should be able to save the huge sum of money spent by the Australian public in petrol each year from going overseas into the pockets of the Standard Oil Trust and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

These are factors to which the Department of Mines, I know, will give some consideration, and so will the Commonwealth Government. This matter has been discussed by that Government on more than one occasion. I remember going into the Wolgan Valley a few years ago, when John Fell and Company erected an experimental plant there for the purpose of obtaining kerosene from shale. The scheme proved to be too costly and fell through. On several occasions during the last few years there has been an attempt in the Federal Parliament to get that scheme under way again. I believe, however, that the hydrogenation from coal is the better method than that of attempting to get oil from shale adopted in the Newnes and Wolgan Valley districts of New South Wales.

Mr. Taylor.]

I congratulate the department upon the efficiency of its staff, and the Minister upon being a fighter for the continuation of the grant for prospecting. In conclusion, I express the hope that he will always recognise that when the department spends £70,000 or £80,000 on prospecting it must increase the production of minerals, more particularly gold, in the State.

Mr. NIMMO (*Oxley*) [4.51 p.m.]: The production of petrol from coal is a matter that should be investigated by the Minister. I understand from recent Press reports that a very brilliant student of our university, Mr. Ian Stewart, has just returned from overseas after having made a special study of the subject. I believe that something will have to be done in this direction, because at present we have to depend for our supplies upon other countries. I notice that the Labour Party wishes to use aeroplanes only for defence, and if we have to get our oil from overseas we shall be very poorly defended indeed.

My main object in rising was to refute the misstatements of fact that have been made by the hon. member for Ipswich. The hon. member said that I spoke about the Coal Production Regulation Act this afternoon in the way that I did because I wanted to get cheap coal. I said that I did not raise any great objection to the price of coal, although it had been forced up by the operations of the Act, but I took great objection to being forced to take any coal that the companies cared to foist upon the consumer. That is the point that I want to make. Previous to the passing of this Act, all businesses called tenders annually for their supplies of coal. Samples were tested for their steaming qualities, and the tenderer who could supply the coal with the greatest steaming quality got the contract. The passage of this Act meant that a company was tied down for all time to the coal supplied by the colliery that had the contract at the time of the coming into force of the Act. I think that the Minister is seized of the importance of the point that I make. He knows that if he is compelled to go to a particular tailor in this city to get his clothes he has cause for objection. Similarly, the consumers of coal are going to resent being compelled to accept coal from the same supplier all the time.

The hon. member for Ipswich also said that the Moore Government were continually cutting down the price of coal when they were in power, with the result that the Labour Government had to step in to protect the coal owners. That also is a misstatement of fact. During the period when the Moore Government were in power, they, in common with every other Government in Australia, had to cut many things, but the coal owner was not cut down in price in a greater degree than others suffered reductions.

It should be the ambition of every hon. member to encourage the more extensive use of coal. Nearly every industry is striving to instal other means of providing power, and in some cases is even using wood fuel. Fancy using wood for the production of power in a State where there is coal in abundance! Some companies are converting their plants to the use of crude oil and others are using electric power. Something will have to be done to improve the present position, particularly in the direction of

allowing each industry to choose the type of coal that suits its requirements. Why should an industry be compelled to use an unsuitable coal for a long time simply because the Act stipulates that that may be done? I should like hon. members thoroughly to understand that the remarks by the hon. member for Ipswich were, as is usual with him, incorrect.

Mr. GLEDSON: Point out one that is not correct.

Mr. NIMMO: I have pointed them out and the hon. member may read them in my speech later on.

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

Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*) [4.57 p.m.]: I should like to outline the experience of one dairying company in connection with the use of coal with the object of asking if something cannot be done to alter the present unsatisfactory position. In our district we decided to encourage the development of a coalmine and, although the coal was not very suitable, we used it for some years. We were anxious to support local industry. The mine was not able to carry on, and so we had to look elsewhere for coal supplies. The Logan and Albert Dairy Association then turned its attention to the Ipswich district from which it had drawn coal on previous occasions and, although it was anxious to obtain its supplies from its previous source in that district, it was not allowed to do so. In fact, it was told it would have to draw its supplies from a certain named colliery. We resented it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: In the same way as you resent cream carriers' picking up cream supplies from certain areas.

Mr. PLUNKETT: We resented being told that we could buy our coal only from a certain colliery. We used this coal for six or eight months but eventually it became so inferior that it was of no value to us at all. We told our suppliers that the coal was not satisfactory and we also complained to the coal board. The Act provides that any objection must be lodged with the board, but as so much time must elapse before the cause of the trouble is actually discovered, we were compelled to burn wood. When a board of directors of a dairy association takes drastic action like this it surely must be conceded that it has very good grounds. We were strongly of the opinion that the coal that we were compelled to take was inferior for our purpose and we are burning wood to-day. From all appearances we are likely to continue to burn wood. I have mentioned the matter solely with the object of inducing the Minister to inquire into it, because it must be apparent that such an unsatisfactory state of affairs does not make for the encouragement of the consumption of coal.

I understand that other dairying companies are also contemplating the burning of wood instead of coal. The position cannot be allowed to remain there, especially when there are industries in need of coal and coal is available at no great distance from the city of Brisbane. It seems strange, to say the least, that industry is not allowed to buy the coal that suits its particular requirements. Personally, I like

{*Mr. Taylor.*

to see coal used wherever possible in order that the coalmining industry can be developed. My complaint is not so much of the price—in fact, I do not know at the moment what the price is—it is of the unsatisfactory method of telling the consumer that his coal supply must be taken from one mine even though that coal does not suit his requirements, and of the way in which complaints are dealt with by the district coal board. I hope that the Minister will have the matter investigated for the sake of the coalmining industry.

Mr. MULLER (*Fassfern*) [5.1 p.m.]: It is a great pity that the coalmining industry should be so disturbed as it has been in the last couple of years. We all admit its importance, particularly as it affects the Ipswich district, where many men rely on it for work and wages. I do not object to the marketing method used, provided businesslike ways are adopted. The idea behind the marketing of coal is to increase the remuneration of the coalminer and coal-owner, and I do not object to that principle, but there are two sides to the question as there are in any other primary or secondary industry. First, an article must be produced at a price acceptable to the consumer, and, secondly, some form of contact must be made between the producer and consumer.

We have in this State unlimited supplies of coal. We have also a large consumption of coal, but because of interference by the Government and the district coal board charged with the marketing of this commodity much has been done to injure the industry. That is a serious thing. The Minister should investigate the matter and rectify the trouble.

The hon. member for Albert made some reference to the way in which the dairy association he is interested in is affected. The factory I am connected with has had a similar experience. My association was reluctantly compelled to abandon the use of coal and use crude oil and wood. That is merely because we cannot get the coal that we require, despite the fact that we have drawn our supplies of coal from a particular mine in that district for the past thirty years. It is said that is due to the Government's taking the supplies for railways and tramways. As a result, the price of coal at all of our factories has increased 100 per cent. in the last twelve months, although generally speaking the price of coal has increased a few shillings a ton. I am not objecting so much to that, nor am I objecting to the wages the miners are earning, but I am objecting to consumers being compelled to take coal that is not suitable for their requirements.

We have some very excellent coals. Some are suitable for gas production, some for heating, and others for other purposes. The dairy associations must have a coal suitable for their boilers, and yet they are told that they cannot have it. That is tragic from the viewpoint of both the miner and the consumer. The additional costs of making the change in fuel and using unsuitable coals are passed on to the poor primary producer.

Let us take the position of Queensland compared with the other States. According to the "Telegraph" of 27th September, the New South Wales Railway Department called tenders for the supply of 1,000,000 tons of large coal and 451,000 tons of small coal, and the prices varied from 8s. to 13s. 4d. a ton

for large coal and from 6s. 3s. to 12s. 3d. a ton for small coal. This is 6s. a ton lower than Queensland. Those figures prove conclusively that there is a great variation in the quality of coal, but that is not the point I wish to make. All I am concerned about is how Queensland is to compete with New South Wales. Fuel costs are a very big factor in industry and if one State can obtain fuel at half the cost that another State has to pay, what will happen to the industries of the State that has to pay the greater amount? I am an advocate of co-operation and organised marketing; but I am not an advocate of bungling—bungling that is resulting in throwing thousands of persons out of work every year.

Mr. GLEDSON interjected

Mr. MULLER: It is all very well for the hon. member for Ipswich. He only looks at this matter from one side. It is necessary to look at it from both sides. One should not live in one mining centre all the days of one's life and believe it is the whole world. If you produce an article you have to sell it and if you disappoint your customers your industry will go down. I have one factory in mind that was compelled to spend upwards of £300 to reconvert a coal-burning engine to a wood-burning engine in order to meet the present conditions. My remarks are not in the nature of destructive criticism.

Mr. GLEDSON: Wood fuel would cost twice as much as coal.

Mr. MULLER: No. For the information of the Committee I might say that you can burn wood at a lesser cost than you can burn coal, and we are doing it to-day. I can show the hon. member for Ipswich figures that prove that wood fuel is cheaper than coal.

The factory I mentioned had coal-burning engines and there was no desire on the part of the management to go back to wood if it could be avoided, but the present restrictions and regulations have forced us to do it. During the past two years wood has been used as a fuel at this factory and the fuel costs are 9s. a ton, whereas the coal costs amounted to 17s. a ton. There is no comparison in cost, but the convenience of coal fuel is a considerable advantage. I am looking at this matter from the point of view not only of the consumer, but also of the producer. If you strangle the coal industry you force manufacturers either to import crude oil or to use electric current or some other form of power. Therefore, I hope the Minister will take control of this coal board and endeavour to point out to its members the folly of their ways.

Mr. H. WILLIAMS (*Windsor*) [5.9 p.m.]: I was born in the mining town of Gympie, where my father worked as a miner, and I lived there for twenty years. In common with other hon. members, I congratulate the Minister on his appointment as Secretary for Mines. I think the party made a wise choice. His extensive experience in mining in his younger days will be of great advantage to him in his new office.

The only regret I have is that the Gympie goldfield is not producing the amount of gold that it was thought it would. The Government have assisted the new Gympie companies at the commencement of their operations by erecting a battery there, but,

Mr. H. Williams.]

unfortunately, they have not discovered the amount of gold they expected to.

I wish, too, to refer to the Northern mining fields of the State, embracing such towns as Cooktown, Georgetown, Chillagoe, and Port Douglas. These fields are in the electoral district of the hon. member for Cook, and he, no doubt, if present, would express his appreciation for what the Department of Mines has done. In the North the department has granted aid for road repair work so that the miners can transport their ore to smelters or batteries. The industry has also been helped by subsidies for the development of mines and loans for machinery purchases. Water supplies have not been overlooked, and Wolfram Camp, Bamford, and Robert's Creek have now supplies of water. The amount expended under this heading is not large, the total for the year being £141 16s., but the benefit that has accrued to the industry is very much greater than the intrinsic value of the work.

In the mining warden's district of Cooktown, Georgetown, and Chillagoe, £196 was allotted to road works, and its expenditure has enabled the miners to convey their ore for treatment at either a battery or smelter in their own district. A sum of £1,503 was granted for prospecting assistance at Cooktown in the year. One hundred men were thus enabled to go out and prospect in the hope of finding gold, which would be to the benefit not only of themselves, but also of the State. The figures for the Chillagoe and Georgetown district are £1,306, and Port Douglas £36. Prospectors given aid in the mining warden's district of Cooktown, Georgetown, Chillagoe, and Port Douglas number 212.

The Government also granted subsidies for developmental work and for the purchase of machinery amounting to £5,840. Such is the class of work being undertaken on behalf of the miners in the northern part of the State by this Department, whose officers have also kept in touch with small bodies of men scattered round the area.

The Kidston State battery has been kept in operation to help the producers of low-grade ore, and in the year crushed 7,144 tons for a return of 1,144 fine oz. of gold, the wages paid being £1,800.

Approximately £9,000 has been expended by the Department of Mines in granting assistance to mining in this area, and hon. members must agree that such an amount has been well spent for a recovery of £135,000.

A mining man interested in mining leases in Central Queensland told me quite recently that he had received good treatment at the hands of the present Secretary for Mines, who had done more to help him than anybody else in his experience. This man was satisfied that as the Government were assisting in trial boring on his property some thousands of tons of payable ore would be won.

The gold production of Queensland in the last seven years has been—

	Fine oz.
1930	7,821
1931	13,147
1932	23,263
1933	91,997
1934	115,471
1935	102,990
1936	121,174

[Mr. H. Williams.

It shows that Queensland has produced gold to an increased value of £500,000 during the last twelve months. In other words, Queensland's mineral wealth has recovered by £3,140,000 during the year. I claim that the Minister is proceeding along the right lines in assisting the mining interests of Queensland.

Mr. CLARK (*Fitzroy*) [5.15 p.m.] : Representing as I do an electorate situated in a very important mineral belt, I add my congratulations to the Minister upon his elevation to the position of Secretary for Mines. He has been known a long time to me, and is a man who has had practical experience in almost every part of the State. He has worked in metalliferous mines and coalmines, and no man is more suited for the position than he. I congratulate him, too, on the way in which he has carried out his duties. I also extend my congratulations to the members of his staff, because I am sure in them we have some of the finest officers it is possible to find in Australia. Every man in each of the sub-departments is capable of doing the work allotted to him.

From personal observations in the Central District, or that part of it which I represent, I know that during the reign of the Labour Government the prospector there has received a great deal of aid from the Government, and I hope that he will receive the same measure of help in the future. After all is said and done, it is the prospector who really finds the mining fields of the State, and to whom the credit is due. The more assistance given to the prospector the greater the benefit to be gained for the State.

In my electorate there are mines of various classes, alluvial fields, reef mines, lode mines, and all other kinds of mines. Each and every one of them is showing promise, thanks to the aid given by the Department of Mines. There are certain alluvial deposits in Central Queensland that show great promise, and I am hopeful that in the near future they will be of immense value to Queensland in helping to absorb the unemployed in the State. I claim that the mining industry is the only industry that can take up unemployment, because it is the industry that caters for every other industry in the State. It gives employment to men engaged in the timber industry, in coal production, railways, wharf lumpers—almost every industry shares in the growth of the mining industry.

I heard one hon. member of the Opposition refer to the help given to Mount Morgan by his party when in power, but I refute that statement. I was in Mount Morgan during the time the Opposition were in power, and they can certainly be given the credit of sending Sir Herbert Gepp to Mount Morgan, but nothing was actually done until a Labour Government were returned to office. The Government at that time were going to help Mount Morgan, but they only continued with that "going to help" policy, and nothing was actually done. When Labour took office in 1932 the then Secretary for Mines advanced a sum of money to enable certain tests to be made, and it was on the result of those tests that Mount Morgan again started. I do not propose to give the Government credit for raising the price of gold, but I do say that they should be given credit for helping the Mount Morgan Company to reopen the mine. Certainly the company has altered and improved

its machinery in addition to installing new plant, and it is because of those improvements—and it has in control of operations men who know their jobs and understand the industry—that it is in such a good position to-day. Mount Morgan at present is a paying concern, and will continue to be so for many years. New plant has been installed for the treatment of oxidised ores, and the sulphide mill has been reconstructed. Something like 800 men, who were idle previous to 1932, are now employed there.

The fact that 7,821 oz. of gold were recovered in Queensland in 1932 and to-day the recovery is something like 121,174 oz., proves conclusively that the Labour Government have helped the mining industry in no small measure. The gold recovery for Mount Morgan alone, in Australian values, over the last two years was—

	£
1935	309,566
1936	316,924

I am afraid that the people outside of Mount Morgan do not realise just what is being done there. It may interest hon. members to know that over 600,000 tons of ore and waste were removed from the open-cut at Mount Morgan, averaging over 12,000 tons a week. Approximately half of this amount was ore, and the concentrates recovered amounted to 10,463 tons. It is the largest mine in the district and employs a great number of men.

As we have prospectors distributed throughout the whole of the Central District, I should like to suggest to the Government that a scheme similar to that in operation in Charters Towers be introduced for the Central District. I believe that it will be of great benefit to Queensland if more of the unemployment relief money could be granted to prospectors. Under the present system a man makes an application for a prospecting grant, and it is granted for one month only. That man may be 20 miles or 12 miles out of a town and at the end of the four weeks he has to make application for a further grant. At the end of the next four weeks, he applies for a further four weeks, and after he has had a grant for sixteen weeks, he is required to stand down for a certain period. I suggest that the Minister investigate the matter with a view to seeing whether it is possible to abolish that system and to allow the genuine prospector, who is prepared to do the best he can for the State, to continue without standing down. After all, the prospector is the man who really discovers the mineral fields of the State. I admit that we have our geologists, but I believe that in the final analysis it will be found that the man with the pick and shovel is the man who does the important work.

These figures show the value of gold recovered on the Rockhampton field—

	£
1935	8,000
1936	17,600

Hon. members will observe the wonderful improvement in 1936 of more than 100 per cent.

I also suggest to the Minister that an inspector or warden should be sent out to inspect the various prospecting areas situated a few miles out of town so as to save a great deal of valuable time for the men

who are working. The majority of the genuine prospectors have no desire to come to town when they are out in the bush and the lure for gold is so strong—I know what it is myself—that they are not inclined to leave the scene of their operations. Their object is to discover gold if they can.

The mining industry is one of the most important for employment purposes, as these figures showing the number of men employed in metalliferous mining indicate—

1930	2,594
1931	4,322
1932	5,599
1933	6,047
1934	6,199
1935	6,064
1936	6,371

In addition, over 2,000 men are employed in treatment works and 1,204 in smelters and mills. There are also 2,500 men in the coal-mining industry. These figures give some idea of the importance of mining in relieving unemployment.

Criticism has been levelled against the Coal Production Regulation Act and the boards set up thereunder, but I share the view of the hon. member for Ipswich that if all the coalmines in the State were allowed to operate, the return to the owners and miners would be meagre indeed. In fact, the wages that would be earned by the miners would be so small that they would not even be sufficient to sustain the bodily strength that is required to do the work. It is just as necessary to regulate the production of coal as it is to control the export of butter or any other commodity. I endorse the action of the Government in passing the Coal Production Regulation Act. It is all very well for hon. members opposite to say that it is not acceptable to them, but I realise that at least some of them are connected with coalmines and it would suit their purpose better to produce as much coal as they could, quite regardless of the effect upon the owners of small coalmines.

Mr. MAHER: What hon. member on this side is connected with a coalmine? There is no hon. member of this party who is connected with a coalmine.

Mr. CLARK: The speeches of some hon. members opposite would suggest that they were connected with coalmines.

Mr. MAHER: No.

Mr. CLARK: Queensland produces not only coal, but almost every other mineral. In my home town of Mount Morgan the mining industry has been responsible for the production of a large quantity of copper in addition to gold. The value of copper produced in Mount Morgan since 1932 has reached the very satisfactory figure of £185,116. The value of gold won was £1,166,820. The value of both gold and copper was £1,351,936. When the Moore Government were in power the metalliferous mining industry was stagnant. I cannot for the life of me see how hon. members opposite can lay claim to having done anything to resuscitate Mount Morgan, or the mining industry.

I commend to the Minister a revision of the Mines Regulation Act. Certain regulations affecting the conditions of the miners

Mr. Clark.]

could be revised with advantage. There can be no denying the fact that the development of the metalliferous mining industry will increase the number of miners employed and the incidence of industrial diseases. As we know, when a mine or stope exceeds a certain temperature, steps must be taken to have it reduced, or the shifts shortened to six hours, or even four hours. To-day a company, instead of allowing a six or a four-hour shift in those parts of the mine where the temperature is high, arbitrarily closes down that section of the mine. The ventilation of a mine is of the first importance to the miners. In fact, ventilation is a very big factor in reducing industrial diseases. A miner working in a stope where the temperature is high will not remain in the industry as long as if he worked in a well-ventilated area. It is for this reason that I urge the Minister to overhaul some of the mining regulations, particularly those referring to industrial diseases, which are bound to increase with the development that is taking place in the metalliferous mining industry, with a view to mitigating their injurious effects.

Mr. McLEAN (*Bundaberg*) [5.33 p.m.]: I agree with the hon. member for Fitzroy as to the necessity for amending the Mines Regulation Acts. In my previous contribution to this debate I attempted to show the effect of accidents. I now desire to have details placed in "Hansard" for the instruction of the people, who will thus be able to see for themselves that the carelessness of mining companies takes toll of the life and limb of the miner. The annual report of the Under Secretary for Mines is very interesting and informative in this respect. It shows that the men engaged in winning wealth in our mines are not receiving the protection they are justly entitled to. It says—

"Many of the accidents reported, whilst not of a nature to cause serious bodily harm, resulted in the loss of employment exceeding fourteen days, and one or two instances are on record where, if proper care and first aid had been administered in the early stages, it is just possible that an earlier return to work would have been possible, and although previous mention has been made for the necessity of installing up-to-date first-aid stations and the employment of a reasonable number of persons with a knowledge of first aid, there remains room for further improvement in this direction, and I would again ask managers to give this phase of mining very close attention."

I would make it mandatory that the regulations enacted for the protection of miners should be observed. The report further states—

"Falls of ground were responsible for a total of 52 accidents, equal to 27.1 per cent.

"In addition there was one fatal accident causing the death of two workmen. These workmen were engaged in extracting fillers, and at the conclusion of a shift a small stub of coal had been left in. On returning to work the following morning, a fall occurred soon after work commenced. Life was extinct when the bodies were recovered."

That suggests negligence of the company or the officials who were responsible for

[*Mr. Clark.*

seeing that the miners were properly protected. The report continues—

"During the year two accidents were recorded as a result of the ignition of explosive gas, resulting in the death of five workmen. . . . That the men had some indication that all was not well was disclosed by the fact that where the bodies were found was some considerable distance from where they should have been working, and the fact that in nearly every case they had taken the time to gather their billycans, clothing, etc., and take them away would indicate their departure was not hurried and they did not anticipate meeting with explosive gas."

Somebody must have had a knowledge of the existence of this explosive gas, because its presence even in very small quantities can be detected. The report goes on—

"The second fatality due to this cause occurred at the Dawson Valley colliery on the 12th March and resulted in the death of one workman. Explosive gas had previously been reported in this mine, and from the evidence given at the inquiry it would appear the workman had finished driving a cut-through to the rise, the inclination of the seam being very steep, and before a connection was made with the lever above the workman was requested to go into another place. On the morning of the accident it would appear he had gone into the place previously worked in in order to recover some of his tools, when the gas was ignited with an open light. Instructions had previously been given that all workmen driving places to the rise similar to this should be supplied with safety lamps, but this instruction did not appear to have been carried out; neither did the place appear to have been marked off, in accordance with regulations, as being dangerous, and, further, the brattice cloth used to ventilate this rise place had been removed."

That is definite evidence that should be brought before the notice of the people that miners are called upon to risk their lives because of the gross negligence of their employers. These men risk their lives to make profits for others. I urge upon the Minister the necessity of amending the regulations to make it mandatory on employers to protect the lives of the miners in every possible way.

The report continues—

"In addition, many injuries are caused by wagons leaving the roadway. This calls for greater care in laying and maintaining the roads where wheeling has to be carried out, particularly when the height of the seam worked gives little clearance between the wagon and the roof, and in some instances insufficient clearance is allowed between props alongside wheeling roads. This could be avoided in many cases by the more liberal use of crowns, which would allow the prop to be set at a greater distance from the roadway."

That indicates that there has been a callous neglect of the interests of the miners by the employers, resulting in the loss of the

lives of some miners and serious injury to others.

I have quoted this report in order that it may appear in "Hansard" and in the hope that some action will be taken in the interests of the miners.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. T. A. Foley (*Vormanby*) [5.39 p.m.]: A number of matters have been discussed during a very interesting debate, which shows that a keen interest is taken in mining in Queensland.

A matter that was raised by the hon. members for Bundaberg and Mount Morgan relates to the protection of miners against accident and industrial disease. The Mines Regulation Act makes ample provision for all necessary precautions, yet accidents occur. Section 24 throws the onus of disproving negligence upon the owner and manager, and reads—

"The occurrence of any accident in or on a mine shall be prima facie evidence of negligence on the part of the owner and the manager."

I might also point out that careful and regular inspection of mining operations is made throughout the coal and metalliferous mining fields by inspectors, who thus ensure that the working conditions are safe.

In all accidents resulting in disablement for fourteen days, or more serious injury, the circumstances are investigated by an inspector of mines. Public inquiries are held into the cause of all serious accidents that occur in the course of mining operations in Queensland. Such an inquiry is presided over by a warden who has the help of four experienced miners, and an inspector is in attendance to assist. The findings of the experienced miners and the report of the warden are submitted to the Secretary for Mines for appropriate action. Since I have occupied the ministerial chair, a number of mining accidents in the State have been investigated, the findings placed before me and appropriate action taken where the evidence showed any negligence. The hon. member for Bundaberg can rest assured that in both the metalliferous and coalfields, every possible precaution is taken in the interests of the workers.

There is also the additional assurance of check inspectors. These are men appointed by the miners and paid conjointly by the Department of Mines and the Department of Labour and Industry. A miner who thinks ground is dangerous or who has other reasons for doing so can send for a check inspector to make an inspection, and if, in his opinion, the locality is dangerous for the miners he can arrange for a mining inspector to recall these miners from this place or himself order the men out. Every necessary precaution, which is the result of years of experience, is taken to safeguard against accidents such as have been mentioned.

With regard to industrial disease, I remember when I worked in metalliferous mines in the Charters Towers and other districts in the North, the old type of Ingersoll drill was used, which made no provision for a centre core to spray water, and the result was that the miners worked always in a haze of dust. The provision of a centre hole through which water is continually sprayed has reduced the dust nuisance to a very large extent. There may be

mines that adhere to the old system, and this might come from purchasing second-hand machinery. Generally, in most of the bigger mines up-to-date methods are being used. I was surprised when going through the workings at Mount Isa to notice the absence of dust.

Some years ago a committee was appointed to endeavour to arrive at some working basis in the ventilation of mines. The object was to arrive at some definite point with regard to temperature, so that eventually the temperature could be controlled in both coalmines and metalliferous mines. Up to date, however, that committee has not been able to arrive at a workable basis. It does not seem to know just where to start, and the whole thing apparently resolves itself into a question not so much of the temperature as of the volume of air that is circulating in the mine. If a mining inspector, at the request of the miners, makes an examination and finds that conditions are not suitable he can instruct that the necessary tests be made, and if conditions are found not up to the standard laid down by the Act he enters that fact in the log of the mine and the manager has to comply with the requirements of the law. In some instances part of the mine has been closed down. This was done recently in one of our collieries and a great deal of trouble was experienced. In every way provision is made to improve ventilation. Our duty as a Government stops at that. Where it is insisted by the men working in a place that conditions are below standard, the mine manager has to institute a six-hour day at certain standard rates laid down in the Act. There is a difference of opinion in coal-mining areas as to whether the minimum rate should apply to a coalminer on contract or whether he should receive the average being earned by contract miners in the mine. That matter will eventually be decided upon by conciliation and arbitration.

The hon. members for Bundaberg and Isis issued invitations to me to visit their respective districts to inspect the mining activities and meet miners there. I can assure those hon. members that since I have been appointed to my position I have endeavoured to give as much time as possible to visiting the mining areas of the State. I find that that is the best method of getting a first-hand knowledge of the industry. My recent trip North was really taken with the object of revisiting the districts I worked in many years ago, and, naturally, of seeing the methods that have been applied since I was mining. I assure both those hon. members that when the opportunity presents itself, some time after Christmas, I shall visit their areas for the purposes of making an inspection and of hearing any representations that may be made for the improvement of the lot of the men engaged there.

Reference was made to the necessity for helping the men working on the molybdenite deposit at Wonbah. Representations were made to me with a view to obtaining some help for the owners of that mine. It appears that they have a valuable molybdenite deposit there, but, through lack of capital, are unable to carry on operations. Certain machinery is required, and they need help to carry out certain developmental work also. Although we could not accede to the whole of the requests made by the representatives

Hon. T. A. Foley.]

of that syndicate, at least we are endeavouring to meet them as far as lies within our power. Certainly they will get some help to carry out developmental work, and it is possible that they will be aided also in the purchase of machinery that will better enable them to carry out their operations on a scale warranted by the value of the deposit.

The hon. member for Charters Towers gave us a very interesting review of the development that is taking place in that district. I take this opportunity of reminding the Committee that the hon. member for Charters Towers takes a keen interest in mining affairs. He can tell us something about every mining show there. He has first-hand knowledge of the men who are operating them, and is acquainted with the history of all the older mines. On my recent visit to Charters Towers he had occasion to make representations to me for aid in the renovation of the Venus battery. For years now we have been operating that battery in an endeavour to retain facilities at Charters Towers for the crushing of ore of prospectors and miners. With the increase in the price of gold and the impetus in development in that industry, activities increased to such an extent that ores were being treated at this plant under very grave difficulties. Certain alterations were pointed out to us as being absolutely essential for the proper working of the plant, and we were able, out of a fund that we have for that purpose, to authorise an expenditure of approximately £1,000 to enable improvements to be effected. Those include the renovation and improvement of the mill as well as the installation of an additional unit to enable it to meet all present requirements of the Charters Towers area. There are some persons in the district who are of the opinion that an entirely new battery should be supplied. As time goes on we shall be able to decide whether that is warranted, but on the present basis of development the renovated and improved Venus mill should suffice.

The Charters Towers district is a very extensive one, as I know from intimate association with it. I was reared there as a boy, and prospected in it as a young man. I worked on the reef at the Swedenborg line, and took out a couple of crushings. I also worked further on, between there and Mount Leyshon, and also in the Mount Charles district. Therefore, I can claim to have a fairly intimate knowledge of the operations that are carried on throughout the district. I can assure hon. members that there is scope for successful operations for a great many prospectors, and they will at least be able to keep the wolf from the door while they are testing out a leader, which in that district might open out into a reef, or developing a show.

The hon. member for Charters Towers has already pointed out the increased activity that has taken place in the Charters Towers district as the result of the assistance given by the Government. Considerable development has taken place at Lolworth and in the Mount Stewart district. During the last financial year there was distributed in the Charters Towers and Ravenswood district a sum of £13,273 to 472 men and £163 to ten men at Ewan, making a total of 482 men who have received prospecting assistance in those districts. In addition, we have given subsidies amounting to £879 to various syndicates and companies for developmental sup-

plies. As has been pointed out by the hon. member for Charters Towers, too, the benefit of that distribution is reflected in the increased gold production in the district, and the general activity, enthusiasm, hope, and optimism that prevail.

The hon. member for Bowen referred to the export of iron ore and to the visit of the Japanese representative, Mr. Umeda, some time ago, who was inquiring into the possibility of ore supplies in this State. So far as I know at the present time, no iron ore is being exported from Queensland, but there is a possibility of some development at Iron Island at a later date, as soon as the persons who control the deposit are able to obtain the necessary facilities to mine and transport the ore. There is a deposit of about 2,250,000 tons in sight.

MR. MAHER: Where is the island?

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: A few miles out from the coast at St. Lawrence. For the benefit of the hon. member for Bowen I should like to mention that the Commonwealth Government appointed a committee some time ago to investigate the accessible deposits of iron ore in Queensland. Moreover, Mr. Umeda's entry into Australia is, of course, a matter for the Commonwealth Government, who have full control of the entry of aliens into Australia.

MR. MAHER: He is not an alien. He is a business man and is entitled to come in.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: Mr. Umeda is not a naturalised British subject. My point is that the necessary control of the entry of persons other than British nationals is vested in the Commonwealth Government. Mr. Umeda entered Australia and visited certain iron-ore deposits. In an interview with the Under Secretary and me, he pointed out that his main objective was to interest Australian capital in the exploitation of Australian iron-ore deposits, and that his interests were prepared to guarantee a market for that product. He even went further and said that the interests he represented would guarantee Australian capital engaged in mining operations for Japanese requirements against any loss. However, nothing definite was arranged. Mr. Umeda thoroughly understood that under the Queensland laws no person other than a British subject could obtain a title for mining leases in Queensland.

Even were it possible, and had Mr. Umeda desired, to obtain a lease or leases for working iron-ore deposits in Queensland he could not do so, because as a result of negotiations between the Commonwealth and State Government no leases for iron ore are being granted at the moment. Investigations are being made by a committee of Commonwealth experts for the purpose of determining the accessible iron-ore deposits in Australia. The object is to ascertain whether there are enough to satisfy the needs of Australia for a considerable number of years to come. As one hon. member pointed out in relation to coal deposits, iron ore that is taken from the ground cannot be replaced. A hundred years in a nation like Australia is a very short time, especially for a base metal that may be used in large quantities. We have agreed to co-operate with the Commonwealth Government until its committee submits its final report. As soon as we obtain that information there will be an opportunity

[Hon. T. A. Foley.]

for interests in Australia and Queensland to take up iron-ore leases with a view to exploiting them. The export of iron-ore deposits in Queensland is purely a matter for the Commonwealth. I understand that the Broken Hill Company Proprietary Limited has been supplying iron ore from one of its mines to the Japanese; and until the Commonwealth Government issue a regulation preventing the export of ore I do not think the State can interfere.

The hon. member for Bowen referred to the allowance of £2 a week that is made to married prospectors, and pointed out that it was too little on which to expect a man to keep his family and also provide for his requirements in the bush. My difficulty in administering this vote is that I have to be guided by the number of bona fide applicants recommended for favourable consideration by our mining wardens throughout the State and the amount of money at my disposal. It has been found in the past that £1 and £2 a week over a period is all that the vote will stand, and that is why that is allowed to the prospectors to-day. I quite agree with the hon. member that the amount is small if a man has to keep his family in the town and also keep himself in the bush; if the family were with him in the bush it would be a different matter.

MR WELLINGTON: Northern hon. members might help you in getting more money on the Estimates for this purpose.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: There may be something in that. However, in addition to what the Commonwealth advances, we have distributed money allocated from the Loan Fund as well as money allocated by the Department of Labour and Industry. These amount to a considerable sum and have met all demands up to the present. In an endeavour to keep the bona fide prospector going as long as possible we provide for payment for sixteen weeks, and longer if possible. I have appointed an inspector who visits the various districts where prospectors are operating and this experienced man follows up their work and weeds out the new chum and the malingerer, and this has resulted in a considerable saving, which is of advantage to the bona fide prospector because we are able to support him for a longer period.

The hon. member for Bowen referred to mining access roads. A very considerable amount of work has been done with the vote that is available for that purpose. Where the project is too great for the department to handle we have arranged that the Main Roads Commission shall lay down mining access roads and it has been carrying out some very good work. As a result of representations from the miners and a favourable report from the department's inspector who visited the field, the Main Roads Commission is spending a considerable amount of money in making a road from Portland Roads to Batavia that will provide better access from that port to the town, thus obviating the necessity of travelling the long route to Coen, which moreover is very bad in wet weather.

The hon. member for Bowen also referred to the benefit the Bowen coal was to the Mount Isa mines. It was of considerable benefit to the company when deciding whether it was possible to undertake such

a gigantic task as developing the Mount Isa deposits, to know that it could obtain coal at a very reasonable price from Bowen and also coke from the Bowen coke ovens established by the previous Government. The company has obtained supplies of coal and coke at reasonable prices. It would probably have cost a very considerably greater sum and probably have caused the abandonment of the project had it not been able to make such an arrangement in the initial stages of the development of Mount Isa.

An hon. member of the Opposition drew attention to a loss of £2,000 for the year's operations of the Bowen coal mine, but if one were to add to the credit side the benefit of a cheaper supply of coal to the Railway Department and private consumers in the Northern district as compared with the cost prior to the opening of the coalmines, the profit and loss account would show a decided profit.

In the absence of the hon. member for Cook the hon. member for Windsor drew attention to the activities in the Etheridge district and to the proposal for the establishment of a treatment plant. The Etheridge miners have made representations for the establishment of a treatment works at which ore could be handled without having to be transported to the Chillagoe smelters. An assurance has been given to the hon. member for Cook that necessary treatment facilities will be provided in that area. On that field some mines produce refractory ores and others free gold, and it was therefore necessary to seek the advice of metallurgists as to the proper plant to meet the general purposes of the field. The matter has been submitted to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and a report is awaited. This should be forthcoming very shortly, when steps will be taken to provide some treatment facilities.

The hon. member for Oxley said that the mining industry was at a very low ebb when the Moore Government were elected to office. That is true. The hon. member attributed the depression to the fourteen years of Labour administration. That is totally untrue. In the post-war period and up to comparatively recent times, the value not only of gold but of other minerals was very low. We had an ordinary standard price for gold, and it was not until the alteration in English sterling values that the price for gold began to increase and a revival took place in the goldmining industry. The same thing applied to metals. After the war, one could hardly give wolfram away, and tin was down to such a low price that it was hardly worth working. The same thing applied to molybdenite, bismuth, and other base metals. The Government were paying £50 a ton to keep the copper industry going in the western part of the State when they were only receiving £39 a ton for the smelted article at Chillagoe. We showed tremendous losses on the operations of the Chillagoe smelters, nevertheless we had to keep the gougers and the industry going over a very long period. Since steady prices came about naturally, not only the Government but the gougers and miners also have benefited generally. I think it is totally wrong for the hon. member for Oxley to take the stand that Labour was responsible for the depression in prices.

The same thing applies to the hon. member's assertion that the Mount Morgan,

Hon. T. A. Foley.]

Mount Coolon and Golden Plateau were brought into production as a result of activities of the Moore Government. During their period of office, there is no doubt that they pursued a policy of giving assistance to prospectors, and I give full credit to them for what they did, although the period for which these payments were made to the prospector was less than it is to-day and the funds allocated for that purpose were considerably less than our funds. As a result of help rendered to miners, Golden Plateau was eventually developed. Only promises were made by the Moore Government in regard to Mount Morgan, and it was not until the advent of a Labour Government that the actual money was supplied to the company to carry out the metallurgical tests, which eventually decided on the reopening the mine.

Mr. NIMMO: They would have got it if there had not been a change.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member should not make misleading statements. I realise that had the Moore Government been returned it is possible that money would have been forthcoming, just as it was when Labour assumed office. Representations were made during their term of office, the matter was promised consideration and when the reports from departmental and other experts were available, the money would have been well spent in testing out the metallurgical processes to treat low-grade ores. When those reports came in the Government in power would no doubt have given the necessary help. It happened that it was a Labour Government that really handed over the necessary funds.

As to the necessity of further stimulating the mining industry, I fully agree with the remarks made by hon. members. As a result of my observations in mining areas I have come to the conclusion we could not do better than provide as much money as possible for the granting of aid for making tracks and access roads to mining shows in order to cut down the transport costs of the ores to treatment plants. We should also continue the policy of establishing efficient treatment plants in central positions and give as much assistance as possible to the smaller mining men to get machinery to work more efficiently. We are doing that at present, so far as the money was allocated for these purposes will allow.

Let me give an illustration of what such a policy means. A party of miners from Irvinebank made representations to me for help to buy a compressor and jack-hammer drilling system in order that they might work more efficiently and win greater quantities of ore from what was really a low-grade ore. It was discovered that the cost of that plant was in the vicinity of £500. It is obvious that no department would be able to approve of any great number of those plants unless it had inexhaustible funds upon which to draw. It is my intention to arrange for experiments by an officer of my department, who believes that he can design a much cheaper and smaller plant that will meet the requirements of small parties of prospectors and enable them to discard the stone-age methods that they have had to adopt up to the present.

The hon. member for Nanango referred to the good work that the prospector does for the State, and I agree with him. I

[Hon. T. A. Foley.

agree also with the statements by hon. members on the Government side of the Committee that we cannot do enough for the bone-fide prospector who goes out into the "never never" and under rigorous living conditions endeavours to locate gold or other mineral deposits.

An instance of the fine work these men do for the State is to be found in the achievement of Mr. Gordon who, at Portland Roads up in the Gulf country, located what is known as Iron Range. Later, Packer's Creek and Scrubby Creek, adjoining, were discovered by other prospectors. As a result of those discoveries there is every possibility that one of the finest and most fertile tracts of country that we have on the eastern coast of Australia will be developed. There we have the opening up of what appears to be a likely mining field for some years to come. Every help is being given to the prospectors in that district. Every attention is even being paid by the officers of the Department of Mines to the catching of the earliest available mail so that cheques will be delivered to those men with a minimum of delay. If it is thought to be necessary, everything else is laid aside in order that the mails are got ready for the Portland Roads men. This policy is being carried out, not only at Portland Roads but in every other mining centre in the State.

When the new find was made at Bartle Frere we were in the happy position of having a credit balance at the end of the financial year. I was travelling through the North. The pioneers of that find met me at Gordonvale. They travelled by rail motor to Babinda, explained their prospects and their position, and asked for the sum of £200 in order that they might be able to widen the pack track (which they had already cut themselves) in order to facilitate the transport of goods up to the highest point in Queensland. That advance of £200 was approved, with the result that those men have improved facilities for developing their properties, which are in very difficult and inaccessible country. So the programme goes on all over the State.

Reference was made by the hon. members for Oxley, Albert, and Fassifern to disabilities suffered under the Coal Production Regulation Act by certain consumers of coal in obtaining suitable coal. I take it that hon. members agree that some form of organisation in the coal industry was necessary when the Act was passed. A similar form of organisation was found necessary in Great Britain. I have a résumé of the scheme that was embodied in the British Coal Mines Act of 1930, and I see that it contains similar provisions to those set out in our own scheme. It deals with the sale of coal by the board and the supply of coal by owners, it regulates the purchase of coal, it determines the quotas, it determines the standard tonnage, classification, and minimum prices, and the definition of classes of coal. All those provisions, most of which are similar to our own, were found to be necessary in the interests of the coalmining industry in Great Britain. In any scheme for the organisation of such an intricate and complicated industry with so many interests involved it is only natural that in the initiatory stage some anomalies are bound to occur and someone is hurt in the endeavour to do the best in the interests of the industry and the consumers.

The Queensland Act gave some rights to the consumer if he felt that he was being detrimentally affected in the way that has been suggested by these hon. members.

Mr. MULLER: That is not being done.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Let me deal with the history of the Act and then leave the matter to hon. members. A decision was made by the Central Coal Board for the purpose of ensuring a supply of suitable coal to the gas industry, and what applies to that industry also applies to any other industry. Any gas company has the right to appeal to the West Moreton District Board at any time if the coal is unsuitable for gas-making purposes. Such appeal must be considered by the West Moreton District Board with the least possible delay, but the onus of proving that the coal is unsuitable rests upon the purchaser. If the decision of the West Moreton District Board is not acceptable to the purchaser he has the right of appeal to the central board. The Booval Butter Company has already done that. The following letter, under the signature of A. G. Muller, chairman of directors, has been received by the secretary of the Coal Board:—

"Further to my telephone communication, I desire to place before the chairman and members of your board the unsatisfactory position regarding the supply of coal in the West Moreton district. We, the Queensland Farmers' Co-operative Dairy Association, are unable to secure suitable coal for use at our Boonah butter factory.

"For many years past, in fact long before the board took over control, we had been using washed slack from the Rhondda Colliery, almost exclusively, at Boonah, as we had found that it was much more suitable than any other.

"Whilst we have repeatedly complained to the local board, up to the present we have received no satisfaction. Neither have we been able to purchase a suitable coal. We have been allotted coal from other mines which are not at all suitable.

"The matter is a very serious one as far as our association is concerned. The fuel at present in use is almost doubling our costs. We would appreciate your kind consideration of this matter in the hope that you will meet our request."

That is the right procedure. There we have the consumer applying to the Central Coal Board to have his case considered. The central board instituted an inquiry to discover the actual position, and this is the report, signed by W. Thomas, secretary of the West Moreton District Coal Board, to the Central Coal Board—

"QUEENSLAND FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION LIMITED.

"BOONAH FACTORY.

"First quota allotted for twelve months ended 30th June, 1935—

	Tons.
Rhondda	225
Rosemount	363
Thistle	343
Hart's Aberdare	130
Mount Elliott	52

1,118

"Quota for six months ended 31st December, 1936, was altered so as to provide trade for other collieries. This quota was on the following annual basis:—

	Tons.
Clarefield	270
Rosemount	368
Thistle	340
Hart's Aberdare	130
	1,108

"The company wrote to the board, 2nd July, 1936, drawing attention to the deletion of Rhondda from the list, and the board notified the company that Clarefield Colliery had been substituted for Rhondda, drawing the company's attention to their right of appeal to the central board. This right was not exercised.

"Current quota, i.e., for six months ending 30th June, 1937, was allotted on the same basis as the preceding six months (as above). The following correspondence has passed between the company and the board in relation to the current period:—

"30th December, 1936. Company wrote asking for 50 per cent. of their requirements from Rhondda—washed slack coal. Board replied 12th January, 1937, stating Rhondda was producing in excess of its quota and could not supply the company without committing a breach of the scheme. The company protested on 13th January, 1937.

"3rd February, 1937. Company wrote again asking for Rhondda washed slack. Board replied 4th February asking what coals would have to be deleted from the quota if Rhondda was authorised to supply.

"9th February, 1937. Chairman of West Moreton Board reported to board that he had interviewed Mr. Saxelby, general manager of the company, and had explained board's difficulties to him. Board then wrote to company, 11th February, offering Rylance Collieries washed slack in place of Clarefield. This was possible because one of Rylance's customers could be supplied with Clarefield slack, an adjustment not possible with any of Rhondda's customers.

"16th February, 1937. Letter received from Mr. Tomlinson, manager of Boonah factory, suggesting the following quotas:—

	Tons.
Rylance	283
Rhondda	288
Thistle	144
Hart's	144
Rosemount	144
Clarefield	144
	1,152.

"Board authorised the chairman to visit the Boonah factory and discuss matters with Mr. Tomlinson. This was

Hon. T. A. Foley.]

done and the following arrangement was made:—

	Quota for six months. Tons.
Washed coal	228
Thistle	134
Rosemount	148
Hart's	65
	575 "

Notwithstanding the disabilities under which the board was working every effort was made to meet customers and finally an arrangement was made on the basis I have quoted.

Mr. MULLER: It was not a mutual arrangement.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was arranged after a member of the board had described the difficulties they were labouring under.

The report goes on to state—

"On 11th March, 1937, board issued an amended quota decision on the exact basis discussed with Mr. Tomlinson.

"On 19th March, 1937, Mr. Tomlinson, manager of Boonah factory, wrote to the board acknowledging receipt of the board's decisions in the following terms:—

'Your letter of the 11th instant came duly to hand, also particulars of the decision of your board in connection with the supplies of slack to our Boonah factory.

'We were pleased to meet Mr. McQueen, chairman of your board, and to have an opportunity of explaining our position to him.

'We will be glad to discuss the situation further before the next allocations are decided.'

"The washed slack is now being supplied from Rylance Collieries but the quantity involved has been deleted from other quotas and has been allotted by the board to those who lost trade under the readjusted quotas. It is definitely impossible to make any such arrangement with Rhondda coal.

"No further communication has been received from the company since 19th March, 1937."

Mr. MULLER: Why was all that taken away?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was taken away in the allocation as a result of the quotas laid down in an endeavour to satisfy everyone in that area. The result is that after the colliery from which the hon. member's company was getting supplies got its quota, Boonah was left out of the list of consumers to be supplied. The difficulty confronting the board in making the arrangements desired could not be overcome. Every endeavour was made to meet the hon. member.

Mr. MULLER: Were you aware that we were buying Rhondda coal previous to the board's taking over?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That may have been so. What I wish to point out was that every effort was being made, notwithstanding the difficulties with which the board was confronted, to meet the Boonah

people, even to the extent of entering into an arrangement with their management in regard to the quota for a given period.

The Boonah people took the matter further in a letter of 19th May, asking that the appeal be adjourned. They were met in that respect, and then they sent a further letter advising they were prepared to have the case heard on a given date. That matter will come before the Central Coal Board, and the representatives of the company will have an opportunity of stating their disabilities. A unanimous decision by the Central Coal Board after they have heard all the evidence is required on the question whether it is possible to supply a customer with coal from a particular colliery or whether that customer can get the equivalent in heating power and other respects from coal from any other colliery that is able to supply it.

So it will be seen that every effort is made by the organisation set up to meet any consumer who has a complaint. The same applies to the Brisbane Gas Company. Every effort is being made to meet it. It has the right to state its case on appeal, and if it can prove to the board that the coal supplied to it is not satisfactory for its purpose every effort will be made by the board to make a readjustment in the allocations in order that it may be satisfied. But there are occasions, because of the quota system and in the endeavour to satisfy each colliery, when it is almost impossible to get the organisation to such a degree of perfection that everyone is satisfied. As far as is humanly possible, every effort is made to meet the consumers.

Mr. MULLER: Are you aware we could not get a reply to our letters to the West Moreton Coal Board, not even an acknowledgement of a letter? That does not look as though they were meeting the trade.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Of course, I have not their files and must take the hon. member's word for that, but it appears to me to be somewhat strange. If his company suffers under such a disability he has his redress under the organisation that has been set up. He can approach the central board and have his case heard. The board consists of a Government representative (Mr. Stafford), a consumers' representative (Mr. Ferry), and representatives of the employees and the coalmining industry. The same procedure is followed as in England. There also, difficulties are occasionally encountered, and the board hears evidence, and if a readjustment is justified it makes it if it is within its power to do so.

The hon. members for Bundaberg and Ipswich raised the important subject of the extraction of oil from coal. It has engaged the attention of the Government and the Department of Mines for a considerable time, but because of the numerous processes submitted from Germany, England, and Australia it is very difficult, indeed, for any Government to decide whether it is advisable to proceed with treatment works, costing in some cases as much as £11,000,000, or £1,500,000 for another process, to produce the oil requirements of Australia. The fuel must be produced at a price comparable with that of flow oil at present on the market. In Great Britain the low carbonisation and hydrogenation processes are used, as well as in Germany. Naturally, the dominating factor over there is the need to make the country self-contained in fuel supplies, and

[Hon. T. A. Foley.]

consequently those countries are prepared to subsidise such industries to an enormous extent in order to attain their objective. Whether in Australia we are in a position to do that is another matter. Oil interests are endeavouring to locate flow oil at the present time, and the indications at Roma and Injune are indeed very favourable, or at least the persons and companies that are investing their money in scout-boring think so. There is the possibility that with the help of further capital for the exploration of flow oil it will be eventually produced in this State. Oil has already been discovered, but not in sufficient quantities to make it an economic industry. Interested persons claim that they are on what is called the edge of an oil pool, and they need additional capital to put down other test borings to enable them to locate the oil they claim exists in Queensland. In view of this possibility, and the reports that have been given to Governments, it is rather difficult to decide what should be done about producing oil from coal. Sir David Rivett was selected by the Commonwealth Government to make inquiries during his recent tour overseas. He went very extensively into what was being done in Great Britain, and he also visited Germany, and received every assistance possible from the German authorities to enable him to investigate the processes in operation in that country. His report to the Hydrogenation Committee in Australia—and it is a very long report—points out that up to date they have not been able to produce oil at a price the Australian consumer would pay. I think in the hydrogenation of black coal the figures reach approximately 14d. a gallon and of brown coal a little higher. For a unit that would produce Australia's requirements about £11,000,000 would be involved. Sir David Rivett further points out that when we take into consideration the price of imported oil, round about 5d. a gallon, c.i.f., we should have to give a subsidy in the vicinity of £300,000 to £400,000 a year to enable the industry to continue and put a product on the market in competition with the imported article.

Those statements show the difficulties we are up against, but we have done everything possible to help. We have gone to the trouble of sending parcels up to 6 cwt. of Queensland coal from the Bowen State coal mine, the Styx River coal mine, the Newcastle Colliery at Blair Athol, and Burgowan Coal Company Limited in the Maryborough district to Germany to be tested in that country under processes the Germans think would be suitable for Australian conditions. The latest reply we have from that country is a letter from Herr Otto Wolff, Koln, Germany, to the Agent-General. He says—

“With reference to our previous correspondence relative to the question of the possibility of production of synthetic oil from Queensland coal and coke, I am very sorry for not yet having been able to remit you the report of our conclusions.

“In the meantime we have made the analysis of the coal samples which we have received from Queensland. The trials concerning a new simplified gasification process, which just would be suitable for the treatment of your Blair Athol coal, had the result, that we may spare several quite expensive aggregates.

“At present we are too busy to work out our proposals and calculations for the respective simplified gasification plant as well as for the real Fischer plant. The respective elaboration will be sent to you at my earliest possibility.

“In case you or your technical expert would like in the meantime to visit a modern Fischer plant in Germany, I beg you to let me know it, so that I may make the necessary arrangements.”

A later report, which appeared in the Press, has been quoted by the hon. member for Ipswich, and it is possible that in the very near future we shall have a report from the Agent-General giving us some idea of what he saw on his visit to Germany.

Quite recently we had an offer from an Australian named Spillane, a Sydney man who is associated with a young German named Fischer. They have submitted a process known as the Spillane catalytic process. They claim that theirs is a short-cut method, and that they have proved conclusively in the laboratory that they can produce oil or fuel from coal at a cost of 3½d. or less a gallon. They are asking that we help them in the erection of a pilot plant in Queensland to test out the process on a larger scale than an ordinary laboratory test, in order that they may determine for certain whether the process is commercially practicable. We went so far as to bring those two gentlemen to Brisbane. We thought that to negotiate by correspondence was tedious and unsatisfactory. We appointed a committee comprising the Chief Government Geologist (Mr. Ball), the Government Analyst, and the lecturer in chemistry and physics at the Technical College, to examine carefully the technical side of the proposal. They submitted their report to the Bureau of Industry. The next position with which we were faced was that those three gentlemen were not well enough versed in the technique of the production of oil from coal to give a definite answer to the question whether the process is practicable. Our next step in the matter was to submit it to the Commonwealth authority, and although we have heard a great deal of the Commonwealth's desire to further the investigation of processes of extracting oil from coal we found the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research had no one competent to give an opinion upon the proposal. We received that reply, despite the fact that Sir David Rivett is Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of that body. We have now referred the matter to another Commonwealth authority, the Commonwealth fuel expert, Mr. Rogers, and there the matter stands. Whether Mr. Rogers is competent to give an opinion or to advise a Government as to whether they should expend £9,000 or £10,000 on a pilot plant to test out this scheme, I do not know. That is the position with which we are now faced. All kinds of proposals are submitted to us from overseas and even from our own people, yet when it comes to deciding whether it is advisable to expend large sums of money in the investigation of these proposals we have no one to whom we can look for advice.

Mr. BRAND: Are you satisfied with that 3½d. a gallon?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am not in a position to give an opinion. I am not a technical man. I know nothing of

Hon. T. A. Foley.]

chemistry or physics, nor do I know anything about the process of extracting oil from coal.

Mr. PLUNKETT: If they can do that one would think that they could get all the money that they wanted.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is generally assumed, but immediately they approach outside sources they are confronted with all kinds of difficulties, and would get very little out of the process. Our difficulty was that we could find no one capable of expressing a definite opinion as to whether it was advisable to try out the process by the expenditure of many thousands of pounds. Up to date we have not even been able to obtain a competent authority within the Commonwealth service, but it is possible that Mr. Rogers, the Commonwealth fuel expert, may be able to advise us on the point. That is the position so far as the Government are concerned to-day. We have a big file of papers dealing with the subject, and we are doing our part in sending samples to be tested, but as time goes on the inventive mind of the Englishman, the German, or some other national, or of an Australian may be able to devise some scheme for extracting oil from coal on a commercial basis.

I think that I have replied to all the points raised by hon. members. I thank them for their good wishes and for their appreciative remarks concerning the department and its staff. One hon. member described the department as a very small one, but it does a considerable amount of work. The department has a small staff, but I challenge any other Minister to show that its thirty-five members of the staff cannot put through more work than thirty-five members of any other department.

Mr. JESSON (*Kennedy*) [7.58 p.m.]: At the outset I should like to congratulate the Minister on his elevation to ministerial rank and to express my pleasure that he took it upon himself to tour the State and to become conversant with its mining operations. That was a very fine gesture, particularly by a Minister who had held office for such a short time. His is one of the most important departments, because it helps to win real wealth from the soil without very much Government aid.

At 7.59 p.m.

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

Mr. JESSON: The financial aid extended to prospectors is money well spent. These gougers, tin-scratchers, and others go out into the never-never under all sorts of adverse conditions in an endeavour to win new wealth for the State while their families live in the town and, in some cases, their good wives go out to work to help maintain the home while the husbands are engaged on their important work.

The greatest compliment that anyone could pay the Minister is contained in a paragraph that appeared in an issue of the "Courier-Mail" in December last. It said—

"He has the advantage of having had practical experience, and in the Mines Department it is unquestionably an asset to have a political chief with experience of mines and minerals. He will bring to his work the fresh and vigorous outlook and may be depended on to leaven

[*Hon. T. A. Foley.*

his administration with tact and judgment."

That is a very fine tribute for the "Courier-Mail" to pay the Minister. I could not allow this opportunity to pass without congratulating him on his accession to this most important office.

The hon. member for Oxley did not have a congratulatory word to say of the mines administration. When he congratulates the Government I shall be the first to congratulate him. He said that the mining industry had to thank the Moore Government for what they did, because, prior to their advent, it was stagnant and had reached zero point under the previous Labour Administration. A significant tribute was paid to the previous Labour Government by the late Mr. L. Urquhart, Chairman of Directors of Mount Isa Mines Limited, who ascribed Mount Isa's successful inauguration to the helpful attitude of the Labour Government who held office prior to 1929. In referring to the help rendered by that Labour Government to Mount Isa Mr. Urquhart said—

"I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude the constructive and helpful attitude of the Queensland Labour Government towards Mount Isa. The Government realises how much the success of the Mount Isa enterprise means to the State in helping to re-establish the credit of Queensland in the eyes of the financial world."

That says quite a deal, coming as it does from a gentleman of Mr. Urquhart's ability and standing. His qualifications were undoubted, and no one would expect a man representing such high financial interests to be a supporter of Labour. It is pleasing to know that at times credit is given where credit is due. That is more than we can say of hon. members of the Opposition.

The hon. member for Nanango made a five-minute contribution to this debate. It is a wonder to me that under his tribute the Minister did not blush himself out of his seat. The hon. member could do nothing else. He knows nothing about mining. In fact he never saw a mine until he passed through Ballarat.

The department has done much to help in rehabilitating this State. Its activities has resulted in an increase of wealth, and it is beyond doubt that it has made no small contribution to solving the unemployment problem. The following figures show the number of men employed in metalliferous mining in Queensland during the last eleven years:—

1930	...	...	...	...	2,594
1931	...	...	...	...	4,322
1932	...	...	...	...	5,599
1933	...	...	...	...	6,047
1934	...	...	...	...	6,199
1935	...	...	...	...	6,064
1936	...	...	...	...	6,371

These figures speak for themselves. They disclose the very fine contribution that mining has made to employment.

Various hon. members of the Opposition during this debate have flayed the Government for not spending more on mining, but they do not realise that Queensland comprises an area larger than New South Wales, Victoria, and a part of South Australia combined, and that it has a small population

who are endeavouring to develop the country with limited means, and, therefore, it is the duty of the Commonwealth Government to help in the national development of the industry. A great amount of money is required to develop the immense potentialities of this State, where almost every kind of mineral can be mined and almost every kind of crop can be grown, and it is too much to expect this small population to do it. If the Commonwealth Government faced their responsibilities they would provide the money necessary to develop this State. Most Governments in Australia are too parochial in their outlook and they should approach this matter from a national point of view.

It is impossible for the Department of Mines to do all it would like to do owing to the limited amount of money available. My electorate, in conjunction with Charters Towers and other adjacent areas, shows an annual return of £1,000,000 from mineral production. That adds to the national wealth of this country, and thousands of pounds more a year could be profitably spent in that area in providing batteries and access roads and schools for the children of miners. The people in those areas live under difficult conditions. The children have to be educated by the correspondence school. They do not know what it is to be able to have a cold drink. But they battle on in the face of adversity. The belly-aching by hon. members on my right about what this Government should do is out of place, because it is clearly the duty of the Commonwealth to help in developing a State with such a great area and such a small population.

The hon. member for Oxley has said that the Commonwealth Government spent a sum on an aerial survey. I say without fear of contradiction that the Commonwealth Government have played a political confidence trick on the South Australian Government and the Queensland Government in regard to this matter, and they have done the same thing in regard to providing money for juvenile employment.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I have allowed the hon. member a good deal of latitude. I do not think he is connecting his remarks with the vote under discussion.

Mr. JESSON: The Commonwealth Government provided a certain amount of money for an aerial and geophysical survey of Queensland, but they also got the State to contribute to an aerial survey, not only for mining but also for defence purposes.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Aerial surveys come under the Loan Fund Estimates and the hon. member is not in order in discussing them on this vote.

Mr. JESSON: I shall have to reserve my comment on that matter for another time. I draw the attention of the Minister to the Kangaroo Hills tinfield, from which £12,000 was obtained in 1936. It is very unfortunate that owing to difficulty of access the hon. gentleman could not visit this field, but I hope it will be included in his next Northern itinerary. Its possibilities are great. Hon. members have said that miners are pioneers and those on this field are deserving of as much praise as those on any other mining field. They

exist there under very adverse conditions. Although there is an abundant supply of water of a sort in the district, that used for drinking purposes has to be packed to the field, and goodness only knows when they get water to have a wash. Such are the men who battle in this area to increase the national wealth.

The Boomerang and Sardine mines are monuments, although underground, to the miners who pioneered mining in that area and extracted many thousands of pounds in tin from the earth. Although the Charters Towers field is not included within my electorate there are mining areas in my electorate adjacent to the electoral district represented by the hon. member for Charters Towers and, having much in common in this respect, we co-operate on behalf of the miners when that is possible.

At 8.11 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. JESSON: Over £100,000 of mineral wealth has been extracted from the Charters, Towers, Ravenswood, and Kangaroo Hills districts.

The officials of the department are ever ready to help the miners in every possible way, and I am sure the Minister will recognise the loyalty of his wardens in that part of the State.

I place it on record that I very much regret that for 1936-37 only £30 was expended in the various warden's districts in my electorate—that is to say, the Ingham part of the Ravenswood field and the Kangaroo Hills district of the Charters Towers field. That was spent on repairing the Yellow Punch road.

I know very well that the Minister and his officers are sympathetic towards the miners in their efforts to get their ore to the batteries. The limited finances at its disposal have been the difficulty faced by the department. I have been told that the vote for these works has been reduced, but I should like to see it doubled or trebled during the next financial year. I am sure that my friend, the hon. member for Charters Towers, will help me in representations towards that end. Most of the roads there are untrafficable. When I was in the Kangaroo Hills area in the election campaign in 1935 the miners told me that I was the first aspirant to political honours they had seen in the district for twenty-two years. There was only one miner at the hotel to see me. I gave him a full and elaborate address and like the good old supporter of Labour he was he spread the gospel throughout the length and breadth of the mining field, with the result that I got every vote in that district.

With regard to prospecting assistance given during the financial year 1936-37, the Ingham district only received £88 distributed amongst nine men, and Charters Towers and Ravenswood district £13,272 to 472 men. Subsidies for development work and loans for the purchase of machinery were made to the Charters Towers and Ravenswood districts amounting in the aggregate to £879. Because Ingham comes within the warden's office at Charters Towers, separate figures are not available for that area. I have discussed this matter with the Minister and I hope there will be a change in the near future.

Mr. Jesson. }

The Minister has been very good in providing a couple of batteries in my area, and I hope in the near future he will have more funds available to make more State batteries available to enable miners to crush their ore. The Shrimp battery is a State-owned tin-treatment plant under lease, and it has been kept in operation for miners in the neighbourhood of Ewan. I am informed by the hon. member for Charters Towers that it has been greatly improved on representations made by him.

The production of gold in the part of the State in which I am specially interested is still increasing, but the 1936 figures are as follows:—

	Gold.	Value Australian Currency.	Value of Other Minerals.
	Fine Oz.	£	£
Charters Towers	7,994	69,947	885
Ravenswood . . .	1,316	11,515	498
Kangaroo Hills . .	Nil	Nil	11,819
Totals . . .	9,310	£81,462	£13,202

A gross value of practically £95,000 is represented by those figures, and that is a very fine contribution to the wealth of the State. As I have said in this Chamber on more than one occasion, it is amazing to find the lack of knowledge displayed regarding North Queensland by the public generally and by hon. members of the Opposition in particular. They do not know anything about the northern part of our State.

Mr. MAHER: How do you know?

Mr. JESSON: The hon. gentleman did not know much about it when he went up there.

Mr. MAHER: I found out quite a lot while I was up there.

Mr. JESSON: I am pleased to know that North Queensland has improved the knowledge of the Leader of the Opposition, because he sadly needed it. I should like to think, however, that the people of Queensland do know that there is such a place as North Queensland. If one stops to consider the wealth that is taken out of the North through mining one must agree that it is a place well worthy of every consideration. It is only of latter years that people from the South have ventured to North Queensland, and I know for a fact that despite what hon. members opposite and other calamity howlers may say with regard to excessive taxation there is plenty of money available for investment in mining ventures in Queensland provided they can strike the right thing. If rich deposits of tin or gold are discovered ample funds are available in the South for developing them. The hon. member for Oxley asked how we could expect Broken Hill Proprietary Limited to venture into Queensland when we have such intense taxation.

Mr. DANIEL: They never pay the intense taxation on gold.

Mr. JESSON: I thank the hon. member for Keppel for that interjection. That is just what I was going to say. The hon. member for Oxley showed how poor his knowledge of the subject was when he said that those companies would not invest money

in Queensland because of the excessive taxation here. As the hon. member for Keppel has stated, companies that are exploiting our mineral deposits do not have to pay that taxation. The hon. member for Keppel has proved by his interjection that the hon. member for Oxley knew no more about gold-mining than he did about coal-mining during the earlier stages of this debate.

I regret that I was unable to speak earlier this afternoon, as I should have liked to have heard what the Minister would have said in reply to my remarks. I think, however, that the Minister should get away from Ipswich and Gympie and that he and his officers should devote more of their time to the development of the industry in North Queensland, as I am confident that the State will be amply repaid for any expenditure of money in those areas.

Mr. POWER (*Baroona*) [8.23 p.m.]: One section of the activities of this department to which I wish to refer is the work of check inspectors. I should like the Minister to give further consideration to the appointment of a greater number of check inspectors in his department. In addition to the ordinary sewerage work that is now in operation, the check inspectors have to exercise supervision over a good deal of storm-water drainage work. Further consideration should be given to the appointment of a check inspector to assist the man who is now carrying out both these duties. Whilst I admit that the Minister has given the matter very serious consideration, I propose to show exactly what was done in this direction by the Moore Government. I was an employee of the department controlling State coal-mines from 1929 until somewhere about 1931, when I was dismissed by the Moore Government. Prior to the advent of the Moore Government one check inspector was receiving a salary of approximately £300 a year, of which £40 was paid by the Department of Labour and Industry. Immediately the Moore Government obtained control of the Treasury they reduced the amount payable to check inspectors to approximately £40.

The Hon. E. A. Atherton, the then Secretary for Mines, was the gentleman responsible for reducing the proportion of salary paid by the Mines Department by £260 per annum, with the result that the check inspector in the metropolitan area received only the £40 per annum that was paid by the Department of Labour and Industry. He could not devote the whole of his time to the job for approximately 15s. a week, and so he resigned. Thereafter, certain jobs were carried out in Brisbane without proper supervision. I have the unhappy recollection of a job opposite the place where I lived. The Brisbane City Council, under the administration of Mr. Greene, was constructing a storm-water sewer, but the open cut was not timbered, and a fall of earth took place outside my home. I had to make an investigation, and as a member of the council I asked the men to come out and stand on top of the open cut until I had sent for the deputy city engineer to come out to give instructions to the ganger to have the open cut timbered. Those were the conditions that obtained during the time of the Greene administration. I am satisfied that the check inspectors are giving good service to the department to-day, but I also feel that greater supervision should be exercised over the work in the interests of the

[*Mr. Jesson.*

men. I, therefore, suggest to the Minister that he should increase the number of check inspectors.

I should like to say a good deal about State coalmines, but I know that I should be transgressing the Standing Orders, and I have no desire to do that. The Bowen coalfield has been a wonderful help to the Government and to the Railway Department in particular, in that the department has for a number of years received portion of its coal supplies from the Bowen district at 6d. a ton above the cost of production.

I should also like to offer some comment on the financial assistance extended to prospectors. I know the Minister would like to see the amount increased, but I suggest to him that further investigation should be made into the applications that are received from time to time. I have the unhappy recollection of the treatment of two applications that were received by the Secretary for Mines, the Hon. E. A. Atherton, when I was an employee of the department during the time of the Moore Government. During the time I was doing a few days' work in the records branch of the department two applications were made for prospecting assistance. One applicant, who had every qualification and had participated in all phases of mining, was recommended. Unfortunately, Mr. Atherton rejected the recommendation, and no assistance was granted. As I stated on my advent to this Chamber, the applicant whose only qualification was that he was an ardent supporter of the Nationalist Party, was recommended for prospecting assistance. Mr. Atherton agreed with the recommendation and it was granted.

I hope that the Minister will give every consideration to qualified applications for prospecting assistance. It would be a waste of public money to send men out prospecting unless they possessed some knowledge of what is required of them. The department grants aid to prospectors for periods varying from four to twelve weeks. An unqualified man would be just as well in the city doing a little relief work. I should much prefer to see a qualified man receive prospecting help for a longer period than is at present specified than that an unqualified man should be favourably considered.

Mr. DANIEL (*Keppel*) [8.32 p.m.]: I desire to support the remarks of the hon. member for Bowen in which he advocated better means of communication between rail centres and mining townships. This matter has direct reference to a mining field in the Minister's electorate. I know perfectly well that the Minister has worked strenuously to get adequate means of communication between this field and the nearest railhead. I refer to the Golden Plateau mine at Cracow and the nearest railhead is Theodore. I recently journeyed from Eidsvold to Cracow and from Cracow to Theodore. These roads are absolutely impassable after a fall of 2 or 3 inches of rain. It would be of great advantage to Cracow and the people in that district if some co-operation existed between the Main Roads Commission and the department with a view to establishing better means of communication between those centres. The soil in the district consists of heavy black soil, which, as the Minister knows, is absolutely impassable after rain.

I congratulate the Minister on the way in which he is carrying out the duties of his

office. I read with interest the accounts of the travels he undertook throughout Queensland in order to make himself more intimately acquainted with the ramifications of his department. I also wish to congratulate the officers of the department. I have received as much help from the department as I have from any other. I have always been courteously treated and any matter I have brought forward has received sympathy and consideration. If I may be permitted to reiterate the remarks of the Secretary for Public Works, I should like to say that the prospector on leaving the city to seek for precious metals is fired by the spirit of adventure and initiative, and should receive consideration. The State is to be congratulated on having a head of the department like the Minister and the staff under him.

Mr. RUSSELL (*Hamilton*) [8.34 p.m.]: I merely rise to amplify the remarks made earlier in the debate by the Leader of the Opposition. He dealt with the part played by the Commonwealth Government in endeavouring to revive the metalliferous mining industry in Australia. They convened a conference consisting of State Ministers and State officials under the chairmanship of Senator McLachlan, who, in addition to being Postmaster-General, is Minister in charge of Development and Scientific and Industrial Research. That conference discussed the metalliferous mining industry in all its phases together with the allocation of a grant made available by the Commonwealth Government. The scheme initiated by the Commonwealth Government provided for a grant of £500,000 spread over three years, to end in 1938. The funds were allocated to the States for expenditure on the £1 for £1 basis, but in the main without that supplemental condition.

For the three years 1935-1938 the total sum allotted was £493,750. The allocation to the various States is as set out in the following table:—

	£
New South Wales	75,700
Victoria	95,700
Queensland	130,500
South Australia	46,300
Western Australia	106,400
Tasmania	39,150

It will thus be seen that Queensland received the largest share of the allocation. The purposes of the fund were to assist prospectors and working parties by sustenance grants, for advances to companies, practical instruction in prospecting and mining, assistance in the provision of mining pools and crushing and treatment facilities, roads, water supplies, and generally such other aid as might be necessary to promote search and to turn to profitable account whatever useful discoveries were made. The technical committee set up at the time reported that without taking into account the obviously large amount of indirect employment created, the scheme had led directly to the absorption of 6,850 men in the various States.

I merely cite that to show that so far as the revival of mining is concerned the Commonwealth Government have done their part; and I think it comes with bad grace from hon. members opposite to harp continually on the string that but for the Commonwealth Government we could do greater things, and that the Commonwealth Government have pursued a deflationary policy.

Mr. Russell.]

Nobody can accuse the Commonwealth Government of not having done their share to help the revival of this important industry, especially when we remember the paltry amount that has been expended from the Queensland Unemployment Relief Fund to create employment for men in this industry. When that fund was initiated it was said that one avenue of employing men would be in mining, and it would be money well spent if a greater allocation were made from that fund for that purpose.

At one time Australia provided the bulk of the gold production of the world. For the period 1851 to 1860 Australia produced 40 per cent. of the world's supply. It is said now that there are vast fields in Australia that need exploitation, and, considering the output of gold in this country, I think that Australia is lagging behind very much indeed. At the time the committee was formed Senator McLachlan said—

“ I will not be content until Australia's production of gold (now, say, 1,000,000 oz.) equals that of Canada, which is about 3,000,000 oz. There is no doubt the gold is there to be won, and there is no reason why our output should not be increased from its present level of 3 per cent. of the world's supply to a very much larger percentage, bearing in mind the pinnacle we reached in the golden decade of 1851-1860, when Australia produced 40 per cent. of the world's supply.”

I think, therefore, it is quite unjust to lay at the door of the Commonwealth the blame for the lack of gold production. The Queensland Government have certainly not been doing their manifest duty towards the industry, because they have not been finding sufficient funds for the employment of labour on the mining fields, whereas the Commonwealth Government have done their share in finding £500,000 between the States. I hope we shall no longer hear this wailing about the Commonwealth Government's evading their duty towards an industry where Queensland could render greater assistance than it gives.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. T. A. Foley, *Normanby*) [8.39 p.m.]: I cannot allow the remarks of the hon. member for Hamilton to pass without comment, particularly his statement that Queensland was not doing its share, and his endeavour to boost the Commonwealth Government for the small contribution they have made to this industry. It is true that Queensland received the largest share of the amount allocated for that purpose by the Commonwealth Government, approximately £130,000, spread over three years. The financial year 1937-38 is the last of that period. The amount unexpended this year is £24,000, but in addition to that the Queensland Government have continued their usual grants for prospecting, aid to mining, and assistance for roads, water supply, etc. In other words, we have carried on our usual programme as if no Commonwealth help had been rendered. No doubt this money has enabled us to do a great deal more, but the fact remains that there is an obligation on the Commonwealth, as is there on the States. If a mining revival is to be effected the Commonwealth Government can do it with their greater revenue and resources by assisting the States to extend their programmes. No great thanks is due to the Federal Government for the money they have contributed.

[*Mr. Russell.*]

The reason why Queensland received a larger allocation than other States was because the late Hon. James Stopford, as Secretary for Mines, attended the conference with a definite programme and policy to place before it. This could not be said of the representatives of every other State. As the result of this definite policy he was able to obtain a greater share of the amount available than the other States.

Item (Department of Mines—Chief Office) agreed to.

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 8.44 p.m.