

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 1938

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

QUESTIONS.

BRISBANE AND SOUTH COAST HOSPITALS.

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) asked the
Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

“1. Who is the General Superintendent
of the hospitals in Brisbane controlled by
the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals
Board?”

“2. How many salaried medical officers
are employed—(a) superintendents, (b)
departmental medical supervisors, (c) other
full-time officers, and (d) part-time officers?”

“3. What is the approximate annual
amount of salaries paid to all such officers?”

“4. How many—(a) buildings, and (b)
blocks are contained in these hospitals?”

“5. How many beds do they contain—
(a) general, (b) maternity, (c) children,
and (d) total?”

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND
HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon,
Lhaca) replied—

“1. Dr. Aubrey D. D. Pye, M.B., Ch.M.,
F.R.C.S.E., F.R.A.C.S.

“2 (a) Superintendents—

Brisbane Hospital—Dr. Pye.

Women's Hospital—Dr. Adam, M.B.,
B.S., F.R.C.S.E., F.C.O.G.

Children's Hospital—Dr. Arden, B.S.,
M.D., M.R.C.P.

Maleny Hospital—Dr. Parer, M.B.,
Ch.M.

Kilcoy Hospital—Dr. Millar, M.B.,
Ch.M.

Canungra Hospital—Dr. Swinburn,
M.B., B.S.

Nambour Hospital—Dr. Bayley, M.B.,
F.R.C.S.

(b) Departmental medical supervisors—
Brisbane Hospital—

Medical Supervisor and Assistant
General Superintendent—Dr. Julius,
from 1 January, 1939.

Casualty Supervisor and Resident Orthopædist—Dr. T. S. Brown, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S.E.

Surgical Supervisor—Dr. G. H. Hogg, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S.E.

Radiological Supervisor—Dr. E. W. Casey, M.B., B.S., D.M.R.

Assistant Medical Supervisor during Dr. Julius's absence—Dr. Morris, M.B., B.S.

(c) Other full-time officers—

Brisbane Hospital—7 senior resident officers; 1 medical officer, clinics; 16 junior resident officers.

Children's Hospital—1 senior resident officer; 3 junior resident officers.

Women's Hospital—1 junior resident officer.

(d) Part-time officers—

Brisbane Hospital	..	..	48
Children's Hospital	..	..	10
Women's Hospital	..	..	8
Pathology Department	..	..	2

"3. For the year 1938-39—

			£
Full-time staff	..	..	16,625
Part-time staff	..	..	16,334
			<hr/>
			£32,959

Country hospitals	..	..	2,264
			<hr/>
			£35,223

"4. Buildings—

Brisbane Hospital	39	(5 are blocks)
Children's Hospital	12	(5 are blocks)
Women's Hospital	1	(4 wings)
Country hospitals	4	

"5. Brisbane—

(a) General: Public 933,	
Intermediate 48	.. .. 981
(b) Maternity: Public	
102, Intermediate 60	.. .. 162
(c) Children	.. .. 222
	<hr/>
	1,365

Country hospitals—

General: Public 85, Inter-	
mediate 10	.. .. 95
Maternity: Public 12,	
Intermediate 7	.. .. 19
	<hr/>
	114

Total 1,479"

BUNDABERG RAILWAY SERVICES; WOOD FUEL IN LOCOMOTIVES.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) asked the Minister for Transport—

"In view of the resumption of activities at all collieries in the State, will he give immediate consideration to—(a) the resumption of tri-weekly passenger services from Bundaberg to Brisbane, leaving Bundaberg at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; (b) the elimination of wood as

a fuel on all locomotives travelling through sugar-cane districts?"

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

"(a) and (b) The Commissioner is already dealing with these matters."

REPORT ON BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION.

Mr. DART (Wynnum) asked the Premier—

"Will he make available to members of the House the report of the Government officers who investigated the various departments connected with the Brisbane City Council?"

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, Mackay) replied—

"No. The report of these officers will be made available to the Lord Mayor, on whose initiative this investigation is being made. The Government made two of their officers available to the Lord Mayor for this purpose, and progress reports have been made to the Lord Mayor, and I understand action has been taken in regard thereto by the City Council. It will be seen, therefore, that the publication of this report is a matter for the Lord Mayor to determine."

PAPERS.

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

Fifty-third report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Building Societies, and Industrial and Provident Societies.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

- Regulations, dated 15 October, 1938, under The Warehousemen's Liens Act of 1938.
- Order in Council, dated 20 October, 1938, under The Coroners Act of 1930.
- Order in Council, dated 20 October, 1938, under The Supreme Court Act of 1921.
- Orders in Council (3), dated 20 October, 1938, under The Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1935.

PRIVILEGE.

REMOVAL OF MEMBER FROM COUNTRY MEMBERS' RESIDENCE.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (10.33 a.m.): I desire, Mr. Speaker, to speak on a question of privilege. After the hon. member for East Toowoomba was suspended yesterday evening, he was also removed, I understand by your order, from the country members' residence in the building adjoining Parliament House.

Standing Order No. 125, dealing with this matter, reads as follows:—

"When a member is suspended from the service of the House, he shall be excluded

from the House and from all rooms set apart for the use of members."

I contend, Mr. Speaker, that the Standing Order does not authorise the removal of the hon. member for East Toowoomba from the country members' residence for the following reasons:—

1. It is not part of the House, being a separate building with a fence between. It could just as easily have been half a mile away, its proximity being merely accidental.
2. The hon. member for East Toowoomba occupies his room in the country members' residence under contract—he pays a rental throughout the year and whether he occupies the room or not.

For the foregoing reasons, I move—

"That in the opinion of this House, the country members' residence adjoining Parliament House does not come within the purview of Standing Order No. 125."

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the hon. gentleman please hand me a copy of the motion?

Mr. MAHER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In justification of that motion, I draw your attention and also that of hon. members in this House to the fact that it is a matter of privilege that is at stake and contend that the Standing Order's reference to "such rooms as set apart for the use of members" in the House entirely relates to the House, and there is no relation at all to a building which at one time was the residence of the Clerk of the Parliament. Its proximity to Parliament House is purely accidental. The building could have been situated half a mile or even a mile away from the precincts of Parliament House.

The Premier: It could have been, but it is not.

Mr. MAHER: Yes, but I submit it is not a room covered by the terms of the Standing Order, which is specific in the matter that when a member is suspended from the service of the House he shall be excluded from the House and from all rooms set apart for the use of members. That implies, of course, all rooms in the House set apart for the use of members.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: This is set apart for the use of members.

Mr. MAHER: The Standing Orders use the words, "The House and all rooms set apart for the use of members," and it is stretching the Standing Order too far altogether to infer that that includes the rights and privileges of members in a lodge, which is, after all, a place of lodging. The building is for the convenience of country members of the House by arrangement with Mr. Speaker. The building across the way is altogether a lodging-house, and it is not a room set apart in the House for the use of members at all.

Mr. Dunstan: It is on part of Parliament House grounds.

The Attorney-General: Do you suggest a man could set up a tent in Parliament

House grounds and be excluded from the rooms?

Mr. MAHER: Not at all. That is an altogether different proposition. The true interpretation of the meaning of the grounds of Parliament House is "within the precincts of the House." There is a dividing fence between the two buildings, and the fact that the building is on grounds controlled by Parliament does not enter into the matter at all. I am concerned because it is against the true meaning of the Standing Orders. The rooms set apart for the use of members, in the terms of the Standing Order, cannot possibly mean anything else but the rooms connected with Parliament House itself and not the rooms of a lodging-house, even though that is controlled by Mr. Speaker.

The privileges of every country member who has a room in the Lodge are at stake. Who knows that an hon. member who occupies lodging in that house may come under the ban of suspension at some future time? This happened frequently between 1929 and 1932, but the present members of the Opposition are much better behaved and have a better understanding of the position and respect for parliamentary procedure and, therefore, suspension of an hon. member on this side of the House is a rare occurrence.

Mr. Walsh: But when there is justification for it?

Mr. MAHER: There are occasions when there is justification. It sometimes happens that a man has very strong views on certain matters and is prepared to accept whatever penalties are coming to him. But let us be just in the matter. I do not think it is the desire of the Premier or even Mr. Speaker to be harsh in this case.

The Premier: Do you suggest that we have been?

Mr. MAHER: Well, I think you could have mitigated the penalty.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Premier: This was his third offence on the same count. I asked him to withdraw, did I not?

Mr. MAHER: I realise that.

The Premier: I gave him every opportunity to withdraw.

Mr. MAHER: But I think that as he is a new member suspension until the end of this week would have been fairer.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House has determined that matter, and it must not be discussed again unless upon notice of motion.

Mr. MAHER: I understand that, Mr. Speaker. As to this particular matter, I am sure that you have no desire to be unduly harsh on the hon. member for East Toowoomba. I think all hon. members will agree with me when I take the point that the Standing Order was drafted with the object of excluding an offending member of Parliament, who had come under the ban of suspension, from using any of the rooms set

apart for the use of hon. members in the House. Over in the Lodge is not in the House.

There is another important point, and one that cannot be overlooked—that is, that if you enter into a contract with a man and accept his rental for a room in the Lodge, then it is contrary to fair play to deprive him of the use of that room for any reason whatsoever. If you break faith with him when he has paid for the use of his room, you repudiate the contract that exists between yourself, Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, and the hon. member for East Toowoomba on the other hand.

Therefore, there are two very important points involved in the motion. In the first place, I cannot agree that the Standing Order gives to the Speaker of the House the right to ban the hon. member for East Toowoomba from using that bedroom in the Lodge. Secondly, the hon. member for East Toowoomba, having paid for the use of that room, is thereby entitled to use it.

I think that if it was challenged in any court of equity—although, being such a small matter comparatively, it would not be—the hon. member for East Toowoomba would win. There is a contract in existence and nobody has the right to restrain the hon. member for East Toowoomba from using the room for which he has paid. I do not want to press that. I am merely appealing to the sense of fair play of the House. Who knows that any other hon. member may not be in a similar position some day? We should observe the Standing Orders as applying strictly to the use of rooms set apart for the use of hon. members in the House.

The hon. member for East Toowoomba has been adequately punished by being suspended from the House until the end of next week, and I do not think there should be any desire on the part of the House to bar him from using the bedroom in the Lodge for which he has paid, and which, in my view, he is entitled to use.

Mr. Dunstan: Supposing that the bedroom was a sleeping-room in the House?

Mr. MAHER: If it was in the House, then the hon. member for East Toowoomba would have no right to it. If the room was in the House he would be paying nothing for the use of it. There is no contract so far as rooms in the House are concerned. I recognise that if it was a room in the House the hon. member would have no right to occupy it, but when it is in a separate building—a building separated from Parliament House by a fence—I submit that this Standing Order does not cover the hon. member's rights and privileges in respect of the use of a bedroom in the Lodge, for which he has paid. I desire, therefore, to move this motion of protest.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (10.44 a.m.): Yes. In seconding the motion that has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition I should like to support the contentions that he has

made, and to say that when the Standing Orders Committee drafted Standing Order No. 125 they could not have contemplated the letting of a room by Mr. Speaker. They contemplated the use of rooms that were in Parliament House itself—rooms that Mr. Speaker had no power to contract for with other hon. members.

I should like to add this—that the residence is known as the country members' residence, and its use is not confined only to members of Parliament, because Mr. Speaker has contracted with men who are not members of this House for accommodation at that residence. That brings it into a different position from that of a room in Parliament House as contemplated by the Standing Orders. I submit as the residence itself is apart from Parliament House—although it is under the control of Mr. Speaker—and is not used solely by members of Parliament, the term "rooms set apart for the use of members" cannot have the meaning that Mr. Speaker has placed upon it. It is generally recognised, I believe, that the Standing Orders Committee at the time could not have had in mind the relationship of landlord and tenant, which is the relationship between Mr. Speaker and those who occupy these rooms. The law relating to removing a man from his residence is a just one and provides for adequate means for so doing, and it has been designed to prevent certain things from taking place whereby a tenant can be removed and left on the street.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion is—

"That in the opinion of this House the country members' residence adjoining Parliament House does not come within the purview of Standing Order 125."

The Standing Order, which has already been read by the Leader of the Opposition, is as follows:—

"When a member is suspended from the service of the House he shall be excluded from the House and from all rooms set apart for the use of members."

The practice in the House of Commons and in all other Parliaments of the Dominions is that when an hon. member is suspended from the service of the House he is not permitted within the gates of Parliament House during the currency of the suspension. After his suspension is agreed to by the House, if he does not go of his own free will immediately, he is removed by the order of Mr. Speaker, who acts as the trustee of the House in seeing that its decisions are carried out.

In accordance with this Standing Order, I had no alternative but to insist that the hon. member for East Toowoomba, accompanied by a policeman, be given a few minutes in which to collect his papers, and then absent himself from the precincts of the House.

The only entrance to the Lodge—which is rooms set apart by me for the use of members—is through the gates that lead into these grounds. Consequently I think that no other conclusion can be reached than that

those rooms are set apart for the use of members as in Standing Order 125.

I cannot see that there is anything more to add to what I have already said, except that now the matter has been raised under privilege I should prefer that the House give its opinion on the matter and make the determination for all time.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, Mackay) (10.50 a.m.): Mr. Speaker, like yourself, I presume no member of Parliament desires to be harsh with anyone. But the Standing Orders and the privileges of this House must be maintained. Action was taken against the hon. member for East Toowoomba for refusing to comply with the Standing Orders of this House. Despite even repeated opportunity to do so, he refused to recognise the authority of the Temporary Chairman of Committees. He was then suspended by a vote of this House and escorted outside the gate.

Mr. Maher: By a policeman, not by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: You did that to me.

The PREMIER: I think it is undesirable that any heat be displayed in discussing this matter because it is one that affects every hon. member either now or in the future, because whatever decision is arrived at to-day will apply in any future case. There is no occasion to discuss the matter from the partisan point of view at all.

Mr. Maher: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The facts are that the hon. member for East Toowoomba was suspended because of his breach—an aggravated breach—of the rules of this House. The suspension was made by the majority of the Parliament and the question arises: What does the suspension involve? It means that for the period of the suspension the hon. member shall have none of the privileges that attach to a member of Parliament. That is what it means—that and nothing else. It is perfectly simple.

We come then to the question of the occupancy of a room in what is known as the Lodge. The very fact that the hon. member occupied such a room is an indication that he is a member of Parliament and therefore entitled to the privileges of Parliament, but he can occupy that room only while he is allowed the privileges of a member of this House, and they have been suspended by this Parliament. The greater includes the less.

Mr. Daniel: Has his salary been suspended?

The PREMIER: The answer is "No," but we could suspend it if we wished. That matter had not occurred to me until the hon. member reminded me of it. It is competent for us to include the cessation of the salary for the period of suspension as part of the punishment, if the House so determined, but the House has not been asked to determine that, and so it is irrelevant to the point at

issue. The fact is that he has been suspended and the suspension carries with it certain disabilities that would not apply had he remained in possession of all the privileges of the House. One of the privileges is that he may occupy a room at the Lodge.

Mr. Brand: Under contract.

The PREMIER: I will come to that later on. Obviously the occupancy of that room is based on the same privilege. Your right, Mr. Speaker, and mine to go into the Parliamentary Library to read a book or to take a book away to read depend on our enjoying the full privileges of the House. The same thing applies to a member sleeping in a bedroom in the House or within the grounds of the House.

The fact that a fence divides the Lodge from the main parliamentary buildings has no relevance. Why, there are walls in the House itself between the various bedrooms!

It is absurd for the Leader of the Opposition to argue that a dividing fence excludes part of the building from the precincts of the House, or from the House of Parliament itself, because how much more so would his argument apply to a partition? A partition dividing a room is a much greater obstacle than a mere fence. Therefore, it might be argued that inasmuch as there are a wall and doors and windows, which may be closed, dividing the dining-room from this Chamber, the hon. member could continue to use the dining-room while under suspension. If there is anything in the argument of the Leader of the Opposition, it goes as far as that.

The question of contract was raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Isis. I should be very sorry indeed to have either hon. member argue a case on the law of contract for me, because that application of the law of contract is subject to certain conditions. The law of contract varies according to the nature of the contract. For example, under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act no employee can contract out of the legal wage prescribed by the court, and under the Wages Act no man can forgo his rights even if he purports to forgo those rights, either in writing or orally; he can still demand his rights in a court of competent jurisdiction. Therefore, we see that the conditions surrounding a contract cause contracts to vary in character and degree. In this case, I claim in the first instance, there is no contract at all. It is only a custom. The Lodge is available to country members of Parliament. At one time, Mr. Speaker—you will contradict me if I am wrong—it was occupied by the Clerk of Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is a parliamentary building erected many years ago as a residence for the Clerk of Parliament, and has always been under the control of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee. For some time it has been set aside by me for the use of country members of Parliament as a place

where they can reside when Parliament is in session.

Mr. Brand: On payment of a consideration.

The PREMIER: That is beside the point I am raising. At one time the Lodge was occupied by the Clerk of Parliament. It is subject to the control of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee. This committee can put that building, or the rooms therein, to any use that to which it is proper and legal to put them. There is no contract with any member of Parliament, either with the Parliamentary Buildings Committee, or with Mr. Speaker, or with any other authority, to provide a country member of Parliament for a given period with bedroom accommodation.

Mr. Maher: For the session, definitely.

The PREMIER: There is no contract at all.

Mr. Maher: Yes.

The PREMIER: I repeat, there is no contract at all. For example, I have a suite of rooms at the end of this building. They are set aside for the use of the Premier. During the session they are used chiefly for the purpose of holding meetings of the Executive Council. But the Parliamentary Buildings Committee or at least this House could carry a resolution that those premises be used for some other purpose. If that vote were carried in Parliament I should have to vacate the rooms. If I were to resign or be dismissed by the Parliament, then I should have to vacate all rooms that are associated with the Premier.

It is a rule of practice, of usage, that applies here; a custom has grown up. It is a privilege, Mr. Speaker, not a right. That is the main point. It is a privilege to use a bedroom in the Lodge, not a right; but just as one having dinner here has to pay for that dinner, so a man occupying a room as a bedroom has to pay for that bedroom. There is a perfect analogy between the two things. It is a privilege, not a right, and therefore no law of contract applies to what is at best only a privilege—and a privilege that may be withdrawn at any time.

If, for example, it was decided to turn that Lodge into a Speaker's residence—as Parliament might do, as the Parliamentary Buildings Committee could do—would not that terminate any tenancy on the part of hon. members sleeping there? If we decided that the Clerk of Parliament, in the interests of Parliament, should take up residence there, would not that terminate any occupancy by anyone else?

Mr. Maher: You would have to give reasonable notice.

The PREMIER: Would notice under the law relating to landlord and tenant have to be given each man who used that Lodge? Obviously not. The contention is absurd. The rooms are made available for sleeping chambers by the good grace only of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee and because

Parliament itself has made no objection to such a practice. Therefore, there is no contract, there is no breach of privilege and the words of the Standing Order entirely justify your action, Mr. Speaker.

Let me quote the Standing Order before I sit down. It says—

“When a member is suspended from the service of the House he shall be excluded from the House, and——”

“and.” There is a significance in the word “and”——

“and from all rooms set apart for the use of members.”

Obviously, the room referred to was set apart for the use of this hon. member, and therefore, he having been suspended, that Standing Order applies. It is a room set apart for the use of hon. members within the meaning of the Standing Order; and by being suspended the hon. member is deprived of the use of that room. Otherwise, how could the authority of Parliament be vindicated? If the mere exclusion from debate was all that was intended under the Standing Order, practically very little penalty would be applied at all; but the penalty of exclusion from the House and all rooms set apart for the use of hon. members means that so far as Parliament, with all its grounds and all its appurtenances, is concerned, the hon. member is deprived of the use of them, and to that extent for the period of suspension he is not a member of Parliament at all.

Mr. SPEAKER: As a matter of fact, an hon. member who is suspended must have his mail sent out to him.

The PREMIER: He ceases virtually, if not de facto, to be a member of Parliament during the period of that suspension.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not know whether the House is prepared to come to a decision on this matter at the moment, but there is no provision in the Standing Orders for an extended debate on the question of privilege. It is Mr. Speaker's privilege to terminate the debate if he considers that reasonable discussion has been permitted. As my action is being questioned by the House, I propose to allow a little further discussion on the matter.

Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley) (11.6 a.m.): I am at present not concerned with the penalty inflicted on the hon. member for East Toowoomba, but I do not altogether agree with the Premier that no contract has been consummated between those who reside in that Lodge and you, as Mr. Speaker.

There are various kinds of contracts. There is a contract for the sale of goods, there is a contract in respect of agency, and there is also a marriage contract. Excepting the last-mentioned contract, there can be retraction from such contracts by mutual consent of both parties.

This is a contract entered into with you, Mr. Speaker, under which we pay a certain amount of rent to reside in the Lodge, and

so long as we are not in default in payment of that rent there is a right of tenancy.

It may be held that one of the qualifications of tenancy is that the tenant must be a member of Parliament, and that he shall enjoy the privileges of the House. The building is absolutely detached from Parliament House and does not come within the scope of Standing Order 125. It is said that there is no separate entrance, but the right of ingress and egress through the parliamentary entrance, without coming near the House has been granted to hon. members, and I have heard it said that through your indulgence one gentleman has resided there who was not a member of Parliament. Therefore, so far as he was concerned, it was a lodging-house.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not true. That gentleman was for 27 years a member of this House, and desired to remain there, and as no other hon. member objected to his remaining there he was permitted to do so, on the understanding that if his room was required by a member of Parliament he would have to leave.

Mr. MACDONALD: His tenancy then ceased.

Mr. SPEAKER: He was permitted to remain there as a privilege.

Mr. MACDONALD: My interpretation of the contract is that when I pay my rent I am entitled to reside in that cottage.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: Do you call 5s. a week rent?

The Premier: We had better put it on a proper basis and have the rooms valued.

Mr. MACDONALD: I cannot see that no contract has been entered into. I entered into a contract on the basis of landlord and tenant.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley (11.9 a.m.)): I am glad this matter is to be discussed on a non-party basis. It should be so.

The whole question revolves round a matter of privilege, and it appears to me to be drastic action for a man's home to be smashed up during a period of suspension from this House. (Government laughter.) It is his home during the period he is living in Brisbane. The gentleman was living there and naturally it is his home.

Is the right to reside in the Lodge a privilege? That is a question I desire answered. Certain Labour members occupy rooms in this House and do not pay for them at all. That is a privilege. Certain country members occupy rooms in the Lodge and pay so much a year each for the privilege. Parliament sits only for a certain number of months in the year, but the rent charged amounts to a fair sum of money each year. I think I heard an hon. member say 5s. a week. It is £13 a year, and the hon. members are occupying those rooms for only five months of the year. The question arises whether that is a privilege. The Lodge is a building that was bringing in no revenue at all at one time. Now it is producing revenue and it is entirely detached from the House.

I should like to deal now with the question of what the precincts of the House means. I think the Premier said recently that there were enough hon. members within the precincts of the House—

The Premier: I never said anything of the kind.

Mr. NIMMO: It might not have been the Premier, but it was a Minister who said that when notice was drawn to the number of hon. members who were in the Chamber.

The Premier: That would be the Chairman of Committees.

Mr. NIMMO: Possibly the Chairman said it. At any rate, the Chairman said there were enough hon. members within the precincts of the House. There was then quite an inquiry amongst hon. members as to whether the Lodge could be regarded as being within the precincts of the House.

Mr. Walsh: They were not over at the Lodge; they were attending upon the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber.

Mr. NIMMO: The hon. member is speaking only for the Labour members. At any rate, an inquiry went round as to whether the Lodge was within the precincts of the House. It is strange that this should have occurred only within the last three weeks. It was ruled amongst hon. members that it was a very moot point whether the Lodge was within the precincts of the House.

Then, too, the other day a firm of solicitors sent one of its officers down here to serve a writ on a certain hon. member. The inquiry went round—I do not know whether you had it made of you, Mr. Speaker—whether the paper could be served over at the Lodge, as to whether the Lodge was within the precincts of the House. That question could not be decided, even by members of the legal profession.

Another point I want to raise is that that Lodge could have been let very easily to one of the Government departments when it became vacant. A Government department could have been occupying that building and it would have had nothing to do with Parliament at all. The building is absolutely detached.

Other matters have been raised this morning. I have a note of some of them. For instance, the hon. member for Stanley raised the question of the payment of rent. I understand from hon. members that they pay three months in advance. According to the Premier's argument, those hon. members could be put out at a moment's notice. If rent is accepted for three months in advance, then the Premier knows as well as I do that no man can be put out until that time expires.

The Premier: Yes, under certain conditions.

Mr. NIMMO: He can be put out?

The Premier: Under certain conditions.

Mr. NIMMO: Bad behaviour or something of that sort?

The Premier: He was put out for bad behaviour.

Mr. NIMMO: Not over at the Lodge. I think the Premier must admit that the behaviour of the hon. member for East Toowoomba over at the Lodge was exemplary.

The Premier: I am not saying anything about that. He was suspended by Parliament for bad behaviour.

Mr. NIMMO: But the only bad behaviour that would justify his expulsion from the Lodge would be bad behaviour whilst in the Lodge.

The Premier: I am not saying anything about that. I do not know anything about his behaviour over there.

Mr. NIMMO: After all, it would be quite an easy matter to allow the hon. member to stay in his room. We should be big enough to say that a severe penalty has been inflicted upon him when he has been expelled from this House for a fortnight.

The Premier: Not for a fortnight; seven days.

Mr. NIMMO: He gets all this week and all next week. He is suspended really for a fortnight.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. NIMMO: I know that is out of order. If the hon. member for East Toowoomba came up the steps of this building he would be liable to arrest. He is not allowed inside these grounds. I think that it would be a magnanimous gesture on the part of the Premier if he rose this morning to say that the hon. member for East Toowoomba might be allowed to remain at the Lodge.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. If the House does not go into Committee of Supply by half past eleven this will cease to be an allotted day. I think the House can make up its mind now. I will only repeat for the information of all hon. members that I could have ruled either way, but the facts are that that building is within the grounds of Parliament House as one of the parliamentary buildings, and it is under the control of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee.

In accordance with the usage of all British Parliaments an hon. member under suspension is not permitted to step within the grounds of the Parliament House. There is no other means of access to that building than through the grounds of Parliament House, and in the circumstances I fail to see how I could have decided otherwise. But I should not be offended in the least if the House upset the decision and decided in the opposite direction. I did what I believe to be the right thing.

Question—That the motion (Mr. Maher) be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 14.

Mr. Brand	Mr. Nicklin
„ Clayton	„ Plunkett
„ Daniel	„ Russell
„ Dart	„ Walker
„ Maher	
„ Massey	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Moore	„ Macdonald
„ Morris	„ Nimmo

NOES, 34.

Mr. Bedford	Mr. Keogh
„ Brassington	„ King
„ Brown	„ Larcombe
„ Bulcock	„ Mann
„ Clark	„ Marriott
„ Collins	„ McLean
„ Dash	„ Mullan
„ Duggan	„ Pease
„ Dunstan	„ Riordan
„ Farrell	„ Smith
„ Foley	„ Walsh
„ Gair	„ Wellington
„ Gledson	„ Williams, H.
„ Hanlon	„ Williams, T. L.
„ Hayes	
„ Healy	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Hislop	„ Hilton
„ Hynes	„ Power

Resolved in the negative.

QUESTION BY SUSPENDED MEMBER.

MR. SPEAKER'S RULING.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to report to the House that in accordance with the parliamentary procedure of the House of Commons I have caused to be excised from the business sheet a question standing in the name of the hon. member for East Toowoomba. "May," at page 331, gives the authority on that point.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—
THIRTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

(Mr. Gledson, Ipswich, one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES IN CHIEF, 1938-1939.

DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Dash, Mundingburra) (11.24 a.m.): I move—

“That £124,560 be granted for ‘Department of Railways—General Establishment.’ ”

This amount is £5,430 in excess of the actual expenditure during 1937-38, and £11,720 more than the appropriation last financial year.

The total appropriation required for the Railway Department for 1938-39 is £5,976,000. This shows an increase of £223,323 over the actual expenditure of £5,752,677 and or £411,000 over the appropriation of £5,565,000 for 1937-38. The increase in expenditure last financial year as compared with the estimated expenditure was £187,677, and this was due mainly to the cost of variations in award conditions granted by the Industrial Court, and also to the wages of the increased staff employed in the workshops and elsewhere.

The main items that go to make up the estimated increase in expenditure for 1938-39

as compared with the amount spent last year may be summarised as under:—

- Grade and automatic increases.
- Basic wage increases.
- National health insurance quota.
- Additional staff.
- Longer sugar season, Maryborough district.
- Increased stores.
- Increased boiler programme.
- Increased purchases for new railway refreshment-rooms.
- Ballast and ballasting.
- Permanent way material, &c.

The Railway Department is an important revenue-producing and spending department, and as I have not had an opportunity for some time of placing figures concerning it before the Chamber I take this opportunity to do so. The opportunity has not presented itself to me for several sessions of speaking on my Estimates, and I take the opportunity of placing before the Committee figures that unmistakably show that the railways are a big business concern, that their revenue earnings are high, and that they earn a considerable amount of money.

The following table discloses the revenue and expenditure of the railways from 1932-33 to 1937-38:—

	Revenue.	Expenditure.
	£	£
1932-33 ..	5,885,668	4,243,823
1933-34 ..	6,118,898	4,403,370
1934-35 ..	7,068,196	4,999,593
1935-36 ..	6,564,960	5,094,314
1936-37 ..	6,949,677	5,335,373
1937-38 ..	7,254,388	5,754,509

It will be observed from these figures that the railways have earned more money, and in doing so expended a greater amount than in previous years. Of course, increased expenditure is only a natural corollary of increased earnings.

The following figures show the cash receipts and expenditure for the years ended 30 June, 1937 and 1938:—

	1937.	1938.	Increase.
	£	£	£
Cash Receipts ..	6,923,110	7,226,328	303,218
Expenditure ..	5,335,373	5,754,509	419,136

The principal items accounting for the net increase in expenditure for 1937-38 as compared with 1936-37 were—

	£
Basic wage variation ..	161,602
New award	43,664
Automatic increases ..	17,519
Sleepers and ballast ..	21,930
Heavy rolling-stock repairs	74,530
Leave and retiring allowances	18,300

Ever since the establishment of the railway system in Queensland, very few surpluses have been shown. In this respect the following table will be of interest:—

	Surplus.	Deficit.
	£	£
1932-33 ..	57,654	—
1933-34 ..	160,118	—
1934-35 ..	494,521	—
1935-36 ..	—	117,751
1936-37 ..	7,872	—
1937-38 ..	—	129,091
	£720,165	£246,842

As this table discloses, in the last six years four surpluses and two deficits were obtained, the net surplus being £473,323.

From 1865, when the railways were first inaugurated, to 1905-06, continuous deficits were shown in the working of the system. A surplus was obtained in 1906-07, but from 1907-08 to 1909-10 deficits were shown again. A surplus was realised in 1910-11, but deficits were the order of the day from 1911-12 to 1913-14. In the following financial year—1914-15—a surplus was obtained, but from 1915-16 to 1931-32, both years inclusive, further deficits were recorded.

I need hardly remind the Committee that £28,000,000 was written off the capital value of the railways by the Moore Government. In consequence, the railway accounts showed a surplus from 1932-33 to 1934-35.

Deficits were again recorded in 1935-36 and 1937-38, but a surplus was recorded in 1936-37.

The total deficits from the time the first railway was built in 1865 to the present time amounted to £32,077,589, and the total surpluses during the same period amounted to £285,845. The net deficit during the 73 years therefore was £31,992,744.

The question of travelling stock has been raised from time to time. The following figures indicate the amount of stock carried by the railways during the year 1937-38:—

Horses	28,907
Cattle	67,558
Calves	291,100
Sheep	2,056,121
Pigs	433,432

Hon. members will note that those figures show that we have shifted a tremendous number of stock, and this applies particularly to drought periods. Stock was railed as far as from Dajarra to Wallan-garra.

The railways have been subjected to a good deal of abuse for the bruising of cattle, which it was claimed took place while they were in transit on the railways. The Commissioner has received letters from people who have transported their stock on the railways stating that they had no fault to find with the way in which the railway employees had handled their stock. Anyone who is familiar with stock knows that most of the bruising of stock occurs when they are being driven through the trucking yards. When they are being put through the gates, a good deal of

bruising occurs, because they jam. The stockmen are not very particular as to how they force the cattle up the crush into the trucks. Sticks are used to make them go up, and I suppose, because they have no further interest in the cattle, the stockmen are not particular how they handle them.

The department decided that it would see what could be done in the matter. The Commissioner sent a railway official to one of the cattle stations in the Gulf. This man came in with a mob of cattle, saw them trucked, and travelled down with them on the train, and went with them to the meatworks and saw what condition the carcasses were in after they were slaughtered. The department paid this man's expenses in order to ascertain if any improvement could be effected in the trucking of cattle. This work was undertaken in the interests of the cattle people. The officer in question supplied the Commissioner with a very comprehensive report on his observations, and he is to be commended for the thorough manner in which he performed his duties.

Despite frequent allegations to the contrary, the Government have not been unmindful of the needs of the farmer and the man on the land generally, so far as its railway programme is concerned, and a review of its actions in recent months shows that the country centres have not been neglected. We have three new 102 horse-power Diesel motors allocated to runs between Brisbane and Gatton, Brisbane and Dugandan, and Too-woomba and Roma.

An additional train service has been provided each week from Brisbane to Charleville and Charleville to Brisbane, and the services between Ipswich and Grandchester have been expedited considerably.

We have given further assistance in fruit distribution. At the present time we take a half-bushel case of fruit at any railway station and deliver it for 1s. a case.

Vegetables can be mixed with the fruit and the package consigned at the same rate. In this way we are helping the fruitgrowers, as we place officers of the department at their disposal to receive orders and take the cash and the Commissioner hands it over to the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing.

Mr. Russell: Good work.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: We have received letters of appreciation from a number of people.

The country storkeeper, timber-getters, timber-haulers, and others reap considerable benefit from the orders for timbers which have been placed by the department from time to time. These include—1,123,000 super. feet of log timber, 80,000 super. feet of dark red cedar logs, and 41,000 super. feet of rough silky oak.

The following works have been undertaken in country centres and should prove of great benefit to the primary producers:—

Thulimbah.—Extension of siding to facilitate fruit traffic.

Lurnea.—Provision of race for trucking yards.

Glen Geddes.—Provision of loading bank for trucking yards.

Pound Creek (near Ingham).—Provision of unloading bank for stock.

Ayr.—Removal of trucking yards to a new site to obviate the necessity of cattle passing through the town.

Biloela.—Siding accommodation and removal of trucking yards to a new site. This will facilitate the cotton traffic.

Mulgeldie.—Metalling approach to trucking yards.

Monto.—Metalling station yard.

Boonarga.—Provision of cream shed.

Bungamoo.—Moving out rail fence and providing gate for the convenience of cane traffic.

Dawson Valley Line.—Widening of open level crossing at 2 Miles 75 Chains.

In addition, the wheatgrower has been well cared for by the present Administration. To provide facilities to cope with the wheat harvest, approval has been given for the undermentioned works to be undertaken at the centres shown:—

Bowenville.—Loop siding, metalled roadway and filling for wheat dump.

Yarrala.—Siding accommodation, metalled roadway, filling for wheat dump and open level crossing.

Nandi.—Construction of roadway and filling for wheat dump.

The foregoing comprises a brief resume of the actions of the Government through the Railway Department since July last to make the lot of the man on the land more pleasant, and I am sure that the endeavours we have made in that direction are deeply appreciated by those whom they are intended to benefit.

The Department has made as much improvement as possible with the money at its disposal, and for the current year we shall endeavour to do all we can in the erection of loading banks and so forth.

The salaries and wages are a large item in the expenditure of the department and at periods of heavy traffic much overtime has to be worked. There has been a general increase in wages since 1932-33 and in order that the people will know the huge bill that we meet for salaries and wages I give the following figures:—

SALARIES AND WAGES—1 JULY, 1932, TO 30 JUNE, 1938.

—	Salaries.	Wages.	Total.
	£	£	£
1932-33 ..	804,502	2,439,840	3,244,342
1933-34 ..	813,741	2,577,929	3,396,671
1934-35 ..	873,880	2,931,406	3,803,286
1935-36 ..	904,053	3,021,007	3,925,060
1936-37 ..	943,597	3,120,690	4,064,587
1937-38 ..	990,499	3,420,432	4,410,931

It will be noted that between 1932-33 and 1937-38 there has been an increase of £1,166,589.

It will be seen from these figures that we are a big spending body and that there is ample justification for the proposed increase in railway fares and freight.

Coal is another very big item in the expenditure of the Railway Department. During 1937-38 we bought 444,563 tons of coal at a cost of £409,358. We consumed 401,045 tons.

The number of train miles travelled during 1937-38 was 13,542,542, an increase over the previous year of 695,920.

The amount paid in workers' compensation during the year was £38,820, and for the previous year £42,437. The Railway Department paid the whole of the cost of compensation, through the State Government Insurance Office.

This year we have to make provision for national insurance for 17,339 employees and to find approximately £64,000 for the purpose. This sum is estimated on the basis of having to pay 1s. 6d. a week for males and 1s. a week for females. We hope that traffic will continue on the up grade and that we shall be able to carry on the good work that we have been doing.

A good deal has been said about "giving the boy a chance," and so on. I desire to show what the Railway Department has done between 1932 and October, 1938, in the employment of junior and similar labour. During the period we have employed—

Trade apprentices	305
Lad porters	247
Junior clerks	174
Cleaners	98
Flying-gang nippers	17
Apprentice bridge carpenters	17
Junior storemen	5
Steno-typists	12
Railway Refreshment Rooms—	
Males	38
Females	61
Total	974

It will be seen that we are doing something for boys who wish to learn a trade. We are always calling upon lads between certain ages to become apprenticed to the various trades, and to join the service in order that they may become porters, cleaners, and mechanics.

Much has been said about the overstaffing of the railways. Before I resume my seat I propose to show that the railways are run as economically to-day as they have ever been run in the past. During 1937-38 we had 14,385 permanent male employees, 191 permanent female employees, and 441 gatekeepers, making 15,017 permanent employees. If we add to this the 2,322 temporary employees employed during that period, the grand total for the year was 17,339.

At 30 June, 1932, there were only 15,178 employees in the service. We have increased the railway staff by 2,000 since then.

No doubt, a great deal will be said about our action in increasing fares and freights.

I want to show what has been done since the years 1914-15 in this regard and to explain the expense the Railway Department has been put to.

In 1914-15 the average amount paid to railway employees in Queensland was £139 a year. The following table shows the lowest wages payable in the different grades for 1914-15 and 1936-37:—

	1914-15.		1936-37.	
	Per annum.	£	Per annum.	£
Clerk	100	..	211	
Station-master	132	..	285	
	Per day.		Per day.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Porter	7	6	14	11
Guard	8	3	17	5
Driver	9	9	18	5
Fitter	7	9	19	5
Fettler	7	6	15	9

It will be noticed that a great increase in the remuneration of railway employees has occurred. We should not be unmindful of the fact that the cost of living has increased, of course, but I am giving those figures for the purpose of showing that the increase in fares and freights is not commensurate with the increase in working expenses.

Coal in 1914-15 cost 10s. 5½d., as against 17s. 10½d. at the present time—an increase of nearly 71 per cent.

These further figures should prove interesting to hon. members:—

	1914-15.	1936-37.	1937-39.
	£	£	£
Revenue	3,832,003	6,949,677	7,254,388
Expenditure	2,401,679	5,335,373	5,754,509
Net Revenue	1,430,324	1,614,304	1,499,879
Percentage Net Revenue to Capital Invested	4.033	2.446 (on un-reduced capital)	..

It is often contended that the railways are over-staffed, but that is not so. It may be contended that they are considerably under-staffed if you take the figures for 1914-15 as a guide. The following are some comparisons:—

	1914-15.	1936-37.
Line miles	4,838	6,497
Employees on full time basis	12,488	15,560
Employees per mile	2.58	2.39

It will be seen that there were 8 per cent. more employees per mile in 1914-15 than to-day, notwithstanding the fact that hours have been reduced from 48 to 44 and the links have been completed from Rockhampton to Mackay, Mackay to Proserpine, Proserpine to Townsville, and so on to Cairns. The staffing figures show that the increase is only what

is necessary for the carrying on of the railways.

The movement in fares during the same period was as follows:—

FARES.					
Miles.	1914-15.		1936-37.		Increase Per Cent. 1936-37.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
<i>First Single.</i>					
50	8	6	10	9	26.4
100	16	0	20	0	25.0
200	31	0	37	0	19.3
400	58	2	68	0	16.8
500	71	4	82	0	14.9
Average per cent. increase				..	20.4
<i>Second Single.</i>					
50	5	8	7	6	32.3
100	10	4	13	0	25.8
200	17	9	24	0	21.5
400	35	8	42	0	17.7
500	43	2	50	0	15.8
Average per cent. increase				..	22.6

FREIGHTS.					
Miles.	1914-15.		1936-37.		Increase Per Cent. 1936-37.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
<i>Minerals (Lowest).</i>					
100	8	9	12	6	42.8
200	15	0	21	8	44.4
300	19	2	25	0	30.4
400	23	4	31	8	35.7
500	27	6	36	8	33.3
Average per cent. increase				..	37.3
<i>Merchandise (Highest).</i>					
100	75	0	101	3	35.5
200	133	4	180	0	35.0
300	191	8	236	8*	23.4
400	200	0*	236	8*	18.3
500	200	0*	236	8*	18.3
Average per cent. increase				..	26.1

* These are maximum rates from coast to West.

It will be seen that the increase in fares is from 20 per cent. to 22 per cent., and in freights from 26 per cent. to 37 per cent., a very moderate advance, indeed, compared with the heavy increase in costs.

Excursion fares have also been reduced. Women in the West may travel a distance of 483 miles for a return fare of 30s. We have provided these very cheap fares to enable the women to come to the coast.

Mr. Nimmo: They have to be members of an association to get that concession?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Yes, members of the Country Women's Association. That privilege was granted by the Labour Government. The increase in revenue from fares and freights from 1914-15 to 1936-37

was 81 per cent., whereas the increase in railway wages and other expenses over the same period was 122 per cent.

About 17 years ago a statistical office was established in the department, and we are now able to check every important aspect of our operations.

Comparisons are drawn month by month and year by year with previous figures for the same section or depot, and with the figures for other divisions.

Records of late trains and their causes, hot boxes, boiler and tube trouble, mechanical failures, loads of trains in relation to tractive capacity of the engines, wagon loads, engine, car, and wagon mileage, and ton mileage (i.e., distance travelled multiplied by tonnage conveyed), engine mileage per day, average haul, analysis of driver's time, coal and oil consumption, ticket collections, overtime, cost of handling goods, performance of employees in workshops and along the line—these are only some of the more important of the statistical comparisons that are considered by committees of principal administrative and executive officers month by month.

A special train was built to the order of the department for service on the Sunshine Route from Brisbane to Cairns. It is undeniably one of the finest tourist trains of its kind to be found in Australia. We also have constructed a large number of rail motors. Our example in this respect has been emulated by other States. We have designed an engine for these motor trains that will run on crude oil. I am quite sure that the latest model engines that will be placed in commission will be such as the department will not only be proud of but will also meet with the approbation of the general public.

Trains on the Western line have been reconditioned to permit passengers to travel to the western areas in as much comfort and with as little fatigue as possible. Many other improvements have been effected, and I am hopeful that with the allocation of enough loan money still greater work will be accomplished by the department.

The department had a very anxious time during the period of the coal strike. It concentrated on fulfilling all essential services. It is pleasing to note that many fine tributes have been received by the department in consequence. One letter, received from Mr. F. C. P. Curlew, Secretary of the Australian Sugar Producers' Association Limited, is typical of them. It reads—

“Dear Mr. Murton—

“Now that the coal strike appears to be actually over and ordinary conditions will soon obtain, I desire, on behalf of my members, to place on record their appreciation of the action of yourself and members of your staffs throughout the sugar districts, in keeping the conditions of sugar transport so close to normal.

“During the whole period of the coal strike you must have had continuous worry and anxiety, combined with many thankless duties in restricting transport, and it is a

matter for congratulation amongst the business community of Queensland that you have so successfully handled this and another recent awkward position so satisfactorily.

“With best wishes.”

Mr. Maher: There is no question that the Commissioner and his staff did excellent work.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I am pleased to hear the hon. gentleman say that.

Mr. Nimmo: Is that the only letter you received?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: We received many such letters.

Mr. Brand: The department had a big job to do in the sugar districts, and it did its work very well.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The department specialised in keeping the essential services and seasonal industries going. Mr. Murton is a very careful officer. He cannot be hustled. He takes his time when deliberating on a matter and arrives at decisions only after consulting his staff. I am pleased to have the opportunity of paying this tribute to him. He is a first-class man. I am pleased that the Government selected a Queenslander like Mr. Murton for the vacant Commissionership. Their policy in that respect varies from that followed in the other States.

I also desire to commend the work of those officers who had the task of organising supplies of wood fuel during the coal strike. They did their work excellently, and did not spare themselves in the discharge of duty to keep the big railway system operating in the public interests.

It is fitting that I should also commend the work of the ex-Commissioner, Mr. Davidson. He displayed special ability and ably discharged the duties of his office. He knew his work in every detail, and whether he was right or wrong he was not afraid to express his opinion on any subject.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (12 noon): It is rather a pity that when these important departmental Estimates are before the Committee the departmental report, which serves as a guide to hon. members, is not available.

The Minister for Transport: I forgot to mention that it will be here by Friday.

Mr. MAHER: It is not quite fair that such reports should arrive after the Estimates have been discussed. After all, the country is put to considerable expense in the preparation of these reports, and it is only reasonable that they should be available for study during the current session so that hon. members may have an opportunity to peruse them and carefully dissect figures, and so draw conclusions that may be of vital public importance.

The Railway Department losses cost the taxpayers approximately £1,500,000 each year, and it is essential that the report of the

Commissioner should be available to Parliament before the Railway Estimates are dealt with. One of the faults of the present Government is that these reports are not speeded up in time to reach Parliament while the Estimates are under consideration. When the Minister tells me it is going to be here on Friday, I am reminded of the saying about closing the stable door after the horse is gone.

The Minister for Transport: It would have been here last week but for the trouble that was in progress a few weeks ago.

Mr. MAHER: Parliament should have the report so that we can deal with it during the current session. We are entitled to have the reports in order that we can discuss the Estimates intelligently. This delay in submitting departmental reports to Parliament is a difficulty affecting all Ministers.

I take the opportunity of congratulating Mr. Murton on his appointment to the office of Commissioner for Railways. I think the Government made an excellent choice when they selected him to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. Davidson. Mr. Murton has served for a long time in the Queensland railways and he has had the benefit of a long association with a capable Commissioner in Mr. Davidson. I have had many dealings with Mr. Murton, and he is an excellent man; he is fair, honest, and just, and he is an excellent figure to be at the head of the department.

It is a great pity, as I see things, that under present conditions the Commissioner, no matter how capable he is, is largely in the hands of the Government. He is told by the Industrial Court what wages he has to pay, and he is told by the Government what fares and freights he shall charge, and that makes the position of the Commissioner an extremely difficult one. At any rate, I wish Mr. Murton a very agreeable term as Commissioner.

According to the Auditor-General's report the financial operations of this department for the year 1937-38 resulted in a net loss of £129,091 5s. 1d. The previous year showed a profit of £7,871 8s. 2d. Without doubt the loss is very heavy, but it is in keeping with the results of all other financial operations of the present Government. The expenditure always outruns the receipts. That relationship is reflected in the Budget each year. According to the report of the Auditor-General, expenses were £419,000 greater than those of the previous year. The basic wage increase accounts for £161,000, but expenditure in other directions has outrun receipts by £258,000.

Of course, it is difficult for me to discover the reason for this increase in expenditure. Obviously, even after Parliament has provided for a reduction of the capital indebtedness and given the Railway Department an opportunity to pay interest, it is still unable to do so. When virtually half of the total invested in the railway system has been written off to enable the Minister and his officers to meet its interest obligations, there should be

some very earnest effort on their part to maintain that position, and it is, therefore, regrettable that the department has to admit to a loss of £129,000 for last year.

Mr. Bedford: How many times have you asked for a reduction of fares and freights?

Mr. MAHER: The Moore Government gave a reduction, but it is rather remarkable that the Government the hon. member for Warrego so enthusiastically supports increased fares and freights to the extent of £325,000. Despite the increased revenue thus made available to the Government we still find the great loss of £129,000 in the Railway Department for the past financial year.

I impress upon the Committee my true appreciation of the great service that the railway system is rendering to Queensland and it may be advisable to meet such a loss, as we have to do, by the writing off of substantial payments to the Treasury each year and taking taxation receipts to make up the difference. Be this as it may, we cannot run up huge annual losses indefinitely.

To meet this position the Government have decided on a 5½ per cent. increase in fares and freights as from 1 November next and estimate that this will return £266,000 for the current year. I emphasise that this means an increase in receipts of £400,000 per annum. The percentage increase in fares and freights becomes operative as from 1 November, and is estimated to produce £266,000 for the remainder of the current year. It involves a sum of £400,000 a year, which is a very high tax on the users of the railway service.

When discussing the Financial Statement I took some trouble to emphasise to the Treasurer what the effect of these recurring increases in the service of the Railway Department might be. The Minister must be seized of the importance of the challenge that is made to railway transport by flying boats, fast aeroplanes, motor trucks, utility trucks, motor cars in general, and other forms of competitive transport. Within reason the Minister should endeavour to protect the department against this competition.

I have some understanding of the value of the splendid services that are rendered by the Railway Department to those who live in the rural areas of the State. Stockowners are benefited greatly by the services it gives. Moreover, the railways can give services that motor trucks cannot give. Therefore, do not let us do anything that is going to drive away the customers of the department. Any increase in fares and freights obviously tends to do that.

If people find that a motor truck can give a cheaper service, even though they may be loyal to the Railway Department up to a point, they are inclined to observe the dictates of economy. If they can get transport a shade cheaper by patronising the motor trucks, and such a desertion of the railways becomes general, its rivals can cut very considerably into the railway revenue.

These 5½ per cent. increases in fares and freights, involving another £400,000 a year,

when added to the £325,000 a year—which was the figure in 1932—make a total of nearly £750,000 that the customers of the Railway Department have had to shoulder in a period of six years.

The Government may feel justified in their actions, but, after all, results are what count. I believe that it would be better to exercise prudent control over expenditure. I believe that by this means it might have been possible to obviate the need for any heavy increase in charges.

The whole question boils down to one of control of expenditure. If the greatest possible business prudence is not exercised in the expenditure of any department of State it is obvious that it can get out of hand. Those who have had some experience of business know the truth of that only too well.

I desire to refer to a matter that was dealt with by me when discussing the Financial Statement. I refer now to the use of cattle wagons at Wallangarra when it is intended to tranship fat stock into New South Wales wagons for transport to the Homebush markets. A very serious principle is involved, and I was astonished to find that the Railway Department had interfered with the destination of stock by using its powers to refuse wagons to those owners who desired to send their stock to Wallangarra.

The coal strike cannot be used as an excuse because the stockowners concerned were told that wagons were available to transport their stock to either the Cannon Hill meatworks or the Wallangarra meatworks.

At that time the price of fat stock at Homebush was remarkably high—at least £3 a head above Cannon Hill prices. Therefore, a good profit was offering to cattle buyers at Cannon Hill who bought cattle here and sent them on to the Southern market. The stockowners desired to take advantage of that highly profitable Sydney market, but were prevented by an unwarranted action on the part of the Railway Department. Such an interference with their rights should not be permitted by any Minister or by Parliament.

I assume that the Commissioner would not take the responsibility of that action of his own free will—he would have a higher regard for his office than to interfere with the free flow of stock across the border—and therefore I can come to no other conclusion than that he acted on the instructions of the Government. The question involved employment at Cannon Hill meatworks, and no doubt that was the prime consideration with the Government. That is all very well, but stockowners, under any fair system of government, are not going to be prevented from taking advantage of a profitable market in any other State.

Australia is one country, and to set up a difficulty at the border restrains free trade between the States. I hold the Government answerable for what occurred. The action of the department is highly reprehensible, and I hope we have seen the last of instructions by the Government to the Commissioner for Railways to interfere in matters of this kind.

The action of the Commissioner, in my judgment, without the slightest doubt, represents a breach of the Commonwealth Constitution. If Parliament admits a principle of that kind, where is it going to end?

It must be remembered that the New South Wales Commissioner for Railways was willing to provide wagons at Wallangarra to take this stock through. No doubt he became aware of what was happening, and it is not without significance that very shortly afterwards we read in the newspapers that the Railway Department of New South Wales refused to provide wagons to carry the carcasses of the cattle from Cannon Hill to Sydney. In other words, they argued that if the Queensland department prevented cattle from going through, they would prevent the carcasses from going through.

Mr. Walsh: It would be typical of the New South Wales Government.

Mr. MAHER: Provocation breeds retaliation. The Queensland Railway Department provoked the New South Wales Railway Department, and that was the result.

It is the stockowner who suffers from such a monstrous action on the part of the Government. The cattle industry has gone through a period of great difficulty because of low prices. Now, when conditions are a little better, we find a Government department using its power to restrain a stockowner from sending his fat cattle to a profitable New South Wales market. He was told that he could have wagons to take his cattle to the meatworks at Wallangarra or to Cannon Hill, but he could not have them to take them over the border into New South Wales. That practice must be stopped.

The Minister for Transport: What was the name of that cattle man?

Mr. MAHER: There is just one other matter that I should like to make reference to and it relates to proposals recently made for the defence of this country, which include a road from Goondiwindi to Central Queensland. At first sight, the Premier appeared to favour such a course, and I understand that in military circles a connection between Goondiwindi and a point in Central Queensland is regarded as imperative. I submit that it would be far more to the point from the points of view of both defence and the development of Queensland to build a railroad rather than a main road.

All military experts will agree that you can move troops far more readily by a railway than by road. Big guns can be moved far more readily and rapidly by rail than by road. There is this other very important question to be considered, that if we were invaded at some future time we might find ourselves seriously short of the fuel for motor transport on the roads, whereas we should have no shortage of coal for locomotives. Looking at the matter by and large, it seems to me that the case for a railway is very strong indeed, and from the military point of view, a road is not half so attractive as a railway.

Then there is the question of the development of Queensland. The belt of country from Goondiwindi north to Miles and through Wandoan and Taroom to Springsure represents some of the very best to be found in Queensland. It is in the safe rainfall belt, and it is only partly developed, but there is scope for enormous development, and eventually it is going to carry a very big population in this State. Therefore, railway transport is essential for stockowners and for general developmental purposes.

Taking these two aspects into account, if money is to be provided for major defence and developmental works in Queensland and it is intended that there should be an important means of transport, it would be better to construct a railway than a road.

The Commonwealth proposals provide for the duplication of certain railways in New South Wales, but with all due respect to the Commonwealth's idea I think that would be a waste of public money, especially as to-day there is railway communication from Sydney to Brisbane via Kyogle, from Sydney to Brisbane via Wallangarra, from Sydney to Queensland via Moree and Boggabilla and from Sydney to Queensland via Moree and Mungindi—four good railway lines by which troops could be transported quicker than by a main road.

With a road congestion would occur at the New South Wales-Queensland border. We should have no means of quickly moving troops west of the Main Dividing Range into the Central district. That is why I say that, looking at the matter from the national aspect, a duplication of railways in New South Wales where there are already numerous connecting links to Queensland, would be a waste of Australian money. Where we have to attack the problem is in Queensland, because a congestion of troops would occur at the Queensland border.

It is highly desirable to construct a strategic railway serving the dual purpose of defence and developmental needs, commencing from any point on the border that may be decided on. I merely mentioned Goondiwindi, as that point was selected by the military authorities, and was mentioned by the Premier in his remarks recently. Such a strategic railway should run from Goondiwindi to Miles, connect with the railway from Miles to Wandoan, and thence go to Springsure to connect with the Springsure-Emerald branch of the main central railway. It would be an excellent work to proceed with.

(Time expired.)

Mr. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) (12.26 p.m.): The discussion of the respective merits of a road or a railway in the hinterland to serve defence and developmental purposes is rather premature. We must first concentrate on inducing the Federal Government to change their defence policy in relation to Queensland, and to end their boycott of Queensland in allocation of money for a planned defence policy. The Federal Government, in

their present mood, will construct neither railway nor road in Queensland, notwithstanding the vital importance of Queensland from the viewpoint of national defence.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke very fluently and excitedly about the action of the Railway Department in withholding trucks during the time of the coal strike. He built his argument on the unwarranted assumption that the Government had improperly instructed the department to do something that was unconstitutional and improper. That is an unfair and unwarranted assumption. The whole inference, the whole of his deductions and arguments, fall to the ground because they were built upon that unwarranted and improper assumption.

Mr. Brand: Would the Government not have to instruct the Commissioner?

Mr. LARCOMBE: The department was faced with a very difficult position during the coal strike. It had to withhold trucks not only from prospective interstate railers, but from Queensland railers also. There was a general dislocation and general slowing down of the railway facilities, owing to the danger of a serious shortage of coal stocks.

Mr. Bedford: It was very well handled by the department.

Mr. LARCOMBE: It was very well handled, as the hon. member for Warrego remarks. The letter read by the Minister was only one of many such letters the department received. It is a tribute to the administration of the department, and shows that it carried out its duty very well during that difficult and trying period.

The Minister made a very interesting speech, and gave the Committee a great deal of useful information. He also cited statistical summaries that will be very useful to hon. members and the public generally in their endeavour to assess the value of the railway service. It is evidence of an irrefutable nature. Hon. members should peruse it.

With the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister, I desire to congratulate the present Commissioner on his elevation to the high office he now occupies. He has fairly earned the blue riband of the railway service. As Secretary for Railways for many years, I had the opportunity of working closely with Mr. Murton. I can endorse every word said by the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition concerning him. He has a very fine personality, and devotes his life almost wholly to the service. He has very few interests outside the department and his own home. He is the type of public servant who make a success of a State enterprise. He richly deserved promotion to the position he occupies, and I wish him well during the currency of his term.

The Minister, the Commissioner, and their staff are to be congratulated on the excellent results shown for 1937-38. These were attained under very difficult circumstances.

The consideration of Railway Estimates provides Parliament with an excellent opportunity to ponder over at least five important points. They are—

1. The immense value of our railways.
2. The magnitude of the task with which railway administrators in Queensland are faced.
3. The operations of the railway service.
4. The results achieved by our railways.
5. The best method of solving railway problems.

We should concentrate upon those important points during the discussion on Railway Estimates, and we should undertake that task in a non-party way. Unfortunately, we do not do it. Hon. members on both sides are infected with the virus of party politics so that the cursed canker of party discussion intrudes into the debate on Railway Estimates as well as on other Estimates.

Mr. Dart: Why not set a good example?

Mr. LARCOMBE: I only reply in a party political strain after a discussion has been carried on in that spirit. I am always prepared to consider problems on a wider basis.

In the discussion on railways from the viewpoint of party politics, unfortunately, very often the immense value of the railways and the splendid work of the administration is buried under an avalanche of criticism, abuse, attack, and sophistry. There is not enough intellectual honesty or Christian charity in our debates. I listen to the prayer Mr. Speaker reads each morning, and later I listen to speeches delivered by hon. members opposite, and the contrast at times makes me very sad. I hope my little homily will be taken to heart by hon. members opposite, because they are the worst offenders of all parties in this Chamber.

Mr. Russell: Practice is better than precept.

Mr. LARCOMBE: It is surprising to me the hon. member did not recognise that during the period from 1929 to 1932. He utterly failed to do so. Like one of Shakespeare's characters, he would rather teach 20 what would be better to be done than to be one of the 20 and follow his own advice.

I am going to act on the suggestion of the hon. member for Wynnum and briefly discuss the railways from the viewpoint of non-party politics. I wish to mention some of the problems of the department that I think should be considered. First of all, there is the large area of Queensland, 670,500 square miles, to be served by our railway system. Compare that enormous area with the area of Victoria, which is less than 89,000 square miles, and remember that New South Wales is less than half the size of this State.

It may be said that Western Australia represents a very much larger area, but if one looks at the map one will see that just a fringe of the territory in that State is served by railways, whereas here the whole of the three divisions are fairly well settled, and we

have splendid railway systems running out from coast to the west in the centre, in south, and in the north. So no comparison lies between Queensland and Western Australia.

We also know our railways run over an enormous distance. One can travel from Dajarra in the North to Quilpie in the South-West, a distance of over 2,000 miles, in one continuous train journey. That indicates the immense task we have in Queensland in running our railways and running them properly.

The paucity of population—approximately 1,000,000 persons in a State of the area I have already mentioned—is another handicap. In Queensland over 47 per cent. of the railways are beyond a 500-mile radius of the capital. That is a point that must be kept in mind when assessing the value of railway work and the results of railway administration in Queensland. In New South Wales I think the proportion is 7½ per cent., and in Western Australia about 10 per cent.

We in Queensland are suffering from what may be termed immediate over-capitalisation on the basis of unreduced capital. Railways have been constructed that will not show the best results for some years to come, but they are opening up the country. The department has built for the future as well as for the present. The indirect result is good to-day, and will be immensely greater in the future. The Commission on the Monetary and Banking Systems in its report referred to the immense indirect advantage of loan expenditure on railways. As Secretary for Railways, I often made use of the term "the law of indirect advantage." That term was attacked by hon. members opposite at the time, but to-day we have such a high authority as the Commission on the Monetary and Banking Systems emphasising the importance of that law.

The Queensland railway system is faced with keen competition from shipping, motor, and aerial transport. Of course, this is not confined to Queensland, but that does not make our problem any easier, and it is one of the outstanding problems that the department has to face.

One naturally turns from problems to methods of solution. The stating of problems is much easier than solving them, but it is good to set them down and dwell upon them for in that way solution often becomes easier. We are on the right road to at least a partial solution of our problems if we only view them in proper perspective and give them due consideration.

There are several factors upon which railway success depends and the outstanding are—

1. Capable management by railway administrators and the fullest co-operation of all railway employees.
2. The closest co-operation of the business community and the general public in the use of the railways they own.
3. An effective fight against motor, shipping, and aerial transport competition.
4. A larger population utilising to the fullest extent the railway service of the

State (which has provided for the future needs of Queensland as well as its immediate requirements).

5. Effective protection and encouragement of primary and of secondary industries in Queensland.

6. Reasonable markets and prices overseas for Queensland products.

7. Good seasons (for without the bounty of nature railway traffic must be low).

Some of these factors are within the control of the Railway Department and the Government of the State. Others are not. It is the duty of the Government and the department to concentrate upon the problems within their power of solving and so render the best possible service to Queensland.

And this problem is not only one for the Government or the Railway Department, but for the Opposition and for the people of the State. The welfare of all of us is bound up with the success or failure of the railway system. We are all involved in the results that accrue, because if the railways fail taxation becomes higher—the taxpayers must suffer.

There is a direct and definite relationship between Government policy and railway policy, Government finance and railway results, and if we are to obtain the best results there must be a greater railway pride and patriotism, greater recognition of the great service rendered by the department, and greater co-operation between the public and the department to obtain the best possible railway results.

Party political acrimony has been introduced into the discussion with the object of scoring politically, but at the same time it defames an important service of the State.

I desire to refer briefly to the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition upon various phases of the Railway Department's activities. His noble soul was in great anguish, apparently, because there is a railway deficit. One would think that the hon. gentleman had never heard of a railway deficit. Why, he and his party were responsible for both railway and general deficits when they were in power. They have never been responsible for one surplus.

The Minister has pointed out that there have been four railway surpluses under the Labour Government, aggregating £720,165. There were only two deficits amounting to £246,842, leaving a net surplus of £473,323. What is the hon. gentleman complaining about?

The Leader of the Opposition complained last week about the one-eyed motorist, and he spoke about the severe penalty that he would impose upon such an offender. But the one-eyed motorist is not nearly so dangerous as the one-eyed critic. The hon. gentleman is a one-eyed critic. He takes the deficit for one year only and does not say anything about the railway surpluses that have been made since the present Government have been in office.

Then, too, there can be no doubt that this Government have given very valuable concessions, amounting to more than £1,000,000 since 1932, to the producers of this State. Under the Moore Government, there were huge slashing of wages and salaries, widespread pooling, wholesale retrenchment, omission to effect repairs to rolling-stock, running of the rolling-stock off its wheels, and depletion of stores, and yet there was a huge deficit. These facts discredit the criticism of the Leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman's complaint is discredited when one considers that he was a member of the Government under which these undesirable results occurred. In view of these facts one must admit that the results achieved under the present Administration since 1932 are indeed commendable.

I do not want to emphasise the party political spirit in this discussion this morning, but the Leader of the Opposition introduced this spirit, and I want to remind him of what an anti-Labour Brisbane Press said about the Moore Government and the railway deficit in 1931. In the "Telegraph" of 2 July, 1931, the following statement was published:—

"The annual deficits have been just about as large on the average as were made before, while the railways are performing a smaller value of service to the community. As usual the principal baneful influence on the Treasury accounts is traceable to the Railway Department."

I admit that it is good to endeavour to balance the railway budget now that the capitalisation has been reduced by £28,000,000. The position was entirely different previously with the enormous capitalisation of this department, capitalisation that in some cases should have been spread over the Departments of Public Lands and Agriculture and Stock and other departments of State. Now that we have written off £28,000,000 from the capital debt of the railways we should endeavour to balance the railway accounts.

One remarkable feature about the criticism of the Leader of the Opposition is that while he is constantly criticising any deficiency in the railway accounts he complains about the policy pursued by the Government in increasing fares and freights. He cannot have it both ways. If the hon. gentleman wants the railway budget balanced he must allow the department, and the Government, to take the steps that are deemed necessary to balance it. He wants the budget balanced and at the same time he complains about increases in fares and freights.

Mr. Dart: Any Government can balance the budget by taxation.

Mr. LARCOMBE: And any Opposition can lightly criticise.

There is a tendency for hon. members opposite, in a spirit of mock sympathy for the railway men, to castigate the Government for failing to restore more quickly salary cuts that they themselves made. When the cuts are partly restored they complain.

The position in regard to motor transport competition has certainly improved. The figures show that goods and livestock and the passengers carried have both increased.

Mr. Massey: The more they increase, the higher are the fares and freights.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I am dealing with another phase of the criticism of the Leader of the Opposition, who suggested that the motor-transport competition is a serious challenge to the railways. Of course it is, and we should concentrate upon meeting it. Under Labour policy the department is carrying on a very successful fight against that competition. When the hon. gentleman's party were in power there was a reduction of over 700,000 tons in goods and livestock carried between 1929-30 and 1931-32, and a reduction of 4,000,000 passenger journeys. Why did not the Leader of the Opposition and his party follow their own advice and endeavour to fight motor-transport competition when they had the chance? Admitting that there was a depression, still there should not have been that tremendous drop in the traffic carried.

The present Government's splendid management and the capable and courageous fight against motor-transport competition are reflected in these figures—

Tonnage of goods and livestock carried.	
1931-32	.. 3,836,000
1937-38	.. 5,000,683
Increase	.. 1,164,683

Mr. Plunkett: The present year is a prosperous year.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The increase is too great to be accounted for other than by Government policy. As the "Telegraph" itself said, this Government have helped to lift the depression in Queensland. We restored purchasing power and we restored confidence and we improved the position of the Railway Department very greatly, so that in addition to the increase of over 1,000,000 tons in goods and livestock carried since 1932, there has been an increase in the passenger journeys, as these figures indicate—

1931-32	.. 20,695,000
1937-38	.. 25,601,000
Increase	.. 4,906,000

Those are rather remarkable figures. "Fax is fax," said Josh Billings, and these are powerful and irrefutable facts that reflect credit on the Government's policy. They show, also, that the Railway Department is well managed and is gaining lost ground and fighting motor transport competition very capably. While the Leader of the Opposition is within his rights in discussing motor transport competition, I do not think that his remarks were fair.

The present Government have shown commendable restraint and have kept railway expenditure within reasonable bounds, partly because of the Government policy and partly because of the care the administrative heads have exercised. The increase in expenditure

between 1931-32 and 1937-38 was £1,401,500, and the increase in revenue was £1,339,390.

Those figures disclose an increase in expenditure over revenue of only £62,110, and that after the great task that the Railway Department had to face in the past three years.

(Time expired.)

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) (12.51 p.m.): I listened to the Minister's apology this morning for the failure of this department, and also to the hon. member for Rockhampton.

At the outset I should like to say that the hon. member for Rockhampton is on the wrong track in endeavouring to put any blame on the Federal Government for boycotting Queensland, as he puts it, in reference to defence. We know that the smoke screen put up by the Premier and his friends to cover up his real purpose is intended to conceal his designs on the Federal leadership. Therefore, any stick is good enough to beat a dog with.

The whole motive underlying the recent agitation against the Federal Government was an attempt to belittle them. I have no doubt that the authorities on defence will disclose their plans in due course, but I am not prepared to admit that even the Premier or members of his Cabinet are experts in matters of defence. There is no doubt that the State railways will play a very important part in this programme.

There is one part of the defence programme that is deserving of very great consideration, and that is the unification of the gauges. That certainly is a very ambitious scheme, and one that will involve a very large sum of money. It seems that no defence plan in Australia would be complete unless the railways were unified, unless there was a uniform gauge throughout the Commonwealth to permit of the quick transport of troops in times of emergency. There is no doubt, also, that if that scheme was put into operation it would mean the employment of a large number of men, in accordance with a long-range policy.

I go even further than that. I am one of those who believe that it would be advantageous to both Commonwealth and States if the whole of our railways systems were under one control. By those means we should eliminate all possibility of friction between State and State by preventing any one State from using its railways to defeat the objects of the Commonwealth Constitution, which provides for the free flow of traffic between State and State. I am not a unificationist by any means, but I think the time has arrived when the whole of our railways systems should be placed under one control. It would stop a great deal of log rolling, and certainly stop the control of this department by the unions. It would also give greater power to the man in charge of our railway system. Under the Moore regime we endeavoured to invest the Commissioner with greater power than the Commissioner has to-day.

We cannot deny that the Railway Department is under the domination of the Cabinet,

and in that domination the union interests are paramount. I should like to see the Commissioner given greater power in the control of this very large department, except, of course, that no Government would be prepared to forgo the control of policy. The Government, as the custodians of the public purse, must exercise the power of veto over every department, but that would not prevent the Commissioner's being endowed with greater powers than he has to-day.

Mr. Walsh: Some people complain that he has too great a power, and you are one of those.

Mr. RUSSELL: The Commissioner has not enough power. That applies not only to the Commissioner but to most of our other departmental heads. They had greater freedom under the Moore Administration than they have to-day. We recognised that if a good man was placed in a prominent position he must be given a free hand, the Government exercising the power of veto in relation to policy only. The tendency of the present controllers of office is to have these men holding down important positions and dancing to the tune played by Cabinet. That obtains to-day in every State department.

I, in common with others who preceded me, desire to congratulate Mr. Murton on his elevation to the responsible position of Commissioner. The Railway Department has produced some very fine men as Commissioners. Mr. Murton had a long training under responsible men in the department, and although his appointment came to him late in life I feel certain that he will discharge his important duties with honour to the position and credit to himself and the State.

The railways are one of the few enterprises controlled by the State. While I believe that an important utility such as the railways should be controlled by the State there is no excuse for running them by loose methods, or with undue political control. For many years the Railway Department has been bolstered up by penalising legislation against other forms of transport. It is about time that they showed better results.

In 1931 the capital indebtedness of the railways was reduced by £28,000,000. It was felt by the Moore Government that the department should have an opportunity to show that it could meet the commitments that could reasonably be charged against it. That sum represented the part of the capital that we considered had been absolutely lost. We thought that if we reduced the capital cost the railways would certainly pay their way.

It was expected that by relieving them of this large amount, entailing a big reduction in interest, we should enable the system to—

- (1) Meet out of the earnings all working expenses and the interest on the reduced capital;
- (2) Set aside annually out of the nett profit for renewals and replacements a sum equal to 1 per cent. of the capital indebtedness;

- (3) Reducing gradually the written-off capital of £28,000,000;
- (4) Provide a sinking fund of 5s. per cent. on the reduced capital.

If we analyse the returns for the last seven years ended 30 June, 1938, we find that none of these things has been achieved.

I regret very much that hon. members have not had the advantage of reading the report of the Commissioner for Railways for last year. I might supplement the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition by saying that the Government should make a feature every year of seeing that reports of every department are presented before the Estimates are discussed in this Chamber.

Let us analyse the position during the last seven years ended June, 1938, a period after the reduction in capital in 1931 by £28,000,000. After paying working expenses, maintenance, and interest on the reduced capital, the sum of £720,165 has been credited to the Railway Renewals and Replacements Reserve Fund. Section 6 of The Railway (Capital Indebtedness) Reduction Act of 1931 provides that the net profit in any year to the extent of 1 per cent. of the adjusted capital indebtedness, and any further sums necessary to make up for deficiencies in this connection during previous years, shall be credited to that fund at the Treasury. A profit was made for the years 1932-33, 1933-34, 1934-35, but there was no profit in 1935-36. In 1936-37 there was a profit but none last year, 1937-38, despite the fact that the earnings for that year, according to the Auditor-General's report, were the greatest during that seven-year period.

It must also be remembered that in accordance with the Act I have referred to, during the first four years any excess profits remaining after making the full provision of 1 per cent. on the adjusted capital indebtedness for renewals shall be devoted to reducing the written-off capital of £28,000,000. The Act also provides that as from 1 July, 1935, a sinking fund at the rate of 5s. per centum per annum of the adjusted capital shall be established for writing off the reduced loan indebtedness. Like the foregoing provision for reducing the written-off capital, the annual sinking fund contribution is conditional on ability to make full provision from net profits for the statutory requirements on account of renewals and replacements.

These provisions have not been observed because the railways did not have profits to be allocated for the purpose of reducing the capital indebtedness or providing for the sinking fund. If we make allowance in accordance with the Act for the maximum provision for renewals and replacements, amounting over the period to £2,624,750—after providing that and a few minor adjustments, there is a deficit in the account of £1,630,160.

Those figures show a very disastrous state of affairs. It was assumed that by writing down the capital indebtedness by £28,000,000 in 1931 the railways would have a fair chance

of meeting their commitments, but the deficits over the period have reached £1,630,160.

The time is ripe for a thorough overhaul of the whole system in order to ascertain what is hampering the department and preventing it from paying its way, as it was expected in 1931 that it would. When we consider that the sum of £28,000,000 was written off and the capital indebtedness reduced to a level commensurate with a fair value of the enterprise, it is remarkable that we have such colossal deficits.

I am not prepared to listen to all the excuses that have been offered here this morning. There is something radically wrong with the administration of the Railway Department. Whether it is due to political control or some other cause I am not prepared to say at this juncture.

The time has arrived for an overhaul of the whole system to see if it cannot be put in a better position. Too much complacency is displayed by the Government. Certainly, the system has been a very valuable adjunct to the settlement of the land, but the time has arrived when it should pay its way.

I am not one of those prepared to sit back and regard the position as beyond remedy, nor can I subscribe to the Government policy of the penalisation of other forms of transport to bolster up the railways. When we observe the tremendous development that has taken place in motor and aerial transport, it behoves the Government to take immediate steps to see that this department, at any rate, pays its way, and that it is not, as it is to-day, a tremendous charge on the Treasury. The department is a veritable sink for the expenditure of a large amount of money. Greater facilities must be offered in order to capture a good deal of the lost trade. Whilst I do not believe in the penalisation of other forms of transport, I earnestly advocate a properly co-ordinated system of transport whereby to each section will be allotted its fair share in community service.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that the railways must play a leading role in the traffic requirements of Queensland. They have played a very big part in the past, and should play a bigger part in the future. There is no intention on our part, in advocating a system of co-ordinated transport, to oust the railways from their legitimate field. Many radical reforms are necessary, and we must take as an example other countries of the world where similar problems have existed, but have been solved satisfactorily.

Despite our boast that our railways compare favourably with those of other States and countries, we are far behind the times. The speeds of trains are too low. The delays are too great, particularly when one considers the slow speeds maintained on our branch lines. If one wishes to journey to, say, Preston, it takes one almost a day and a-half by rail—I may be exaggerating a little—but one can travel the distance by motor car in one-third of the time. The convenience of the public is paramount, and no system should be bolstered up

by the Government to the detriment of public convenience. That should be the keynote of any policy of transport. We want speedier trains.

With all due deference to the Minister, who extolled the beauty and the efficiency of our Sunshine Express, I do not think that it is very pleasurable to travel on that train in the depth of our summer. It is a good train, but it is not up to date. If we desire to retain and expand our passenger traffic we must offer greater facilities to the travelling public.

There is no reason why we should not adopt air-conditioning in all our passenger trains. I know that would be an expensive item, but unless we do the travelling public will not be prepared to avail themselves of the railway services. It has been done in other parts of the world. We have only to compare our system with that of South Africa, where, on a narrow gauge, one of the finest trains in the world travels at a very high rate of speed.

Surely we can do in Queensland what they have done in South Africa? That is one means that I suggest of getting greater passenger traffic for our railways.

It is noteworthy that in Queensland we have the smallest suburban traffic of all the States of the Commonwealth. In the other States the railways are used extensively for the carriage of passengers between suburbs and cities. It cannot be denied that in Queensland adequate facilities for suburban traffic are not provided. The age of steam as a means of locomotion in suburban traffic has long passed, and the time is not far distant when the whole of our suburban system will have to be electrified. We could set about the electrification of our suburban system by spreading the expenditure over a period of years, so that the finances of the State will not be seriously hampered. Unless we do that we cannot expect the suburban traffic to be profitable, in Brisbane at any rate. Unless some change is made in the present system, our suburban traffic will continue to be unprofitable when it should really be a means of earning a good deal of payable revenue for the State.

Another matter that is agitating the public mind is the dangerous level crossings in and around the city of Brisbane. In a thickly populated centre like the city of Brisbane these crossings are an anachronism and quite out of step with the times. We have the famous level crossing at Woolloongabba, another at Bowen Bridge, and a third at Clayfield, all dangerous. These crossings are hampering the free flow of traffic and causing a good deal of delay to the people who use the roads. The idea of eliminating them has been turned down on the score of expense. Here again the expenditure could be spread over a period of years, so that it would not be a burden on the finances of the State. To my way of thinking, no work is more important than the abolition of dangerous level crossings, those in the city of Brisbane in particular.

If the railways would give a fair deal to the public they would show better results.

Even on the question of coal supplies, the railways are forced into an unenviable position. They are compelled to buy coal from centres from which it is not profitable to draw it. If the Government desire to give the business to any particular coal mine and to force the railways to pay a price that is not competitive, then the railways should be subsidised by the Treasury for the amount of the over-expenditure. That is one item on which savings could be effected. If that is so in one item it may be possible that the railways are loaded with undue expenditure in other directions. I commend that matter to the Minister's attention. If he has any coalmine that he desires to placate, the Treasury and not the Railway Department must pay the piper. I want to give the Commissioner a free hand in every particular, except, of course, in matters of policy. That must be controlled by the Government.

Another thing that occurred to me during the recent coal crisis was that owing to the adoption of a wrong policy the Railway Department was forced to use a good deal of wood fuel. Whilst that may be all right for temporary use, the thought occurred to me that the Railway Department should be prepared against such an emergency in the future. Instead of having a poor supply of coal as it is evident it must have had just recently—the department should keep on hand enough coal to last for at least three or four months in case any such emergency recurred. Recently we had the spectacle of the Railway Department at the mercy of the coalmining industry. It was not interested in the dispute, and it is a crime against society to withhold supplies from the railways. The Government should as an item of policy ensure that ample supplies of coal are available for the railways and for any other Government enterprise dependent on coal.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (Fortitude Valley) (2.15 p.m.): First, may I take this opportunity of tendering my congratulations to the Minister and to the Commissioner and to the members of the railway staff upon a very successful year. I desire personally to thank the Minister for the many little courtesies shown to me and for the ever-ready assistance given in problems that I have placed before him for his attention. I extend the same thanks to the Commissioner, Mr. Murton, and I hope that the remainder of his term of office will be as successful as his first year. Mr. Murton's officers have given excellent services, and despite the criticism of hon. members opposite, when we look at the ramifications of this great department we are forced to the conclusion that it is one of the most efficient in operation.

I should like to take this opportunity of paying a tribute to the many thousands of railway employees who have carried out their duties day after day and week after week with courtesy and consideration to the public. The thanks of this Parliament are due to the whole of the railway servants for the very splendid way in which they handled the most difficult position that occurred in the last few months in consequence of the coal

stoppage. They were forced to carry on the services with wood instead of coal for fuel, which necessitated additional work—much harder work, I should say—and more time on the job. They carried out their duties without complaint and gave an excellent service.

I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Hamilton. The burden of his complaint could be stated in a few words: that the department has not returned a profit this year, and as a result has not given satisfaction to the people. In spite of his suggestion, however, that the department should be made to show a profit every year, he advocates innovations and improvements that would involve additional expense and additional investigation and research, and would make the burden of administration heavier.

I should like to ask him and other hon. members opposite who criticise the Railway Department and its administration how they propose to make a profit year after year without making substantial cuts in certain directions in the railway administration. I ask them if they are willing to increase freights and fares to any great extent? Are they willing to penalise primary industries by removing rebates that are in force?

Do they suggest that the policy that they applied in years gone by should be reintroduced to make the railways pay, a policy of wholesale retrenchment and other attacks upon the wages and conditions of the railway employees?

Mr. Moore: Why not try a reduction in fares and freights to see if that will improve the traffic of the department?

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The hon. gentleman knows as well as any other hon. member that that is not the solution of the problem. I do not claim to be an authority on the subject, but I express the opinion that in view of the competition between all other forms of transport and the railway service, sooner or later the State will have to consider the taking over of almost every other form of transport and co-ordinating them with the object of serving the needs of the people.

Mr. Massey: And make a mess of things.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: If hon. members opposite are not prepared to help towards a policy of progress in the administration of the various transport systems I should like them to explain how they would conduct the railways and show a profit, and at the same time maintain the railway concessions at present enjoyed by primary producers, without interfering with the wages and conditions of the railway employees. It is little use for hon. members opposite to talk with their tongues in their cheeks. We have to acknowledge that this department has done excellent work for the people of Queensland and is to-day one of the most popular Government departments. I ask hon. members opposite to cast their minds back a few years when this department was the Cinderella department in this State, and bear in mind that to-day it is one of the most respected.

It has given splendid service, and will continue to do so in the interests of the people. Can hon. members opposite deny that this department has given a better deal to the primary producer than hitherto? Can they deny that the suburban services have been improved, as the hon. member for Hamilton did?

Mr. Moore: Of course we can deny that.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Can they also deny this very important fact, that the rolling-stock and the financial position of the railways have been improved to very material extent? We see signs of this improvement in the benefits enjoyed by the public, and so we are forced to the conclusion that it would be better to conduct the railway system along the present lines, giving a full measure of public service, rather than curtail its operations for the sole purpose of showing a credit balance in pounds, shillings, and pence at the end of the year.

We must also not overlook the fact that the department is in effect doing the work of other departments of State, and for very little financial compensation. Is it not a fact that by the extension of the railway system into the interior of the State large areas of land have been made available for settlement and the receipts by the Treasury thereby enhanced?

Mr. Brand: Not since your Government have been in power.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Absolutely so, and in the last few years to the greatest extent in the history of the State. When we are urged to see to it that the Railway Department discloses an annual profit we should take into account its excellent work in helping other departments. If the present system of financial administration in the Railway Department was altered to give the department full credit for the benefits that it has conferred on other departments by its operations, it would be able to show a surplus in accordance with the best established principles of accounting.

Mr. Brand: It has shown very big losses.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The hon. member is referring to losses in years gone by, but I remind him that his Government wrote £28,000,000 off the capital cost of the railway system. We admit all those things, but why should there be any complaint in the face of the present sound and progressive policy? Let us give full credit to the department for its achievement and let us co-operate to help it improve its operations where possible. It could then be continued as one of the most useful departments of State.

Another phase of departmental activities deserving of mention is the section known as the Tourist Bureau, which in recent years has done excellent work in advertising this State and attracting to it many thousands of tourists from other States, and from all over the world. This has brought a reasonable degree of prosperity in its train. The activities of the Tourist Bureau can be further increased. Much can be said about the scenic beauties

and natural attractions of Queensland, and if these attractions are made known in other parts of the world by advertising, we shall obtain the maximum results. The bureau is entitled to much credit for what it has already achieved, and if its activities are further enlarged it will be a means of great benefit to the progress and prosperity of the State.

The hon. member for Hamilton discussed the question of level crossings at various points of the city. On the Address in Reply I spoke on this important subject—it is important from my point of view. I repeat what I said then, that the Government and Railway Department should give very serious consideration to the adoption of a policy respecting level crossings. It may be claimed that money is not available to give effect to my suggestion, but the Minister can investigate the matter immediately with a view to removing these unsatisfactory and unsightly level crossings and substituting some other convenience that will not only be a public convenience but also guarantee the safety of people using roads such as Bowen Bridge road and Campbell street. A complete investigation into level crossings should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity, in the interests of public safety and convenience.

I again wish to raise another matter that I have discussed in this Chamber in recent years. I do not do so with the idea of reiterating the argument I have used year by year, but because the time has arrived when some attention should be given to the need for constructing a new railway station at Brunswick street in order to give improved facilities to the public who use this important station.

It may be said that a review of railway policy is imminent, and that it will involve the use of Roma Street Station as the point of commencement for all services into the country, and that, in consequence, Brunswick Street will then more or less fall into disuse. That is not so. If Brunswick Street was rebuilt, or considerably improved, it would be used as the terminal point for the whole of the metropolitan railway traffic.

Moreover, we shall shortly have the Story Bridge completed, and the result will be a considerable increase in the stream of passenger and vehicular traffic from the south side into the Valley that will tax the facilities provided at the Brunswick Street railway station. The need for improving the station is, therefore, accentuated by the nearness of the approach of the Story Bridge to completion. If it will be necessary to carry out these improvements when the bridge is completed, why not make some provision now? Why not be ready when the bridge is completed? I think the time is long overdue for a considerable improvement in the station facilities for the people living in the Valley and contiguous areas who have occasion to use one of the most central railway stations in the metropolitan area.

I wish to place on record my thanks to the Minister, the Commissioner, and his officers and all others in the department who gave me every possible co-operation during the

past 12 months in the many matters that I had occasion to bring under their notice as member for Fortitude Valley. I feel a continuation of that co-operation can only result in much good for all those concerned. I wish the department continued success in the interests of the people.

Mr. DART (Wynnum) (2.32 p.m.): I have not been here long enough to offer my congratulations to the department for any extra work it has carried out. When we find the department showing a deficit of £129,000 as a result of a year's activities, I think it is time to set our house in order; it is time to find out where the leakages occur and whether they can be stopped.

The Railway Department is established for the benefit of the public, and the public are deserving of the best possible facilities for the money they pay. It is necessary, too, that rates and fares should be commensurate with those facilities. I cannot see any reason for the proposal to raise freights and fares, in view of the nature of the facilities that are given.

I maintain that some of the deficits are caused through bad management.

Mr. Mann: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. DART: Perhaps the hon. member does not; I'll tell him.

Mr. Collins: In what way?

Mr. DART: Just wait and I will tell him. When he hears it he will understand it, if he has enough intelligence.

Many passengers on the Wynnum line have given up their first-class tickets and are travelling second-class, because the first-class carriages are not clean and tidy and do not provide that standard of comfort that holders of first-class tickets are entitled to. They can get better accommodation in the second-class carriages. I can name a number of Government officials who travel daily from the Wynnum area who have changed because they are not receiving the accommodation a first-class ticket entitles them to.

Mr. Walsh: Do you contend that second-class is better than first-class?

Mr. DART: If a man is paying for a first-class ticket he should get something superior to the accommodation offered for a second-class ticket. The Melbourne Street railway station offers no shelter to intending travellers from the fierce rays of the afternoon sun in summer.

At 2.35 p.m.,

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

Mr. DART: If the railways are to meet competition from motor transport the facilities and accommodation for the travelling public must be made attractive. The public demand proper accommodation.

The hon. member for Fortitude Valley did not appear at all concerned as to the losses

incurred by the system, so long as he could obtain improvements in his own area. He offered no suggestions of a constructive nature, nor did he point out where a saving could be effected. Perhaps the services of a few porters could be dispensed with, but I am not at all in accord with that method of trying to make the railways pay. Employees should be retained, but better facilities should be given to the public.

The Sunnybank line should be duplicated as far as Kuraby. Thus a great number of people would be induced to reside in the district. The duplication would pay handsomely. Moreover it is only comparatively recently that some of the station buildings on this line have been lighted at night. How can the department induce the public to make use of the system if it does not make the stations and conditions attractive? Every effort should be made to give good and clean accommodation to the travelling public, and to see that station buildings are clean and provided with light, and give shelter from the sun and rain.

Five streets intersect in the vicinity of the entrance to the Woolloongabba goods yards, with a railway line crossing each. For years past the public have been clamouring to have the level crossings removed, and the department should give serious consideration to that matter. Action should not be delayed till somebody meets with a fatal accident. A life is worth more than money. Certainly, some persons may not think so, but before somebody is killed at one of these danger points it behoves the Government to do something, perhaps to substitute a subway for the crossings.

Grids have been constructed at some of the railway gates, but the public are not adequately protected. Recently grids were installed at the Wynnum and Wynnum South stations, but there is no warning of an approaching train, and strangers to the district could come into collision with a moving train without being aware that it was in the vicinity. In the South they provide warning signals at such dangerous places, and I suggest to the department the installation of red "danger" lights at Wynnum and Wynnum South that could be controlled from the station offices.

The existing rates and fares are quite high enough, and there is no reason for any increase. If the department retained the fares and freights at their present level, but provided better accommodation and facilities, a greater number of passengers would be induced to use the service, and thus deficiencies would be wiped off.

I do not think that we should attempt to fight motor traffic. I do not see why one method of transport should fight another. We should co-operate wherever that is possible and allow reasonable latitude to the motor-transport people so that they can use their activities to help the railways. There are many places from which produce can be carried by road to the railway at great convenience to the residents concerned. We know,

too, that there are certain types of produce that can be carried by both railways and motor trucks. I know that there is a controversy as to which form of transport should have the right to carry certain types of loading. These difficulties could be overcome by co-operation. If there was greater co-operation between rail and road transport much could be done in the interests of the State.

I believe that the electrification of our suburban railways should be carried out. The present passenger traffic is too slow for the residents of such places as Sandgate, Wynnum and Manly who may desire to do business in the city. If it is not practicable to undertake this work at the present time, at least the Government should keep it in view. I believe that the electrification of suburban railways would encourage greater passenger traffic and thereby bring greater revenue to the State. It must be agreed that most of our suburban trains are too slow, especially when one considers that it takes an hour to travel 12 miles.

I should like to suggest, too, that the department give consideration to the granting of cheap week-end fares from the city to Sandgate, Wynnum, and Manly. I am surprised that hon. members who represent congested city electorates do not agitate for this means of giving the children of the working man an opportunity of enjoying the seaside air, during the summer months especially. This scheme was in operation years ago, and it could be reintroduced. Even though the fares might be cheaper, the extra numbers carried to these places during the week end would more than compensate the department for the reduction.

There are other matters affecting the various railway stations in my own electorate, that I could discuss but I shall not deal with them now. I can approach the Commissioner or the Minister in connection with them.

I suggest that the way to avoid a deficit on the railway service is to make a thorough investigation of the various activities of the department in order to ascertain where the fault lies. The Government should not endeavour to make up deficits by imposing higher taxation upon the people.

Mr. COLLINS (Cook) (2.44 p.m.): I listened with a good deal of interest to the criticism of the hon. member for Wynnum in order to see if he could offer any constructive suggestion for the elimination of the deficit about which he is complaining. While he spoke very easily on ways and means of improving the transport services, all the things he suggested would cost the department a great deal, without apparently adding anything to its revenue. We know that there are many ways in which our train services could be improved to give greater comfort to the public, but we must remember also that this is a young State and we have a greater mileage of railway per head of population in Queensland than any other State.

If we regard the railways from a business viewpoint only, and say that they must pay

interest, we shall retard the development of the State. If the railways are looked upon as developmental railways, which they are, especially those in the North and West, it will be realised that they have opened up millions of acres of land and have made successful settlement possible. From that more comprehensive point of view, the railways are one of the best paying enterprises in the State. If it were not for our railway development we should not have half the people on the land who are there earning money and creating wealth from which the whole State benefits.

Another very important factor for our consideration is the complete change that has taken place in transport during the last 20 years. Motor transport is probably taking a great percentage of the traffic from the railways, though it was never thought of when the railway system was originally designed. Then, again, aeroplanes are taking a great amount of the best-paying traffic from the long-distance services, that is, the first-class passengers. Having those things in view, it will be realised that it is very difficult to look on the railways from the pounds, shillings, and pence point of view only, and to say that they must pay their way and show a profit.

If the deficit on the railways were due to decreasing efficiency, I should say that that was a serious thing, but from the figures that the Minister has given this Committee to-day it is clear that since 1914 the efficiency of the railways has steadily increased. When we consider the number of persons employed, the mileage of railway, the number of passengers, and tons of goods and livestock carried, we can see that there is no decrease in efficiency. This Government are still suffering from the drastic economies practised between 1929 and 1932, when the Moore Government dismissed a great number of the staff and put many more on half-time, with the result that the rolling-stock and thousands of miles of line got into a bad state of repair.

Hon. members opposite say nothing about that. They left it to this Government to make up for their neglect, and then they glibly condemn the present Administration because our railways are not showing a profit! I take it that the railways are in a similar position to the Chillagoe smelters, the loss on which was discussed in this Committee the other day, when it was agreed by hon. members on both sides that the loss was justified in the circumstances. The railways to-day carry a tremendous quantity of goods at less than the actual cost.

That is done for the purpose of helping industries and when one aspect of the work of the railways is taken in conjunction with the other it shows that the railways are giving the greatest service in the history of the State and that we have little to worry about. As time goes on and the population increases, as it must during the next 20 years, the position will improve and without any very great effort the Railway Department will be able to earn enough to pay interest and probably more, so that we shall be enabled to reduce freights and fares. If we

compare the freight rates charged by the privately-owned railways that operated in this State at one time with the freight rates charged by the State railways, it will be found that the rates charged on the private lines were invariably 50 per cent. higher than those on the State railways, and, what is more, the services on the private lines were not anything like as good as those provided by the State system.

I desire to express my appreciation of the consideration extended to me at all times by the Minister, the Commissioner, and the staff of the Railway Department. They have been courteous in every respect and have helped hon. members in every way that they could.

The numerous non-paying branch lines have a very important bearing on the fact that the railways are not able to show a profit, but do hon. members opposite suggest that these lines should be closed and the people who have pioneered the back country thereby deprived of the use of the railway system? It would not be very difficult to make the railways pay if we closed these non-paying sections, but would it be right to do that, so neglecting the interests of the people who were induced by the construction of those lines to develop the districts they serve? It would mean that the country would be abandoned by many of these people and the revenue to the Department of Public Lands would be negligible.

Of course, the railways could be made to pay interest and redemption by an increase in freights and fares, but here again we should be penalising the people in the country. Summing it up, I think we are very fortunate indeed in having the present sympathetic administration of the railway system.

I appreciate what the Minister has done in connection with the Cooktown to Laura line, probably an outstanding example of non-paying lines. It does not serve a very great number of people, but it serves a very important section who are pioneering the country and endeavouring to make a living by following pastoral pursuits and mining. If that line was closed, all those industries would be abandoned.

Then there is the section from Almaden to Forsyth, also in my electorate. This also does not pay. It was not constructed by the Government but was bought by them from the old Chillagoe Company. It was never a first-class railway line and a considerable amount of money would be required to bring it up to the standard that would enable it to carry locomotives with safety. In view of that fact, the Government have inaugurated a splendid rail-motor service for the people, a service that is even better than any other provided on the Etheridge line. The Government propose to go even further in improving the service by using a large Diesel motor, which will give the people not only the same splendid goods and passenger service, but will also allow of two or three trucks of cattle to be coupled to the rail-motor. That will serve these people of the

outback better than they have ever been served before.

I urge the Minister to expedite the construction of the new rail-motor. The people of the district are looking forward to the improved service it will provide. Settlement along the railway is at as low an ebb as it can be, and it can be reasonably expected that increased traffic will come from this line in the future. Strong efforts are being made to revitalise the mining industry, which at one time was of large dimensions in this district. There is nothing to prevent it from again becoming a prosperous industry. Such an improvement must enhance the prospects of the passenger and goods service. The outlook of the cattle industry is improving year by year. Much of the Etheridge railway traverses good cattle country. The population of the district and railway traffic must increase with its development.

I wish to pay tribute to the work of the district superintendent at Cairns, Mr. Morris, during the serious floods which occurred in the Etheridge district last year. One railway bridge was completely swept away and several others badly damaged. Mr. Morris made an immediate inspection of the damage, and owing to his great organising abilities traffic was suspended for three days only. That is a remarkable fact, in view of the tremendous damage that was done. One bridge swept away was almost 10 chains in length, yet the rail-motor traffic was resumed after a suspension of traffic for three days. That is a remarkable achievement, and reflects credit on Mr. Morris and his staff.

The good service given by the railway employees on the Etheridge line should not pass unrecognised. The operations of the rail-motor service on the Etheridge line calls for considerable vigilance on the part of the train crew, as most of the line is unfenced and a considerable area of the country carries stock. The vigilance of the employees, assisted by the good headlights supplied by the department for steam engines and rail-motors, have prevented any serious accident.

I should be failing in my duty if I did not pay a tribute to the department for the excellent service it has always given to the maize-growers on the Atherton Tableland in the transportation of large quantities of maize to Cairns, the port of transhipment, at very short notice. Recently, the Maize Board had to transport from the Atherton Tableland and place in a ship's hold at Cairns 7,000 tons of maize at 10 days' notice. That was made possible by the efficient service rendered by the department and its employees. On no occasion has the department fallen down on its job in the transportation of maize at short notice. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the economical handling of maize at the silos the department placed hoppers at the disposal of the board. This reduced the cost of handling to the growers considerably.

When we consider the sympathetic services, many of them of an unpayable nature such as drought relief, the reduced rates to Mount Isa, the transport of ore to Chillagoe

at special rates, and many other similar services, we must admit that the department is giving the people a very efficient and excellent service. All I wish to say in conclusion is that we hope for a continuation of the excellent service we are receiving from the department.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) (3 p.m.): I wish, in common with other speakers, to express my appreciation of the very fine work that has been done by the Commissioner and his senior administrative officers, and also the rest of the staff of the Railway Department.

I was pleased to hear the statements, particularly that by the hon. member for Cook, to the effect that before hon. members criticised our railway system they should take into consideration the fact that we have 6,497 miles of standard gauge open to traffic in Queensland, and, with the exception of Western Australia, the population per mile of railway is less in Queensland than in any other State. Queensland is the best-served State in the Commonwealth as far as railway communication is concerned. The figures also indicate that the percentage of working costs to earnings for the five-year period ended 30 June, 1936, compared favourably in comparison with the results of any other railway administration in Queensland.

Mention has been made this afternoon by the Leader of the Opposition and other hon. members opposite who followed him of the fact that the railways show a deficit, and that that deficit has been of a recurring nature; and they said that steps should be taken to prevent a repetition of those deficits. I point out to hon. members that deficits in railway administration are not by any means peculiar to Queensland. I had an opportunity this morning of reading the reports of the South Australian Commissioner for Railways for 1938, and also the report of the Victorian Commissioner for Railways for the same year.

Before dealing with those reports, I wish to say that I, too, regret that the report for Queensland for the year ended June, 1938, was not presented in time for perusal by hon. members while the Estimates of this department are being discussed. I sincerely hope that every effort will be made, not only by this department, but by other departments, to see that their reports are furnished in sufficient time to give hon. members the opportunity to peruse them during the debate on the Estimates of those departments, respectively. I realise the difficulty associated with collecting and collating all the information required for the purpose; but, after all, those reports are not of much value if they are made available only after the discussion on the Estimates has been completed.

The report of the Commissioner for Railways in South Australia for the year ended 30 June, 1938, reveals that they had a deficit of £779,738, which was an increase of £52,895 over the deficit of the previous year. Comment is made by the Commissioner to the effect that road-motor competition made it

extremely difficult to maintain the volume of business in that State. It is well to remember, when we have regard to the deficit in Queensland, that in South Australia they have been operating under a 48-hour week, and it was not until 1 October this year that a reduction was made in the hours worked by the employees covered by the Commonwealth award. The reduction in hours will increase the operating cost of the South Australian railways.

The Victorian railways showed a deficit of £241,953 for the year ended 30 June, 1938. There was a decrease in revenue for this period of £411,845, and an increase in working expenses of £573,213. That increase was principally due to wage increases and the increased costs of material. Victoria also enjoyed a reduction in interest and exchange of £1,288,616. This was brought about by the Railways Finance Adjustment Act that was passed by the Victorian Parliament in 1936, providing for the writing-off of £30,000,000 of railway capital. So it will be seen we have an almost full analogy between Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, because similar provision has been made in the two other States for the writing-off of capital.

Deficits are by no means peculiar to Queensland, but the difficulties of administration here are more acute than those in any other State. Queensland has the greatest mileage of any system in the Commonwealth, and there are many difficulties in construction. The inland railways system has to cross the Great Dividing Range, and owing to the tropical rains in the coast areas repairs to washaways involve a heavy and recurring cost. The nature of the soil, also, particularly that on the Darling Downs, makes the upkeep of the rail bed extremely costly.

The Commissioner in Victoria has lamented the fact that inadequate provision has been made by Parliament for railway renewals and replacements, and for last year the sum of £270,000 was allocated for this purpose, but was totally inadequate.

The construction of rolling-stock in Victoria has been the lowest of any State in the Commonwealth, and for the five-year period ended 30 June, 1938, only one locomotive, 14 carriages, 67 vans, and 1,285 trucks were constructed. Mr. Clapp, the Commissioner, mentioned that virtually no locomotives had been constructed for seven years, and as a result the average age of locomotive stock increased from 18.2 years on 30 June, 1928, to 25.78 at 30 June last. He estimated the normal economic life of a locomotive at 25 years, and the fact that the average age of stock at 30 June last was greater than that clearly shows the necessity for a greater construction programme. To provide adequately for replacements, at least 25 locomotives on the basis of average service must be constructed annually.

I propose to show that in Queensland we have done more than in Victoria in providing additional rolling-stock. Based on the same average replacement as has existed over the last four years, we shall find that from 30

June, 1938, we constructed 29 locomotives in five years as against Victoria's one, and 51 carriages, 150 wagons, 17 rail motors, and 34 rail-motor trailers.

The import of these figures is that if Queensland had adopted the system operating in Victoria we could have saved that amount of money and shown a surplus for the last financial year.

Apart from the "Spirit of Progress," of which mention has been made, no carriage has been constructed in Victoria since 1926-27. It has been said the economic life of a carriage is 35 years here, and the average life in that State 29 years. It can be seen the rolling-stock in Victoria has reached a stage of advanced obsolescence.

In addition to that, the Railway Department of that State had the advantage of having 3,000 men allotted to it for the purposes of unemployment relief, and these have been used in the maintenance and construction of railway tracks. As a result of this additional labour, provided at no charge to it, the department was able to prevent deterioration of the standard of the tracks and provide a greatly accelerated service. None of such means was available to the railway administration in Queensland, and consequently the analogy I have drawn would indicate that our administration compared more than favourably with that of Victoria and South Australia.

It may be argued that I have omitted any reference to New South Wales, but the New South Wales report for the year ended 30 June, 1938, is not in the library. Nevertheless, I think that even if it could be referred to Queensland would still compare very favourably with that State.

Despite decreases in the gross earnings of the Railway Departments of those States, there has been a substantial increase in the gross revenue of the Queensland Railway Department. In 1937 the gross revenue was £6,949,677, and last year it rose to £7,254,380. Admittedly, there was a substantial increase in working costs. The reason for this is that in April, 1937, the Railway Department had to pay an increase in the basic wage, and a further increase in September of the same year. In addition, there has been an increase in the cost of materials.

Railways play a very prominent part in the economy of Queensland. So important is the part they play that the Minister for Transport has moved for the introduction of a State Transport Bill. Some time ago a royal commission was appointed to investigate the transport systems of Queensland, and I presume that some of the recommendations of that royal commission will be incorporated in the Bill that will be placed before Parliament in a few days' time.

One of the reasons why most of the Governments throughout the world think it incumbent upon them to take legislative action to protect the railways is that the railways are very costly undertakings. In Queensland we have invested £66,000,000 in round figures in railways, and we cannot afford to see our

assets ruined because of the unrestricted operations of motor transport.

Some of the objections that are taken to motor transport are that unlicensed vehicles—and sometimes this is done without a permit from the State Transport Board—are used for the purpose of conveying large bodies of people to sporting meetings, public outings, and other social engagements. Objection is taken also to the fact that the operatives of these trucks frequently work inordinately long hours.

Mr. Moore: Like the dairy farmers.

Mr. DUGGAN: Certainly, but the point is that the dairy farmer has not to compete with another class of primary producer. The owner of a motor vehicle plying for hire between the various towns of the State is in direct competition with an authority that is obliged by law to pay certain wages and to respect all the other conditions that are incorporated in awards of the Industrial Court.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that road users in Queensland pay for the service that is provided by the Crown. Probably he is not convinced of the soundness of my point of view, and I am certainly not convinced of the soundness of his. The point, however, is that in assessing the value of these statements we must take into consideration certain ancillary services that are provided by the Crown for which no charge is made by the Crown. I refer now to the traffic police control. The railway authority is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the railway track in good order and condition for the safe transport of the public, and it has very many officers whose sole function is to see that safety measures are observed.

But as far as the motor vehicles are concerned, traffic police are entrusted with the responsibility of seeing that traffic rules are observed on the road, and no charge is made by the Crown for this service to the motor transport users.

In Victoria attempts have been made to win back custom to the railways by individual contracts with manufacturers and other consignees. This system has been objected to by the former Commissioner for Railways in Queensland—and it is probable that the administrative officers of the department at present hold the same views—on the ground that discrimination so far as traffic rates are concerned is inadvisable because of the friction that ensues from the adoption of such a policy. Experience has proved, however, that this discrimination notwithstanding, it is essential that some special inducement should be held out to consignees in order to regain the trade, because that is done by the truck-owners themselves.

The theory of railway rating is that low and insufficiently remunerative freight rates are essential for the successful marketing of certain products, and the loss on them should be compensated for by higher rates on the more valuable commodities. I propose to show that the railway system in this State provides a service to the consumers that is

not provided by any road transport organisation. These are the average rates—

	Per ton.		
	£	s.	d.
Minerals, coal, and coke ..	0	9	6 $\frac{3}{4}$
Timber	0	17	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Firewood	0	4	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
Agricultural produce ..	1	4	8
Fruit	1	4	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
Sugar-cane	0	3	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Raw sugar	0	10	5 $\frac{1}{4}$
General merchandise ..	2	13	4
Wool	5	7	1 $\frac{1}{2}$

We do not find any evidence that motor transport is prepared to carry these low-freight products.

Mr. Moore: You do not call wool a low-freight product?

Mr. DUGGAN: It is the highest-freight product. The point I wish to make is that the coal strike proved conclusively the disinclination of motor-transport undertakings to carry goods at these cheap rates. I had occasion to intervene on behalf of certain building contractors who wished to have bricks forwarded by rail from Toowoomba to Chinchilla and other towns on the Darling Downs. The alternative was to send them by motor transport, and the cost of doing so was prohibitive.

The road-transport people are selective carriers, whereas the Railway Department, being a common carrier, accepts all goods, and has to pay the penalty of providing that service while much of the cream of the traffic is taken away from it. That condition of affairs in my opinion should not be permitted.

In addition, as several hon. members opposite have mentioned, the Railway Department is faced with competition from air transport, and much of this fairly remunerative traffic will be taken from the Railway Department as commercial aviation in Australia expands. People who can afford to travel by air would otherwise be first-class railway passengers. I believe that the only effective control is the nationalisation of our transport system in Australia, possibly by vesting it in some Commonwealth authority, and I believe that if such an authority paid due regard to the need for a well-planned economy the effect would be that the railways of Australia would not be affected by the unfair competition that is eating into their profits at the present time.

I make the suggestion to the Commissioner and his staff that probably there are one or two minor features of administration in other States that we might copy with advantage. For instance, the Railway Department in New South Wales provides a newspaper for express train passengers on long journeys. The cost of such a service is very small compared with the appreciation it gains from the passenger.

Mr. Walsh: Is that only first-class passengers?

Mr. DUGGAN: I do not know whether that is so. Last year in New South Wales 9,825 passengers travelling to Brisbane were

supplied with morning papers. Even at the higher cost of newspapers in Queensland, it would amount to only about £80 a year, and I believe this small courtesy provided by the staff would earn the good will of the travelling public. The custom could be adopted on trains from Brisbane to Wallangarra or Brisbane to Cairns, with advantage to the department.

The subject of level crossings is certainly an important one, but its importance is confined principally to the metropolitan area. I know that a strong agitation has prevailed here for some action to be taken to reduce the dangers that exist at these points and I suggest to the Minister that he might, with advantage, give consideration to the scheme in operation in South Africa, where the Government undertake to defray 50 per cent. of the cost and the local authority concerned the other 50 per cent. of abolishing level crossings. I believe that would be a fair allocation of the responsibility. I know from reading the Press that this demand for the abolition of level crossings at certain centres in Brisbane is justified, and I believe that sooner or later the Government will be obliged to take some action in the matter, but I also feel that if there is an allocation on the basis that I have suggested all interests will be equitably served.

I desire now to refer to another matter that I believe to be of importance, and that is door-to-door deliveries by the Railway Department. We live in an age when large country stores have ceased to exist. When I first arrived in Toowoomba 11 or 12 years ago there were seven or eight large firms with a staff of at least 100 employees each, but to-day there is only one such large firm in that city. We now have the small specialised stores with probably only two or three employees, such as grocers' stores, and people specialising in haberdashery, Manchester goods, and so on, where the business turnover does not warrant the employment of a truck driver, and so these firms enter into contracts with a parcel-delivery service to have their goods delivered throughout the city. That scheme is adopted by many tradespeople in Queensland. I feel that when these people buy their bulk goods in either Brisbane or Sydney, as the case may be, the Railway Department should undertake to deliver them right into their stores. I believe that they would patronise the Railway Department in preference to the motor-transport system if they could get that service. The advantages of door-to-door delivery are obvious. The trader is not obliged to pay extra for bringing his goods from the railway station to his shop, because the motor-transport system delivers the goods right from the warehouse or depot to the trader concerned. Although the Royal Commission on Transport thought there was no public demand for this service, and as there is a disinclination on the part of the department to provide this service because of the cost involved, nevertheless I believe that the suggestion might be adopted with advantage in the near future.

The question of providing air-conditioned carriages is deserving of consideration, but

owing to the high cost involved I think more pressing reforms might be effected first.

Although the Minister explained that the standard of rail-motor construction in Queensland was greater than that in the Southern States, I am inclined to question that opinion. Although we have 100 horse-power Diesel motors operating on the main lines to-day, I think that if we increase the horse-power to 150 and provide a heavier type of construction we shall have higher speed, better riding comfort, and more economy in operation. The department would be well advised in spending more money in providing more suitable types of rail motors, if it expects to win the patronage of the public. A realignment of curves to permit of higher speeds has been undertaken by the department from time to time and I hope will be continued in the future.

The Minister has claimed, with some justification, that in accordance with the Government's policy of expansion within the Railway Department the permanent staff has increased materially in recent years. I understand that an economy board is carrying out an inquiry at the present time, but I hope that its recommendations will not favour the dismissal of employees. I should like to see a very happy and contented service and I believe that if employees are giving of their best to the department we should discourage the system of introducing additional employees if the permanency of those already there might conceivably be affected. We should discourage the entrance to the service of lad porters if it means the displacement of senior porters, or the entrance of junior clerks if it means the displacement of senior clerks. I hope when that report is made its recommendations will not involve the dismissal of any employee.

I have one last suggestion to submit. I have already submitted recommendations to the Commissioner regarding the re-establishment of the position of General Manager at Toowoomba. It is an important railway centre from the point of view of traffic, mileage, and staff, serves the great South-Western district, and warrants such an appointment. I hope the information I have conveyed to the Minister will receive due consideration, and that as a result the appointment will be made.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (3.26 p.m.): This is one of the largest departments in the State from the point of view of Government expenditure, while from that of general finance it is the largest of all departments.

It is remarkable that hon. members opposite appear to think that a great department like this should continue to be a debt factory. I cannot conceive why the objective should not be to make ends meet, or why, as the railways are a business enterprise, they should not show some profit on the year's working. To do that would be a laudable endeavour. The object of the present Administration is that the railways shall not be administered on sound business lines, but shall continue to make losses and build up

debt for the people to meet, as it did prior to 1931. We can recall the years prior to 1929, when we generally looked to the railways for a deficit of £2,000,000 each year.

If one says that sum quickly it does not sound very large, but it will be recalled that Parliament felt that the railways should be administered on a sound financial basis, and that every possible endeavour should be made to make them a sound business concern. Therefore, a Bill was introduced writing-down the capital indebtedness of the railways by £28,000,000. A careful scrutiny of the working of the department since then discloses that the railways began to be a business undertaking and showed small profits for several years thereafter. Now they have receded to the same old way of working—they show a deficit year after year.

Although the report of the Commissioner has not been tabled, opportunity presents itself in the report of the Auditor-General discovering that for 1935-36 the deficit on the railways was £117,157, and there was a surplus in 1936-37 of £7,871, and another deficit in 1937-38 of £129,091. Will the Minister explain how long he expects that the railways will continue to make annual losses? Parliament has endeavoured to place them on a sound financial footing. Will it be necessary to bring down further legislation in an attempt to place them on a sound financial basis, so that they will be recognised as a sound business concern, or do the Government intend to look for recurring deficits from their operations?

Mr. O'Keefe: What do you suggest?

Mr. BRAND: I suggest that we should make the railways a reasonable business concern.

Labour administration continues to provide ever-increasing freights and fares but no adequate compensation to the public in the way of a better service. Hon. members opposite have indicated some reforms that should come in railway transport, but they apparently must await some other opportunity. The Government are unable to carry on what is recognised to be a modern form of transport in a way that will win a greater trade for the railways. Every State in Australia and nearly every country in the world is concentrating on giving better service to the users of the railways—particularly passengers, because that is a very payable branch of the service—in order that the railways may get the trade that is being lost to other forms of transport. It should not be beyond the ingenuity of the department to improve on the methods of transport that we have to-day.

I should like the Minister to tell us whether the department has considered air-conditioning some of our passenger services throughout the State, particularly the Sunshine train that runs through the tropical belt. It would be a great comfort to people travelling on that train if it was air-conditioned, and it would cause that form of transport to be patronised by the people living in the northern part of the State.

If we are not prepared to improve our transport facilities by providing extra comforts, then it is only to be expected that we shall lose a considerable part of our passenger traffic on aeroplane transport, which, I understand, is not only a faster form of transport but a more pleasant one. I believe the railway transport can serve the people better, but it should be made more comfortable if we want to retain the support of the public. I hope the Minister will not adopt the policy of leaving such improvements for some future day, but that he will proceed to put them into effect immediately.

The practice of asking people to buy a seat ticket after they have bought their ordinary ticket should be discontinued immediately. The railway ticket should be sufficient to enable any passenger to obtain a seat in the train. During my visit to North Queensland I found that the question of having to pay for a seat after buying a ticket was a very burning one, and the people were anxious that the practice should be discontinued.

Mr. O'Keefe: I have never heard a complaint during all the years I have been up there.

Mr. BRAND: Well, I heard complaints during the very short time I was in North Queensland. After buying a railway ticket to North Queensland people are not at all pleased when they find they have to buy a ticket to reserve a seat on the train. Protests against this system have been made on the floor of this Chamber on previous occasions, and it is time it was abolished.

It is regrettable that notwithstanding the continuous increases in railway fares and freights since the Government took office there is to be a further increase of 5½ per cent. It is very awkward for the Government that the railway system of New South Wales is reducing its fares and freights. If other States can do this why is it that the administration in Queensland cannot do likewise? The State has had a very prosperous year with a revenue of over £7,000,000. This increase is a direct charge levied on the country people of the State who have to pay freights in both directions, and consequently it is they who must carry the burden of this extra charge. It was country dwellers who felt the first effects of the previous increase in fares and freights, and it is they, too, who must carry the additional burden of the proposed increase to be brought into effect on 1 November. On behalf of the country people of Queensland I protest from my place in this Chamber against the increase that is being put upon a section of people who are the least able to bear it. They are the winners of the country's wealth, and it is they who make it possible for the cities to live. It is also they who make it possible for the railways to exist, and they should not be asked to bear this further burden, which will make it very difficult for them to remain on the land. The Government should endeavour to make life in the country more attractive and thus induce people to live there instead of, as we see them to-day, wanting to leave the country, irrespective

of locality, to come into the cities where they can obtain some of life's amenities.

Mr. Riordan: That is not right.

Mr. BRAND: It is very unfortunate that it is so. It is one of the tragedies of the country to-day that people want to get away from the land. One method of stopping that flow to the cities would be to lighten the burden of taxation that is being continually placed on the shoulders of the country people. They should receive a railway service comparable to that operating in the metropolitan area, but it is well known that branch lines are not provided with the travelling accommodation given to the metropolitan area. The Minister should give careful consideration to all these matters.

This comment by the Auditor-General on the Railway Department is disturbing—

“There has been a decrease of 1½d. in earnings per train mile during 1937-38 compared with the previous year, but working expenses have increased by 2½d. over the same period, resulting in a decline of 3½d. in the average return per train mile.”

Surely the Minister can give the Committee some satisfactory explanation of the decline of 3½d. in the average return per train mile. Surely we can look forward to something better for the coming year? There may have been some extraordinary reason for this deficit, but I can only repeat that last year was a prosperous one, and that if anything there should have been a great improvement in the position.

The Auditor-General stated further that—

“The ratio of working expenses to earnings was 79.32 per cent. for the year 1937-38, being 2.55 per cent. greater than for the previous year.”

As I stated previously, we are reaching a stage when the railways will be looked upon once again as an institution in which freights and fares are to be for ever increasing and the losses shall be incurred for which the public will have to pay.

Whilst I offer this criticism of the service and its administration, I believe that a very happy choice was made in selecting Mr. Murton to discharge the duties of Commissioner for Railways. Mr. Murton is well known in Queensland in railway activities. He is a thorough railwayman, and if ever there was any justification for appointing him, it was to be found in the efficiency he displayed during recent weeks when the Government refused to face the issue in connection with the coalmining industry.

Mr. T. L. Williams: Which Government?

Mr. BRAND: This Government. The Commissioner took the bull by the horns immediately, and endeavoured to do something to find another fuel that could be used to carry on the services of the State. Mr. Murton did great service for Queensland when, owing to the short-sighted policy of the Government,

the Railway Department did not have that reserve stock of coal that it should have had to enable it to carry on for a long period.

It is remarkable that the Government should have allowed the Railway Department to be without an adequate supply of coal after having been warned by the coalmining industry for months past that there would be a strike in August of this year. Anyone who knows anything about the operations of the colliery employees' unions knows that when they say they are going to do something they will do it. Most industries laid in a stock of coal so that they might be able to continue their operations while the strike was on. As the Government did not realise the position, the Commissioner for Railways had to choose between curtailing the service or finding another fuel. The success of his experiments with wood fuel was remarkable.

I desire to say at this stage that I support the statements made by the secretary of the Australian Sugar Producers' Association in the letter that was read by the Minister this morning. It says that the Railway Department rendered wonderful service to the sugar industry of the State at a time when it was essential that sugar should be dispatched to the other side of the world. I pay a tribute to the Commissioner for the business acumen and foresight shown by him in using wood fuel in his attempt to overcome the difficulty that was confronting this great transport system of the State.

The strike has now concluded and the men have returned to work. I suppose that they are little better off, but much wiser. They have gained virtually nothing. Now that the industry is in full work again I want the Commissioner to be just as active in restoring the services at the earliest possible moment as he was during the strike in meeting the difficulties with which it confronted him.

The Minister for Transport: You cannot get coal from heaven.

Mr. BRAND: You should be able to get enough coal now. I notice that the Commissioner is talking of the difficulty of getting stocks of coal for the Christmas traffic, but the mineowners and the unions have indicated that there need be no fear in that respect. Now that they have begun again a great deal of coal will be produced in Queensland, and, incidentally, people in other countries are looking to our State for supplies.

I believe, from what the Minister told me this morning in reply to a question, that it is intended to revert to the use of coal as early as possible, and I hope that that will be done.

I am sorry that in the first year of Mr. Murton's term as Commissioner the report does not show a profit, but that was only his first year. I hope that this year he will be allowed to direct the railways in such a way that they will give service to the people and at the same time show a satisfactory financial result.

Mr. HILTON (Carnarvon) (3.47 p.m.): I desire to say a few words on this very important vote, particularly because for a number of years I earned my livelihood in the Railway Department. This is the biggest State department and the most difficult to administer, as every thinking person will agree.

At the outset I wish to offer my congratulations to the Commissioner and to his secretary and the other officers of the department for the way in which they have applied themselves to a very difficult task. I know, by virtue of my experience, that they come in for a great deal of unjustifiable criticism, but having a better understanding of the position, as I have, I can readily pay a tribute to them for their very excellent work.

I wish to join with other members in extending my congratulations to Mr. Murton on his elevation to the Commissionership. I feel that he is applying himself with unbounded zeal and energy to the job, and we can look forward to much improvement, wherever it is possible to make it, in the administration of the department.

I was rather interested to hear the hon. member for Isis talking about putting the Railway Department on a business footing. We hear many persons expressing views of that kind these days, but we do not hear from them what they mean by a business footing—they fail to tell us what they would do if they were in control of the Railway Department, which, if they were logical and sincere, they would explain.

We hear a good deal about railway deficits, and we all regret that deficits occur, but I want to draw a comparison with another deficit that is found every year in one of the State's activities. I refer to the deficit in connection with road construction in this State. The Railway Department as a great public utility is still carrying on the splendid work of development in the State, but in recent years its task of meeting working expenses, interest, and redemption has become very severe indeed, for certain reasons. So long as we allow motor competition with the railway system—there is a big section of the community who desire the convenience of motor traffic—I defy any business man to pursue the same policy of development that has been pursued by the Railway Department since its inauguration and show a profit each year.

There are a great number of people who talk loudly about the railway deficit without taking into consideration the deficit that occurs each year in connection with road construction. On reading the report of the Royal Commission on Transport I was interested to find that, taking 75 per cent. of the cost incurred by the Government and local authorities in road construction and setting off the amount of revenue derived by way of petrol tax and registration fees, in the year 1935-36 there was a deficit of close on £500,000. These figures are approximate, but the estimate is a fairly accurate one. Although on the one hand we hear a great deal about the deficit of approximately £129,000 in the Railway Department last year

—a deficit that was unavoidable—on the other hand we hear no word of condemnation and no criticism of the deficit of approximately £500,000 each year in connection with road construction carried out by both the Government and the local authorities, mainly the Government. If road construction was retarded or if the Government and the local authorities acting as one unit in this very important matter decided that they would spend only the equivalent of net revenue on road construction there would be a hue and cry throughout the country. I suggest that the people who criticise the Railway Department so severely because of its annual deficit should take that very important factor into consideration and should also realise that the department is carrying out important developmental work in the country. I venture the opinion that if Queensland was again in the initial stages of development and we did not have a single railway line there would be a clamour for the construction of the existing lines, and the Government, in their wisdom, would build them in order to develop the State to its fullest possible extent.

Recognising that fact, we have to reconcile ourselves to the position that the railways are with us, and that for many years they will be a factor for consideration in this State. At the present time a large section of the community would like to see the railways scrapped, and every year there is a continual agitation for the scrapping of them or for the closing of branch lines.

On the other hand we have a great section of the community, who in the main are entirely dependent on the Railway Department, crying out for their full protection and preservation. An obligation rests on the Government to legislate as wisely as possible between these two great sections of the community. I feel very confident that in legislation that may be introduced shortly this course will be pursued.

Mr. Moore: You have inside information.

Mr. HILTON: It does not follow that I have. We know very well that the Labour Party always pursues a sound, wise policy in these matters, and, without having any inside information, we can rest assured that the Government will do what is best for all sections.

It is very amusing to hear certain sections of primary producers, favourably situated geographically, crying out for the restriction or abolition of the railway service. I wish to remind those people who sponsor such a policy that if it were not for the railways the greater number of primary producers could not carry on. For instance, we have fruit-growers in the granite belt in my electorate. Could their produce be carried to the remote parts of the State by the most efficient motor-transport organisation that can be devised? First of all, with them time is the essence of the contract. I do not believe that the most efficient form of motor transport would be able to deliver their goods to the far northern and far western parts of the State quicker than the railways.

Again, the economic viewpoint must be taken into consideration. It would be impossible for any system of motor transport to convey perishable produce over a distance of 1,000 miles at such low rates as are set out in the tapering rates of the Railway Department, which are a very big factor in the transport of primary produce. I remind those people who talk about placing the department on a business footing that we have never seen motor transport attempting to give conditions that could be compared, even in the remotest degree, with the tapering rates charged by the department.

When we take into consideration the enormous increase that has taken place in the last financial year with respect to the non-profitable or low-rate traffic, together with the small increase in the more profitable sections, we can readily realise why the department is in difficulty year after year. Figures published in the report of the Royal Commission on Transport reveal that in 1911-12, 286,649 tons of wheat, agricultural produce, fruit, and raw sugar were carried on the railways. In 1935-36 the quantity of these goods handled by the department was 1,050,620 tons. This is an increase of 663,971 tons, or 171 per cent. In 1911-12 the quantity of general merchandise—which is the most profitable form of traffic carried—amounted to 532,831 tons. The amount transported in 1935-36 was 591,322 tons, an increase of only 58,491 tons or 10.98 per cent. These figures very plainly reveal what the department is faced with in motor competition and largely explain why the annual deficit occurs.

But although the carriage of these goods may be a loss from an accountancy point of view, in the long run there is a gain to the State. The operations of the department in this respect have contributed largely to the improvement that has taken place in Queensland during the past six years.

At 4 p.m.,

Mr. GLEDSON (Ipswich) resumed the chair.

Mr. HILTON: Despite the handicap the department has to labour under it is very consoling to note the relation of working expenses to earnings. Taking all factors into consideration, the Queensland railways are in a much better position than the railways in any other State.

The average percentage of working expenses to earnings over a period of five years in the various States is as follows:—

	Per cent.
Queensland	77
New South Wales .. .	69
Victoria	70
South Australia .. .	83
Western Australia .. .	72

When we take into consideration that Queensland has the greatest mileage of any State in the Commonwealth, that our railways extend over a much greater area than any other, and that the population per mile of railway is lower than that of any other State with the exception of Western Australia,

where the railways are concentrated in one part of the State, we must conclude that Queensland is in a much more favourable position than any other State.

The following figures show the percentage of population per mile of railway in the various States:—

Queensland	151
New South Wales .. .	435
Victoria	391
South Australia .. .	232
Western Australia .. .	103

The Commissioner and his officers and all the other employees are to be honestly and sincerely congratulated upon what they have achieved.

Various suggestions have been put forward by the Committee for improvements in the service. It may be rather presumptuous for us to advise people who have had a great more experience than ourselves. However, I fully appreciate that in many centres the people are looking for a better passenger service, and I agree with the hon. member for Toowoomba that the department should endeavour, as far as the finances will allow, to construct Diesel-engined motors. I think they would fill a long-felt want in the department and enable it to supply the public with that speedy, clean, and comfortable service that they desire.

It might be of advantage to the department if the Commissioner appointed one or two experienced officers to visit the various centres of the State and confer with representative men with the object of improving the passenger service. I think it would be a very sound idea for the officers of the department to confer with local authorities, chambers of commerce, and other representative bodies, because they would undoubtedly obtain a great deal of information that would help the department to inaugurate a more satisfactory service. Even if the prospective traffic did not warrant a better service it would be advisable to inaugurate one that might attract greater patronage. Looking at the matter from a business point of view, people are hesitant about incurring an expenditure when the prospects do not indicate a good return; but there is nothing like going after business. I think there are centres in Queensland that offer possibilities in the direction I have outlined, and the department would be repaid in the long run by investigating them.

My experience of railway employees generally is that they all take a very deep interest in the affairs of the department, and as I travel about, at times I hear very strong criticism of the administration from various points of view. In their zeal for the welfare and progress of the department a number of the employees think that certain things would be of very direct benefit to the department and its customers. That is only natural, and I always appreciate the interest employees take in the department, for, after all, that means a very keen interest in their own welfare.

The Suggestions and Inventions Board, which invites suggestions from the employees,

has been in existence for many years, but I do not think it is meeting with the maximum of success in obtaining co-operation between the department and the employees. It may be presumption on my part, but I suggest that a greater number of round-table conferences be held between the representatives of the unions and railway executives on matters that vitally affect the department and welfare of the employees. An honest attempt to solve the internal difficulties of the department along those lines would be well worth making, and I hope something in that direction will be done in the not-far-distant future.

A wider system of examination for appointment to all grades of the railway service should be in vogue. At the present time the lad porters' examination—a fairly simple educational test—is the examination for entrance to the traffic branch. The clerical examination, of course, is more involved from an educational point of view, but a qualifying examination, both educational and practical, should be prescribed for promotion to any grade in the service. Such a system would make for greater efficiency. It would encourage railway employees to make themselves more competent for the carrying out of their duties.

The position of night officer should be abolished. It was inaugurated many years ago when the holders of the position were actually night officers who came on duty at night time and did certain work, but at present many of these men have to carry out similar work to those of a clerk or station-master. They are under-paid and have to wait many years for promotion to the station-masters' grade. If there was a qualifying examination for promotion to that grade, any employee should be allowed to sit for it, and having passed the examination, his qualifications and length of service should be determining factors in his promotion to that grade.

The same principle could be applied to other sections of the service. This would make for greater efficiency and greater contentment among the employees.

I have no wish to detain the Committee. I again congratulate the department on the very excellent results achieved under great difficulties. When the State has adjusted itself to the unbalanced position brought about by motor-transport competition with the railways the latter will again come to the front and uphold the position it so proudly held in the past in the development of this great State.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Dash, Mundingburra) (4.10 p.m.): As to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and other hon. members regarding the delay in presenting the annual report of the Commissioner for Railways to Parliament, the reason why it was not before members at the time the Estimates were considered was entirely due to the fact that the Commissioner and his principal officers have been devoting the whole of their energies during the past three weeks to maintaining an efficient service in the face of the extreme difficulty brought about by the coal strike. The maintenance of that service was of more importance to

the State than the completion of the Commissioner's report.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the refusal to supply wagons for the transport of fat cattle that were to go across the border. When the coal strike began, representatives of the meat industry met the Commissioner to discuss the question of supplying wagons for transporting cattle to the meat-works and for moving starving stock. Wagons were supplied for those purposes, and at that conference the Commissioner pointed out how many wagons were available. Between them they arranged for the haulage of fat stock to the market. The Commissioner was keeping in mind also the maintenance of a service for the people in the back country, so that they would not be unduly inconvenienced.

Criticism has been levelled by members of the Opposition at the increase of £419,000 in the railway expenditure for the year ended 30 June, 1938, as compared with the previous year. Hon. members will appreciate the position when I explain that almost 60 per cent. of this increase was due to basic-wage and automatic increases, award variations, extra leave, and retiring allowances, while the balance was made up by increased traffic—train mileage alone increased by almost 700,000 miles—more sleepers and ballast, heavy rolling-stock repairs and replacements, all of which were absolutely essential to the maintenance of a proper standard of efficiency.

No doubt it is desirable that level crossings should be eliminated, but the estimated cost of eliminating the principal level crossings in the metropolitan area, including Woolloongabba, Bowen Bridge, Albion road, Clayfield, Beaudesert road and Yeerongpilly, is £210,500. No matter how much the Commissioner may desire to do away with these level crossings, finances will not permit of its being done.

For the information of the Committee I should like to mention that we are now building special trains for the suburban service, and hope to have them in use before very long.

The Tourist Bureau is doing wonderful work. Last year a record number of visitors came to the State under the Bureau's guidance. An office was opened in Western Australia in an endeavour to encourage tourists to visit Queensland from that State. In Melbourne the office is situated in the best location that it is possible to have for such an activity. Then, too, through the activities of the Tourist Bureau big-game fishermen from other States are enabled to enjoy that sport here. There will be a competition for the biggest fish caught before long.

Mr. MOORE (Aubigny) (4.14 p.m.): Whilst listening to several of the speeches from the other side I was interested to find that they all seemed to be playing on the one string, that is, hon. members opposite seemed to think that the only way by which the railways could show a profit was to increase freights and fares.

It does not necessarily follow that an increase in freights and fares will attract more traffic or will be responsible for the department's earning more money. It is quite possible that by adopting this policy traffic will be driven from the railways to some other form of transport. It is quite possible, too, that instead of travelling stock on the railways owners will travel them on the hoof. There are many other ways in which people will avoid using the railways if it is too expensive to do so. An increase of 5½ per cent. on freights and fares will not necessarily mean that the railways will balance their budget or show a profit next year.

In the Industrial Court on several occasions the union representative has suggested that there was no limit to the capacity of the Railway Department to increase wages, because it need only increase freights and fares, but the representative of the Commissioner pointed out that an increase in freights and fares did not necessarily mean extra revenue; it might mean a loss of revenue; it was quite possible that by making the railways more attractive by reducing freights and fares you might get more traffic and in the end make more money.

Mr. Dunstan: It might be necessary to double your traffic or more, to meet the effect of such a reduction.

Mr. MOORE: It might, but other businesses faced with a prospect of a loss do not make an increase in the price of their products their first thought. They look to see where economies can be made, where business can be encouraged, and where costs can be reduced.

Mr. Bedford: And if their business does not pay, they can shut it up, but we cannot shut up the railways.

Mr. MOORE: I am not suggesting that we could, but we wrote off £28,000,000 to give them a better opportunity.

Mr. Bedford: That only put it from one pocket into the other.

Mr. MOORE: It put the charge on the community instead of on the railways.

Mr. Duggan: The deficit was on the community before.

Mr. MOORE: Yes; but writing it off meant that the railways did not have to carry such a capital load, as it had accumulated over the years by having no replacement fund and having no profits set aside for replacements and relayings. Debts had accumulated, for instance, in respect of bridges that had been burnt or washed away and had to be rebuilt. Of course, the community bears the burden of the £28,000,000 written off, but it was expected that the Railway Department would then be able to meet its obligations, pay working expenses, and to show a small return. The very fact that for three years it has been able to do so shows that it was not such a hopeless undertaking as many people tried to make out at the time. However, the position should be a little better than it is, considering that ten years have elapsed.

I want to make a comparison, and I am not taking the record year of railway, which the Auditor-General suggests was 1928-29, but I am taking the 10-year period 1927-28 to 1937-38. These are the figures:—

	1927-28.	1937-38.
	£	£
Capital ..	61,840,000	39,252,000
Earnings ..	7,381,000	7,254,000
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Earnings per ton mile ..	12 8	10 8½
Working expenses ..	10 8½	8 6
Interest per ton mile ..	4 11¼	2 4¼
Earnings per ton mile ..	2 2¼	2 2¼
Loss per ton mile ..	2 9¼	0 2¼

The difference to-day is solely due to the writing-off of the £28,000,000. There is a reduction in the interest figures, but no great difference in anything else. The earnings are very much the same—less than £100,000 greater.

Mr. Duggan: The Royal Commission on Transport said that road transport is taking £478,000 of the railway's earnings.

Mr. MOORE: I am not so sure about this transport competition, and I shall have a word or two to say about it, because the hon. member has been talking about it and comparing the user of the road with the user of the railways.

In the last 10 years there has been a considerable increase in population, a considerable increase in the development of the State, in the production of primary products, in the reclamation of land from the prickly-pear menace, all of which is now producing primary produce in some form, and there should have been a greater increase in the business of the Railway Department, but instead of that we find that whereas 10 years ago the revenue amounted to £7,381,000, to-day it amounts to £7,254,000.

I know that there have been increases in fares and freights, and that may account to some extent for the reduction in the earnings of the department. In my opinion we should make the railways more attractive by reducing the costs that the people have to pay because by that means we are more likely to get greater trade than if we increase the fares and freight that the primary producer has to pay. I realise that the railway officials have an extraordinarily difficult task in this respect. Since they have the responsibility they should also have complete authority to do what they believe to be in the best interests of the service. I remember an incident that occurred not so very long ago in one of the railway refreshment rooms where the cook was continually getting intoxicated until the manager became very indignant and after many remonstrances sacked the cook. The cook then came to Brisbane and saw his union. The union saw the Minister, and the Minister put the

cook back, and the manager of the refreshment room was transferred.

The Minister for Transport: That never happened in my time.

Mr. MOORE: I do not say that it did. We cannot expect very much discipline and very much efficiency when things like that go on.

Mr. T. L. Williams: Who called him a cook? (Laughter.)

Mr. MOORE: I do not know who called him a cook. I am concerned about the principle. The officials who have responsibility should also have the requisite authority to do what they believe to be in the best interests of the department, but authority is undermined if things like that are allowed to go on. That may have been an extreme case, but there are many other cases in which men in authority and responsible for the proper administration of the department are afraid to exert their authority for fear that they may be made to look small by being either transferred or reprimanded, and the person whom they reprimanded may be retained in his position as if he had done right, whereas in fact he had done wrong.

The whole difficulty is that apparently Parliament fixes the freights and fares the Commissioner gets, the Industrial Court fixes the wages he has to pay, and the unions more or less fix the conditions under which his work is to be carried out. That does not leave very much scope for the Commissioner, and gives him no opportunity to display initiative. He is more or less hamstrung.

Mr. Duggan: The present policy is recognised by those in authority to be the most desirable one.

Mr. MOORE: I am not so sure that it is the most desirable one. I am not so sure that it would not be better to give greater opportunity of initiative to the railway management, so as to bring about better results. I am also not so sure that the mere assertion of the Treasurer of this State that the railways should pay and consequently freights and fares are to be increased by 5½ per cent. is going to be of advantage to the railways. I am not so sure that that will bring the results that he expects. I should be more inclined to leave the matter to the people responsible for the conduct of the railways so that they could carry out experiments to see if they could attract more traffic instead of losing it.

Mr. Duggan: In accordance with that idea and from the administrative point of view the primary producer would have to pay more for the transport of his products.

Mr. MOORE: He will have to pay more because the Government propose to increase freights by 5½ per cent. The primary producer was called upon to contribute an extra amount when the 44-hour week was introduced in this department. The freights and fares had to be increased by 10 per cent. That meant that people working 60 hours a week had to work a little longer in order that some others might work 44. The same thing occurs here

again. Further increases of freights and fares are being imposed on the primary producer, who is not covered by any award rate and must sell his produce on the markets of the world at world parity. To do so he must go without help and work a little harder in order to pay for a transport of his products.

Mr. Duggan: I was referring to a transfer of authority from Parliament to the Commissioner.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member is taking it for granted that the only method open to those responsible for the efficiency of the railways is to increase fares and freights. I do not agree with him. There are many other methods that can be adopted. Methods can be adopted in the service, if those in authority are given a free hand, to stop many leaks and curtail expenditure to a considerable extent. Take one simple thing. We have an illustration of it on page 170 of the Auditor-General's report. I refer to the price paid for coal. The department may not want to take coal from a particular colliery. It may desire to take coal from a colliery which it has found by test gives the most efficient results, and is the most economical. Notwithstanding that, it may have to take the coal from the first-mentioned colliery because it may mean the employment of so many miners. All these things affect the efficient conduct of the department.

At the present time it is run not as an instrument to give the best service to the people but as an instrument of Government policy. If the men in authority were not hampered by governmental action, they could use this instrument in the best interests of the community. If they thought they could obtain more trade in the passenger service by reducing fares they would do so, or if they thought that by a reduction in freights they could get more stock or produce to carry they would do so. Any other policy compels them to conform not to what they believe to be in the best interests of the community, but to what the Government set them to do.

Mr. King: Was your control any different?

Mr. MOORE: To a great extent it was. Three reductions in fares and freights were made during the period of my Government and instead of a loss greater trade was obtained.

Mr. King: That is not the point. You made a point of interference.

Mr. MOORE: That is a lesson on abstaining from interference. The officials in authority should be allowed an opportunity of seeing where they can get new business.

The hon. member for Toowoomba was rather critical of road transport. I do not agree with him. In his criticism of this form of transport he claimed that it did not pay for itself. He said that the Railway Department had to employ thousands of men for safety purposes whereas road transport had the advantage of police services and did not pay for them. If he turns to page 137 of the Auditor-General's report he will

find that included in the total receipts for year of £2,795,057 is £58,715 from fees and fines collected under the State Transport Act, which amount was forwarded to the Treasury. That £58,715 more than pays for any police work on the roads in providing facilities for motor transport. The hon. member will find on examining the Auditor-General's report that motor vehicles are paying for this control either by means of the petrol tax, registration fees, or through the Unemployment Relief Fund.

That money is used not so much for main roads construction purposes as for the purpose of a special trust fund, from which transfers are made to consolidated revenue. Certainly some loan money is paid to the Main Roads Fund, but the whole of the interest and redemption is paid by the motorists, because the money received from motor car registration fees or heavy vehicle fees or petrol tax is used by the Main Roads Commission to pay that interest and redemption.

Mr. Duggan: The vehicles on which fees are levied would be obsolete by the time interest and redemption was paid.

Mr. MOORE: You might as well say the vehicles on the railway would be obsolete by the time the loan is paid from which they are bought; but they are continuing all the time. The vehicle is paying for it because it is paying the annual redemption and sinking fund payments and interest. It is paying for all the maintenance except the £95,000 that is paid by the local authorities, and the rate-payers in the local authorities in those areas are also contributing through their motor tax—in nine cases out of ten—and the Government are contributing nothing except the £5,000 that was included in the parliamentary appropriation for one year. That is the only amount that was paid either for the maintenance of main roads or their construction; the rest of it has been paid out of loan money, for which the motorists by way of taxation are paying interest and redemption. They are entitled to fair treatment in the carting of primary producers' products and the giving of a convenience to the community. It is unfair that the railways should be able through the chairman of the State Transport Board to refuse or curtail a license and prevent the people in the country districts from having the convenience of modern transport.

It must also be recognised that if the primary producer could get his products to market in a better condition and thus get more for them, he would be in a better position to pay his taxes. Take the position of the man who wants to send fat lambs to the market. The lambs are travelled to the railway station and trucked and sent down to the abattoir, where they have to wait until they are killed, which is about three days from the time they left the paddock, and during that period they lose three or four pounds in weight, which, at 8d. a pound represents a considerable sum to the owner of the lambs. If they could be transported in three or four hours by motor lorry, that loss would be saved, and the owner would

get 2s. a head more, which would help him to meet his obligations in taxation.

Mr. Duggan: The department itself could make available better facilities.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, but it does not; it might be able to. That is just my contention; if you give the department the full opportunity to go out after traffic and make the best possible terms for the transport of perishable articles like that, you can get over your difficulty, but the remedy does not lie in putting an extra cost of 5½ per cent. on the freight. That sort of thing is going to repel people and make them, if they can, use other forms of transport.

Mr. King: You will admit that as a great national asset our railways should be conserved.

Mr. MOORE: Of course they should. There are methods of conserving them, but the only methods the hon. member seems to think of is continually increasing the cost to the consumer.

Mr. King: What do you suggest?

Mr. MOORE: I suggest the proper business method. If you have an ordinary business you are carrying on, and you show a loss at the end of the year, you do not say, "I will increase the price of my goods," but you endeavour to ascertain how you can increase your turnover, and if you can induce people to patronise your business by reducing your cost, you do so. The railways have the same opportunity.

Mr. Power: How would you suggest the costs be reduced?

Mr. MOORE: You can reduce your freights and fares. You can see where time of people travelling to their work is wasted, and whether overtime of all sorts is put in that is not justified. One can see instances in which a man who wants to go to Rocklea waits half-an-hour at Roma Street for another train rather than go across to South Brisbane by tram and get a train there, and so gets overtime for the extra time he takes by going from Roma Street. There are all sorts of things like that which can go on and which should be investigated. All kinds of leakages have been found, and before putting up fares and freights I should have thought that the first thing that the department would have seen to would have been to make the department's methods more efficient, and see how efficient its activities could be made. After this had been done, and it was found that the system cannot carry on financially, another method must be investigated. It must be remembered that the community is subsidising the railways to the extent of over £1,000,000 a year in interest, the extra cost of the £28,000,000 written off, but it is not subsidising road carriers to that extent.

So far as long-distance traffic is concerned, I recognise there is nothing that can compare with the railway. It is an absolute necessity, but I do not see why, owing to Government policy, in order to balance the Budget, there should be an immediate increase of railway

fares and freights, an increase that must be borne by the users of the system. A primary producer gets no more for his produce because it is transported to Brisbane by rail. It is he who has to pay the increased cost on everything he gets and everything he sends away. Before adopting that principle investigation should be made to endeavour to find methods by which reductions could be made.

Mr. Brassington: Was that done when you were in power?

Mr. MOORE: There were a great number of investigations, a tremendous number of leakages were found, and a tremendous number of impositions upon the railways were also found. There were all sorts of expenses being put down that should not have been charged. A number of such things were remedied. The hon. member must recognise that in a service of the magnitude of the railways there will be impositions and employees will put in for time they are not entitled to. Of course, I am not accusing any individual of this. Naturally, when a person is in a position to get more money, and he has the opportunity to do it, he will take it.

Mr. Hilton: Not everyone.

Mr. MOORE: Certainly, not everybody, but a great number.

Mr. King: I thought you had better faith in mankind than that.

Mr. MOORE: When the hon. member is as old as I am he will have lost a certain amount of his faith. Experience teaches, and one has many disappointments.

Then the fares and freights are not increased in the suburban areas, because there the department has to compete with buses, but in the country districts this competition is lacking, because licenses are refused. Consequently, there is no limit to the amount that fares and freights can be increased by there.

Mr. Hilton: Of course there is competition in outside districts.

Mr. MOORE: Of course there is, but in very many cases the fees imposed are such that it is impossible for competitors to operate. A number of people would not have the convenience of getting to their centre and back to their homes the same day if they had to use the railways, and, therefore, they stay at home. Of course, in some places the department has provided a rail-motor. In my own district there was a motor service carrying 17 to 19 passengers running in from about half way to Kaimbillenbun every day. That service was forced by the heavy fees to cease running, but this does not mean that the people from that district now go into town. They do not.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (4.40 p.m.): I cannot agree with the suggestion made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that one can increase revenue and reduce costs by reducing freights and fares. I fail to see how any business concern that is losing money can make a success of that business

by reducing prices in the hope of increasing turnover and reducing costs.

The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has made certain remarks with regard to administration. I do not think that any officer of the Railway Department would allow the department to be conducted in an inefficient manner if he was aware of what was causing that inefficiency. I believe that every officer of the department is zealous, and that he realises the strength of the competition that the department has to meet from air and motor transport.

I congratulate Cabinet upon its selection of Mr. Murton to fill the office of Commissioner for Railways. Mr. Murton has given excellent service to the department for many years, and I am pleased to know that he was appointed to the position of Commissioner, because I believe that he is quite capable of carrying out that responsible office.

One pleasing fact is that as a result of the appointment of another general manager, in the person of Mr. Maloney, the Railway Department is almost free from those pin-pricking fines that were imposed upon the employees previously. From time to time one could read in the daily Press that men were bringing appeals before the Railway Appeal Board against decisions to fine them for minor offences.

Some time ago there was a dispute at the carriage shed with regard to signing off. The men wanted another window to be opened so that they could place their disks in that window and catch a certain train that was leaving the yard. One man, being over-zealous in his desire to protect the interests of the department, or perhaps being desirous of embarrassing the men, was not prepared to meet them. As a result of an interview with Mr. Maloney provision was made for allowing these men to have their disks in in time and arrangements were also made to delay the train for a couple of minutes, and the difficulty was overcome without any trouble whatever. I am confident that the abolition of this system of pin-pricking fines is brought about by having the right man at the head of affairs.

I believe that the department should start now to train young men who can occupy the position of Commissioner when that office becomes vacant. I do not mean we have no one competent at present to take the position. In fact, the time is ripe for all departments of State to train young men to fill the offices of Under Secretaries and heads of departments as they become vacant. By adopting this policy, we can be assured of having fully qualified and capable officers in responsible positions. I hope that the Commissioner will give serious consideration to my suggestion that he train a man to become Commissioner when the time arrives.

Another suggestion that I have to offer to the Minister is that a small workshop be erected in the metropolitan area for carrying out running repairs to engines and wagons. I know that there is some arrangement whereby certain work is done in the Normanby yard. I believe that if a small workshop

was erected in the metropolitan area the saving in the cost of sending rolling-stock from Brisbane to Ipswich would pay for it in a short time. A number of wagons could safely be repaired here. I hope the Minister will give some consideration to my suggestion.

Much has been said about the loss on the railways. Let us analyse the position by considering these figures—

	£
Actual earnings ..	7,254,087
Working expenses ..	5,754,509
Profit on working ..	<u>£1,499,878</u>

Thus it will be seen that it was only the commitments by way of interest on the capital charge that caused the railways to show a loss, which, in my opinion, was not a very great one. No blame, therefore, can be attached to the Commissioner or his staff, in that they have not been able to earn enough to meet the interest charges.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that the Railway Department was called upon to buy certain coal. Under the Moore Administration the Railway Department was in clover in this respect. It was getting coal from the State coalmine at 6d. a ton on cost, and screened coal at that, which is the best that can be obtained. There was a strike at Newcastle, and the Cairns Gas Company was receiving coal from Hartley, now known as Ogmore. The Department of Mines desired to retain that business for Queensland and put a proposal before the Railway Department and the Premier at the time to allow a rebate of 6d. a ton on the cost of coal from Hartley to Cairns so that the State coalmine could retain the business. The Government of the day were not prepared to do so, yet we find the Deputy Leader of the Opposition rising to castigate this Government for increasing freights and fares, suggesting that the proper way to increase the business of the Railway Department would be by reducing freights and fares. He as Premier between 1929 and 1932 would not conserve the interests of two Government departments, the State coalmine and the Railway Department, by giving that rebate of 6d. a ton, and that business was lost, because the Cairns Gas Company eventually brought the coal from Newcastle.

Mr. Nimmo: Where did you get that information?

Mr. POWER: I make the statement plainly and deliberately, and if the Minister has not got the papers here to-day they can be found in the office of the Department of Mines.

Mr. Nimmo: You should have them when you make such statements.

Mr. POWER: I know all about it. That is the position. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition castigates the Government and suggests that they should do something that he refused to do, thereby losing business to both a State coalmine and the Railway Department.

Mr. Nimmo: I do not believe that.

Mr. POWER: I am not concerned about that. I do not believe the hon. member.

The value of the railways in the development of the State cannot be over-estimated. To-day the Department of Public Lands is receiving greater revenue as a result of land development brought about by the extension of the railway system than ever before, and a part of that revenue should be credited to the Railway Department. We know that people are not prepared to develop the land unless transport facilities are provided and that is why I say that every credit should be given to the Railway Department for its developmental work. What would be the fate of many parts of the State if no railway facilities were available to them to enable the products to be transported to market? The value of the benefits the Railway Department has brought to other Government departments cannot be over-estimated. The Department of Public Lands in particular is reaping a considerable benefit. All the revenue goes into a common pool and so the Treasury benefits directly by the useful work of the Railway Department.

We shall have to give serious consideration to the effects of other forms of transport on the railway system. I refer particularly to transport by air and by motor trucks. Everybody knows as well as I do that the motor-transport system is picking the eyes out of the traffic, leaving the rest to the Railway Department, but I hope that when the State Transport Bill is introduced serious consideration will be given to the need for restricting the hours of motor truck drivers, who to-day are prepared to work the rounds of the clock. A very large sum of public money has been invested in the railway system and it should be protected. So long as the motor-truck drivers are prepared to work long hours in carrying out their quick transport service they are a menace to the railways, and although we construct excellent main roads throughout the State for the motoring public these truck drivers, who receive a direct benefit thereby, should be called upon to pay very heavy transport fees for this privilege.

I desire to congratulate the Minister and the railway employees on the efficient way in which they are carrying out the work of this department.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 4.55 p.m.