

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1939

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. E. J. Hanson, Buranda) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS.**TENURES OF AGRICULTURAL FARMS.**

Mr. WALKER (Cooroola) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“1. Of the 109 agricultural farm selections which expired in 1938, how many of the lessees had—(a) acquired a freehold title; (b) obtained an extension of lease, thereby retaining their right to a freehold title; (c) converted to perpetual lease up to 30 June last?”

“2. What is the present position in regard to the balance not included in answer to No. 1?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) replied—

“1. These 109 selections comprise the agricultural farms, the original term of 20 years of the leases of which expired in 1938—(a) eight lessees acquired freehold titles; (b) 88 lessees were granted an extension of lease; (c) one lessee converted to perpetual lease selection tenure.

“2. Of the remaining 12 lessees, four intend to have the leases extended, and the remaining eight have not yet signified their intentions.”

TIMBER REVENUE, REDLAND BAY.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“What revenue was received from the sale of Crown timber in the Redland Bay district in the years 1934-35, 1935-36, 1936-37, 1937-38, and 1938-39, respectively?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) replied—

“No separate record is kept of the revenue from the sale of Crown timber in the Redland Bay district. The revenue received from the sale of Crown timber in the parishes of Redland, Cleveland, Capalaba, Mackenzie, Tingalpa, and Currigee for the years mentioned are as follows:—1934-35, £201 16s. 1d.; 1935-36, £60 9s. 6d.; 1936-37, £65 19s. 3d.; 1937-38, £39 10s. 1d.; 1938-39, £80 15s.”

SALARY AND ALLOWANCES OF MR. INIGO JONES.

Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“What salary and/or allowances were paid to Mr. Inigo Jones, Director of Crowthurst Observatory, in 1938-39?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: (Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) replied—

“Mr. Inigo Jones was paid salary of £200.”

REPORT ON WOOL INDUSTRY.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) asked the Premier—

“When will the report of the Royal Commission on the Wool Industry be placed before the House?”

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

“At an early date.”

PAPER.

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

Report of the manager, State Advances Corporation (workers' dwellings, workers' homes, &c.) for the year 1938-1939.

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

(Mr. O'Keefe, Cairns, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES IN CHIEF, 1939-1940.**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.****CHIEF OFFICE.**

Question stated—

“That £72,413 be granted for ‘Department of Public Lands—Chief Office.’”

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (10.36 a.m.): The department controlled by the Secretary for Public Lands is a very important one in the economic life of the people of Queensland. Land settlement has actually been the Gibraltar of Queensland's prosperity. The officials of the department who are responsible for the settlement of our lands have a very important duty to perform. The success of our primary industries is important, not only because it means a great deal to the people who are directly dependent upon them for a living but also because it has an important bearing on the State's finances. We have the climate, the soil, and all other essentials for primary industry, which deserves all the attention this Parliament can give to schemes to promote settlement.

A great deal of work has been done by the responsible officers to ascertain what might be described as a living area in the various districts of this State. Since the early history of settlement Parliament has debated on these Estimates from year to year as well as on important legislation the vexed question of giving every settler a living area so that he can be assured of a reasonable living standard. This undoubtedly demands the services of experienced men. I believe that the principal officers of the department have had a very wide experience in land matters.

The Government are now reaping the benefit of the work that has been undertaken during the last few decades in the settlement of Crown lands. I refer particularly to those lands that have been reclaimed from prickly-pear infestation. Owing to the splendid work of the Prickly-pear Land Commission,

which after biological investigations introduced to Queensland the little caterpillar known as *cactoblastis cactorum*, which successfully eradicated the pear from the areas it infested. Within a few short years this insect completely eradicated the pear which was overrunning our country to the extent of 1,000,000 acres annually and cleared that land—some of the best in the State.

The determination of a living area of reclaimed prickly-pear land is a problem that requires the earnest attention of the officers of the department and the Minister. Even with the experience that we have gained, we are not yet in a position to say exactly what it should be. The department has been carrying out experiments, and the areas it regards as living areas run from 6,000 to 7,000 and even 8,000 acres. I believe it would be wise to form a committee comprising experienced officers of the department who are familiar with these reclaimed areas and practical farmers from those areas to settle the point.

You, Mr. O'Keefe, are acquainted with the manner in which these reclaimed areas can be brought under successful settlement. Immediately after they were cleared of prickly-pear their production value was nil, but by ring-barking and clearing and planting of artificial grasses some of the finest fodder to be found in the State is grown on those areas.

In the central and middle-west, and the central and southern districts, large areas of land will shortly be available for closer settlement, which will be of great benefit to the State.

Transport facilities play a very important part in the success of any settlement. We probably have not paid sufficient attention to this important link in the machinery of primary industry.

One of the difficulties confronting the department to-day is transport. The successful settlement of our coast districts can be attributed largely to the rail and road facilities there, but I do not believe that we have made as much use of the great railway lines in the country districts as we should have done. In this respect, I commend to the Minister the report of the Royal Commission on Public Works, recently laid before Parliament, and urge that he use his advocacy in the direction of persuading the Government to give effect to the recommendations therein and thus enable Queensland to be more closely settled on areas of a size that will ensure a reasonable living to the settler. This would provide work not only for those on the land, but for the many others who would assist in its development.

The railway system has been of great value to the Department of Public Lands in the matter of Crown rentals, which play a great part in the financial stability of Queensland. There is need for greater transport facilities in the Western areas, and their provision would prove of benefit to the Crown. I am firmly of the opinion from a tour of the areas I have in mind that if proper transport facilities for the conveyance of stock and produce are given many thousands of people can be settled thereon. This would give many

people a better livelihood than they at present enjoy, and make for the welfare of Queensland.

It is not difficult to assess the value that railways have been to the Department of Lands in this State. Although the railway system may have cost, say, £30,000,000, by the appreciation in the value of the lands served by the system Queensland has gained a greater sum than that.

Mr. Walsh: That is not taken into consideration in discussions of this matter.

Mr. BRAND: It is unfortunate that that is so. The Department of Public Lands should always recognise the valuable part that railways and roads play in the development and improvement of land.

The Secretary for Public Lands: We are not receiving increased rentals. We are receiving less rent to-day than 30 years ago.

Mr. BRAND: In an area provided only with road facilities the Crown rentals are based on a value much less than that in an area provided with a railway.

The Secretary for Public Lands: There are cheaper rents to-day.

Mr. BRAND: They are cheaper in the areas where there are no road and rail facilities than in areas of a similar class of land in which these facilities are available.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Cheaper in the road and rail areas also.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman knows that his policy in this regard recognises that whereas land in the far north-west may be worth 15s. a square mile, land of similar character and used for the same class of industry in the Winton and Longreach districts is worth approximately £9 a square mile. That comparison shows the very important part that transport facilities play in the development of land settlement in Queensland.

At the present time between Blackall and Charleville there is an excellent tract of land that could be thrown open for settlement if only adequate transport facilities were available. We all know that whenever land is thrown open for settlement thousands of persons ballot for parcels, and it would be of incalculable benefit to this State if we could make available for settlement enough land to absorb all the applicants for it. Unfortunately, most of the land upon which successful settlement could take place has been alienated. It is doubtful whether a living could be made upon the land that has not been alienated. It is important, therefore, to give serious consideration to areas where successful settlement could take place. We should provide adequate facilities for those who desire to take up land. If we could only assess the true value of our present transport facilities I have no doubt that the Government would not hesitate to increase them. Without transport Queensland would not be the excellent primary-producing State that it is to-day.

I am confident the Minister is anxious that Queensland should develop by way of greater

land settlement. During the past few years he has realised just how important our stock routes are to the welfare of the State, and his policy of providing water facilities along those routes is to be recommended. I suggest, however, that he might give serious consideration to widening them. One of the greatest difficulties we find with the old stock routes is that they are too narrow and consequently are eaten out quickly by travelling stock, and so rendered almost valueless for a time. I believe that all stock routes should be at least 1 mile wide in order to ensure that there will be enough feed for travelling stock. As an alternative, railway transport should be provided for travelling stock when the stock routes are impassable. This matter is of paramount importance to the western districts of the State; it is a national question and should receive the earnest consideration of the officers in charge of this department.

I hope that we shall soon again be able as a State to obtain the necessary funds with which to provide facilities that will increase the national assets of this country. There should be no reason why a Parliament such as ours should not be able to get those funds. After all, it depends upon the confidence investors have in us. If we can show a return from the establishment of those facilities in new areas of the State we should be able to get the requisite finance.

We have been told recently that one of the greatest factors in the successful settlement of our country is the provision of water facilities. Dr. Braddell's scheme for the harnessing of the watersheds of the rivers of North Queensland and the diversion of the water south-west through the pastoral areas of Queensland is of wide interest to many people. I recognise that such a scheme would require a great amount of money. In the meantime, I understand that the opportunity will be given to us shortly of securing funds from the Government for the purpose of providing water facilities in small areas so that industries already being carried on there may prosper greatly. We cannot fail to realise the difficulties that beset irrigation under the present methods adopted in Queensland. We have no large areas suitable for schemes such as those of the Nile. We have no large areas we can irrigate by means of gravitation which we as a Parliament know is the most successful form of irrigation. Immediately we have to resort to the pumping of water we become involved in heavy costs, and this fact has made it very difficult for us to provide water facilities for irrigating our lands successfully.

I hope the Minister will be able to tell us that further money is likely to be available to enable irrigation to be practised successfully in Queensland. Within his department are experts who should be able to give us some assurance in this respect. We have to direct our energies towards the greater settlement of land that such water can serve. There are in Queensland to-day many large areas of country that could be developed by means of irrigation. We therefore have the land

for people to settle on. It is our job to see that it is settled. It is my opinion that the Department of Public Lands plays a very important part in the government of this State. I hope that the Minister in the coming year will give all necessary attention to this important phase of his department's work and show that the money we are voting here to-day can be used for the purpose of providing the people of Queensland with land. I trust he will use his endeavours to see that transport facilities are made available. If he does those things in his influential position in the Government, we can look forward to a better future for land settlement.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (11 a.m.): There is one thing upon which I can compliment the Minister, and that is in furnishing the report of his department to Parliament early in the session, thus giving hon. members an opportunity of understanding some of the activities of the department over the preceding 12 months.

Although the report is voluminous, it is notable for the manner in which it obscures some of the activities of the department. For instance, information given in previous years and in respect of which the department has been subjected to a good deal of hostile criticism has been withheld this year or it has been set out in such a way as to make it difficult for anyone to discover the actual facts. The former Secretary for Public Lands, the hon. member for Cunningham, yesterday drew pointed attention to the fact that the lands available for closer settlement as set out in the last report are virtually the same as the areas that were enumerated in the report presented to Parliament last year. The last report sets out in bold type "New lands under preparation for closer settlement" but the hon. member for Cunningham has pointed out that these areas were set out in the reports not only for 1937-38, but in some cases for the previous year. Anyone not associated with the work of the department would on reading this report come to the conclusion that the department had been very active last year because it had opened 74,000 acres of land for closer settlement, whereas the figures are largely a repetition of what appeared in the report presented last year. The Minister should not consent to the insertion in the annual report of the department of material that seeks to mislead the public on the important matter of land settlement.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Those figures show where money is being spent on rural industry.

Mr. MAHER: Not at all.

The Secretary for Public Lands: If we did not publish those figures hon. members opposite would want to know where the money was being spent.

Mr. MAHER: The whole object of heading the figures, "New lands under preparation for closer settlement—works in progress," is to convey the impression that

all this land is being made available for selection during the ensuing year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: No.

Mr. MAHER: Whereas precisely the same information, at least in the main, appeared in the report last year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: It is still in course of preparation and that is where the money that we have spent on rural development is being spent. Hon. members opposite should travel in the North and learn something of what is being done there.

Mr. MAHER: Those figures are intended to convey to the public the impression that 74,000 acres of country will be made available for selection this year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: No.

Mr. MAHER: Very much the same impression was conveyed in the report last year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: It does not say, "this year."

Mr. MAHER: I am not going to waste time arguing with the hon. gentleman about it. I have drawn attention to the fact and I leave it at that.

On the subject of rural development the report simply says that the total amount advanced since the inception of the scheme was £665,615. The amount spent each year should be disclosed. A great part of that £665,615 was advanced under the Moore regime.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is not true. Not one penny was advanced by the Moore Government.

Mr. MAHER: At any rate, whilst I do not object to the insertion of an interesting table of that kind, which shows the total amount that has been expended, Parliament is entitled to know just how much was advanced last year in loans for rural development.

The Secretary for Public Lands: If you read the report you will find that information is there.

Mr. MAHER: The annual report fails to indicate to Parliament what the expenditure from this fund during last year really was. The reason for that, of course, is that there has always been very strong criticism of the limited amount of money made available by this Government for this important purpose. The manner in which the table is set out is designed to impress the public by causing them to believe that this Government have made £665,615 available for that purpose.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is quite true.

Mr. MAHER: On the contrary, that is the total sum that has been advanced in rural development loans since the inception of the scheme, which was founded by the predecessors of the present Government.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Not one penny was advanced by them. You talked, but did nothing.

Mr. MAHER: Another matter I desire to mention in the same category is that relating to freehold tenures. Up to the 1937 annual report full information was given showing in respect of expired leases of agricultural farms the number of lessees who chose an extension of lease in order to retain the right to get a freehold title and the number who converted to perpetual leasehold. In 1937, for example, this information occupied half a page, on page 23. In the last annual report there is a small paragraph of three and a-half lines on page 17 which gives very meagre information on this important matter. It merely says—

"Extension of lease has been chosen by practically all."

That is a deliberate attempt to evade a very important issue. Useful information on this point which has appeared in the annual reports of the department in recent years has this year been dropped altogether. That is because the Minister has been subjected to well-merited criticism. He is endeavouring to escape the wrath of the Opposition. He cannot deny that he has seen fit to avoid giving the Opposition this information.

I now refer to a matter affecting forestry. Almost every annual report up to 1937 stressed the fact that our supplies of pine timber were being rapidly exhausted. In the past two reports no similar warning has been uttered, although the present position is worse than it was two years ago.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Who said so?

Mr. MAHER: The annual harvest of pine is much greater than the annual planting. Here is something that Parliament is entitled to know something about. We, as a Parliament, must look at the whole position. If we do we must be concerned at the rapid disappearance of our softwoods; yet vital information on this point is withheld in the annual reports since 1937. Up to 1938 tables were included in the annual report, for instance, appendices G and H on pages 32 and 33, showing for a long period of years the details of the net revenue derived from the sale of Crown timber and the amount of loan money spent on reforestation. This year for the first time these important tables have been omitted.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The whole of the information is in the report if you will only read it.

Mr. MAHER: Why are these important matters withheld from Parliament?

The Secretary for Public Lands: They are not withheld. It is only your stupidity in not being able to read them.

Mr. MAHER: The Minister's policy in this respect has been the subject of criticism in previous years.

In order to escape that criticism he has directed—I have not the slightest doubt of that because I cannot visualise the officers of the department, who have been in the habit of inserting this necessary information in the annual return, omitting to do so on their own account—that this information should be omitted. I can only come to the conclusion that it was by the Minister's direction that this information, which would be helpful in constructive criticism of the work of the department, has been deliberately omitted from the report. Every year until this year, these tables containing this important information about the net revenue derived from the sale of Crown timber and the amount of loan money spent on reforestation has been supplied. Why should that course be adopted unless for the reason I have given? Every effort seems to be made to make the process of getting necessary information as difficult for hon. members as possible; that has been the motive in the preparation of this report—to make things as difficult as possible for those who wish to understand the position and criticise the administration of the department in Parliament. I make this charge against the Minister: that he is not as frank with Parliament in the annual report as he was in former years. I ask that this practice, which was helpful to Parliament, should be resumed next year so that hon. members may understand the movements of loan money and revenue, and that Parliament may be assisted by the officers of the department to see the position clearly, rather than that the activities of the department should be obscured in the way that the report undoubtedly does.

The Secretary for Public Lands: From what you say it is apparent that you never read the report.

Mr. MAHER: I read the report very carefully. I am interested in many points in it; but that has been the theme running through the report, "How can we best obscure the real activities of the department and make it difficult for any reasonable criticism to be sustained?"

I want to submit to the Minister one or two suggestions the adoption of which I think would be helpful. In the first place no compensation is allowed for ringbarking when the pastoral leases expire. This seems to me unjust, particularly on brigalow scrub country where ringbarking is very costly. The ruling rate for ringbarking in the brigalow scrubs ranges from 5s. to 7s. 6d. an acre according to the density. It is not just a question of putting the axe into it and destroying the timber and immediately getting the benefit of good fodder. Brigalow country takes from seven to eight years from the time it is ringbarked to sweeten up properly. After the country has been ringbarked, there is a growth of strong grass and undergrowth and one has to wait for at least three years before a fire will go through the country. If the fire is a success, then with the rains there is a vigorous crop of undergrowth and weeds that have very little nutritive value for stock. It takes another three years for the natural brigalow-country grasses to assert themselves

and overcome the weeds. And then another year or two must elapse before these grasses are in their proper state and the country is sweet. It is thus seen that in brigalow country seven years must elapse before the lessee obtains the real benefit of his enterprise and expenditure. The Minister might well consider the important matter of allowing compensation to lessees at the termination of their leases for money expended in ringbarking. For example, a 10,000-acre property ringbarked at a cost of 5s. an acre, involves an expenditure of £2,500. Seven years must elapse before any benefit is obtained by the lessee. At the expiration of his lease he gets no allowance for this, although for other improvements he does. The Land Court assesses the value of the improvements and the incoming tenant is obliged to take over at this figure, but I submit that a lessee who has to deal with country in which ringbarking is expensive, is in a class by himself and provision should be made for compensating him. One of the factors that contribute to the non-improving of scrub country is this very thing. Many lessees hold the view that it is no use their taking the risk of expending £2,000 to £5,000 in improving dense brigalow country when on the expiration of the lease they get no return.

Mr. Collins: What is the term of the lease?

Mr. MAHER: A pastoral lease would run approximately 30 years from the date of commencement and, as I have said, seven years elapse before the lessee reaps any benefit. He has 23 years then to run, but in many leases the lessee in occupation has only 10 to 15 years to go.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. gentleman is dealing with a matter that involves legislation.

Mr. MAHER: Not in that way. I am merely making a suggestion to the Minister. Very often the hon. gentleman invites constructive criticism and I am suggesting how land settlement could be increased.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! It would involve legislation.

Mr. MAHER: I do not think it would involve any new legislation. I think all that is necessary is a decision by the Minister and the officers that ringbarking be treated as an improvement on the expiration of a lease. I will not labour the point, but if it was done it would cause many lessees who have 10 or 12 years to run to improve their country and the State would reap the benefit. It would also give employment. After all, why should a man with a 10-years' lease of 10,000 acres expend £2,500 in ringbarking when the incoming tenant will obtain the benefit?

Mr. Collins: Does not the Minister give an extension of lease for improvements to be done?

Mr. MAHER: If an extension of lease was granted in appreciation of such enterprise that would meet the case, but I am taking the instance in which no extension of

lease has been granted, the country is taken over for closer settlement, the Minister exercising his right to terminate the lease. In such cases it would be wise to give a concession.

Much could be achieved in the way of closer settlement if pastoral lessees had the right to subdivide their leases and sell the country they are unable to control. There are many large pastoral holdings in areas in which there is a demand for closer settlement, and if it was a condition that profits realised on such a sale were to be used by the vendor in improving his own area the State would not have anything to lose but very much to gain.

There is no reason why a man should forfeit to the Crown what he has obtained from the Crown by contract.

Mr. Power: Why should he be allowed to use it twice after he has been allowed to settle?

Mr. MAHER: The cost of improving big areas is prodigious. Therefore, would it not be better to allow a man to sell part of his area and improve what he retains? I think the Minister has recognised the wisdom of this policy at Billa Billa. He has decided to allow the grazing homestead lessees—men who had 25,000 acres of country—to subdivide their leaseholds—precisely the principle that I am advocating so far as pastoral leases are concerned. I think the Minister was impressed by the case made in respect of Billa Billa. When these lands were first thrown open for selection I said in this Parliament that the areas were too large and that the men who had taken them up would never be able to raise enough capital to improve them. It would take £20,000 to suitably improve 20,000 acres of brigalow country. This would mean that, instead of making a living from that area, a man would have to go on the labour market to earn money. He would have to earn money to keep the property instead of being kept in comfort by the property. At Billa Billa the Minister saw that it was essential that the selectors be given the right to subdivide and sell portions of their areas.

Mr. Power: That would be all right in some circumstances, but we should not make a permanent principle of it.

Mr. MAHER: If it is right in one set of circumstances, why is it not right in another?

Mr. Collins: The Crown was put to a lot of expense in increasing the areas in order that they might be able to make a living.

Mr. MAHER: Let us take the case of a man who has 100,000 acres of pastoral lease. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that he says: "I should like to sell 30,000 acres. Give me the right to sell that and I will expend any profits I make from that sale on improving the country that I retain." He would thus have money to improve his area, and the man coming onto the 30,000 acres would have capital to improve his share. My point is that in this way the country would be improved

rapidly. It is not fair to argue that a pastoral lessee should be called upon to forfeit his lease. The point is that land that now carries a beast to 40 or 50 acres could, in the way I suggest, be improved to carry a beast to 10 acres. The present policy does not make for the rapid development that we desire.

Mr. Power: Who would own the improvements that were effected as a result of that sale?

Mr. MAHER: Obviously, the man who put the improvements on the property is entitled to their value at the expiration of the lease. After all, he is only leasing the land from the Crown. He pays his rent and discharges his obligations to the Crown, and if he improves the country the State derives benefit from the increased production and the consequent increased taxation that the lessee is able to pay.

Mr. Power: You are suggesting that the Crown should give him permission to sell part of the land, and, with the proceeds of that sale, improve his own holding, and then, at the expiration of the lease, you say he should have the value of those improvements.

Mr. MAHER: The Minister has agreed to the same principle at Billa Billa. After all, the same thing exists with hotel leases. Often when a man sells a hotel lease he makes a profit.

(Time expired.)

Mr. COLLINS (Look) (11.25 a.m.): One would be doing a wrong if one had not complimented the Minister on his administration of the Department of Public Lands. We are indeed fortunate in having at the head of that department a gentleman who has been connected with land matters all his life. He has been associated either directly or indirectly with land for many years and is au fait with the position of the man on the land. As a business man, the Minister recognises that the man on the land has to run his land as a business and is entitled to make a profit on the undertaking and have a competence when he retires at the end of a useful life. The Minister has taken all these things into consideration in his administration of the department. He has so reorganised it that I believe it is one of the best administered departments under the control of the Government. He has surrounded himself with very competent officers. One could not come in contact with better officers than the present members of the Land Administration Board, Messrs. A. G. Melville, V. Grenning, and J. L. Callaghan. One must appreciate their sterling value and the complete knowledge they possess of the department under their control. They have at all times shown sympathetic consideration to those who have experienced difficulty on the land. That remark applies equally to all officers of the department, from the Minister down. From time to time the Minister has gone out of his way to help those who have been in difficulty.

The department is fortunate in having as one of its officers Mr. Ainscow, who has given yeoman service to the Government and has

created a standard of efficiency it would be hard to equal. His services have not been excelled in any road-making department of the State or, for that matter, in any other State. His objective is to get the job done—get men employed and to do the job in hand in the shortest possible time.

The Leader of the Opposition has seen fit to criticise the annual report of the Land Administration Board on the operations of the Department of Public Lands. He criticised it because of its vagueness. In my opinion, too much information is contained in that report and I have found it difficult to assimilate the whole of it within the time at my disposal. We have, in addition to the duties we perform in Parliament, many others that we must discharge in attending to the wants of our electorates, and to completely digest the whole of the information in the report would take more time than one has at one's disposal. The graphs contained in it are illuminating and are presented in such a way as to make them easily understood by all.

Officers of the department must be congratulated upon the care they have taken to bring the report up to such a fine standard. I have always looked upon this report as one of the most informative reports presented to Parliament. It should be so, because land settlement is responsible for the whole of our prosperity and without it the State would not be the State that it is to-day.

The Minister has given the utmost consideration to all sections of people on the land throughout the State, from Cooktown in the North to Coolangatta on the southern border and to the far western parts of the State. He has given proper consideration to pastoral lessees; he has provided water on stock routes, water supplies in cities and towns, and roads to help develop new scrub lands; and he has financed new settlers. He has given a great deal of consideration to all the matters that come under his control.

In the Daintree district, which is really the most northern point of settlement in the State, there is a great deal of land suitable for closer settlement. It is situated in an area with a high rainfall, which, with the good quality of the soil, makes the district eminently suitable for settlement. I am very pleased that the Minister is pushing on with settlement there, and I hope that it will be expedited, because the opening of new land is one way of solving the problem of unemployment, particularly when the area to be settled is contiguous to the sugar-growing districts. The cane-cutting season is only of a few months' duration, but during the slack period the workers may find employment in felling the scrub in new areas that are being prepared for closer settlement.

Another area in my electorate suitable for closer settlement is Julatten. It has a good rainfall, the land is reasonably good, and after being planted with cultivable grasses may be used for dairying and the fattening of stock. The land that has already been

opened up was rushed by new settlers. The people in this State are very land-minded. Their desire is to get a piece of land because they know that by the application of work they can get a secure living and a reasonable competence in their old age. I do not wish to give the impression that a fortune is to be made from the land, but I do know that the majority of settlers are very much better off than the average man who follows casual employment or even the man on the basic wage in constant work. The casual worker is always faced with the fear of dismissal when one job is finished and he has to look for another, perhaps 100 miles away. He may earn good money while he is on a job for two or three months, or even for four months, but if he has to travel long distances in search of work when the job is finished much of his earnings is eaten up in travelling expenses. On the other hand, any man who is willing to work may become a successful settler and make a reasonable living for himself and his family.

The work that has been done in making access roads to new settlement areas is to be very highly commended. This is some of the best work that has been undertaken by the Government. It gives settlers immediate access by good roads to the marketing centres. I know that in the early days on the Atherton Tableland the settlers had to carry their goods on their backs for years before they got road access. That great obstacle to progress has been overcome by the policy of the Minister. The work he has done in the Julatten area in that respect is a credit to him and his officers. The good roads he has constructed are necessary because to-day a man should be able to go on the land without suffering hardships. There is no reason why he should give some of the best years of his life to carrying some of his goods on his back or on a pack horse, and getting his cream and other farm products to markets under the awful conditions that formerly existed. The construction of road access to the Julatten lands to give the settlers access to the Cook Highway and Cairns is a very necessary work in the opening up of some 5,000 or 6,000 acres of land in that area. Without that access these settlers will have to undergo great hardship. The Co-ordinator-General of Public Works has been unwise in suspending operations on this road for the time being even though the suspension may be temporary. I urge him to give further consideration to this project, as it is only by good roads that we can hope to make these settlers successful.

The hon. member for Cunningham yesterday, as well as succeeding speakers on his side of the Committee, deplored the fact that the tenure of land being opened up in Queensland was that of perpetual leasehold. Perpetual leasehold is a perfectly sound tenure, and is being sought after by people who are taking up land. To-day the old prejudice against that tenure—it was merely prejudice, due to the fact that the people did not know the full implications of it—has entirely disappeared. Every block of land

open for settlement to-day is rushed by intending selectors.

Mr. Macdonald: They have Hobson's choice. There is no other tenure.

Mr. COLLINS: I will give the hon. member who just interjected an illustration. When his Government were in power there was a soldier settlement on the Atherton Tableland of 20,000 acres. The land was probably among the best agricultural land in this State. It was all selected under perpetual lease. Then his Government gave the selectors the option of converting to freehold. Of all the settlers who selected perpetual leasehold tenure in the first instance—I believe there were between 80 and 90 of them—only three saw fit to transfer to freehold tenure.

Mr. Edwards: They did not take advantage of it, because they had no money. They were stony-broke.

Mr. COLLINS: They had no desire to do so. Even those settlers who did transfer to the freehold tenure have since expressed a desire to go back to perpetual leasehold.

Mr. Muller: Because of the taxation.

Mr. COLLINS: It was because they must pay for the freehold land. They were absolved from all that.

Mr. Macdonald: What is your tenure?

Mr. COLLINS: Some of my tenure is freehold and some is leasehold.

Mr. Macdonald: What proportion?

Mr. COLLINS: That does not matter very much. I should be perfectly happy to transfer my freehold to perpetual leasehold if the Crown would give me the unimproved value of that land as assessed by the Commissioner of Taxes. On that basis I could get an additional £10 an acre—that is the value of some of that land—and put it into further farming operations, and if I could not make more than the 3 per cent. the Department of Public Lands charge me for the use of that money—that is the capital I have lying dead in the land—then there would be something very wrong with my methods of farming. I say definitely—and I mean it—that if the department would do that I should be prepared to change over. Obviously, I should be better off under those conditions. The hon. member has an entirely wrong impression as to the demand for freehold land. The great value in freehold land is limited to city areas, because the growth of the city increases its value tremendously and the owner thereby reaps an unearned increment. That very seldom applies to country lands. When the increase in the improved value is due to the growth of a city the man who has not created the value receives it, but under the leasehold system the lessee gets the value of his work, and the general public continue to own the land for all time and get the increment not earned by the lessee.

Mr. Moore: What about the reappraisalment?

Mr. COLLINS: The reappraisalment assesses the unimproved value. Any improvement a man puts on his leasehold land belongs to him in the same way as the improvements would belong to him if they were put on a freehold block. There is no difference.

Mr. Moore: That is the theory of it.

Mr. COLLINS: That is the fact. How can you account for the fact that leasehold land on the Atherton Tableland is selling to-day under the leasehold tenure for as much as £20 an acre? That is a complete answer to the hon. gentleman's argument.

Mr. Moore: No; if it is up for reappraisalment they may pay more for it.

Mr. COLLINS: Most of the value they have paid for is in improvements. It is better to let the Crown own the unimproved value, because under that system the settlers can devote all the rest of the money they have to production. Take the whole of the western areas of the State. They were developed under the leasehold system, yet hon. members opposite argue that it is wrong and these people are being robbed.

Mr. Macdonald: They are not comparable.

Mr. COLLINS: They are.

Mr. Macdonald: Far from it.

Mr. COLLINS: It does not suit the hon. member's argument and that is why he says they are not comparable. The leasehold policy has suited the whole of the pastoral areas in the West. If the freehold tenure is so good and the man who wishes to go on the land should have the right to obtain it, why have the Federal Government seen fit to create a leasehold tenure for the whole of the land under their control?

Mr. Moore: It is better for the Government.

Mr. COLLINS: Who are the Government? The people! Therefore, according to the argument of the hon. gentleman, it is better for the people. That is what we are arguing.

Mr. Moore: It is better for the people who do not work the land.

Mr. COLLINS: I am not saying it is better; it is as good for the people who work the land.

Mr. Edwards: What is wrong with freehold tenure in close settlement?

Mr. COLLINS: I am asking you what is wrong with leasehold tenure?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to address the Chair.

Mr. COLLINS: I was carried away by the interjections by hon. members opposite. The facts on this subject hurt them. Leasehold tenure is unquestionably a tenure that has won the confidence of the people in this State. The land does not produce any more produce whether it is held under one tenure or the other. The land does not do anything to show that it objects to being worked under

leasehold tenure. A new conception of the value of land is abroad to-day. At one time the average man who took up land did not expect to make very much out of the use of it, but he did expect that over a long period of years the land would increase in value, and this increased value would probably give him a competence. To-day men go on the land, not with the idea of making a profit 20 to 40 years hence, but of making a profit from year to year. It is for this reason that there is unexampled increase in our sugar, dairying, and wheat industries, and almost all other phases of agriculture. This is also true in the pastoral areas, so far as beef production is concerned. Unfortunately, it is not true of wool-growing. Drought is a very important factor in this industry, and the natural conditions have limited the number of stock that the land can carry.

One of the best articles that I have read recently on land administration of this State is contained in the Sydney "Bulletin" of 11 October. This paper is one of the most severe critics in Australia of Labour and generally speaking is hostile to our administration, but under the heading "The Empire's greatest landowner" it states—

"Queensland Government is the greatest landowner in the Empire. Of a total area of 430,000,000 acres, only 28,000,000 acres are alienated—a wide strip along the coast in the South, a narrow one along the North Coast to just beyond Cooktown, another narrow belt which runs through the older settlement area along the South-west railway, a few patches in the pastoral land of the far-west. About 40,000,000 acres, nearly all in Cape York Peninsula and along the edges of Carpentaria Gulf, and the Northern Territory border, are unoccupied. The rest is all under pastoral, grazing, or perpetual lease.

"Development is, therefore, orderly, and active. The Land Administration Board manages the whole of the Crown land. It watches and quickly adjusts rents and areas to conditions, and its record of work each year is a heartening evidence that a Government department can be business-like and progressive.

"Under its modern scheme, development of virgin areas for closer settlement is not as rapid as it has been at times in past history, but it is methodical and leaves little room for failures. In recent years attention has been concentrated on putting into use the rich scrub lands of the North—where population is a defensive as well as an economic asset: last year on nine rich blocks, totalling 74,200,000 acres, from the Eungella Range, behind Mackay, to the prosperous Daintree, just south of Cooktown. The process followed is survey into farm blocks, removal of valuable timbers, so that they will not be wasted in clearing, and, finally the building of all-weather access roads.

"The days when Northerners carved their way into the scrub and brought their supplies in on pack horses are over.

"In pastoral districts, local small settlers get first benefit of resumption nearest to them when extra areas are needed. Nearly 5,000,000 acres of resumed areas were opened last year. . . .

"The board's report this year quotes one instance in which improvement covenants for £10,000 in three years have been covered by an expenditure of £18,000 in under two years; another where £10,000 has been spent in two years on a covenant to spend £4,400 in five years. Prickly-pear leases subject to clearing conditions are merging into ordinary leaseholds, so far that, where in 1934 3,276 square miles were under this tenure, total pear leaseholds last year were only 185 square miles."

(Time expired.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS
(Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) (11.51 a.m.): Before the debate goes very far I should like to answer some of the criticism of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition must have awakened in a very bad temper this morning. First he commended the department for its early tabling of the report, then he went on to prove that he has not read it. I interjected at the time that he had not read the report, and I propose to prove now that he has not done so.

The first matter with which he dealt was rural development, and he objected to the fact that my department takes credit for advancing a certain amount of money for this very commendable work. I hold the opinion, as does every other hon. member on this side of the Committee and, I am sure of the Opposition, that rural development is one of the channels in which Government money can be most wisely expended. Not only does money expended in this way usually lead to a greater amount of employment than money expended in most other ways, but it also improves the Crown's estate. What is wrong with our taking credit for the full amount that has been advanced? That is the amount that the Government have actually advanced since we have been in power and since I have had the honour of controlling this department.

The Leader of the Opposition may be telling the truth when he says that the Moore Government initiated a certain scheme, but the point is that they only talked about it. Despite what they say about depression conditions, in their three years they had the best opportunity in the history of the State for the carrying out of this work. When they talk about the depression they do not tell the people that they had over £5,000,000 in actual cash in the Treasury and that instead of spending that on rural development they lent a considerable amount of it to the other States and so enabled them to find work for their unemployed. The minute we straightened-up the State's finances after the Moore blight we did what they were talking about doing. We advanced money to the settlers of Queensland, and that is the actual amount that this Government have made available.

The Leader of the Opposition could not find much in the report of the Land Administration Board on which to attack the Government. I remind him that this is not my report. If the hon. gentleman thinks that the officers of the Land Administration Board are all "yes" men and that they will do exactly what the Minister tells them to do, he has another think coming to him.

I give this commendation to the whole of my officers—and when I speak of officers I mean the staff of the Land Administration Board and the other officers controlling the various sub-departments—I have no "yes" men. I have all honest men who do their duties properly. If they think that anything is wrong with either the administration or the policy of this Government they do not hesitate to say so. Hon. members opposite know as well as I do that the officers of the Land Administration Board in particular are not out to serve any Government; they are out to serve the country, and they are doing so in a commendable manner.

The Land Administration Board's report did receive a little commendation. That praise came, as the hon. member for Cook has pointed out, from the Sydney "Bulletin." If we had had to pay advertising rates for all the space that the Sydney "Bulletin" gave us it would have cost us a considerable amount of money. That journal did not ask us for one penny—and most newspapers are inclined to charge Governments dearly for what they do. The Sydney "Bulletin" paid the Land Administration Board, and the Government indirectly, a very high compliment indeed by pointing out the very efficient way in which the land affairs of Queensland are administered.

Considerable space was devoted by a valuable paper such as the Sydney "Bulletin" to giving Queensland a boost. It is about time that the Opposition, in land matters particularly, decided to give Queensland a boost rather than to try to score a point politically, to the disadvantage of their country.

In Townsville there is the very fine paper called the Townsville "Bulletin." The Leader of the Opposition was up there quite recently and he knows he received a good report in that paper. Mr. D. Green, who is in control of the Townsville "Bulletin" and the "North Queensland Register," which paper is recognised as one of the best country newspapers in Queensland and circulates extensively in the pastoral areas of the State—gave us his commendation upon the report of the Land Administration Board. He extolled what we have done and said that whatever might be said about Government institutions the Department of Public Lands had certainly done something tangible.

An Opposition Member: You must advertise very extensively in it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, we do not advertise very largely in that paper; country papers do not get very much advertising matter from us at all. Mr. Green realised the value of the report and he trusted

that people throughout the world would obtain and read it.

The Leader of the Opposition complained particularly about the work of the Sub-Department of Forestry. I will prove that he did not read the report, and I shall deal with that sub-department when I come to it. If, in the meantime, he turns to page 18 of the report of the Director of Forests he will ascertain the net revenue of that sub-department. On page 4 of the same report he will find the whole of the expenses of reforestation. When I come to deal with that sub-department I will read from those pages for his benefit.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke of other important matters. If he had started his remarks by saying what he said later on, it would have been all right. I object to that hon. gentleman thinking for one moment that the report which I tabled on behalf of my department is manufactured by the Minister in charge of it or by the Government.

I want to deal with the remarks of the hon. member for Cunningham because, as an ex-Minister, we naturally take a little notice of him. He commended the officers of the department, because he knows them as I know them. They are efficient and loyal, not to the Government but to the State. His whole complaint rested on his liking for freehold tenure as against perpetual leasehold. As the hon. member for Cook pointed out, the soldier settlers at Atherton were offered freehold tenure but only three of them decided to convert. One has since left the district, and every time I come in contact with the remaining two they ask me to allow them to reconvert. They have exhausted the time allowed and are desirous of getting back to leasehold.

What is wrong with the land tenures of Queensland? As will be found from a report shortly to be presented to Parliament, some £40,000,000 to £50,000,000 of capital have been invested in the wool industry of this State. That is a very conservative estimate of the amount of money invested in that industry. What are the tenures of those engaged in it? Not freehold. Many of the people who have invested their money in the wool industry of this State do not live in Queensland—they are absentees. Much of that money has been invested by people who are overseas and in other States. Pastoral lessees are not asking for freehold tenure. A pastoral lease has a maximum term of 30 years; a pastoral development lease, 40 years; a grazing selection, 28 years; and a development grazing selection 40 years. If we were to include the cattle industry with the sheep industry we should find at a conservative estimate between £70,000,000 and £80,000,000 had been invested in leasehold land by people looking for investments in all parts of the world. Those people have come to Queensland and invested their money in pastoral leaseholds. They have come to Queensland to invest their money in pastoral land, but not under the freehold tenure. They do not want the freehold tenure; even if we offered it to them

they would not take it. Has not the Leader of the Opposition already pointed out that when pastoral areas are open for settlement there is an enormous number of applicants? I say emphatically that no land in Australia is more suitable for investment than the land in Queensland, and it is because of the tenures offered by the Government. That statement is proved by the number of people who invest their money in land here. Why, Sir Walter Massy-Greene, an ex-Minister of the Federal Government, has a considerable number of properties in Queensland, and so have other people from the South.

I was surprised to hear the hon. member for Cunningham do a disservice to this State. He has been in charge of the department, and I had some regard for him as Secretary for Public Lands, but I did not expect him to say anything that would tend to discredit the department or the State. He said, in his usual half-hearted way, that there was no demand for land in Queensland, but there is. The hon. member for Cook, who knows more about land settlement in Queensland than the hon. member for Cunningham because he travels, was able to tell the hon. member for Cunningham that applications are being received from all over Australia for land in this State. Why, in the Palmerston district in my electorate there are settlers from Victoria who have told me how fortunate they were to read an advertisement in a Southern paper, perhaps the Sydney "Bulletin," extolling the lands of Queensland. Our advertising campaign has brought people from Victoria who tell me that they are doing very well indeed on the Palmerston area.

The hon. member for Cunningham also said that the farmers were in a bad way in this State, but they are not in a bad way. We all know that there is some distress in the wool industry, but that is not because of any maladministration by the Government. It is the result of the low prices for wool. Despite the economic position of the world, the Queensland farmers are better off than the farmers in any other State of the Commonwealth, and that is established beyond doubt by the smallness of the amount required in this State under the Commonwealth rural rehabilitation scheme. That scheme, inaugurated by the Commonwealth Government, makes a fund available to farmers in distress to enable them to write down their liabilities and to continue operations on their land. The smallest amount of money required by any State under that scheme is the sum required in this State. Why is that so? It is because the farmers in Queensland are better off than the farmers in the other States. Is that not logic? Queensland draws less money from this scheme than any other State for the simple reason that the farmers in this State are not in need of it.

I want to establish the fact that our farmers are not in a bad way. I always believe in proving my statements. The report of the Commissioner of Taxes shows that the net taxable income of the farmer in Queensland has increased year by year. It shows

that there was a decrease of net taxable income of sheep pastoralists, but in 1937 the net taxable income of cattle pastoralists was £574,000, and that in 1938 it had increased to £731,000. I now come to the net taxable income of the mixed farmers for whom the hon. member for Cunningham is particularly concerned.

In order to determine how badly off a man is we must examine what money goes into his pocket. According to the last annual report of the Commissioner of Taxes, the taxable income of mixed farmers was £393,000, against £251,000 the previous year.

Now take dairy farmers—and hon. members who know something about the dairying industry will agree with this. In 1937 the taxable income of this tax-paying section was £40,000, while in 1938 it was £70,000—a wonderful appreciation. This is the sort of thing we want to place on record, as they are facts, facts that induce people in the other States and elsewhere to come to Queensland and settle on our land. After my trip overseas to Canada and the United States of America I came to the conclusion that the farmer in Queensland was better off than the farmer in those countries.

Again, I want to quote from a very fine advertisement inserted in the "North Queensland Register" and Townsville "Bulletin" by Mr. C. D. Edwards. I am not referring to the hon. member for Nanango who, unfortunately, like the hon. member for Cunningham, will say anything that suits him politically in order to condemn the State. The following advertisement under the name of Mr. Edwards appeared in the "North Queensland Register" on 26 August, 1939:—

Mr. King: They say he is a brother of the hon. member for Nanango.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He is an estate and land agent in Brisbane. He says in this advertisement—

"Two hundred and nineteen acres at Millaa Millaa, heavy walnut and cedar scrub, all virgin land 8 years ago, 101 milking cows (pick of 120), 2 bulls, 5 sows, new 12-room house, cost £1,250 to erect, double brick chimney, grassed with paspalum, kikuyu, clover, subdivided into 10 paddocks, with 7 creeks through the property, annual average rainfall over 80 inches a year."

He quotes the cream returns from this property from July, 1938, to June, 1939, as £2,073 14s. 8d. The other returns were—Pigs, £500 10s. 2d.; potatoes, £139 17s. 6d.; calves, £78 19s. 3d.; making a total of £2,793 1s. 7d. He states that this return is a fair annual average for the farm, that the actual butter-factory statements are available to a buyer, who is invited to bring along his accountant and investigate the returns. He adds—

"We feel sure that on inspection of the property itself you will buy on sight. In all our years of business in Brisbane we have never struck a dairy proposition that

would practically pay for itself within two years."

Mr. Muller: Do you believe it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Those are the figures he advertises in the "North Queensland Register" and Townsville "Bulletin." He asks any potential buyer to bring along his accountant to examine the figures. In effect, he says: "You can come and examine the dairy returns and you will see that with 100 cows your money will be returned in two years." I am pleased to give this illustration of how well a dairy farmer can do on 219 acres of land. Then hon. members opposite have the audacity to get up and say that the dairying industry in Queensland is not what it should be.

Mr. Macdonald: Shocking!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is absolutely shocking, because the position is not as they would lead people to believe. I am sure we are all very pleased indeed to learn that two years' revenue from this dairy farm will return an intending buyer his money.

Mr. Plunkett: It is not sold.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The owner has made so much money on it that he wants to sell and retire.

The hon. member for Cunningham led this Committee to believe that there was some delay in opening lands to settlement in North Queensland. I shall be very pleased on my next visit to North Queensland to take the hon. member with me and show him some of the lands up there. The hon. member will then realise why it takes so many years to properly open up jungle lands for settlement. First of all, we have decided that no land shall be opened unless there is road access to it. We collaborated with the Main Roads Commission, which builds the main roads, and the Public Estate Improvement Branch builds the feeder roads. We do not open any land in Queensland unless those conditions are present. It takes a long time for these works to be carried out. In addition to that, there is valuable timber on these lands. We are not going to give away the Crown estate. Many years ago, when past Governments opened up lands, a plan of the land was made, and the man who took up the land often did not know what he was buying. When he got up there he found there was very valuable timber on the land, but at that time there was not a market or marketing facilities for this valuable timber. The result was that for many years in North Queensland millions of pounds worth of the finest cabinet and other timbers was burnt. We will not allow that to happen to-day. We do not open up this land for settlement unless the Sub-Department of Forestry tells us it does not require it for reforestation purposes. We first of all take off the valuable timber for the benefit of the people of Queensland. That is one of the reasons why we have to delay the opening of these lands. The Sub-Department of Forestry

will not give us the O.K. until it has taken all the valuable timber off. I should like the hon. member for Cunningham to come up and see what is going on. It may take five years before we are able to make available some of this land. We had roads built into the Maalan area, but the Sub-Department of Forestry will not release the area because it tells us the value of the timber is too great to let it go to settlement. In the Palmerston area, after the Sub-Department of Forestry took off the bulk of the valuable timber, we decided we would allow the settler the value of the remaining timber as long as he spent the money in developing the land. I have here a return in connection with the Granadilla and Palmerston lands, which shows that from 1936 to 1939 the value of the royalty on the timber given to the settlers amounted to £10,462; that was not the value of the timber, but it was the value of the Crown royalty. That was given to the settlers as long as we were satisfied they expended the money on their holdings. That is why that land has not been opened up as quickly as the hon. member for Cunningham would like to see it opened up.

There is a great deal of loose talk about land settlement in Queensland. The hon. member for Cunningham knows as well as I do that when you come, say, south of Mackay, there is no Crown land for selection. We are restricted to land that has come into the hands of the Crown by resumption. From here to Mackay virtually the whole of the land was alienated years ago; we are restricted to resumptions of land. We are further restricted because, owing to the economic situation to-day, the area made available years ago is not now a living area. As these resumptions take place in various parts of the State we allocate to the adjoining settlers areas sufficient to make their holdings living areas. If hon. members will read the report of the department, they will see that as a result of our policy thousands of settlers have been able to obtain living areas. So that to-day we are restricted entirely to opening up these jungle lands in North Queensland. I say without hesitation that from the day the Department of Public Lands starts opening those lands until they can be of value for settlement, three to four years must elapse.

That is why the same names appear in the report each year. If we did not give the information, hon. members would growl, and when we do give the information, nevertheless, they growl. The report is issued by the department with the best of intentions to place the position fully before the people.

In the discussion on this vote last year I said, as the hon. member for Isis this morning pointed out, that on the land policy of the Government of any State depends the future of the people on the land. If settlers are doing well and are contented, that is proof that the Government's policy is sound. On the other hand, if they are not contented and are not doing well, that proves the unsoundness of the Government's policy. I have proof here, in the incomes, that, with the

exception of the sheep pastoralists, who have had a very bad time owing to drought, our policy is sound.

Now I propose to show the movement in the net value of the whole of Queensland's primary production, and in this I do not take the figures of the State Government Statistician but those of the statistician of the Commonwealth. The same basis is taken for each year. The figures used by me in this debate last year were taken from the report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission. They showed that for 1935-36 the net value of Queensland's primary production totalled £29,205,000. I have now obtained the figures for the other two years and will quote them for the benefit of the Committee. The net value of all Queensland primary production was—

	1936-37.
	£
Pastoral	14,112,000
Dairy	4,957,000
Agriculture	10,706,000
Forestry	2,185,000
Total	£31,960,000

I remind hon. members that the country has gone through a period of drought, but for 1937-38 the figures are—

	1937-38.
	£
Pastoral	15,364,000
Dairy	7,443,000
Agriculture	11,264,000
Forestry	2,514,000
Total	£36,585,000

Is not the increase of the total for 1937-38 some commendation of the land policy of this year? The total increases over the preceding year are—

1936-37	£2,755,000
1937-38	£4,425,000

In pastoral production alone the increases are—

1936-37	£2,551,000
1937-38	£1,252,000

It has been stated that the pastoralist is in a very bad way and we have had cited cases in regard to sheep, but to the extent that the value of the industry to the sheepman has depreciated the value to the cattleman has appreciated. Whatever may be said of the pastoralists of Queensland, their actual production, which in turn reflects their net earnings, for 1936-37, was £2,551,000 greater than those of the previous year, and those for 1937-38 were no less than £1,252,000 greater than for the year preceding. What can be wrong with a land policy that is responsible for that? Is it not sound? If, on the other hand, these industries were languishing there might be some ground for complaint. It is the policy of this Government that is responsible for this wonderful

production of this State. The record export figures for last year are mainly due to the land policy of the Government.

The hon. member for Isis referred to land rentals. The fact is that although a greater area of land is held from the Crown throughout the State to-day rentals are lower than they were years ago. It must be remembered that mine is a very large department to administer and that it is essential, therefore, that we get as much revenue as we can to balance our outgoings. It is only natural to think that as more land is being opened up, the department would be deriving a greater revenue, but that is not so. I shall quote figures dealing with pastoral leases in particular because it has been said that the pastoralist is in a bad way. In 1937-38 239,000,000 acres of land were held under pastoral leases. This area is 55.84 per cent. of the whole State. Last year the revenue from that area was only £380,000, or an average of 1¹/₂d. an acre. I challenge any hon. member of this Committee, or anyone else, to name any part of the world in which land can be had for less than that price. In 1927-28, 10 years earlier, the revenue from pastoral leases alone was £457,000. It will be seen, therefore, that we have to administer a growing department with a decreasing revenue—a revenue that fell by £77,000 in one item alone in 10 years. Why has there been that decrease? The reason is that rentals are lower. This Government stand for giving to the people on the land a chance to live, and we have proved that in the fact that our pastoral revenue has decreased by £77,000 in 10 years.

When speaking of additional areas for settlers, the Leader of the Opposition argued that we should do something more for the men who wanted to forego half their areas. That is all right, but in the western parts of the State we have to forego a good deal of revenue from large areas of land because we have to do something to patch up matters for those who have not living areas. More than two-thirds of the land that comes into the hands of the Crown has to be made available for that purpose. By pursuing that policy we have appreciated the return from the land, and after all, it is what we can get from the land that counts.

I am glad the hon. member for Oxley is present. During a previous debate in this Chamber he spoke about the work of the Public Estate Improvement Branch, which is administered by the Land Administration Board. Amongst other things he said that we had shut down on a lot of work. He stated that on the Taroom-Wandoan road men had been paid off although the job had not been completed.

Mr Nimmo: That is so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Like everything else the hon. member says, it is quite wrong. This is certainly one of his worst offences. He said a number of people had told him all sorts of things, and for his information I quote the following

letter from the clerk of the Taroom Shire Council to the Land Administration Board—

“5 October, 1939.

“I am directed to advise that the council appreciate the road work being carried out by the Public Estate Improvement Branch within the shire and it is the opinion of the members of this council that the said roads are being well constructed and are suitable to the immediate requirements of the district.”

Another letter, written to Mr. Callaghan, a member of the Land Administration Board, from the Taroom Shire Council is as follows:—

“15 September, 1939.

“Public Estate Improvement Works.

“Wandoan District.

“With reference to our conversation by telephone yesterday, I have to advise that I got in touch with Mr. Chairman John Mundell, of Bungaban Station, Wandoan, and Mr. Councillor J. G. Willacy, Stanley Park, Guluguba, and they report on the roads as follows:—

Mr. Mundell states that the Wandoan-Roche Creek road is in good order but he cannot give an opinion regarding the other roads as he has not inspected same.

Mr. Willacy states that the Guluguba-Giligulgul road and the Giligulgul-Wolebee road are definitely good jobs.
.....”

I say again, as I said in answer to a question asked in this Chamber by the hon. member concerned, that we began operations on the Wandoan public estate improvement works in September, 1938, with a staff of 94 men. After Christmas that number was increased to 116. From July to September, 1939, 106 men were employed, and we propose to employ 45 men for the remainder of the financial year. If anybody cares to look at the roads in question it will be found that what I have said is true. We could not keep 100 men employed if there was no work for them to do. If we had not finished the roads hon. members opposite would have been pointing out to us what an extravagant Government we were in keeping a lot of men about doing nothing. Those roads are very fine roads, indeed, and the people who use them are satisfied with what we have done.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (12.27 p.m.): The vote under consideration is of great importance, as much revenue accrues to the State from this department. It has become a great spender of public money through the operations of the Public Estate Improvement Branch, irrigation projects, and reforestation schemes.

In common with other hon. members, I congratulate the members of the Land Administration Board on the comprehensive nature of the report submitted to Parliament. The operations of the sub-departments are well set out, but, as the Leader of the Opposition remarked, a number of important features have been deleted from the report. On those

features members of the Opposition have based their criticism in previous years. I do not know the reason for the exclusion of these matters. I do not know whether the fact that these subjects have drawn criticism has been responsible for their deletion. It is not a desirable thing that important information should be withheld. The report, whilst being informative, would certainly have been more informative had the features I refer to been included.

The Premier: You do not think departmental officers read speeches delivered in this Chamber?

Mr. NICKLIN: They might, occasionally. It is very significant, as my leader pointed out, that these things have been omitted.

The Minister, in his criticism of speeches made by hon. members on this side of the Committee, has fallen back on rather weak material to combat their arguments. He spent a considerable amount of time in quoting the advertisement of an estate agent who had for sale a property in North Queensland. I do not know for what reason he used that advertisement. Perhaps, he did it to enable hon. members on his side to get in touch with the agent in question with a view to purchasing the property. No doubt, judging by the advertisement, they would be better off as owners of the property in question than as members of Parliament.

Then the hon. gentleman referred to the thread-worn argument about the Moore Government's lending money to the other States. He refused to give credit to the initiative adopted by that Government in establishing a policy of rural development in this State. He endeavoured to take to himself the whole of the credit for the establishment of a rural development policy and the expenditure of much money on it to date.

At 12.30 p.m.,

Mr. BRASSINGTON (Fortitude Valley), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. NICKLIN: Other speakers have dealt fairly fully with the value of rural development work and I do not propose to reiterate their arguments. I am trying to point out the unfairness of the Minister's argument. What is the exact position? The figures I propose to quote are to be found in the annual report of the department. The rural development policy was inaugurated by the Moore Government, but of a total of only £640,000 of loan money available to that Government they appropriated £190,000, or 30 per cent. of it, to inaugurate the rural development scheme. Now, what is the record of the present Government in expenditure on rural development? In six years they have made available only £480,504 of a total of £35,341,000 of loan money, or 1.3 per cent. They should be fair, and instead of decrying the efforts of the Moore Government in inaugurating a rural development scheme they should give the Moore Government credit for their splendid work, because in proportion to their total loan resources they provided more

money for rural development than the present Government have done.

During this debate and debates in previous years hon members have stressed the value of prickly-pear land that was cleared of pear by the cactoblastis and other biological methods of control. Hon. members have also pointed to the increased wealth from the reclaimed lands, but I think it is significant to note the opening sentence of the annual report of the Prickly-pear Land Commission, which says—

“The year just closed has been a very favourable one for the growth of all kinds of vegetation, and it cannot be claimed that it has seen any considerable reduction in the pear infestation of the State.”

I think that is a warning that we should not sit back and be content with the results achieved up to date by the biological methods of controlling the spread of prickly-pear.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Do you know that the Commonwealth Government have withdrawn their co-operation in this matter?

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. gentleman refers to the Commonwealth Government every time he wants to excuse his own actions. The Commonwealth Government have carried their share of the responsibility of investigating the problem of prickly-pear destruction in this State and no doubt they have withdrawn the financial support given in previous years because the investigation that they initiated has now been completed. The point I wish to make is that we should not sit back in a self-satisfied way and say that the prickly-pear has been completely destroyed in the State, but we should continue our efforts to keep it in check otherwise it may over-run the millions of acres of valuable country that was once in its grasp.

The report of the Prickly-pear Land Commission goes on to say that the effectiveness of the biological methods of control has been considerably reduced by the destruction of the pear itself, because the destruction of the pear brings about the destruction of the cactoblastis and the other biological agents. In passing I wish to sound the warning that in view of what has been said in the report we should continue our efforts to control the spread of prickly-pear so that it can never again become the menace that it was in Queensland in past years.

It is interesting to note that on the whole the Prickly-pear Land Commission thinks that the pear position is satisfactory although it issues that warning earlier in its report. It is also interesting to note that methods have been evolved which had been proved to be very satisfactory in treating tiger pear, a species which in the past has not yielded to biological treatment to the same extent as the more common varieties. No doubt, the Minister realises the danger from this pear and will see that his department's efforts are directed to effectively controlling it.

The Public Estate Improvement Branch works undertaken by this department are

undoubtedly necessary, and good work has been accomplished. It would be informative and only right if the Minister included in his report more information as to the actual costs of these works. At present it is very difficult to ascertain exactly what they cost, and whether they are being carried out by the most economical methods. It has been said in the past that much of this Public Estate Improvement Branch work, particularly road work, is being undertaken under the control of the Main Roads Commission. I do not know whether that is correct.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The Co-ordinator-General is in charge of all such works.

Mr. NICKLIN: The report makes no mention of that fact. If, after all, these works are not costing more than they should, and are not over-costly, what is the objection to setting out their actual cost in this report? The only reason one can deduce is that they are costing more than they ought. I hope in the future it will be found desirable to include in the report the actual cost of these works.

There is one other matter in connection with public estate improvement works that I wish to mention, that is, the reclamation works now being undertaken in various parts of Queensland, particularly at Coolangatta, Sandgate, Townsville, and Cairns. I have only seen this work at Sandgate and Coolangatta. These works are valuable. They have undoubtedly been the means of creating a certain amount of employment. It has been the practice at Sandgate up to date to take the filling material for reclamation purposes from an adjoining section of the country. From what I can ascertain from the report, this work up to date has cost £275 an acre. That cost is spread over the whole 87 acres it is intended to reclaim, but the whole area has not been reclaimed. Therefore, the actual cost per acre up to date has been considerably higher than that figure. There might have been some justification up to the present for this work inasmuch it was for the purpose of relieving unemployment, but at the present time there is not the same need for it, as the employment figures are good. Perhaps a cheaper method of completing the reclamation of this low-lying land may be evolved. I suggest that the Minister consider—I do not know whether he has done so—whether, particularly on the work adjoining the Hornibrook Highway, the filling in could not be more cheaply accomplished by pumping sand by means of a sand pump. It is a costly procedure to bring soil a considerable distance for reclamation purposes.

Mr. Hislop: What would become of the Hornibrook Highway if you undermined it?

Mr NICKLIN: Undermined it!

Mr. Hislop: Yes: If you took all the sand away the Hornibrook Highway would disappear.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not know what the hon. member means. Surely there is plenty of Moreton Bay besides the strip over which

the highway runs! There is no need to pump any sand from the area adjacent to the highway; it can be pumped from the front of the area that is being reclaimed; this would improve the value of the reclaimed area, because the depth of water adjacent to the land would be much greater. I think if the method I suggest was adopted, the cost of the very valuable reclamation work that is going on at Sandgate would be considerably reduced. I have seen examples of this type of reclamation work carried out at Tweed Heads. By means of a sand pump driven by a tractor a considerable amount of foreshore was reclaimed at that town.

Another Public Estate Improvement Branch work is the construction of graded walking tracks in our national parks. After all, when one is on a holiday one likes to visit these places in comfort, and the construction of these well-graded tracks is much appreciated by the many visitors to our national parks.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The Sub-Department of Forestry controls the national parks.

Mr. NICKLIN: Whoever is responsible, good work is being done.

In connection with the bringing of land into production by means of ringbarking, I should like to know whether there is any provision in the settlement conditions to control the ringbarking. We know that in the past there has been too much indiscriminate ringbarking. Some settlers denuded their properties of all living trees, with the result that settlers on many of these areas are faced with the problems of lack of shade for their stock and of soil erosion. I think it would be wise to have some provision included in the settlement conditions relating to ringbarking that would prevent the indiscriminate ringing of timber. Shade is essential on grazing properties. It is particularly essential to leave a belt of timber along watercourses and creeks in order to prevent soil erosion along the banks and the corollary—the silting up of the watercourses, which greatly diminishes their utility.

If we exercise care in ringbarking, particularly on the banks of watercourses, much of the silting that takes place in our very valuable creeks and many of our problems of soil erosion, which are causing grave concern in many of the older countries and will give us much trouble in the future, will be overcome.

The expansion that has taken place in reforestation work must be gratifying to all; nevertheless, greater advantage could be taken of this important work. According to the report, the objective in reforestation—a very worthy one and one that I hope will be attained in the very near future—is to plant 5,000 acres annually. Only 2,728 acres were planted in the past year.

Our softwoods are diminishing at a fast rate. Each year they are being cut into, and it is significant that although in the report submitted to Parliament two years ago the Director of Forests very plainly warned us that within a very few years Queens-

land would be denuded completely of softwoods, there has been no diminution in the amount of timber cut, the figures for the past year being—

	Super. feet.
Softwoods	152,000,000
All timbers	293,000,000

This cannot go on for ever.

Money is necessary for reforestation projects, but the policy adopted in the making of money available for this work cannot be altogether commended. For the past 20 years the average annual revenue from timber has been £213,000, whereas for 21 years the average annual expenditure from revenue for reforestation work amounted to only £1,464; the rest of the money required came from loan and special employment funds.

The Secretary for Public Lands: It is all the one till. It is only a matter of book-keeping.

Mr. NICKLIN: The point I make is that it is desirable that of the timber revenue of the State we put aside a stated portion for reforestation work—to replace the trees cut down.

Mr. King: That is being done.

Mr. NICKLIN: Of the £213,000 received annually as revenue from timber, only £1,464 was used for forestry purposes. The hon. gentleman knows that that is not good business for the State.

Mr. King: Last year more was planted than ever before in the history of the State.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is not the point. We are not financing our reforestation work on business lines. Instead of setting aside each year part of our timber revenue we are depending solely on loan and special employment funds. And these funds have a habit of fluctuating. As they fluctuate so will the reforestation work fluctuate. Would it not be better to set aside £100,000 of that £213,000 for reforestation work? If we did that, we should not be dependent upon loan money, and our reforestation policy would be sound. As I have pointed out already, during the last 21 years, we have spent on forestry an average of only £1,464 a year from our timber revenue. I hope that the Minister will prevail upon his colleagues in Cabinet to alter the present policy of financing reforestation work so that a definite proportion of timber revenue will be devoted each year to replacing an asset of the State which, at the present rate of cutting and under present conditions, will be non-existent within a few years.

Mr. King: Our reforestation programme is a good one.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not complaining about the reforestation programme that has been carried out in recent years. I commend the department for having as its objective the replanting of 5,000 acres a year—I hope that that area can be increased—but I do say that the Sub-Department of Forestry could be placed upon a much sounder footing if, instead of being solely dependent upon loan

money, a certain proportion of timber revenue was set aside each year for our reforestation programme.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) (12.52 p.m.): This is a very important department, and I was pleased to hear the benevolent remarks of the Minister this morning. I believe that in many cases he does follow the advice of the Land Administration Board, and it is right that he should do so. This is an important board, and it has done excellent work for the State, despite the Government's policy.

Much has been said about rural development. We know that rural development is important to the welfare of the State, but a perusal of the figures discloses that the Minister has not done anything wonderful in this direction. He admits that the Moore Government initiated this policy, yet he takes credit for it! The Moore Government advanced £190,000 for this from the meagre funds they had at that time, and they advanced that money at 3 per cent. Immediately the Labour Government attained office they adopted their usual attitude of the Jew and increased the interest, and they altered the conditions under which the work was to be carried out. Although I have been right through the report, I cannot find any disclosure by the Minister of what he did last year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: It is not my report.

Mr Russell: What have you left out?

The Secretary for Public Lands: I have left nothing out.

Mr. NIMMO: This report is just another example of the expenditure of public money for publicity purposes. The present Government are the greatest publicity artists that it is possible to find, and this report has been used for publicity and general propaganda purposes. What is the good of a report if we cannot rely on it and if it comprises only propaganda? Possibly, when the Minister went on his wonderful trip to Canada—

The Secretary for Public Lands: A nice trip, too.

Mr. NIMMO: I have no doubt it was. He may have told some of the people whom he met over there that he would send them copies of his report. Certainly, if they read this one they will say "What a wonderful Government Queensland has, and what a wonderful Minister!"

Let us analyse the report. I desire to refer to that filling-in part between pages 22 and 23, relating to "Public estate improvement work, completed or in progress." I ask hon. members to note the words, "completed or in progress." We have no list of what work has been completed.

This sheet is very conveniently carried over, and if anyone cares to look at last year's report it will be found that credit was taken for exactly the same work.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Not the same.

Mr. NIMMO: We will take the report. I do not know which report to read first. The heading is exactly the same in both reports—"Public estate improvement works—completed or in progress." Every one of these works is exactly the same as mentioned in last year's report. They are—

"Julatten—12½ miles, access roads for land selection.

"Cairns Reclamation—150 acres being reclaimed for building sites.

"Danbulla—15 miles, road access to timber.

"Woopan Creek—9½ miles, road access to land for selection.

"East Palmerston—16½ miles, access to land for selection and timber removal.

"Utchee Creek—13½ miles, road to land for selection and timber removal.

"Murdering Point—4 miles, road and bridge access to beach.

"West Palmerston—12 miles, road access to dairy lands and removal of timber.

"Maccarone's Crossing—¾ mile of road and bridge over Liverpool Creek."

That length of road has been repeated for the two years. What do you know about that!

"Granadilla No. 2—3¾ miles of road and bridge access to land and timber.

"Tully-Jarra—26 miles, road and bridge access to selections and removal of timber.

"Kirrama—14½ miles, road access to Kirrama State Forest."

This is the celebrated road the Minister might wreck himself on some day—I mean politically, of course.

"Townsville Reclamation—Reclamation of swamp lands for allotments.

"Baralaba—112 miles, road access and bridges to selections.

"Bulburin-Many Peaks—7½ miles, mountain road to timber areas.

"Wandoan—130 miles, access road to selections in reclaimed pear lands."

This is the road that the Minister argued about this morning and said was completed. When the photographs are available I will disclose to this Committee that the Wandoan-Bundi road is incomplete, notwithstanding what the Minister said this morning.

"Chinchilla—181 miles, road access and bridges to selections being reclaimed pear land.

"Sandgate—87 acres being reclaimed for building sites."

Where is the hon. member for Sandgate? What a wonderful brain was behind the filling in of this land at great expense! When the land was put up for auction not a block was sold.

"Amity-Blue Lake—14 miles, scenic and tourist road from Amity to Blue Lake.

“Gatton College—Construction of metal and bitumen road throughout the college grounds.”

Anyone who visited the college 12 months ago would know that the work was finished; nevertheless, credit is taken again in this report.

“Coolangatta Reclamation—Reclamation of swamp land for seaside allotments.”

I have quoted those particulars to show how thoroughly unreliable the report is. It conveys no information, it is all propaganda, and anyone who read last year's report need not bother to read this year's. The Government have been preening themselves and taking credit for work for which they claimed credit last year.

We have no information of what the Government have spent during the past year in rural development loans. We are simply given the total amount of expenditure. I say unhesitatingly that the Government dare not tell us the amount expended last year, because it is so shamefully low.

At 2.15 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. NIMMO: I think I have proved beyond doubt that in this report the Minister has engaged in propaganda in an endeavour to make the public believe that there is a halo round his head and another round the Government's head, and that they are doing everything that the people require. There are many things to be admired in the department, and there is no need for this propaganda. For instance, there is a wonderful Land Administration Board. Of course, I recollect that when the Minister assumed office he said that he intended very carefully to follow the policy of the Moore Government, and he has tried to do that.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I never mentioned the Moore Government.

Mr. NIMMO: At Warwick the hon. gentleman said that he intended to follow the good example of Billy Deacon, and that is the same thing.

The Secretary for Public Lands: He was one of the decent members of the Moore Government, but he has deteriorated since then.

Mr. NIMMO: The Minister meant that he intended to follow the policy of the Moore Government, but apparently the Treasurer has not allowed him to have money at cheap rates of interest. The New South Wales Government are still making money available at 3 per cent. for rural development, which means that, just over the border in New South Wales, the primary producer can get money from the Government for development purposes at 3 per cent., but when he comes to Queensland he is charged 5 per cent.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: New South Wales is in a pretty bad way financially.

Mr. NIMMO: That is questionable. Mr. Spooner has pointed out that the New South Wales Government had a drought and other factors to contend with and so the revenue last year was not as large as usual, but this year a bigger revenue is expected. I do not think that New South Wales is in a bad position at all.

I know that the Minister is anxious to leave behind him a record of achievement in the department, but it is a wonder to me that he has not allowed freehold as an optional tenure because a perpetual lease tenure is retarding progress. That brings to my mind the case of a widow at Sherwood, who sold her property for £750. She was delighted to come in and collect the money, but when she produced the perpetual leasehold title the buyer would have nothing to do with it. She appealed to the department to be allowed to convert it to freehold so that she could go on with the sale. I rang up several financial institutions for her and inquired whether they had ever had a case like this before and how they had acted in the matter, but in every instance I was told: “We do not lend money on perpetual leaseholds.”

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is not true. I know that one of the greatest amounts advanced by a bank in my area was advanced on a leasehold title.

Mr. NIMMO: It might have been a hotel. (Opposition laughter).

The Secretary for Public Lands: It was. The title was leasehold. You said that financial institutions never advanced on leaseholds.

Mr. NIMMO: I suppose there are exceptions that prove the rule. This unfortunate widow was compelled to sell her property, but she had to accept something like £500 before she could get rid of it. Unfortunately for her, her husband was a rabid Labour man and had built this worker's home which the Government had directed must be constructed on a perpetual leasehold. It is remarkable that when hon. members opposite buy property, in almost every case they insist on a freehold title. They do not want perpetual leasehold. Only the other day when I asked the hon. member for Mirani about the title to his property, he smiled and admitted that it was freehold.

The Minister remarked that leasehold was greatly in demand for pastoral purposes. He said persons engaged in the pastoral industry do not want freehold. Of course they do not, because the Government have pursued a policy of taxation of freeholds, which has tended to confiscate the whole of the property. No-one engaged in pastoral pursuits can afford to hold the freehold land because land taxation is so heavy that it virtually amounts to a capital levy. In fact, Socialism is rampant so far as tenures for pastoral purposes are concerned. Freehold pastoral land whose full rental value is 4d. an acre is taxed to the extent of 1s. and 1s. 2d. Look at the wonderful freehold pastoral properties in the West whose owners have for years made ineffectual efforts to sell!

The Minister also mentioned in support of his statement that the demand for land was so great that one northern farm property would repay the purchaser in two years. That statement, based on an advertisement by a commission agent, is rather remarkable. I heard something about this farm. I understand that the owner who put the farm in the hands of the commission agent for sale read the advertisement quoted by the Minister, did not recognise that it was his own property, and, thinking it was a wonderful farm, interviewed the agent, to discover that it was his own property. (Opposition laughter.) Yet we find the Minister quoting such an advertisement to convince this Committee of the soundness of his arguments.

There are many statements in the annual report of the Minister's department that are very illuminating. For instance, take the road that is being built to Kirrama to tap the wonderful reserves of timber that bountiful nature has provided there. Let us examine the wonderful financing of the Government. Nature provided the timber and the Government borrowed money to build the access road to enable the timber to be marketed. They then collar for revenue purposes all the royalties on the timber, and if they decide on any reforestation work in that area they borrow money for the purpose. Is that sound finance? If an investigator went into the position, what would he think of the finances of Queensland? That is just by the way.

I now propose to deal with the subject of land settlement. The Minister said he was doing all he possibly could to encourage land settlement. He practically admitted that he could not settle land, that there was no land south of Mackay that could be settled. I admire much of the work accomplished by the department—and I am not going to mince matters—particularly in the settlement of our scrub lands. Let us take our pastoral lands. The department has been rocked to sleep in dealing with them. In fact, nothing has been done during the last 12 months, which are the worst 12 months in history. Take the operations of the department in pastoral lands for this year only. On 9 February last two very small blocks of land in the Taroom district were opened to settlement. There were 260 applicants. No more pastoral land was opened until May, when one block, part of Bierbank resumption, in the Charleville district, was thrown open to selection. There were 144 applications for that block. The people were still starving for pastoral land, but nothing was done. In June, another block, a resumed portion of Uanda, in the Hughenden district, was thrown open to selection. There were 121 applications for it. In July, the department must have gone mad, because it opened two blocks on Ayrshire Downs for selection. There were 112 applicants for it. The point is that 110 applicants failed to have their desires satisfied. In September, the department opened one block of Maneroo, in the Longreach district, for selection. There were 243 applicants for it. So 242 of the applicants had to go without land. For another block there were 45 applicants, there-

fore 44 had to go without land. This is a matter the Opposition are not able to remedy; all we can do is to suggest to the Minister how settlement could be encouraged and increased.

A Government Member: Let us hear your suggestions.

Mr. NIMMO: When resumptions fall due they could be immediately made available for ballot. There are also large areas taken up under prickly-pear leases that the lessees cannot improve. A man who has taken up a block of 30,000 acres at 3d. an acre cannot improve it to the full. Why not allow that man to sell part of his block?

Mr. Walsh: I knew there was a nigger in the woodpile.

Mr. NIMMO: There is no nigger in the woodpile. If I were the Minister, I should allow the man who held 30,000 acres to cut it up into 5,000-acre blocks and sell some of them, provided that 50 per cent. of the profit from the sales after the improvements were taken into account was given to the Crown.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You would have to abide by the land laws.

Mr. NIMMO: A policy could be adopted that would allow these lands to be opened up. Much of this land is fit for dairying. The Billa Billa blocks, outside Goondiwindi, are wonderful land. When that land was being cut up it was contended that the blocks were too small.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Do you want us to repudiate the leases of that land?

Mr. NIMMO: No, all I am urging is that the Crown give the present lessees the power to subdivide when they are not able to improve the whole of their land.

The Secretary for Public Lands: And repudiate the leasing conditions? If that was done, you would be the first people to complain.

Mr. NIMMO: There is no repudiation about it. The Minister cannot put words into my mouth. I do not believe in any repudiation. I maintain that these people should be given power to subdivide the land.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I cannot allow the hon. member to discuss something that would require new legislation.

Mr. NIMMO: I am sorry that you will not permit me to pursue that argument, Mr. O'Keefe. I was making a constructive suggestion that, if put into effect, would be likely to develop Queensland.

More settlement should be encouraged in the North. The question how that will be brought about is a matter for the department to determine. I suggest to the Minister that if he pursued a policy along the lines I have indicated rather than reclaimed works, such as those at Sandgate and Townsville, the money would be better expended and the

productivity of Queensland would be increased.

While I do not hesitate to commend the Minister for any good work that the department does, at the same time I shall not hesitate to criticise the department for its mistakes. There is no need for the Minister to send out reports that are, in my opinion, misleading.

Mr. WALSH (Mirani) (2.30 p.m.): At least there appears to be some agreement on both sides of the Committee that this vote is a very important one from the State's point of view.

I cannot say that many of the remarks that have fallen from the lips of hon. members opposite have been very helpful to the Minister in the framing of the future policy of land settlement in this State. It must be admitted that the Land Administration Board is faced with a very difficult problem, having regard to the variety of conditions that operate throughout Queensland, the small area of land that is still available for settlement, and the nature of that land.

One of the most contradictory speeches heard in this Committee was that of the hon. member for Oxley. He began by referring to the wonderful work done by the Land Administration Board, but finished by saying that the board, apparently, had not done its job. After all, land settlement is the foremost of the activities of that board.

The comment of hon. members opposite, not only in this discussion, but at other times, is that many areas leased to pastoralists in various parts of the State are too small. Now, the hon. member for Oxley suggests, although not in so many words, that land should be taken from them and made available for closer settlement. There may be some truth in the hon. member's contention, but he had better have a talk with the hon. member for Gregory on that point. He does not appear to agree with that policy. In fact, there does not appear to be any degree of accord among the Opposition on that point.

The Land Administration Board has done very good work, but it must be remembered that the land policy is primarily a function of the Government, and the board carries out the Government's policy as contained in the Land Acts. This Government, more than any other, can take credit for the well-planned settlement and development of Queensland. It is a great credit to the Minister, and I trust he takes no notice of the jibes of hon. members opposite and the yellow Press about the amount of ministerial expenses incurred in visiting the various parts of the State. If there is one Minister who can justify these expenses more than another, it is the Secretary for Public Lands. The hon. member for Cunningham, an ex-Secretary for Public Lands, did not get about the State and see the problems that confronted the man on the land to the same extent as the present Minister, who undertakes the most difficult journeys for this

purpose. If a Minister is prepared to journey over hundreds of miles of rough and dusty roads in the heat of summer, as the Secretary for Public Lands has done, it shows that his heart and soul is in his job, and it is a wonderful compliment to him that, so far, hon. members opposite have not been able, apart from the usual bogies, such as perpetual leasehold, to level any effective criticism at him.

An Opposition Member: He is blushing.

Mr. WALSH: There is no reason why the hon. gentleman should blush. I say that in all sincerity. It is advisable for a Minister, as it is essential for an hon. member, irrespective of the area he represents, to travel through the State and make himself conversant with the problems that confront our industries. I do not know that that desire is particularly noticeable amongst hon. members opposite. Of course, some have much longer parliamentary experience than I have, but I believe it is essential that a member of Parliament should do this.

If there were any fault to find with the administration of this department, the hon. member for Cunningham would be the hon. member most likely to level criticism at it. He did not do so. He merely raised the old bogey of perpetual leasehold versus freehold. I can understand why, during his term of office, land settlement in Queensland did not increase at the fast rate that one would like to see, and that should have been possible, considering there were then thousands of men seeking land for settlement.

Mr. Edwards: There is yet, too

Mr. WALSH: That is so. If the hon. member will only take the trouble to peruse the reports that have been tabled year after year since this Government have been in power, he will find that the Government are doing their utmost to make available for closer settlement the resumed areas that fall due from year to year. I am not one of those who favour the resumption of large areas of land, because I think that this State's experience in that respect has been a very unhappy one. Perhaps a few instances of good results may be cited, but, generally speaking, I do not think that our experience of resumptions of private land shows that such a course would be justified. I hope that the Government will not go in for resumptions of private land for closer settlement.

I cannot convince myself that any man who has had a long association with land development can really believe that freehold is better than perpetual leasehold, either for the community or for the individual.

Mr. Walker: What title have you got?

Mr. WALSH: I have freehold, but if ever I get the opportunity of choosing between freehold and leasehold I shall vote in favour of perpetual leasehold. I maintain that the State should own all the land, and that all profits accruing from settlement,

sales, and so on, should be the property of the Crown.

Mr. Muller: Why not give your own back to the State?

Mr. WALSH: I am quite prepared to do that on the basis suggested by the hon. member for Cook this morning. And what is wrong with that? If the hon. member cannot see that perpetual lease is more favourable, to the new settler in particular, all I can say is that he has a great deal to learn about land settlement.

Take the position of a man who may have 200 acres of leasehold. These leaseholds are mostly forest lands, and the capital value, as usually assessed by the department, would be in the vicinity of 25s. an acre. Taking it at £2 an acre, the capital value would be £400. If the same land was sold as virgin land through private agents, I suppose it would bring up to about £5 an acre. Any hon. member knows that.

The hon. member for Cunningham knows that the wheat lands that were sold in the Dalby district brought up to about £4 an acre. Let us assume that one of those settlers has about 1,000 acres on which he is supposed to earn a living growing wheat. He has about £4,000 capital invested in that holding, and the interest that he would be paying would be about 5 per cent., or £200 a year. If he had taken that land as leasehold he would have got it for about 3 per cent., or £120 a year. It is obvious that he not only saves in interest, but he also has the benefit of the amounts that he would have to pay in redemption to the vendor. That money can be used to improve his holdings.

If a man cannot see that leasehold is better I do not know what is wrong with him. I know of instances in my own electorate in which lands were sold for as much as £6 an acre. I know the capital values placed upon lands in that area by the Department of Public Lands are down to 25s. an acre. I have proved conclusively to many of those settlers that if they had perpetual leases they would have effected a considerable saving in interest, and, in addition, they would have been able to develop their properties with the money that they are now paying to the freeholders.

To my way of thinking, the taxes or rents assessed by the various departments are not hindering settlement. In fact, all the evidence is to the contrary. The greatest bugbear of closer settlement is the freehold system.

Mr. Edwards: That is not true and you know it.

Mr. WALSH: Let me give the hon. member an example of how it operates. Where lies the justification of permitting people to get land from the Crown at 15s. an acre, and by simply putting a few improvements on it, send the price up to £200? I will deal with a property that I know very well. It was taken up in 1912 at a capital value of 15s. an acre. In about 1920 a railway line was

run through the area—public money was spent in the building of the line and roads. Towns sprang up round about. It became necessary for one of the Government departments to resume part of the area. The first area considered was valued at about £100 an acre. That area was not deemed suitable for the building required by the department, and another spot was selected just across the road. The amount paid by the department was £200.

Mr. Muller: How much land?

Mr. WALSH: One acre.

Mr. Muller: How much did the owner pay in the first place?

Mr. WALSH: Fifteen shillings an acre. As a matter of fact, it was a grazing farm of about 640 acres.

Mr. Muller: I suppose the Government wanted to pick the eyes out of it?

Mr. WALSH: No. The same area is now carrying large assignments, and it is hard to get a piece of ground round about for recreation purposes. All the man did who owned the land was to clear the timber off the property.

Mr. Muller: He is one in 10,000.

Mr. WALSH: No. The hon. member has the usual cry that men are being taxed off the land. I refer him to the report of the Commissioner of Taxes for this year. He will see that land tax alone is not having a detrimental effect on this State.

Mr. Muller: If you came with me for a couple of days I would open your eyes.

Mr. WALSH: In the constituency of the hon. member I suppose the freehold system has been so flogged for years that it is difficult to get anything like a decent price, unless properties are well developed. I admit that the settler is entitled to the value of whatever improvements he places on his land. To suggest that anybody in this State has the right to benefit to the extent to which many freeholders have is entirely wrong. I do not think the system is right. It would appear, in any case, that if the people were given the opportunity of saying which system they preferred—if a referendum was conducted on the matter—they would choose the perpetual lease system. Hon. members opposite can obtain figures from the department concerned when the Moore Government were in control to prove that when the people were offered the right to convert perpetual leasehold selections into agricultural farms fewer than 50 per cent exercised it.

Mr. Edwards: That is not right.

Mr. WALSH: The figures are there to prove my statement. Last year I cited a case in this Committee in which a bank manager got in touch with me and asked me to help a settler to convert his agricultural farm into perpetual leasehold on the ground that the bank could not assist the man while the tenure remained as it was. I am prepared to give hon. members the name of the

man concerned, the area, and other particulars.

An Opposition Member: What about the Agricultural Bank?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member cannot draw me off the track. In passing, I might say that that bank has not the same scope for exploitation in the investment of money, if I might use the term of the Agricultural Bank, as private banks have. If the freehold system is such a good system, why is it not argued that pastoral lands should become freehold? I have met many pastoralists in my time who have told me that they would have nothing else but leasehold.

Opposition Members: Land tax would not allow them to own freehold.

Mr. WALSH: Of course, the hon. member will introduce the land tax. I shall have something to say about it as I proceed. It may have a bearing on the matter if the land is not being put to its proper use, but even then land is not liable to Federal land tax unless the value exceeds £5,000. We should have made considerably more headway with closer settlement in the early stages of development in this State if the tenure had been perpetual leasehold instead of freehold. There is abundant evidence that exploitation is still going on under the freehold system.

I should like to draw the attention, especially, of the hon. member for Fassifern to the rentals charged by the department and the rates imposed by the local authorities on perpetual leaseholds. Of course, I know that he will make his usual jibe about the hospital tax. Here are the particulars—

—	Area.	Rent charged by Lands Department.		Rate imposed by local authorities.			
		Acres.	£	s.	d.	£	s.
No. 1 ..	641	9	12	6	21	7	4
No. 2 ..	140	2	2	2	5	5	0
No. 3 ..	145	1	10	0	5	8	9
No. 4 ..	435	4	18	2	12	3	9

These figures relate to perpetual leasehold, and lest the hon. member should not know I should like to explain that the local authorities have the right to value perpetual leaseholds on the same basis as freehold, and no special conditions are laid down for them to observe.

Mr. NIMMO: That is not correct.

Mr. WALSH: Mr. O'Keefe, I realise that the Standing Orders compel me to confine my remarks to the vote under discussion, but I should like to tell the hon. member that the local authorities have a free hand in valuing perpetual leaseholds on the same basis as freehold provided they conform to the minimum valuation stipulated in the Act.

Mr. Nimmo: What about the allotments of land that were sold for £300 each at Southport?

Mr. WALSH: In special leases there is the condition that the valuation shall be 20 times the annual rent, but no such conditions apply to the instances I have mentioned. The local authority has absolute freedom in the making of valuations, even to the extent of imposing a rate lower than the departmental rent if it so desires. I have visited and spoken to some of the settlers on this land, and I know that although the local authorities are getting their pound of flesh from the settlers, they are not prepared to give them reasonable road facilities. The department makes the land available to the settlers to enable them to earn a living and fixes a very low rent, especially in comparison with the other States, and one would expect that the local authority would give them good roads in return for the rates, which in some instances are two and three times the amount of the rent charged by the department. That is one feature of the work of the department that should appeal to country members.

I regret the criticism by the hon. member for Murrumba. It might have been all right if he had gone a little further and not left the matter in the air so as to suggest that the work done by the Public Estate Improvement Branch of the department had been very costly. That tends to leave a wrong impression. The Public Estate Improvement Branch has done splendid work in developing the distant parts of the State, thereby helping to reduce the cost of production, particularly the cost of producing cream by making it possible to have it conveyed to factories at a lower cartage rate than before. That is a very important point that should not be overlooked. Whatever may be done by the Government through the Main Roads Commission in co-ordinating the road construction services of the State, I hope that they will not abolish the Public Estate Improvement Branch of the Department of Public Lands, which has done much to develop country areas.

I have great regard for the work accomplished in the past by the Main Roads Commission, but it must not be overlooked that it was very difficult to get the Commission interested in works of the nature undertaken by the Public Estate Improvement Branch. It is not good to have duplication in any public works. Much can be said for putting the whole of our public works under the jurisdiction of the Co-ordinator-General, but I hope that too much attention will not be paid to roads in the immediate vicinity of city areas to the neglect of essential requirements in rural areas.

As we have heard much about the matter from hon. members opposite, I should like to place on record for their benefit some particulars as to the number of rural landowners who pay land tax. These details are to be found on page 7 of the annual report of the Commissioner for Taxes on land tax. It has some bearing on the development of land settlement. I noticed in Table E on this page that the number of farmers paying land tax for the period covered by the report was only 223, and the number of cane-farmers only 108. I should like the hon. member for Isis to take notice of the latter

figure. He knows, as I do, that motions continually appear on the agenda of the annual conferences of the sugar interests condemning the terrible imposition of the land tax. There are nearly 8,000 cane-farmers in this State, and yet only 108 pay land tax.

Let me proceed a little further. The number of graziers who pay land tax is only 508. If I remember correctly, figures I obtained as a result of the last census disclosed that the number of primary producers in this State was something like 57,000. We can see by an analysis of this report that a very small percentage of the producers—hard-working producers, particularly—are affected by the incidence of the land tax. Some hon. members opposite would support any policy allowing exploitation of people on the land. That is the policy they have been supporting for years. It is difficult to understand why they should stick so much to the freehold tenure in the closely settled areas and disregard it in favour of perpetual leasehold in the pastoral areas.

Mr. Edwards: You know the reason; it is quite plain.

Mr. WALSH: I do. I am trying to impress the hon. member with the disadvantages of the farmer who is labouring under the freehold system. If he cannot assimilate my argument I am very sorry for him.

In conclusion, I wish to pay a tribute to the department generally for the manner in which the officers carry out their work in connection with land settlement. It is a very difficult problem, particularly when we make comparisons with other States. For example, our rainfall is erratic as compared with that of Victoria, while the transport system, both rail and road, makes difficulties for the officers charged with the duty of cutting up land for closer settlement.

(Time expired.)

Mr. CLAYTON (Wide Bay) (2.55 p.m.): I desire to say a few words on the vote before the Committee. I think we all realise the importance of the Department of Public Lands in the advancement of a State that has a very large area of land and a scattered population.

It is pleasing to note that the report of the department was available to hon. members before this vote was brought up for discussion. That is a contrast with the absence of the report of the Department of Labour and Industry when the votes for that department were under consideration. I think that when we are called together to discuss these votes it is only fair that we should have the reports of the departments before their respective votes come up for consideration. If the directors of a company called the annual shareholders' meeting and did not have the annual report ready they would be severely censured.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You have the report of the Department of Public Lands.

Mr. CLAYTON: I am referring to the report of the Department of Labour and Industry. I think the Government should see that all the reports are in the hands of members before the Estimates relating to them are brought on for discussion.

With regard to the Land Administration Board, I think the Minister is very fortunate in having excellent officers on that board. I think he shows wisdom in not interfering to any great extent with the work they are called upon to do. Of course, they are handicapped in matters of policy. Although they may want to bring forward schemes that would be beneficial to the State, they have to be careful that they do not frame one that conflicts with Government policy. That is a handicap upon those conscientious officers who are doing everything possible in the interests of the State.

The more I see of the activities of the department at the present time, the more I am inclined to think—and I think other hon. members are thinking the same way—that any success that has been achieved by the department is due to the fact that they have put the Country Party's policy into operation. By pursuing a policy that was advocated by the Country Party greater success has been attained than when they pursued their own policy before the Country Party came into power. Before the Country Party obtained the opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of their policy, what did we find? Let us go back to the Beerburrum settlement. No greater calamity could have happened to the returned soldiers than the placing of them on the Beerburrum settlement. The Government put them on that settlement and left them there until they were almost starving. Then the Government carried out experiments in the production of tobacco in that area, but finally the settlers left, one by one. That is an example of what the Government did for the returned men.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The original Beerburrum settlement was under Federal control.

Mr. CLAYTON: Who controlled that settlement?

The Secretary for Public Lands again interjected.

Mr. CLAYTON: The Minister says anything when he gets excited.

The Labour Government who were in power when the Burnett and Callide lands were opened up made a great blunder. The Moore Government knew that those areas were too small for closer settlement; that the previous Government had endeavoured to convert pastoral lands into agricultural lands merely by using the surveyor's chain. Rainfall and the distribution of rainfall were not taken into consideration. The Moore Government in many instances ran two blocks into one, and certain settlers were removed. Much of the successful settlement of the Burnett and Callide lands is due to the fact that the present Government are working on the lines adopted by the Moore Government. I agree with the

Minister that Bill Deacon was the best land administrator we have had in Queensland.

I could continue for some time giving instances of how the Moore Government had to deal with unfortunate soldier settlers because of the policy of the Labour Government in power previously.

It is gratifying that there has been improvement in land settlement, and I trust the Minister will continue to accept the advice of the Land Administration Board and not interfere with it when it conflicts with the policy laid down by his Government.

As to the controversy freehold versus leasehold, a man should be allowed to take the tenure of his choice, and a settler should be allowed to convert from perpetual leasehold to freehold if he wishes, and it is wrong for any Government to prevent it from being done. As an instance of the desire of settlers to hold land on freehold, let me point to what took place when the Moore Government were in office.

Mr. Power: Everybody went broke.

Mr. CLAYTON: If they had many like the hon. member in the Labour Party they would all have been broke long ago.

During the Moore Government's term, 6,344 Crown tenants converted from leasehold to freehold tenure.

Mr. Power: Were converted to Labour?

Mr. CLAYTON: They would not be such fools as that. We shall never be able to convert the hon. member for Baroona. He is past it.

At that time 1,825,960 acres were changed from leasehold to freehold. Every man looks forward to the time when he can become the owner of his property and have a stake in the State.

The man on the land, owing to adverse weather conditions, from time to time has to borrow money from the Agricultural Bank or other bankers; but what do we find? On the security of a freehold property one can obtain a greater advance than on a leasehold. As a matter of fact, if one goes to the Agricultural Bank for an advance—

The Secretary for Public Lands: There is no Agricultural Bank to-day.

Mr. CLAYTON: If one visits the Bureau of Rural Development on behalf of a constituent, what will the manager say? He will turn over the pages and say: "Wait a minute; this is perpetual leasehold, not freehold." That man is handicapped in obtaining an advance to purchase cattle or horses for his farm.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is not true.

Mr. CLAYTON: Nothing would be true so far as the Minister is concerned. Both the hon. member for Cook and the hon. member for Mirani spoke in favour of perpetual lease, yet we find that both of those hon. members hold properties under freehold ten-

ure, and I venture the opinion that if the hon. member for Baroona takes up any land it will be on freehold tenure.

Mr. Power: I have a bit of leasehold, too.

Mr. CLAYTON: I like that word "too," because I know that the hon. member would hold freehold. I do not know where his leasehold can be.

Mr. Power: I am not telling you.

Mr. CLAYTON: I should not think the hon. member would. As I stated previously, we do not mind giving a man the option of either freehold or perpetual leasehold.

This morning the Minister read an advertisement that he saw in some newspaper.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I quoted from the "North Queensland Register."

Mr. CLAYTON: The Minister read that advertisement to show what returns a farmer should receive from certain lands. I am inclined to believe that the statements contained in that advertisement are absolutely false, because I do not think that in the case quoted the farmer could pay labour on the turnover mentioned and show the profit that is shown there. I am sure that the Minister does not think so either, yet he has the audacity to read such an advertisement to this Committee.

The same thing happened in the sugar industry some years ago. A man published an advertisement for the sale of a sugar farm, giving the crop as so many tons of cane, and he coloured the advertisement just as this one seems to do. Within a very short time it appeared in the Victorian newspapers, and the result of that was that Mrs. Glencross and others who were members of the Housewives' Association launched a campaign against the sugar industry in Queensland for the excessive profits that were made in the production of cane. That sort of thing is damaging to the State, and it is wrong for the Minister to read misleading advertisements such as the one he quoted this morning.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You cannot blame me for what the man said.

Mr. CLAYTON: I blame the Minister for reading such a ridiculous advertisement to this Committee.

I know the Government are keen on perpetual leaseholds. On 14 March last I received the following letter from the Secretary for Public Lands notifying me of a sale of land at Sandgate—

"You will be interested in the Government's developmental policy so far as it applies to the work of reclamation of a large area to the north of Sandgate . . ."

With that letter he sent me a handbill with his compliments, and I thank him for it. Amongst other things it says—

"Upset prices from £60 to £250.

"Areas from 24 to 30 perches.

“The annual rent will be a sum equal to 3 per cent. on the capital sum bid at auction, subject to appraisalment every 15 years.

“Deposit of first year’s rent, survey fee (£1) and stamp duty (12s. 6d).”

I will not read it at greater length. When the sale took place, what happened? There was not a buyer for one of the blocks offered. I say that if the Government would to-morrow morning change the tenure of that land from perpetual leasehold to freehold they would dispose of a great number of blocks in a very short time. No, they are stubborn and must stick to the perpetual leasehold policy. I understand that it has cost about £293 an acre to reclaim 47 blocks. The job is not yet complete because of the disbanding of the employees on account of the hardship the Government are experiencing. No revenue has been received from the expenditure incurred in connection with this land.

The Minister quoted some instances with regard to income tax, and quoted the number of farmers paying income tax.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I did not. I quoted the taxable income.

Mr. CLAYTON: I stand corrected. The hon. gentleman quoted the 1938 figures.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I quoted the last report.

Mr. CLAYTON: No, he did not.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I quoted the 1937-38 figures.

Mr. CLAYTON: Very well; they will suit my purpose all the better. I said at the time by way of interjection that taxable income would depend on rainfall. From rainfall statistics one can ascertain the fluctuations that occur between one year and another. From the library I procured particulars of the falls of rain in the Brisbane area during the years, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938. The particulars are—

Year.	Inches.
1935	34.63
1936	19.97
1937	34.74
1938	43.49

On a rainfall of 19.97 inches, is it not natural that the taxable income would be remarkably small? Taxable income is to a very great extent governed by rainfall and, in addition, by the prices received overseas for our produce.

Dealing with the question of land settlement generally, I know there is a great area of land available for pastoral and grazing purposes, but I do not think there is so much available for farming purposes. No-one would buy the block referred to in the advertisement mentioned by the Minister, because the price would be excessive. There is, unfortunately, a drift of the farming population of the State to the towns. That is detrimental to a primary-producing State like Queensland. If we could encourage secondary

industries—and that could only be done by a reduction in taxation—we could absorb those people who are coming into our cities. Young men in the farming areas of the State should be encouraged to go on to farms. How are we going to develop the farms, especially at the present time, when our own sons may leave the farms to go overseas to fight for us, unless we encourage people to come from the cities to work on the farms? How are we going to carry on and produce as much primary produce as Great Britain needs in the present war unless we do something to encourage people to go on the land?

The Secretary for Public Lands: Are you going to blame this Government for the war?

Mr. CLAYTON: No. I have already blamed the Government for many things.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You talked a lot of silly nonsense.

Mr. CLAYTON: The hon. gentleman did when he read that advertisement. The primary producers have been blamed by hon. members opposite for not paying enough wages to the young people who work on the land, but we pay the highest wage we can afford, and it is a wage that enables the worker to save. We cannot pay the basic wage because our industries are not protected by the tariff or the Industrial Court to such an extent as to allow us to pay the wages we desire.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is dealing with something that is not in the Estimates.

Mr. CLAYTON: Perhaps I am a little out of order, Mr. O’Keefe, but I am trying to impress upon hon. members opposite that we should do something to encourage young men to go on the land and to give greater encouragement to the farmer to stay there.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS (Nanango) (3.17 p.m.): A discussion of the land problem gives plenty of scope for thought and mature consideration, and the problem itself presents a splendid opportunity to the department and its officers to develop the land in the proper way so as to encourage people to take up land, to be contented and not yearn for the larger centres of population. We all admit that reasonable land laws are necessary to induce the people to stay on the land and develop the country. It is equally true that in the past much land has been held for speculative purposes and, indeed, speculation is still being carried on in connection with some of the areas reclaimed from the prickly-pear. It behoves us, especially at the present time, to develop the country to the fullest extent and export the maximum quantity of produce to Great Britain and the friendly Powers.

Something must have been radically wrong with our policy of land settlement in the past. Many districts embracing land of first quality, like my own district, went ahead by leaps and bounds, but no-one can justly argue that the leasehold tenure would have

been better than the freehold tenure in that district. That country has been selected under the freehold tenure and developed on that basis. It has been a very successful district, and the farmers have developed it to a high stage of productivity. It is a very fertile area and is as prolific a producer as any other area of a similar size in Australia under the freehold tenure.

Hon. members opposite have used all kinds of arguments, but no-one touched on the disadvantages, particularly in regard to small areas, of the perpetual leasehold system as against the freehold system. This confronts us with a difficulty that we cannot overcome. We can argue that perpetual leasehold is as good as freehold tenure. In the Southern States, particularly in Victoria, many people, chiefly farmers' sons, are being crowded off the land for the want of land for them to settle on. These men possess capital and have always been used to freehold tenure. It is one thing for the Government to adopt the leasehold system but it is another thing to convert these people to their way of thinking. That is what we are up against in land settlement. That is why some of our land settlement schemes on the repurchased estates failed. We had to depend largely on our own people to select the land. They did not possess sufficient capital to develop it, and, as the result, the Government in many instances had to come to their assistance. No-one will argue that when a person desires to acquire a quarter of an acre of land on which to build his own home he does not seek a freehold tenure. Hon. members opposite who claim that there is a general desire for the perpetual leasehold system for home-building sites and small agricultural areas are merely talking with their tongues in their cheeks.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: Both titles are in perpetuity.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is so, but a man who builds a home on a piece of land for himself and family looks forward to the day when that land and home will be his own.

Mr. Walsh: He can obtain a 99-years lease under the perpetual leasehold system.

Mr. EDWARDS: The hon. member does not believe in one word that he uttered in this Chamber. He himself owns freehold land, yet he advocates perpetual leasehold to the other fellow. That is a very fine principle. It is the principle of: "Take what you desire yourself and advocate the other system for everyone else."

The Secretary for Public Lands: You cannot get a leasehold tenure in most sugar areas; it is all freehold.

Mr. EDWARDS: The hon. member for Mirani could convert his freehold to leasehold, but I do not blame him for not doing so.

Mr. Walsh: You know that there is nothing in our laws compelling a person with freehold to hand it over to the State, and convert it to leasehold.

Mr. EDWARDS: When the Moore Government were in power they gave landholders the opportunity of converting from perpetual leasehold to the freehold system. In the very short time for which they had the opportunity of doing so, thousands converted.

Mr. Walsh: Some of them are sorry for having done so.

Mr. EDWARDS: Did they convert because the hon. member was not able to educate them up to the policy of the Labour Party? The Labour Party has laid down that leasehold shall be the system of land tenures. Had the hon. member for Mirani attended the convention that laid down that principle I am quite sure it would not have been agreed to. It was adopted by men who did not own land. To-day the hon. member is in the Labour movement and must advocate that tenure whether he believes in it or not. It is indeed unfortunate that that is the policy of the Government. This matter has been debated year after year. I realise the Government cannot alter their policy because the majority of their supporters do not care a two-penny dump whether the farming community make a success of their farms or not.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: We are the only Government who have ever done anything for the farmers.

Mr. EDWARDS: I think the hon. gentleman believes that.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: You crucified them when you were in power.

Mr. EDWARDS: I ask the hon. gentleman what did your Government do?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to address the Chair.

Mr. EDWARDS: There are other problems that require much consideration. One of the most important is water conservation. There is no doubt that Queensland is the most backward State in the Commonwealth in irrigation. Several attempts at irrigation have been made; some small efforts have proved fairly successful, but, generally speaking, it must be admitted that irrigation efforts in Queensland have been a failure.

I was astonished when I heard the Secretary for Labour and Industry mention the amount of money that has been given to one man in the Theodore area to enable him to carry out experiments in growing cotton under irrigation. Cotton-growing has been carried on in that area for a number of years, both under irrigation and dry conditions. What is the reason at this late stage, after the industry has been established for a number of years, for advancing a large sum of money to enable experiments to be carried out? If the Government brought an expert from a Southern State where irrigation projects have been as successful as anywhere else in the world and asked him to advise them on the practicability of irrigation in these areas it is most likely that they would save the State an enormous

amount of money. Before an irrigation scheme is embarked on the nature of the country must be carefully examined. The conditions operating in one district may be totally different to the conditions operating in another district. I do not claim to be an expert on irrigation, but as soon as I saw the Theodore area I came to the conclusion that the puggy nature of the soil rendered it totally unfit for irrigation purposes. You might put 4 or 5 inches of water over such land to-day and if you got a similar amount of rain to-morrow the land would be unfit for use for 12 months.

Every irrigation project has its own problem. The irrigated area on the banks of the Murray is in a low rainfall belt and has a clay subsoil. That country can be flooded and will not pug. Moreover, there is very little risk of a tropical or subtropical downfall of rain immediately after irrigating. Successful irrigation in the dark and heavy soils or the creek flats in Queensland can be carried out only by the spraying process: water is lightly sprayed over the ground for a certain length of time. If the Government would afford assistance to the settlers to install such irrigation plants, the settlers would have an insurance against the droughts that occur from time to time. Eight or nine cuts of lucerne can be taken off irrigated creek flats each year, and settlers would be prepared to put their own energy and money into such a scheme. It is along such lines that irrigation should be carried out in Queensland. It is the small irrigation system that will prove a success. From time to time it has been suggested in this Chamber that Queensland should embark on some large irrigation scheme, but I should prefer to have the advice of an expert before giving an opinion one way or the other. Many of our streams carry down an enormous quantity of silt. This has to be dealt with. That occurs in the Condamine and other rivers, on the banks of which farming is taking place.

Mr. Walsh: It is a problem in all our watersheds.

Mr. EDWARDS: The Government should give heed to the unfortunate position of many settlers in the far western parts of the State, and investigate the question whether something cannot be done to give them an adequate water supply. In this respect I am not referring to the watering of stock routes. The Government should do that work. They should not have to be asked to do it. In the Mallee country of Victoria, irrigation is done by gravitation, the water flowing for miles in channelling. No pipe line can be seen in that country. That system of irrigation was undertaken on the advice of experts. The adoption of this method in certain districts of Queensland would make water available to properties that are now dependent on the seasons. If they meet with an adverse season, stock have to be moved, and the properties become absolutely useless.

I could never understand why the Government did not reinvest in reforestation a greater percentage of the revenue that they have derived from the sales of log timber.

Surely they realise that the day will come when we shall have no timber at all? I cannot understand why they expend loan moneys on this work. It is like banking one's own money and then borrowing from someone else to do certain things.

Then, too, it is true, as has been stated, that much of this log timber is carried over council roads. As a matter of fact, the log timber that is coming from the Bunya Mountains through the towns of Kingaroy and Nanango and on to Yarraman is brought over council roads. The timber tracks adjacent to those roads are being used by the forestry people to haul the timber to the roads, and although it is taken over council roads it is left in the main to the shire councils to keep those roads in repair.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is not true.

Mr. EDWARDS: The Minister knows as well as I do that they get only a few hundred pounds from the Government.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Not a few hundreds; thousands of pounds.

Mr. EDWARDS: I tried to get £100 or so at one time for the shire council, and I found it fairly hard to get.

This asset cost us nothing, and although we have derived great revenue from it the railways, after hauling timber for years, have nearly always shown losses, the roads in the district from which the timber is taken are nothing like what they should be, and to-day very little of that asset is left. The Government are not putting back anything like what they have taken from it.

The Secretary for Public Lands: We are putting in three trees for every one that you grew.

Mr. EDWARDS: That may be so, but the Minister knows the conditions under which we had to work.

I have asked the Minister from time to time to give consideration to the opening for settlement of at least a small percentage of that land in the Yarraman and Nanango districts from which the timber has been taken. I suppose he knows that the Yarraman and Upper Yarraman districts have been supplying the only potatoes that have been coming to the Brisbane market within the last few weeks and that they have been realising up to £24 a ton? In my opinion, the department would be well advised to investigate that suggestion. I know that on one occasion an investigation along those lines was conducted and the majority of representatives favoured the course I am suggesting.

They advocated what is known as a balanced production in that district, and it would have been an advantage to the railways and an advantage to the Government, and, I believe, an advantage to the forests, because, after all, it would have been many years before much of that land would be planted. All the rougher country on the hills could have been used for forests, leaving a few acres here and

there for agricultural purposes. Very good red soil can be found there.

In connection with the further settlement of this State, I think consideration should be given at once to the possibilities of land reclaimed from pear. It is necessary that the officers of the department go into the matter very carefully and see that settlement is of the right class. I do not mean, of course, that the people who take up land should be supervised, because they are prepared to work. You know the land, Mr. O'Keefe, and you know that there are millions of acres in the Wandoan district—

The Secretary for Public Lands: All alienated.

Mr. EDWARDS: Reclaimed from pear. I suggest that the Minister and his officers should consider whether that land is going to be put under production or stand idle.

The Secretary for Public Lands: We cannot repudiate leases.

Mr. EDWARDS: There is reason in everything.

The Secretary for Public Lands: They are standing up to the conditions of the leases.

Mr. EDWARDS: Roads that are very necessary are being built there at the present time, and I think that every encouragement should be given to put that land under production. After all, if it is not under production it is no use to the people who have got it or to the State.

The Secretary for Public Lands: All the lessees are carrying out the conditions of their leases.

Mr. EDWARDS: I do not think the system of balloting for land has been the success it should have been. Many farmers' sons have balloted for years without success.

(Time expired.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) (3.43 p.m.): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has been advocating repudiation.

Mr. Edwards: No.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I say it is repudiation.

Mr. Edwards: Nothing of the sort.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The people in the area he mentioned have been carrying out the conditions of their leases. I know this, because quite recently I caused an investigation to be made in the area. I say, for the benefit of this Committee, that every farmer in that area is carrying out every condition the Government can enforce.

Mr. Edwards: That was all I wanted to know.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How can we take millions of acres from those people? Hon. members cannot have it both

ways. This Government will not stand for repudiation. The hon. member for Nanango and others on his side of the Committee brought up the question. I say that this Government, under the direction of the Premier, decided from the very beginning that every contract in connection with lands held by anybody would be observed. We will not repudiate. We have given the settlers in that area something they have not had before—access roads. Until the Public Estate Improvement Branch began to operate in that area, there was not an inch of road outside the main roads. The settlers gladly welcomed what the Government did. We had to do it. How can we keep people on the land without giving them the means of getting their produce to market? This is the first time an honest attempt has been made at giving adequate transport facilities in that area. Hon. members opposite who pose as advocates of the farmer are saying that it is wrong for us to spend this money in giving access roads to those settlers.

Mr. Edwards: I did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The trend of the speeches delivered by hon. members opposite would indicate that. I am satisfied that most of the hon. members opposite do not know what they say. Last session I spent a considerable amount of time in going through the remarks they made on my Estimates, and I intend to read what they say this year. I am quite satisfied that in many instances hon. members opposite really do not know what they are saying.

Mr. Edwards: I appreciated the good work that was being done on the road when I was out there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I repeat that what hon. members opposite suggest we should do amounts to repudiation, and neither this Government nor any other Labour Government stand for repudiation.

Mr. Maher: Nobody advocated that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Again, the hon. member for Wide Bay said that the Bureau of Rural Development would not make any advances except on freehold titles. I am sorry that the hon. member is not in his place in the Chamber, because I always like an hon. member to be present when I am replying to his accusations. He said that no settler could get an advance from the bureau on a perpetual leasehold title.

The Premier: Who said that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member for Wide Bay, and he meant that a settler could not get finance to buy cattle or anything else.

Mr. Edwards: He did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He said that distinctly, and hon. members may read it in "Hansard" to-morrow. This debate seems to have developed into the old discussion of freehold versus leasehold. Hon. members opposite have said that the freehold title is the only one that bankers will look

at. It was said that a person who went to a trading bank for an advance could not get it because he had a leasehold title to his land. Why, in my own electorate some of the biggest advances made by banks are on leasehold. As a matter of fact, in the Tully area, all the sugar lands are leasehold.

The Premier: Only the speculator wants freehold.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

When the National Bank of Australasia opened a branch at Tully it advanced considerable sums of money to sugar-growers who had perpetual leases only. They did not want freehold.

I challenged the statement of the hon. member for Wide Bay that the Bureau of Rural Development, which superseded the Agricultural Bank, will not lend on perpetual lease. In my own electorate, in the Palmerston area, the settlers are able to get advances on their leasehold titles from the bureau, and they are all doing very well. On the Granadilla area, at Clump Point, the settlers, who have leasehold tenure, are getting advances from the bureau to buy cattle and everything else that they require. They are being very well treated—so well that, for the first time, I think, in the history of Queensland, I, as a Labour candidate at the last elections, got every farmer's vote in the Granadilla area against three opponents. The votes were not really given to me; they were an endorsement of Government policy. I think that is a record for Australia—that one candidate should get the vote of every farmer in an area. I have been in touch with the Bureau of Rural Development to-day, and it tells me that the bureau advances money to Crown lessees to enable them to bring their selections into production, and that a great deal of money is advanced for this purpose. As a matter of fact, the bureau advances more money on perpetual leaseholds than on freeholds. That is the answer to the hon. member for Wide Bay.

The hon. member for Mirani gave some details of the valuation of freehold and perpetual leaseholds, and pointed out what attitude was adopted towards the Government when the Government wanted to buy land from a landholder. Let me give some idea of what the Government are asked to pay for land that was originally taken up for 15s. an acre when they required part of it for a school or a reserve. I shall mention two instances. The Department of Public Instruction required a piece of land for a school reserve at Burleigh, and although the land had been taken up on an agricultural farm tenure at £1 an acre the Government had to pay £625 for 2 acres. As the Premier has said, it is only the speculator who wants freehold. How absurd it is to think that the Government should have to pay £625 for 2 acres of land that was taken up as an agricultural farm at £1 an acre, and that in face of the fact that the land was required for a school for the children in that farming district.

Later on, an additional area was required for a teacher's residence at Burleigh, and 1

acre 22 roods was resumed by the Department from the same farmer for £125, although the land had been selected originally at £1 an acre.

We had a similar experience at Surfers' Paradise, in the Southport district. The Department of Public Instruction purchased an area of 1 acre 10.4 perches of land for educational purposes and paid £650 for it. Any preference for freehold tenure is entirely one based on the desire to speculate. I advise hon. members, if they desire further particulars, to go along to the Bureau of Rural Development and inquire how many freehold titles it has been asked to convert to perpetual leasehold. The only people who really want freehold tenures are those who desire to hold land for speculation purposes. Hon. members will admit that there are always a considerable number of applicants for any land opened to selection under the perpetual leasehold system.

The hon. member for Oxley destroyed his own argument. He began his speech by criticising the department, and then pointed out that there were 400 or 500 applicants for one block of land opened to selection under the perpetual leasehold system. He asked why we were not opening more pastoral lands for selection. It is a well-known fact that we can open for selection only what we can obtain by resumption. As hon. members know, the numbers of resumptions are limited. When resumptions are made, we must first consider those lessees who selected areas in the past that are not living areas to-day. We have increased the areas of many landholders. We cannot have it both ways. Our policy is to keep on the land those who are on the land to-day. We consider it to be our duty when resuming pastoral areas to enlarge those areas that are not living areas to-day. We cannot blame any Government of the past for opening those areas for selection. They may have been living areas at the time. That is why we have not the quantity of land available to throw open for selection that the hon. member for Oxley would like.

The hon. member for Wide Bay, whom I am pleased to see in the Chamber now, charged the Government with deliberately placing soldier settlers on land from which they could not get a living. I have heard that statement ever since I have been in this Chamber. The hon. member for Cook can tell what the Government of the day did in that respect on the Atherton Tableland. I remember the time when the late Mr. Gillies, then Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, who was a friend of mine, came to North Queensland when the Labour Government of the day had repurchased some of the most expensive land on the Atherton Tableland. They paid a high value for it in order to settle the soldiers on the land. The Government of the day were not altogether responsible for what happened. The Commonwealth came into the picture.

Mr. Clayton: You advised them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I remember listening to a speech when the

Moore Government were in power. It was delivered by Mr. C. Taylor, who said he was a member of the committee that recommended the purchase of the land and accepted full responsibility for advising the Government of the day to purchase the land. That committee, which was called the Land Settlement Advisory Committee, comprised—the late Mr. J. H. Coyne, then Secretary for Public Lands; the late Mr. R. Sumner, M.L.C., Mr. C. Taylor, M.L.A., representing the Opposition; Mr. L. G. Board; Mr. F. Martyn, representing the Australian Workers' Union; Mr. R. H. Moss, of Messrs. Dalgety and Company; Mr. W. F. Cameron, of Cameron Brothers; Mr. James Spark, a well-known business man of Brisbane; Mr. H. L. Jones, a beekeeper who represented the farming interests; and Mr. Rose, chief executive officer. Mr. Taylor, in the course of the speech I heard him deliver in this Chamber, said that the Government of the day could not be blamed for acquiring that land.

As the Premier pointed out, every Government in Australia have been blamed for the class of land opened up for soldier settlement. It was not a political committee that recommended the purchase of that land. From a sense of fairness, Mr. Taylor was good enough to get up in this Chamber and tell me and other hon. members that he accepted his full share of the responsibility for what was done; yet, at this late hour, we have the hon. member for Wide Bay endeavouring to lay the blame on the Government for the Beerburum settlement.

A good deal of debate has taken place as to why we are continuing reclamation works, what they are costing, and whether we shall get our money back. Everyone should realise that a good deal of reclamation work was started in order to find employment for men who were out of work, and some of it was undertaken on account of health considerations. Whatever else may be said of the Sandgate reclamation work, one fact stands out clearly: by filling up that area we have made Sandgate a place fit to live in. Everybody admits that. I had the pleasure of taking the Lord Mayor and the representative of the Sandgate area on the council to that place, and they told me that it was one of the best works undertaken by the Government from a health point of view. Some hon. members are concerned because we did not get a bid at the land sale at Sandgate. We did not expect to get a bid. Hon. members overlook the fact that the land laws demand that all Crown land must go to public auction in order that it may be available for sale. We are selling several of those allotments. The trouble with the Sandgate area was that we could not get a water supply.

An Opposition Member: How many have you sold?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Several. Hon. members may have seen in the Press that His Excellency the Governor commended the Bush Children's Committee for taking up a site there.

Mr. Moore: They have not taken it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They have taken it.

Mr. Moore: No, they have not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I assume the hon. gentleman does not challenge the Governor. They have certainly accepted that piece of land. We will make it available for nothing. We made an arrangement with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane for filling in a recreation reserve; he was good enough to let the Government have a big area of land for sale.

These reclamation works are worth doing, apart from a health point of view. Take Broadbeach. Every allotment opened up there has been sold. The Leader of the Opposition has taken a perpetual leasehold down there; so has the hon. member for Oxley, and several other hon. members who realise it is a good seaside resort and that the Government—as they always do—have done the job properly, and put down decent roads. At Coolangatta, where more reclamation work was carried out, every allotment has been sold. A great deal of reclamation work was done at Cairns.

An Opposition Member: When was the reclamation done at Coolangatta?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Public Estate Improvement Branch carried on work there for two years.

Mr. Moore: After the Minister took up a few blocks there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition took up a block at Broadbeach and the hon. member for Oxley and several other hon. members.

One hon. member referred to the reclamation work that had been carried out at Coolangatta. The Land Administration Board did that job. Every allotment has been taken up, and any hon. member who takes the trouble to go down there can see the beautiful homes that have been built on these perpetual leaseholds.

Anyone who takes the trouble to visit Coolangatta and see the beautiful homes there will realise what it means to have perpetual leasehold. Of the reclamation works at Kirra more than half of the allotments have been sold and in Cairns every allotment made available has been sold at a very high price. We are continuing the work, but members of the Opposition in an endeavour to get something on which to hang an argument as against the Department of Public Lands are making a bit of noise by saying that no bid was made at Sandgate. I did not expect to get a bid for the land there. There was no water available and nobody will buy an allotment for a seaside home unless water and electric light are available. In spite of the difficulties of the Brisbane City Council, the Lord Mayor has been good enough to go on with the extension of the water main to that area and in the very near future water will be available. The Land Acts make it compulsory to put the land up at auction to arrive at an upset price. There are some

houses there and some allotments have been sold, and had it not been for the war I am sure there would have been no difficulty in selling the allotments almost as well as at Coolangatta. For the information of hon. members opposite I remind them that only two allotments were sold at the upset price at the original Coolangatta sale, but immediately after people discovered what a wonderful thing it was to be able to get this land at a low price as against the hundreds of pounds they were paying for freehold land they rushed it. There is not an allotment at Coolangatta left for us to sell, and I am quite satisfied that in the very near future there will be a fine residential area at Sandgate.

As to reclamation work I stress the point, and hon. members opposite should take it to heart, of the large amount of manual labour that is involved. Only a couple of graders and trucks are employed, the rest of the work being mainly labouring work. A large amount of employment is created for the unemployed, for whom the Opposition, from the Leader down, appear to have such concern. Moreover, they must also realise that one of the chief merits of reclamation work is its worth in the interests of the health of the community.

At 4.4 p.m.,

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

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

The hon. members for Murrumba and Oxley gave credit to the Moore Government for the rural development scheme carried out by the Department of Public Lands.

Mr. Clayton: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

The Land Administration Board in its report for 1930 and 1931 advocated this scheme. It points out that in 1930 and 1931 this scheme was recommended to the Moore Government who at that time had a large amount of money available. The Opposition will not put it over me that they were then distressed for money. They had £5,000,000 at credit, more money than all of the other Governments of Australia put together. That was owing to the foresight of previous Labour Governments. I emphasise that point and am very pleased to have the opportunity to do so. The Land Administration Board stressed to the Moore Government, the hon. member for Cunningham then being Secretary for Public Lands, that rural development was a good method of employing men and would also be a good thing so far as the development of land was concerned. That advice was ignored. The board gave it again in 1931. It was again ignored. In its report for 1933 the Land Administration Board stated—

“However, it was not until the Employment Council was constituted in May, 1932, that a forward step was made. The Land Administration Board took the opportunity of again bringing the scheme under notice. It was immediately accepted, put

into operation, and financed from the Commonwealth and State Loan Fund.”

Let us examine that statement. It was initiated in May, 1932, on the eve of an election, and my predecessor told his leader, “This is a good thing to go to the country on,” and it was included in that Government’s policy speech in May, 1932. The elections were in June. Owing to the good sense of the electors of Queensland that Government were defeated. They did not advance one penny from this fund. I did not intend to interject or refer to the matter in my speech in this debate, but the Opposition will not play the game, but, as the British say to Hitler that they will give bomb for bomb, so must I reply to the Opposition.

Every hon. member of the Opposition who has risen has tried to salve his conscience by asking why we included a reference to this £665,615 in this report. They tell us that they initiated the scheme. They initiated it on the eve of the election, and they did not spend one penny. For two years the Land Administration Board asked them to do it, but they did not accept the recommendation until their last year of office, and then only on the eve of the election. We expended money on this work because we realised that the Land Administration Board was a body whose recommendations should be followed, and the £665,615 that is mentioned in the report now before the Committee is the actual amount that has been advanced by this Government, and very extensive work has been carried out with it.

The hon. member for Oxley said that immediately after this Government were returned to power they increased the interest rate. That is not true. The position is that amounts were made available from the Commonwealth and States special funds that had been established for the relief of unemployment to the Department of Public Lands for rural development, and we made available £190,000 at 3 per cent. It is not out of place here to state that the Moore Government did not even accept the full recommendation of the Land Administration Board, because all they made available was £100,000. When we came into power we realised that that was not enough, and we increased the advance to £190,000.

I remember accompanying our Premier to a meeting of the Federal Loan Council at which the late Mr. Lyons presided, and this was one of the schemes that were put forward by our Premier for the relief of unemployment. It is to the credit of the late Mr. Lyons that he made available to this and other State Governments certain sums for the relief of unemployment, and the Federal Government accepted the Premier’s suggestion and subsidised the Department of Public Lands on a £1 for £1 basis up to £100,000. They fixed the interest at 3 per cent. After exceeding £100,000 we advanced another £90,000, still at 3 per cent. Then we advanced another £100,000, again at 3 per cent. We made a further advance of £199,066 and increased the interest to 5 per cent. up to 31 December, 1934, but from 1 January,

1935, we reduced it to 4 per cent. Then we advanced another £162,838 at 4 per cent., and the last amount advanced by this Government was £19,000 through the Land Administration Board at 4 per cent. It will be seen from this that we have not increased the interest. As a matter of fact, the money is costing us more than 4 per cent.

This is one of the activities that have been taken over by the Bureau of Rural Development, which has superseded the Agricultural Bank. The Bureau of Rural Development comes under the control of the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, and last year a fairly large sum was made available for this work. If hon. members will only read the report of the Bureau of Rural Development, which is now in their hands, they will see what amount of money has been made available.

I prepared something that I want to get into "Hansard." It is really a summary of operations mentioned in the report of the Land Administration Board. That was the speech I intended to make, until I was side-tracked by the Opposition, who endeavoured to introduce political matters into this debate. When I read this summary I am more convinced than ever that the Leader of the Opposition and other hon. members on that side of the Committee are not sincere, except, of course, those who have not spoken—and I am sorry I did not know that the hon. member for Cooroora was going to speak because I always expect something from him, and I should have let him speak before I spoke. I do not look upon him as one who indulges in condemnation as do those who have already spoken.

The report of the Land Administration Board has been commented upon very favourably by leading newspapers in Australia, including the Sydney "Bulletin," which has given us a wonderful free advertisement. The Townsville "Bulletin" and many other newspapers, as well as trade magazines, have asked us for illustrations, because they intend writing up the work of the department. We have received commendation for our report. As a matter of fact, the editor of the Townsville "Bulletin," as everyone knows, is a public-spirited man, and he said that the report of the Land Administration Board showed a record of achievement. I intend to give to the Committee an account of some of the achievements of the Government.

The total area of the State is 429,123,800 acres, and 93½ per cent. of that area is under Crown control. I emphasise that point—93½ per cent. of the whole of the area of this State is not freehold. How can it be said that people prefer freehold? Despite the fact that Governments of the past gave freehold, and despite the actions of the Moore Government, who gave the people the opportunity of converting their leaseholds into freehold, less than 7 per cent. of the land of this State is freehold. In 1929 the unoccupied land was 66,332,413 acres, and in 1938 the figure was 40,804,198 acres. There is a record of achievement. Less than 10 per cent. of the whole State remains to be disposed of. As some hon. members opposite pointed out,

some of that 10 per cent. is in remote parts and is not fit for occupation.

The Land Administration Board, composed of Mr. Melville, who has been a very long time in the department, Mr. Callaghan, who has been there for many years, and Mr. Grenning, is deserving of credit for what has been done in the past and for what is being done now. Those gentlemen are carrying out the Government's policy in regard to land tenure. Our tenure must be all right, when it is considered that less than 10 per cent. of the area of the State is not occupied. Of that 10 per cent. it would not be an exaggeration to say that 5 per cent. would be useless land. We will develop the remaining 5 per cent., as we have developed those lands in the North.

Reference has been made of vacant lands in this State. I ask: where are they? When the hon. member for Nanango was speaking about 1,000,000 acres being capable of settlement, I asked him where it was. He told me that it was land already alienated under certain lease conditions, which we will not repudiate. There is no vacant space in Queensland to-day worth while. The Land Administration Board of the day, under Mr. Payne and the various under secretaries of the department from time to time, must be given credit for the wonderful work that has been done. Hon. members opposite should have pointed out, as newspapers were good enough to do, the Government's wonderful record of achievement in land development.

I challenge not only hon. members opposite, but anybody, to show me any Government in the world who have done better than we have in the last 10 years. Over 25,500,000 acres have been dealt with by the Land Administration Board in 10 years. There is a record of achievement. It is something hon. members opposite could do well to tell the people. They should speak of our wonderful land and of what we have done with it. Virtually all our land is under occupation. When I was in Canada the people were astounded to find that a State such as Queensland with under 1,000,000 of population had such a record in land settlement. They said that what we were doing was marvellous. Every year I send to various Ministers in Canada a copy of our report and every year I receive replies telling me that we are doing something worth while. When I was in Canada and America I found that half the land was going out of occupation. In Canada, one-third of the area was going out of occupation because producers could not get enough for their produce. In addition, they suffer from the winter experienced there, a disadvantage we have not got here. Every Minister for Agriculture, every Minister for Lands, and every Premier, Congressman, Senator, or Government official I met said that what we had done in Queensland in land settlement was unequalled in the world. I say that that is so.

Although the area under occupation has increased in the last seven years the Crown revenue by way of rent is less because it is the policy of the Government to do everything possible to help the man on the land.

These figures show the area under occupation and the total revenue—

	Area	Revenue £
1922-23 ..	326,816,752 ..	1,331,118
1938-39 ..	367,264,387 ..	1,106,717

Although there was an increase in the area of 40,447,635 acres, the revenue had decreased by £224,401. That is something that I want the people of Queensland to realise. Despite an increase of over 40,000,000 acres under occupation, the Government, as a good landlord, have helped the people to such an extent that the revenue from rent has fallen by over £220,000. Our policy of helping the man on the land has borne fruit, as was proved by the figures that I quoted this morning.

The hon. member for Gregory said that the Government had not treated the pastoral lessees as they should be treated. I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber. These figures show the area under pastoral leases only—

	Acres
1929	203,842,480 *
1938	240,329,640

The figures show an increase of 36,487,160 acres. The rents have also been reduced. The average rental in 1929 for all pastoral properties in Queensland was 21s. 8½d. a square mile, and in 1938, as a result of decisions of the Land Court and concessions given by the Government, it was reduced to 19s. 6d. a square mile, which is equal to an average rent of ¼d. an acre. I challenge anybody to point to any better land anywhere else where the seasons permit operations throughout the year.

Up to 31 December, 1929, the total area of Crown tenures was 342,160,683 acres, yielding a revenue of £1,099,136, but by 1938 the area had increased to 367,264,387 acres, yielding a revenue of £1,106,717. Although the area had increased by 25,103,704 acres the revenue had increased by only £7,581. In 1929 the area of unoccupied land was 66,332,413 acres, and in 1938 it was 40,804,198 acres, or a decrease of 25,528,215 acres. If that is not a record of achievement, I want to know what is. I want to say again emphatically that the report of the department should be read carefully by hon. members opposite so that they may glean the information from it that I have just given to the Committee. Therein they will find a record of achievement not only by the Government or the Minister, but also by the officers of the department, to whom I give the greatest credit. But I think that credit should also be given to the policy of the Government, which has made the position possible.

Mr. WALKER (Coorooora) (4.20 p.m.): I desire at the outset to make a few general remarks on the administration of the department. Naturally, hon. members on both sides of the Committee give credit to the department for the excellent work it has accomplished, as revealed in the annual report. As

the Minister stated, there is very little vacant land in Queensland to-day on which new settlers can be placed. I have heard it said by Mr. McCormack in this Chamber that people talked about the millions of acres of land available for settlement in Queensland, and advocated the introduction of settlers from overseas, but that there was not sufficient vacant land in Queensland to settle our own boys. It is a fact that we have not got land in a good rainfall area where settlers could make a living by producing something that the country requires or for which we have a ready market.

I was very sorry that the Minister said that when Labour went out of office in 1929 they left £5,000,000 of loan money in the Treasury, but, notwithstanding this fact, the Moore Government failed to use any of that money for reforestation purposes, or developing our lands. The Minister knows perfectly well that £1,500,000 of that money was earmarked to redeem promises made by the McCormack Government before going out of office. He could have told this Committee, too, that the Loan Council made arrangements with those Governments who had loan money on hand to lend it to other States who wanted it on short-dated loans in order that all States should share alike in the loan money available. The Moore Government had no option but to agree to the Loan Council's request. There was nothing wrong in the action of the Moore Government, because in 1928 the McCormack Government—and the Minister was a supporter of that Government—also lent short-dated loans to other States. It will be seen that the Moore Government's action has only to be explained to show that there is nothing in the Minister's contention.

The Minister also said that leasehold tenure was as good as freehold tenure. I have no desire to flog the pros and cons of leasehold versus freehold, but I do desire to refer to his statement that a private banking institution at Tully showed a desire to lend money on sugar lands held under lease. That is quite understandable. The advancing of money against assigned sugar lands is good business because they would have a mortgage on their crops. It was rather amusing, after my three years' connection with the Agricultural Bank, to hear the Minister saying that leasehold tenure was regarded by the bank as a good security. The Agricultural Bank did not regard perpetual leasehold as a good security in itself, consequently, private banking institutions refused to advance money against land held under a lease except where improvements had been made. In that case, they made advances up to one-half of the value of the improvements.

The Minister also repudiated the action of the Labour Government with regard to the purchase of land at Beerburrum for a soldier settlement. I was really surprised at his doing so, because we all know that his Government were responsible for the settlement of that land. There was no need for him to mention it, but to deny the responsibility of the Labour Government was entirely wrong. Beerburrum was settled by the

Theodore Government, and was worked by the returned soldiers for a considerable time. Anyone who mixed with those settlers knew that they invested their war gratuities and savings in the purchase of improvements and implements to work that land. They know, too, how heart-broken those people were because they were placed on land that could not grow produce to enable them to make a living. The Government the hon. gentleman supported were responsible for that settlement. I do not want to rehash these things, and flog the Labour Government as hon. members opposite do the Moore Government, but some explanation is necessary.

The Minister also made comparisons between the reforestation programmes of the Moore Government and his Government. He quite omitted to mention the improvement in the financial position of the State between that and the present time. It is generally acknowledged that we have for some years past been getting on a better footing, but the fact that the Brisbane City Council has recently found it necessary to discharge 1,700 men proves that work cannot be done without the necessary money. I go further and say that, so far as the present Government are concerned: I do not care whether they get money from Loan Funds, the State development tax, or consolidated revenue for public works—when all is said and done it is well to have a simplified balance-sheet that can be easily understood. Whether the money should be credited or debited to a certain fund does not matter so much after all; it is merely a question of taking it out of King George's right-hand pocket and putting it into his left. My point is that the department has done excellent work in reforestation, and that is the best way of spending money.

In the various State forest areas one can see pines growing; I can see them growing in a dozen different areas in my own electorate. During the last year I inspected those areas, which is an indication of the keen interest I take in them. I have inspected every area between here and Gympie with the exception of Beerburrum, and it is surprising to see the way the pines are growing. Within 50 or 60 years these areas will be returning sufficient to cover the principal and interest on the money expended on them.

I am sorry to see that the work of fire protection is not being attended to as it should be. If this drought continues for another couple of months, particularly during a period of excessive heat, the whole of that area is liable to be damaged by fire. That may appear to be a sweeping statement, but I am familiar with these areas, and I realise the great danger of a fire occurring in the night-time. During the day-time they are watched from various positions, and any outbreak is reported straightaway. None of these outlook positions have telephone communication available in order to pass the word on quickly, as they have in New Zealand.

It is no use trimming lantana, it should be cleared right out. I venture to prophesy that 75 per cent. of the whole of this area right from Double Island Point to the end of the

Mary Valley would be burnable to-morrow. It would be a calamity to lose that timber. We know that these trees are liable to be killed by fire up to 10 years of age. The Sub-Department of Forestry have had men trimming the limbs from time to time and placing them on the ground underneath the trees. Although they will eventually create humus that will stimulate the growth of the trees, before that stage is reached these branches are like kindling for a morning fire, and once a fire started it could not be put out until it encountered a natural break. We have to remember that in Victoria, where they have natural breaks very much wider than our breaks here—our natural breaks range from 4 feet or 5 feet to a maximum of 20 feet—the fires jump the breaks. What hope have we of putting out a fire by narrow breaks; if the fire did not sweep across, it would probably catch on the other side through a falling tree or through sparks, and we should thus lose many thousands of pounds' worth of growing pines. This terrible loss can be avoided if we have effective trimming and firebreaks. I have spoken to many of the employees of the department in the Mary Valley district, and they have drawn my attention to these matters. Unless more effective firebreaks are created, the result of their labours would be lost if a fire occurs. I hope that some scheme will be inaugurated to provide reasonable firebreaks and thus minimise the risk of the loss of these valuable timber areas.

If you wish to deal effectively with lantana it must be taken out by the roots. I realise that experiments are being carried out with the lantana bug, but they have not reached the stage at which it can be said that the experiment has proved successful. Certain experiments with the bug are being carried out on the Atherton Tableland. There should be co-ordination between the Ministers responsible. There is a solid mass of lantana through which nobody could pass that extends 20 or 30 yards onto the farmer's land and into the scrub land.

The Minister has pointed out that there is very little land left for settlement. In this we agree with him. We also know that a large portion is held for raising cattle which could be used for other purposes.

There should be co-ordination between the various departments in regard to irrigation, also. The hon. member for Nanango has referred to good country that requires only sufficient water to make it suitable for settlement. If such lands could be watered it would be in the interests of land settlement. The sooner we cease talking about settling Queensland or leading people to believe that Queensland can be settled by bringing in additional people, the better for us.

In the debate on the Address in Reply I mentioned the need for taking the settlement of the other States as an example. The Minister is quite wrong in saying that the soldier settlements of other States are as bad as those we have in Queensland. One need only inspect the Murrumbidgee scheme, in New South Wales, to disprove that. I agree with the hon. member for Nanango that

an expert survey of many of our streams should be made with a view to arriving at something similar to the Murrumbidgee area, in which one sees a very successful settlement. The Minister should visit that area. I should like to accompany him. He would there see first-class settlement with a contented people. There are examples in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia of closely settled areas growing vegetables, rice, and other crops for the large centres of population—the settlement of Griffith, in New South Wales, has now a population of 25,000 people which 50 years ago, probably, had not more than 25. Mildura and Renmark are examples of such areas. On inquiry, the people of the Murrumbidgee replied that they were quite content, and, if I remember rightly, £30 an acre was being returned from this land for years. In Queensland there is a large area of land similar to that. I do not know if sufficient water is available here, and, like the hon. member for Nanango, I want to be doubly sure that there is before we do anything.

In company with the hon. member for Stanley, I recently made a tour of the Burdekin and Torrens Rivers. A number of tobacco growers could be settled there. The potentialities of that district could be tested. Australia needs double the quantity of tobacco leaf she grows to-day, and there should be more co-ordination between the departments with a view to experiments for greater settlement. As a practical man, I give these suggestions for what they are worth. If we settle only 200 or 300 people, so many fewer are on the unemployed market. It will mean more work for those employed in the railways and in other transport facilities, and thus a certain amount of good will be done for the State.

Last year I mentioned that many of our coast lands could be settled in a much better way than they are. The trouble is that the price is 10s. an acre, and the land is not worth that in its present state. However, small areas could be taken up with success because the few settlers who started on their own years ago are still there. In the Tewantin district four or five men have gone in for poultry on some of that sandy-ridge land. There is enough drainage on it to allow them to cultivate all they need for their poultry.

I make those suggestions to the Minister in an endeavour to help him out of the great difficulty with which he is faced.

MR. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) (4.37 p.m.): In common with other hon. members who have seen fit to do so, I compliment the Minister and the officers of his department upon the excellent report that has been submitted to Parliament, and upon the wonderful results achieved by them, and commend them for the nature of the work that they have carried out. It is said that hope springs eternal in the human breast. I have been hoping for years to see a unanimous expression of appreciation of the endeavours of

some of our Ministers and their officers to develop the State; so far it has not been realised.

Reference has been made by a number of speakers to the excellent work carried out by the various sub-departments, the Sub-Department of Forestry and the Public Estate Improvement Branch in particular. I propose to deal more fully with those matters at a later stage, but in passing I desire to pay tribute to the good work that has been done by the Public Estate Improvement Branch. In my own electorate some of the best class of work that could be seen anywhere has been done by that branch in opening up land. I shall deal with that, too, at a later stage.

The hon. member for Wide Bay has referred to the making available of land in areas that are too small for intending settlers. I hope that no such grave error is committed in the future. The Upper Burnett, the Callide, and even the Dawson Valley irrigation areas are examples of what can happen if the areas are too small. Individuals as well as Governments make mistakes, and we should profit by those mistakes, but I do express the hope that such grave errors will not be made in opening land for closer settlement in future.

In his replies during the course of this debate, the Minister has given us some very valuable information, including figures and facts, which proves conclusively that his department is doing excellent work. There is no need for me to enlarge on or support what the Minister has said about the work outlined by him and his officers in bringing such a healthy state of affairs to exist.

I rose chiefly, at the risk of being accused of once more getting onto my pet subject, to express appreciation of the fact that there is to be a general survey of our inland sources of water supply, surface streams, artesian, and sub-artesian. This question is of national significance to-day, and I am pleased that in conjunction with investigations concerning soil erosion and other problems this survey is about to be made. I have long held the view that the keystone to the arch of Queensland's material wealth is water. Without an adequate supply of water there can be no existence of either human, animal, or plant life. Any steps taken by the Minister, the Government, or any person appointed by the Government to go thoroughly into these matters will be worth while. Water conservation to-day is an economic necessity. It must be pleasing, therefore, to all concerned to know that this investigation is to be made. Too long have we allowed our coast streams, in particular, to flow away in waste. I claim that no longer can this State or any State in the Commonwealth, or any part of the world, allow its valuable waters to go to waste when there is such a demand for water. Our eastern coast areas are well equipped with streams at suitable intervals throughout. In addition, we are favoured with more or less regular rainfall each month and each year. Nature has been liberal, almost to lavishness, in giving us excellent permanent streams for settlement purposes. Not so is the case in the

West and the north-western areas of the State. It is there that the desires of the Government for inland settlement present a big problem. I repeat that it is pleasing to know that something will at last be done to carry out a complete investigation of the matter of conserving western and north-western supplies of artesian and sub-artesian waters, as well as a feature survey of the coast streams for the purpose of irrigation.

I want at this stage of my remarks to suggest that there be established a permanent national advisory committee or council comprising representatives of the Commonwealth and the various States to consider important problems of water conservation and utilisation. This, I believe, was a matter discussed during a recent conference held in Sydney, at which some of our Ministers attended. Mr. J. L. Callaghan, a member of the Land Administration Board, attended that conference, and particularly interested himself in the matter. The hon. member for Cooroora pointed out the great necessity that exists for a complete feature survey of the waters available for Government purposes in connection with irrigation and proposals of that kind. I reiterate that a permanent national advisory committee should be set up to go into this very important question.

As a result of the conference in Sydney that I mentioned, a pamphlet was issued by Mr. Callaghan on his return dealing mostly with the decisions arrived at. His remarks are worth repeating to this Committee. In his pamphlet, entitled "Water as a National Problem," Mr. Callaghan says—

"Somewhat late in man's occupation of the great western plains he discovered an amazing auxiliary to his exploitation of those great pasture lands.

"He tapped the vast reservoirs of underground water, stored there over the ages, and known generally as the artesian flow.

"For 40 years or so he has sunk bore after bore until now in Queensland alone there are approximately 1,800 bores pouring out water at the rate of some 290,000,000 gallons per day.

"Probably about only 5 per cent. of this huge flow is actually consumed by stock; the rest flows away in the bore drains which carry the water through the grazing lands many miles from the bores.

"For about 20 years the flow of these bores has been under observation, with the result that it can be definitely said that there has been a serious diminution caused by decreasing pressure and that this diminution is seriously increasing.

"It is said that if the present drain on the artesian stores continues the flow may eventually cease, but the underground water will always be available in adequate quantity by means of pumping."

He contends that the problem is one of first magnitude. A moment ago I said that it was a matter of national importance to see that our valuable waters, whether on the surface or below ground, were conserved.

Mr. Callaghan continues—

"If this is a correct statement of the position, and the available evidence amply supports it, a problem of the first magnitude for Australia as a whole and for the grazing industry in particular is raised. Cessation or substantial diminution of the artesian flow will almost certainly result in appreciable reduction of the aggregate area of useable grazing land, as sheep can depasture only on land within about 3 miles from bore drains or other water supply.

"Consideration of the problem immediately leads to the question of the origin of artesian water. One school of thought inclines to the theory of internal origin and replenishment—they adopt what is known as the Plutonic theory and are not convinced of the reported diminution and ultimate cessation of the flow. They are of the school which considers that a bore fails because of its own mechanical disruption and that a new bore sunk in proximity will secure the original flow. The adherents of this theory among the cognoscenti appear to be limited in number and are regarded as displaying faith in and devotion to the great man who propounded the theory rather than a due appreciation of the available but meagre observed facts.

"It seems to be more generally accepted amongst the trained observers that the origin of artesian waters is the gradual percolation of rainfall waters mainly through the sandstones of the ranges in Central Queensland. The adherents of this meteoric theory consider that the great stores of subterranean water accumulated through millions of years in these Queensland sandstones have been unduly tapped and dissipated and that now the rate of intake is not equal to the rate of outflow.

"If this correctly states the position the problem presents much ground for serious consideration."

There is much food for thought in those very wise words by Mr. Callaghan.

There is nothing more that I desire to say on the vote except to refer to the increasing spread of lantana throughout our coast areas.

One may almost describe it as an appalling spread. The pest extends from Cooktown to the New South Wales border and beyond, and although we had great hopes that the lantana bug would stamp out the evil or mitigate it, I am afraid that that result is not being achieved.

Mr. Maher: I understand better results were achieved in the far northern centres at some experiment station.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: I was going to deal with that. I understood from a conversation I had with the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock that the results obtained in the far North had been somewhat heartening, that the results in the central district were not so good, and as we come away from the warmer belt the results have been almost negligible. I suggest that the Commonwealth

and State Governments combine in offering something in the nature of a reward that might result in the introduction of some insect or parasite such as *cactoblastis cactorum* in order that the State might be rid of one of its increasing pests. It would not be too much to ask in normal times—it may be at the present time, with the curtailment of expenditure in numerous directions—that consideration be given by the Commonwealth and State Governments to offering a substantial reward for the discovery of some parasite or insect in order that the pest may be gradually wiped out.

Again I wish to express my appreciation of the work of this department. I know just what has been done in my electorate, but I am not blind to the fact of what has been done by it and its various sub-departments in other parts of the State. As I have said, the Public Estate Improvement Branch's activities are worth while. The money expended in that direction and on reforestation is something of which we have just cause to be proud. The officials of the department are capable men and the Minister is fortunate, as are other Ministers, in having such a worthy band of officials to carry out the policy of the Government. Despite the Opposition's criticism, there has been unanimity of opinion as to the excellent work done by the department for the good of the State.

Mr. DART (Wynnum) (4.53 p.m.): I commend the officers of this department on their good work and capable administration, but at the same time the Government must do better for the people than they have.

I was rather surprised to hear the Minister say there were not very many vacant spaces in Queensland. That was a very wrong statement to make. Our population is very small as compared with our area, and we have vacant spaces whether the Minister says so or not. The Minister should be more acquainted with land matters than any other hon. member, and he must know that our vast area could be more closely settled in order to increase our population. Our population is not increasing as fast as it should because the Government's policy does not induce people to settle on the land.

Mr. Walsh: You make yourself look ridiculous in making such statements.

Mr. DART: I should not like to look as ridiculous as the hon. member. I reserve to myself the right to commend the actions of the Government when necessary and criticise them when they make mistakes. The Government are not doing all that is possible to settle more people on the land. The cities are dependent on the country for support as it is in the country that all the wealth of the State is produced. If the country districts are not developed then the cities suffer. It is settlement and production in the country that make the cities. Although the administration may be all right, the policy of the Government does not tend to encourage greater settlement.

The basis of the Opposition's criticism regarding perpetual leasehold was not that it should not be in operation but that it should be optional. Perpetual leasehold is all right in some cases; freehold is desirable in others. This question has been debated very freely. It must be remembered that the people who were responsible for the increased production of sugar and dairying commodities that has been mentioned were mostly on freehold properties. Many hon. members opposite have acquired freehold properties, which indicates that personally they favour freehold, although publicly they support leasehold because that is the Government's policy. They have become better citizens, no doubt, by having freehold property. There are handicaps in connection with leasehold land that are not present with freehold.

I commend the Government for the roads they are making in the country areas, but the main object of making these roads into the various country areas is to gain access to the timber for revenue purposes; closer settlement is a secondary consideration. While it may be all right to take a part of the timber off the land, it would be encouraging to the settler to leave a fair amount of timber on it. It is essential that he have timber with which to improve his holding and establish himself.

The revenue the Government had derived from timber taken from these areas has helped the Treasury considerably. The Government should spend the money they obtained for this timber in reforestation. They should follow the example of the Government in which the hon. member for Cunningham was Secretary for Public Lands, which established one of these great reforestation areas.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Those forests were established before the hon. member for Cunningham was Minister.

Mr. DART: He assisted very greatly, and this Government are doing well in following his good example. The Government should spend more money in replacing the timber that they are taking away.

I had the pleasure, although the hon. member for Baroona—who never tells the truth—said that I never went outside Wynnum—

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member for Wynnum says I never tell the truth. I regard that as an insult, and I ask for a withdrawal.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Did the hon. member say that?

Mr. DART: I had not quite finished my sentence. He did not wait for me to finish the sentence before he jumped up.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Did the hon. member say that? If so, I ask him to withdraw.

Mr. DART: Yes, I withdraw. Had the hon. member allowed me to finish my sentence before raising the point of order, he would

have heard what I intended to say. The hon. member said I never went outside Wynnum. That is a deliberate untruth. I have been in the Cairns district and on the Atherton Tableland recently. If he does not travel beyond the electorate of Baroona, that is his business. I was not pleased when he made the statement that I had not travelled.

An inspection of the timber lands in the Atherton district discloses that much timber has been taken from the scrubs, and the Government will be doing a good service for the State if they see to it that reforestation continues and the forests are protected from bush fires.

So far as this Estimate refers to administration, I approve of it, but I do not agree with the policy of the Government in not granting freehold tenure to those who are entitled to it. The land policy of a Government can be such as to encourage settlers. Previous Governments, for instance, repurchased freehold land and sold it, thus settling a greater number of people on the land than were there before. There is something about owning a home on a piece of land that is one's own that has an irresistible appeal to most people. Somehow or other, freehold makes one feel more certain of the future. If a man is prepared to go out and endure the hardships of a country life he is deserving of any increase that may take place in the value of his property. A number of hon. members opposite do not agree with this view. That is really rather mean. If a man is prepared to deny himself the luxuries of the city, he should have something over and above the earnings of those who prefer to remain in the cities and towns. In some respects, I do not oppose leasehold tenure. It is all right for large sheep-grazing properties, but there are many areas that could be taken over, without any repudiation, and subdivided into smaller blocks.

Mr. Power: Where are they?

Mr. DART: In the outside areas, but the hon. member would not know, as he has not travelled. Of course, the hon. member for Baroona would know very little. I do not suppose he has travelled over Queensland at all. The Minister must know of areas that could be cut up into smaller blocks.

There should also be a provision whereby those holding leasehold property may sell or transfer some of their area. This would enable a greater number of people to settle in a given district. It is appalling to think that we have so many millions of acres of land so sparsely populated, yet the Minister sits back contented in the belief that nearly all the land that is worth while is occupied. Certainly it is occupied, but by only a small number of persons. The hon. gentleman may be likened to a man and wife who occupy a 10-roomed house, when three or four rooms would be plenty. Actually in Queensland we have a very big home with very few people. In fact we have not enough people to defend our shores, and this is because the Government give no encouragement to people to settle on the land.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The land is all under occupation.

Mr. DART: Certainly it is under occupation, but one man may be occupying 10,000 acres, when several thousand people could be living on that area.

Smaller areas of land could be used for several branches of primary production. For instance, if one hon. member on the Government side desired to go in for poultry farming, the growing of bananas, or even of sugarcane, he would not want 10,000 acres. The land is not cut up in the right way.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The land is leased under certain conditions, and we cannot repudiate those leases.

Mr. DART: The Government could give more help to the people on the land. When a certain hon. member on the Government side was acting Secretary for Agriculture and Stock I brought a case before him. He was very courteous and went so far as to make arrangements for the inspection of this man's property in an endeavour to find some way of improving his conditions. I believe that that acting Minister was as anxious as I was to see this man settle down comfortably. He had been on intermittent relief work. Prior to going on relief he bought a comfortable home and he had an acre and a-half of land, on which he decided to go in for duck-raising. All hon. members know that a duck farm does not need much land. He had 935 ducks and he wanted help from the Government to make his venture a success. He had advanced to a certain stage when he was put off the relief work. He was quite willing to accept a certain amount if he could get it, but because he had only 1½ acres of land the law would not allow him to be helped by the department. It was not the acting Minister's fault that this man did not receive some relief; the Government's policy was responsible for that. While the Government continue to pursue such a policy the holder of small areas of land will not receive any benefit. The Department of Public Lands would have much more success if it did more to settle the people on small areas of land.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You are advocating repudiation.

Mr. DART: No; I am asking that the Act be amended to allow the holders of large areas of leasehold land to re-lease part of their holdings in order that the population on the land may be increased. There would be no repudiation or anything of the kind. I object to repudiation. It has never been advocated by me, or by any hon. member on this side of the Committee. I think it would be possible for a man holding 30,000 acres to cut that land up into 5,000-acre blocks. All I am asking is that permission be given to a man who desires to cut his area into smaller lots to enable people to take up the blocks.

The Secretary for Public Lands: He has that privilege now.

Mr. DART: This Government would be well advised to leave the choice of freehold or leasehold to the selectors themselves.

Vote (Department of Public Lands—Chief Office) agreed to.

DISTRICT OFFICES.

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

“That £62,883 be granted for ‘District Offices.’ ”

This vote shows a decrease of £22 on last year’s appropriation. There has been a reduction of £600 for contingencies and an increase of £578 on account of the basic-wage increase.

Vote agreed to.

FORESTRY.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS
(Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) (5.13 p.m.): I move—

“That £46,535 be granted for ‘Forestry.’ ”

There has been an increase of £2,952 to provide for increases to salaries under the basic-wage judgment, and a small increase of £85 for contingencies.

Mr. WALSH (Mirani) (5.14 p.m.): As this vote covers national parks, I desire to address myself to the question. The department has been taking a very keen interest in the establishment of national parks during the term the Labour Government have been in power since 1932. I commend the good work that is being done by the land commissioner for the Mackay district in particular. Over a period of years there has been agitation that certain areas in the Eungella district be set aside as national parks. There appears to be some difficulty in getting settlers in the area to agree to this policy of the department. That is unfortunate. Anyone who has had association with the country districts realises the need for adequate action to preserve many of our scenic spots.

The department has also taken control of various islands off the coast, and in this connection I wish to make a few suggestions. Although the new policy adopted has been devised in what might appear to be the best interests of the department, there are difficulties associated with the matter. The land on these islands at the present time is held under special lease, which does not encourage the holders to go in for the improvements necessary to induce tourists to come to Queensland.

In the early part of the year, in company with the hon. member for Bowen, I visited islands off the coast from his and my own electorates, and saw that the various islanders were doing very good work so far as their tenure would permit. Although I agree that the department should retain some hold over the islands for tourist or defence purposes, nevertheless, I feel that the present tenure

does not encourage the settlers to carry out necessary improvements nor will it induce financial institutions to help them to do the work that is essential in the interests of tourist traffic. I therefore suggest that a special tenure should be devised for these islands. I realise that on the mainland it is essential to have special leases, because the land may be required for recreation reserves and other public purposes, but I say with all sincerity that the special leases of these islands do not encourage the holders to erect the buildings necessary to accommodate the tourists in a proper way.

With the hon. member for Bowen, I visited Day Dream Island, West Molle Island, Long Island, Lindeman Island, and Hayman Island, and we were received with the utmost hospitality by all the islanders. Most of our time was spent in viewing the scenic beauties of the islands, and I should like to tell the Minister that we saw many things that seriously limit the extension of tourist traffic there.

If the islanders were encouraged by a special tenure it would help to develop the tourist traffic on the mainland, too. There is no reason why tourists to the islands should not spend some of their time in the Eungella Range, in the Mackay district. As a matter of fact, that was suggested to me by some of the islanders themselves, and I should like the Minister to give the islanders a different tenure so that they may have a better security than a special lease to offer to banking institutions when they apply for financial help.

The idea of bringing the islands not at present taken up under control as national parks is also a good one. I cannot understand the view taken by the department previously when it allowed many of these islands to be selected and beautiful jungle cut down for the purpose of growing a few bananas, especially when there were thousands of acres on the mainland that could have been used for this purpose. Why allow these islands to be denuded of their beautiful flora.

I should also like every one of these islanders who holds a special lease to be appointed a national park ranger of adjacent islands. Some of the visitors to the adjacent islands are a little careless in many ways, and one never knows when a fire will break out and destroy the whole of the vegetation on the islands. If some authority was given to the lessees that would enable them to exercise supervision over the adjacent islands, they would see that the scenic beauties of those islands were preserved, because, after all, their livelihood depends upon their preservation. I particularly urge the Minister to give some attention to this matter. Nobody from the mainland should be allowed to go to these national parks and set up camp and go away leaving piles of bottles, tins, and other rubbish about the place, and what is worse, cause a fire that may destroy beautiful scenery.

Some reference has been made to ringbarking. More drastic powers should be given to the department if it does not possess them,

in order to prevent indiscriminate ringbarking. Although hon. members opposite may get up and complain that Crown lands are being largely ringbarked I want to direct the Minister's attention to the fact that a considerable area of freehold land is suffering in this respect also. When travelling on the railways I have passed through a stretch of plain country that had a fringe of trees of 1 chain or $1\frac{1}{2}$ chains in depth from the fence. The owner of this land ringbarked those trees, so denuding the land of natural shade for the cattle. We hear much about the liberty of the subject, but this is an instance that shows the need for more drastic power to preserve our timbers. When I passed through this area I usually said a prayer that the trees should not die, and many of them did not die. (Laughter.) Hon. members will agree that, generally speaking, there is too much indiscriminate ringbarking. Apart from the fact that we are losing much valuable timber thereby, there are other factors, such as soil erosion, to be considered. I go so far as to say that the Government should have power of control even with respect to the timber on freehold properties. Their powers should not be limited to Crown lands and leasehold lands. Such powers are necessary if we hold to preserve our beauty spots and our timbers.

I want to impress on the Minister the need for giving some consideration to the form of tenure of the islands off our coast, so that by an improvement on the present special lease some encouragement will be offered to those who are willing to help develop the tourist traffic. No financial or private institution would advance money on a special lease.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (5.23 p.m.): This morning I complained that certain essential information about the condition of softwoods had been omitted from the last two reports of the Director of Forests. The supply of softwoods has been a chief cause of worry to the Sub-Department of Forestry. After all, it is one of the main duties of the Director to keep Parliament advised on the decline in the quantity of softwoods available for commercial purposes. Every year since I have been in Parliament the Director has faithfully discharged that duty, but in the last two years' reports, for some extraordinary reason, this vital information has been omitted. There is nothing at all in this year's report on this important subject. Either the Director is not carrying out his function or he has been directed by the Minister to withhold this information from Parliament. It is the duty of the Minister to rectify the omission. I have a duty to the public. Somebody is in the wrong: it is either the person in charge of the Sub-Department of Forestry or the Minister.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I think you are in the wrong.

Mr. MAHER: There is no reference in this report, nor was there any reference in the last report to Parliament. I feel that important information of this kind affecting our softwoods should be available to Parliament;

they represent our timber assets, and we know there has been a continuous shrinkage. Evidence of that can be found by going into the matter closely enough.

I find the annual cut of pines in 1936-37 was 105,000,000 superficial feet, while in 1938-39 it had increased to 124,000,000 superficial feet, an increase of 19,000,000 superficial feet for one year's production. Yet the annual report is practically silent on this outstanding question of the disappearance of our pine supplies. That is an important point. I think we should be in a position to turn up easily vital information of this kind; we should not have to search into all the nooks and crannies of the various records of the Sub-Department of Forestry in an endeavour to ascertain the true position in this regard. That is the burden of my complaint. Whilst these reports go into great detail about comparatively unimportant things, they make very meagre reference indeed to vital matters.

The Secretary for Public Lands: If you look at page 18 of the report you will see the cut for last year.

Mr. MAHER: That is all right about the cut, but there is no statement by the Director of Forests stressing the position and giving information unless you take the time to go through a hole heap of figures. Here is the report that we are given to read; we are busy men, and the Director of Forests knows the actual position; why does he not indicate in his report the true position and set it out, as was done every year until two years ago?

Another example I referred to this morning—and I feel justified in referring to it again—is the omission of important Appendices G and H. Appendix G in the report for 1937-38 was the forestry financial statement from 1 January, 1904, to 30 June, 1938. It set out in great detail the financial position of the sub-department. It was a very interesting record, and one from which it was easy to pick out a set of figures. It gave the gross revenue, the payments in connection with the marketing of various timber, the net revenue and expenses from revenue votes, overhead, capital improvements, and also the surplus paid to revenue. That is something I have always been anxious to ascertain—the surplus paid to revenue. This important statement, for the first time, is omitted from this year's report. Why is that so? The Minister referred me to page 18 of the report of Sub-Department of Forestry, but the only thing of any help there is that net revenue is set out. The details are not given.

The Secretary for Public Lands: What more do you want?

Mr. MAHER: The important dissection of the amount paid into consolidated revenue is omitted. We are anxious to know the surplus paid into revenue each year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is the net revenue.

Mr. MAHER: It shows net revenue, £375,000.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is the amount.

Mr. MAHER: The amount paid into revenue is £335,000. There is a difference. It is set out in the special table, and why omit an important appendix of that kind when for many years past the report has contained all the information?

The Secretary for Public Lands: You certainly woke up in a bad humour this morning.

Mr. MAHER: No. These things are done deliberately. They do not happen by accident.

The Secretary for Public Lands: There is always a difference between the Treasury and departmental figures. The departmental figures are made up at the end of the month.

Mr. MAHER: Appendix H, representing the loan expenditure from 1 July, 1919, to 30 June, 1938, has been omitted from the report for the first time. Why should the information showing the amount expended from loan for forestry operations be omitted? Is it owing to the fact that each year I have consistently directed attention to the fact that the Minister was drawing large revenues from forestry operations and paying them into consolidated revenue, and utilising Loan Funds to carry on reforestation? I have repeatedly drawn attention to that. It is a very awkward point with the Minister. It puts him on the horns of a dilemma each year, and this time, to escape the scathing criticism of the Opposition for his action, he has apparently—I must blame him—directed that these valuable appendices that would be helpful to us be dropped from the report.

The Secretary for Public Lands: In this report it shows you the amount we spent from Loan Funds for the last 20 years.

Mr. MAHER: Where?

The Secretary for Public Lands: I will give it to you when I get up.

Mr. MAHER: Call out the page. I should like to turn it up.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I am not here to tell you.

Mr. MAHER: I have challenged the Minister to show me where Appendix H, which appeared on page 33 of the report for last year, appears in the Director's report for this year. There are reasons for the omission of these two appendices, i.e., the Minister wishes to obscure as far as possible the amount of forestry revenue paid into consolidated revenue, and the amount of loan money used for forestry operations.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Appendix G shows the expenditure on reforestation for 20 years and the expenditure from loan funds is in Appendix GA, on page 27.

Mr. MAHER: That is in an entirely different form to that in which it appeared previously. The figures are arranged in a different manner, and it is difficult to get the information that we have been used to having.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Many years ago the Sub-Department of Forestry

kept its own accounts, but some years ago those accounts were transferred to head office, just as were the irrigation accounts.

At 5.36 p.m.

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. MAHER: That is not the explanation. Although reforestation was fairly extensive in 1938-39, no part of timber revenue was used for this purpose. The whole of it went into consolidated revenue. That is a rather extraordinary situation. Here is an important department of State from which substantial revenues have been obtained, yet not one penny of that revenue has been reinvested in forestry operations. Last year the net revenue was £328,000, and not one penny of that sum went back into reforestation, yet the Government expended from Loan Fund £104,000 on that work. It was said here this morning that that was a crazy system of finance.

The Secretary for Public Lands: We expended £281,000 on reforestation, and that is in this report, too.

Mr. MAHER: I am referring now to the expenditure from Loan Fund. The amount made available from Loan Fund by the Minister was £104,000. The extraordinary thing is that although a department of State yielded £328,000 last year not one penny of that revenue was invested in regeneration, or the general development work that is being done by the department.

I might state here that for the seven years since 1932-33 the Government have received £1,744,734 by way of revenue from forestry operations, and the loan money spent on reforestation in the same period was £601,198. It will be seen, therefore, that the consolidated revenue of the State has benefited very considerably, and the money that has been expended on reforestation has all come from Loan Fund, and even that has been less than half of the revenue derived.

Certainly, the amount that has been expended has not been nearly enough to cope with the drain on our softwoods supply. The total expenditure on reforestation from all sources last year was £281,000. This money came from Loan Funds and from the unemployment relief and State development taxation. There was no contribution whatever from timber revenue, which one would think would be the first reservoir to be tapped by the Minister in his efforts to finance the industry. It is unheard of that an industry yielding £328,000 in one year should have not one penny of its revenue expended upon it in the planting of forests for future years.

The Director indicates that planting last year included 2,746 acres of softwoods and 34 acres of hardwoods, making a total planting of 2,780 acres, but I should like to indicate to the Committee that the annual report also points out that it would take at least 5,000 acres of planting a year to cope with the present drain on our softwoods forests. There is a big leeway to make up

and the Minister has the funds with which to do it.

The Secretary for Public Lands: He points that out in his report.

Mr. MAHER: He does. He gives no indication of the general position. This is merely a passing reference. It is not sufficient on such an important matter. The position is still very unsatisfactory and compares very unfavourably with that of 1932, when financial resources are taken into consideration. I will give the Committee a comparative table as between 1932 and 1939—

	1931-32	1938-39
	£	£
Net revenue from Crown timber ..	44,585	328,755
Total loan expenditure	1,162,910	3,392,641
Total tax resources (unemployment relief and State development tax)	1,089,645	2,754,642
	<u>2,297,140</u>	<u>6,476,038</u>

The Premier: I thought the Estimates for the Department of Labour and Industry had been passed?

Mr. MAHER: This has nothing to do with them. It will be seen that the Government had approximately £6,500,000 at their disposal, as against approximately £2,300,000 available to the 1931-32 Government. The planting in 1932 was 1,985 acres, as against 2,780 acres in 1938-39. It will be seen that very little progress has been made.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Only five times as much as when you were the Government.

Mr. MAHER: That is nonsense. The planting in 1932 was 1,985 acres, as against 2,780 acres in 1938-39.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You had better keep off figures. You do not know enough about them.

Mr. MAHER: What is wrong with those?

The Secretary for Public Lands: I will show you when I get up.

Mr. MAHER: I have given a table that the Minister might well ponder over. Let the Minister laugh that off.

The Secretary for Public Lands: There has been regeneration and all sorts of things. We have done five times the amount of forestry work that your Government did.

Mr. MAHER: There has been no commensurate increase in reforestation, especially when the huge increase in cut timber is taken into consideration. The Minister had available to him last year £328,000 from forestry revenue, but he preferred to put it into consolidated revenue rather than use some or all of it for reforestation. In 1931-32 the Government had only £44,500 available, but they planted an acreage not far short of

what has been accomplished to-day by the use of Loan Funds and the use of money from the State development tax and the unemployment relief tax.

After all, it is results that count. The Minister may spend money usefully in quite a number of other directions, but the important test is, how many additional acres have been replanted. It is our duty to make a reasonable effort with the revenue at our disposal to replant as many acres as possible to replace the timber used in our own day. The Director has pointed out that softwoods should be replanted at the rate of 5,000 acres a year. The Minister has had abundant revenue for this purpose, but he has made very little progress since the depression years, for he has barely exceeded half the annual replanting that the Director of Forests says is necessary to make good the drain on our diminishing supplies of softwoods.

During the current fiscal year the Victorian Government have appropriated a sum of £117,000 from consolidated revenue for reforestation. Last year the same Government appropriated £105,000 for this purpose, in addition to appropriations from relief tax and loan fund, but, in our own State, none of the revenue from timber has been used for this purpose. There is no doubt that the Minister is going to use some revenue from the State development tax for forestry operations during the year and, of course, he will take credit for the sums spent in that way, but I should like to emphasise that that money should be used to create additional employment. Last year the Minister collected £328,000 from forestry operations, all of which was paid into consolidated revenue, but if the situation was handled wisely and in a businesslike way at least a part of that money should be used for reforestation, and the amount to be taken from the revenue from the State development tax should be used to create additional employment in other directions—forestry operations if the Minister wishes. If the Minister was short of revenue because of a bad year in the timber trade, I could understand the proposal to allocate other revenue for reforestation, but, although he collected £328,000 last year, not £1 of it went back into the industry that produced it.

The Secretary for Public Lands: We spent five times as much as your Government.

Mr. MAHER: The Minister takes credit for the expenditure from the revenue from relief tax, the State development tax, and Loan Fund, but he does not grasp my point. If some of the revenue from forestry operations was used for reforestation the money that is now allocated from Loan Fund and revenue from relief tax and State development tax for this purpose could be used to create additional employment in other directions, and thus we should be able to make greater headway and thereby help to solve the problem of unemployment which is of so much concern to us all.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The hon. gentleman does not contend that the revenue from timber operations should be spent on reforestation?

Mr. MAHER: Forestry operations should be a first charge on the revenue collected from the industry.

(Time expired.)

Mr. McLEAN (Bundaberg) (5.50 p.m.): I first desire to commend the Minister and his officers for the good work they have accomplished in the past year.

The Leader of the Opposition complained that the Sub-Department of Forestry had not done any regeneration work. I cordially invite him to come with me to the Goodnight Scrub. He will there see that as a result of the work of the department in the last few years, particularly during the Minister's administration, this area has advanced to one of the finest forestry areas in the State. The condition of the pine forest in that area is a tribute to him. The settlers in those areas were denied access roads for many years. The Minister paid them a personal visit and subsequently provided good roads not only for forestry purposes, but also to enable those settlers to transport their produce to the railway.

In 1925-26 the quantity of logs consigned from Crown leases to mills was 72,000,000 superficial feet. That quantity fell in 1931-32, during the Moore Government's term, to 35,000,000 superficial feet. In 1938 it had risen to 186,000,000 superficial feet. That in itself signifies a great advance in the building programme from 1931 to 1938.

I agree with the hon. member for Mirani that there should be a legislative enactment giving power to timber-cutters to enter freehold land to cut timber in the same manner as mining prospectors can enter freehold land to prospect for minerals. There is much good marketable timber on freehold property that is now being destroyed by fire. No-one seems to bother.

It was my pleasure to conduct the Minister for Lands of Victoria on a visit of inspection to the Goodnight Scrub area. He thought that the timber there was the best that he had seen in the Commonwealth. There is no doubt that it is a very fine stand of timber. It is the only area in the Commonwealth where there is evidence of hoop pine regeneration.

In order to show that the land in the Bundaberg district is suitable for hoop pine regeneration I have only to instance the action of the headmaster of a school in an area adjacent to the Fairymead Sugar Mill. With the consent of his school committee he undertook the growth of approximately 5 acres of hoop pine. That pine has been growing for about four years, yet it has reached a considerable height.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that 985 acres were replanted in 1932, and 2,780 acres in 1938. That does not represent the total work of the Sub-Department of Forestry. Its work of regeneration, and its subsequent clearing work, give a great deal of employment. A large number of men have been

employed for a considerable time on this valuable work.

I suggest to the Minister that he give some attention to the tea-tree country that is not suitable for any other purpose. I believe that the sandy formation of that country makes it admirably suitable for the growing of pine trees.

From the tops taken from trees produced in the Goodnight Scrub area F. C. Brown and Sons, of Bundaberg, manufacture butter boxes for the Port Curtis Co-operative Dairy Association of a quality equal to anything produced in Queensland. That illustrates the use to which the by-products of the forest can be put.

I wish to pay a tribute to the exhibit that was prepared by the officials of the Sub-Department of Forestry at the Royal National Show in Sydney. The many visitors who inspected that exhibit were surprised at the variety of timber displayed, and expressed their admiration for the manner in which the exhibit was arranged. Hon. members and other visitors who have inspected the forestry showroom established by the department in Brisbane are able to observe the marked improvement in the variety of timbers that are now available for the manufacture of furniture, and to see the various stages through which the timber passes from the log to the finished article. The Minister and his department are to be commended for the great work they are doing in the interest of Queensland.

There is no doubt there has been a diminution of softwoods and hardwoods during the past few years. That was occasioned through the increase in the building programme, but the Minister and his staff are doing everything possible to make up the deficiency.

The Sawmills Licensing Act, which was passed by this Government, has brought about a marked improvement in the distribution of timber to the mills. Years ago, valuable timber was destroyed by people who did not appreciate its value, but that practice has been stopped.

In conclusion, I commend the Minister and the department for the good work they are carrying out in the interests of Queensland.

Mr. FARRELL (Maryborough) (7.15 p.m.): The weak criticism offered by hon. members opposite must be taken by the Minister as an indication of the value of the work he has performed in the department of which he has charge. In estimating the value of forestry in Queensland one must take into account the important work that has been done by that department.

This morning the hon. member for Oxley made a statement in reference to the road to the Kirrama Range. I have some knowledge of that range, and that project is a monument to the tenacity of the present Secretary for Public Lands. Those who have not had the privilege of visiting that area do not realise the magnitude of the project and the work entailed in it. The

timber was inaccessible, and the road has not only opened up forest land, but has also given work in its construction to a considerable number of men. Its completion will give access to a very large amount of timber.

Some magnificent timbers will now be available. The report of the Land Administration Board contains a photograph of some of these logs being made into plywood at the Kennedy mill. In itself, that does not appear to be of great moment, but an appreciation of the quantity and beauty of the timber on that land will enable one to visualise the great work done by the department.

Mr. Nimmo: All out of loan money.

Mr. FARRELL: It is immaterial where the money comes from. The Minister was big enough to visualise the possibilities, and this road could be undertaken only by the Government. No private firm or individual would have undertaken that work, and it is to the hon. gentleman's credit that he was big enough to tackle that project and have it brought to a successful conclusion. The road will be paid for out of the revenues obtained from the timber. Is it not right that, if a road is constructed to give access to timber in a State forest, the Sub-Department of Forestry or the Government should get the return from it?

Mr. Nimmo: That is what I said.

Mr. FARRELL: Then that is all right. The criticism levelled at the construction of this road is not justified. Without it large areas of timber would not have been available. Moreover, it will be a magnificent scenic road. On the completion of the job, the department will throw open that road for the use of the shires. Is not that worth while? In addition, the throwing open of these areas will provide a tremendous amount of work. In the first place, it will give employment to the cutters who fall the trees, to the sniggers who bring them to the road, to the lorrymen who cart them down the mountain side, and to the sawmillers who cut them up. I do not think anybody can offer any severe criticism of the building of the Kirrama road. Certainly, it will be a lasting monument to the tenacity of our present Minister.

From my experience of the North I was struck by the distinct advantage that may be seen to have developed from the Government's policy as compared with the policies laid down by other Governments in previous years. I know that in my own electorate there were no such things as public estate improvement roads in those days. As a matter of fact, no public estate improvement road has been constructed in my electorate yet, but I am endeavouring to have that done, and I am sure that if the shire councils co-operate with the Sub-Department of Forestry access roads will eventually be constructed there.

Very little forestry work is being done in my electorate, because it is really an industrial centre, but I do know that a consider-

able amount of work is going on in the forests of the electorate represented by the hon. member for Wide Bay, who, I am sure, can vouch for what is being done. I am sure that if he desires to make a comparison when he replies, the Minister will quote the number of men who were employed in forestry in that district by the Moore Government and the number employed there to-day by this Government. The employment of this increased number of men is the result of a policy that has been laid down by the present Administration.

When visiting the mills a fortnight ago I gained some idea of the amount of timber that is being cut. Maryborough is in the happy position of being able to say that 95 per cent. of the timber sales from that district are foreign sales. By that I mean that 95 per cent. of the sales are made to outside towns. As a matter of fact, we have been sending timber to North Queensland, and even as far as Western Australia.

Mr. Moore: What do you call the North? Rockhampton?

Mr. FARRELL: If the hon. member knew the timber industry well enough he would know that most of the mills that are operating to-day have agencies in all the northern towns.

Mr. Moore: I thought they had enough timber up there without getting more from Maryborough.

Mr. FARRELL: There are certain types of timber that are needed in the various phases of building that are not grown in the North. For instance, up there they cannot grow the timber that they require for piles and telephone poles. They have not the hardwoods that we have in our district.

In addition to that, we have sent quite a large amount of timber to Victoria. I suppose that is because their forests were burnt out recently.

Mr. Russell: That is not the reason.

Mr. FARRELL: Then the Government's policy of helping the timber industry must have enabled us to do that.

Mr. Russell: The Federal and the State Governments.

Mr. FARRELL: At any rate, the fact is that we have been able to send it down there.

I should like to pay a tribute here to Mr. Duffy, the chairman of the Timber Advisory Committee. It would be an education to many to call on the committee and see what he has been doing for the timber industry of this State. No better illustration of that can be found than the present position of the butter-box trade.

Mr. Walker: He is a first-class man.

Mr. FARRELL: I agree with the hon. member for Cooroola.

Mr. Clayton: He was trained in a good school.

Mr. FARRELL: He is a man who has had great practical experience.

An Opposition Member: The Moore Government trained him.

Mr. FARRELL: Speaking of the butter-box trade, I do not suppose there is any other mill operating in Queensland to-day that has such efficient machinery in operation as the firm of Wilson Hart, Maryborough. Not only does it manufacture butter boxes, it also joins timber by the Lindemann process. The finished article is used for table tops and other furniture. It is a revelation to go through that mill at the present time. It is a hive of industry. Before the butter-box trade was established, we were burning a good deal of our waste pine. Many men and boys are now employed by that firm in the manufacture of butter boxes. On a recent visit I noticed that a further machine had been installed to split the ends of butter boxes.

A check-up on the wages sheets of the two mills operating in my electorate revealed that one mill had a weekly wages bill of £800 and the other a little over £900. Those wages sheets give some idea of the magnitude of the industry in my electorate. I do not know of any other industry that has had the support and co-operation of the Government to the same extent as the timber industry has.

I listened to the criticism delivered by the Leader of the Opposition, and I came to the conclusion that he did not have very many sawmilling friends in his electorate. If he has, I am sure he has not visited them of late. I can assure this Committee that the timber industry is appreciative of the Government's policy. The ramifications of the industry are extensive. It is a pleasure to go through the many mills that are operating and see the huge amount of work being turned out to-day as compared with the dark ages of 1929-32.

Mr. Yeates: Why "dark ages"?

Mr. FARRELL: I know it hurts the hon. member for East Toowoomba to hear me say that. He has the happy knack of always saying what happened when he was carrying his swag.

The Leader of the Opposition complained that our softwood supplies were diminishing, but no-one realises that more than the millers in my district, and no-one has done more than they to encourage the use of hardwood for home-building. Years ago it was the invariable practice for the children to follow the plans of the father in the building of homes, but it does not necessarily mean that if a man built a house with 4 by 4 timber when 4 by 3 would have done, his children should do the same; nor does it follow that because the father erected pine partitions they should do the same. It is the practice in my district to encourage the use of hardwood for floorings and partitions, and I can assure hon. members that no timber is more attractive for this purpose than polished hardwood. We are endeavouring in our district to popularise the

use of hardwoods and we are gradually bringing the people to a realisation of their beauty.

The people of my electorate appreciate the good work of the department in carrying out extensive forestry operations which began in earnest under the present Government. Every effort is made by the Government to use all land forfeited to the Crown for forestry purposes, and I congratulate the Minister and his officers on their very efficient work.

Mr. DEACON (Cunningham) (7.32 p.m.): I am very glad to see that some progress has been made by the Sub-Department of Forestry, although I should have liked to see more. I do not know of anything better that the Government can do than encouraging the extension of forestry plantations and caring for existing forests.

I heartily congratulate the sub-department on its new showroom in George street. I advise all hon. members to visit the showroom and see the wonderful display of Queensland timbers and the uses to which they can be put. It will be worth their while to have a look at them and thus realise the work that the sub-department is doing.

Money spent in forestry work is money well invested, because, eventually, it will give a splendid return to the State. It is a sound investment, and the Government could spend more money in this direction and less in others, and so create the same amount of work.

Mr. Farrell: Then how are we going to build roads?

Mr. DEACON: Not all the men are employed on road construction. If more money was spent on forestry work, not only would additional employment be created, but eventually the return to the State would be considerably increased. To grow a crop of timber is to give the State something worth having. The Government should increase the amount of their expenditure on forestry, either from consolidated revenue or from loan money. The Government must find work for a certain number of unemployed. The present hard times, together with the bad policy of the Government in other directions, will make for more unemployment. The State will have to find money to keep those unemployed; it cannot let them starve, and by enlarging the operations of the Sub-Department of Forestry the Government will do more valuable work for the State than they are doing at present.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I am prepared to accept your advice, but your leader tells me I am wrong.

Mr. DEACON: I hope that the Minister's colleagues will accept it, and give him a freer hand in expenditure in that direction. The Government will certainly not benefit for some time, but the asset will be there. If we do not grow more timber, then sooner or later we shall be compelled to buy it.

Mr. Russell: We shall soon have to buy it.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Not very soon.

Mr. DEACON: We shall certainly have to buy timber sooner or later.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Neither you nor I will live to see that day.

Mr. DEACON: I should like to see the Government destroy less timber that is of some commercial use. If hon. members peruse the report of the department, they will observe that some of the forests will be opened for selection sooner or later. There is timber on that land, and I hope the Minister will not allow it to be destroyed.

The Secretary for Public Lands: We grow five trees for every one that you grew.

Mr. DEACON: I am very glad to hear that, but I hope the Minister is not overstating the case.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I am not; I will prove it.

Mr. DEACON: I well remember the time when our Government had to take office after a series of very extravagant Labour Governments, who left no money behind. They wasted money foolishly, and left no assets behind them. In this case, the Government are investing money in a sensible way. If they continue to invest more money in forestry, then some day the State will recoup itself for their expenditure. We know of the investments they made—I will not mention them now, because we have mentioned them so often—and one wonders how they could dream of putting money into such things when they could have put it into work of this kind, thus creating an asset for the State. By planting trees and looking after natural forests we are saving the State money and doing a work that will bring more money into the State later on.

Mr. King: You said that three times.

Mr. DEACON: I will say it 20 times if it will cause the hon. member to do something; but as the hon. member has taken notice now, there is some hope that he will take an interest in forestry in the future.

I hope the Government will do more than they promised to do, although, judging from their past record, they may not do as much as they promised to do this year. There have been many years when they have not carried out the proposed programme; but I hope they will go a little further this year.

Reforestation is useful work, and in carrying it out the Government will have the support of the great majority of the people of the State.

The staff was a very efficient one when I was in charge of the department.

Mr. King: They are still efficient.

Mr. DEACON: Of course, but now they are working under a handicap, but I have no doubt they are trying to do their best. I know that the great majority of them are good workers, and that they will do their utmost, irrespective of what Government are in power. I sympathise with them for having

to work under a Government few of whom sympathise with the Minister. No doubt, the Minister will have the same difficulties that other Ministers have experienced long ago. There is one thing I am quite sure of—that as time goes on more people will be convinced that by putting money into forests the Government will be carrying out a work that is well worth doing—a work that will create assets for the State.

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) (7.44 p.m.): The report of the Sub-Department of Forestry certainly provides very interesting reading. It is said that the keynote of the sub-department has been intense activity. That activity has been going on for a few years now. The local trade is good, and, as the hon. member for Maryborough has told us, the mills in that city are in full swing; and what has happened there has happened in every other mill in Queensland. All these mills have experienced pretty busy periods during the last few years.

The trade to-day is certainly better than it ever has been, chiefly because the differences between the sawmillers have been adjusted. The intense price-cutting that took place years ago has gone, and the millers, as befits sensible men, have come together and are now working on a reasonable rate of profit. The Queensland trade has been very good up to date, although there has been a slight shrinkage locally. The "Economic News" discloses that fewer building permits are being issued, but as against that Southern trade is at a remarkably high level.

Prior to the change of policy it was not possible to sell local pine in the Southern States. They drew their requirements mostly from Canada and the Baltic. Sympathetic consideration by the Commonwealth Government was responsible for certain duties that gave us an opportunity to compete in the sawn-timber trade with overseas suppliers. The Queensland Government also contributed their share by reducing the royalties on timber intended for export to the South.

The present Government merely followed a practice initiated by the Moore Government. After very thorough investigation that Government, in order to give our local mills more work and to give employment to a greater number of men, decided that it was necessary to bring down the price of our sawn product to such a level as would enable local millers to compete with overseas shippers. I was always a very strong advocate of such a policy and took a very active part in endeavouring to induce the Government to adopt their policy. There were then, as there are to-day, a number who placed reforestation and conservation of timber before the marketing of timber. While we all desire to preserve standing as much of our timber as possible and to spread delivery over a long period, we must admit that closer settlement must engage our attention more closely than that of the conservation of timber.

Whereas I should like to see a policy of greater reforestation for future needs, I

cannot resist the strength of the agitation for the throwing open of many of our lands for closer settlement. The Minister to-day informed us there is in Queensland practically no land that can be opened for closer settlement, that, in fact, our best lands have been alienated already, and that for additional lands for closer settlement we must look to some of those lands that are at present occupied by pastoralists and graziers. It was hard to resist the agitation by country members to throw open many of the lands on the coast that were clothed with our native timbers. These areas are very fertile because of the humus accumulated over centuries. Generally, they are well watered. Another reason given was that many of these forest reserves were the habitat of many pests that apparently worried the farmers very considerably. At that time a thorough investigation was made and it was decided that additional land should be opened for settlement and that we should make some attempt to market our softwoods in the Southern States. The policy that obtains to-day was the result, and it was put into effect some years ago. We see the results to-day in the phenomenal yield enjoyed year after year by the Sub-Department of Forestry. I think that of the year before last was slightly greater than last year's, but for the purposes of my argument the yield for last year was virtually the same.

Fortunately, the Federal Government decided to help this industry by refusing the request of Southern interests to reduce the tariff on imported softwoods; otherwise, there would have been no hope whatever for the disposal of our softwoods in the Southern States. A very large business has been built up now, and that has redounded to the advantage of such firms as that mentioned by the hon. member for Maryborough, as well as many in Brisbane and the surrounding districts.

The prospects of the timber trade generally are bright. I think that if given proper conditions for marketing its product, the Sub-Department of Forestry will have a very good year.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The only trouble is that they all want case timber.

Mr. RUSSELL: Yes, and the demand will be much greater this year than it was last year. While I can see that the demand for our ordinary sawn timber will be quite as good as it was last year, I believe that there is bound to be a much greater demand for the cheaper class of timber, which is cut from the tops and used for making boxes.

We know that at present there is a large trade with Canada in the importation of what are known as "shooks" for the making of boxes, but with the increase in ocean freights and the scarcity of ocean tonnage, as well as the depreciation of the Australian £1 by at least 5 per cent., the cost of importing from overseas will be too great. Therefore, it is obvious that the Southern buyers will be much keener to place orders for greater quantities

of sawn and case timber than they have been in the past. The only question is whether the Queensland Sub-Department of Forestry can stand the strain.

We know that very strong representations were made to the Tariff Board by some interests to reduce the duties on imported timbers. We know, too, that our representatives fought keenly against this, and I am glad to say that they were successful. At that conference of the Tariff Board and representatives of the timber industry, it was alleged that the cut of Queensland softwoods would finish in about five years. The argument was adduced, "Why protect an industry like that when the end is in sight?" I interjected just now that in my opinion the end was in sight, and I think it is, because when Mr. Swain was Director of Forests he said that we had enough softwoods to last for 10 years. That is a considerable time ago, and if his prognostication was correct, I think it would be safe to assume that our reserves of softwoods will peter out in about five years. That would be regrettable and I shall be glad to have the Minister's assurance—if he has the information—that supplies will last for a longer period than that.

I admit that we must expect a fair yield from our replantings, but many of those trees will not be matured for quite a long time yet, and I can see, as far as my observations go, that there is bound to be a very serious lag between the time when the present stands peter out and the time when we can hope to get some yield from our replantings. So that we must, to my way of thinking, strike a rather pessimistic note with regard to the continuance of these very fine services rendered yearly by the Sub-Department of Forestry to consolidated revenue. There is no doubt that this sub-department has been the milch-cow for all Governments for many years past. One has only to look at the revenue derived from this source over a period of time to realise that.

Before going to those figures, however, I should like to refer to what was said in his annual report for the year ended 30 June, 1936, by the Director of Forests—

"Unfortunately, as pointed out in the last annual report, the present annual cut is taken largely from the wood capital, the growth or interest being of little consequence, with the result that it is urgently necessary to rebuild the wood capital to a point where the annual cut can be supplied from interest, i.e., the annual wood interest."

In the report for 1936-37 he said—

"In order, however, to produce a sustained yield equal to the pine cut of last year, an area of pine plantations six or seven times the present would be required."

And in the report for 1937-38 he said—

"To supply on a sustained yield basis from well-managed plantations an annual output of logs equal to last year's cut of hoop, bunya, and kauri pine, a planted

area of approximately 100,000 acres of well-distributed age classes ranging from one year of age up to rotation age would be required."

You will see, Mr. O'Keefe, that we are a long way from the 100,000 acres required, because the total replanting up to date amounts to 22,000 acres, of which only 19,722 acres are replanted under pine. It will be seen that the position ahead of us is serious. I think we have all subscribed to the policy that we should market all our mature wood and derive revenue from it, because we are passing through pressing times. Every Government have been at their wits' end to get revenue. I believe the policy is right, because the first consideration is the employment of our people. In forestry operations, such as in the ordinary harvesting, marketing, and reforestation, we found an avenue for the employment of many of our people in a healthy and useful occupation. All Governments have subscribed to that policy, but we must look to the future to see how far this policy has led us.

If the softwood stands become extinct in five years, this fine revenue will come to an end, and the Government will find that a very valuable aid to their annual budgets will have disappeared. It is remarkable to find that from the year 1919-20 to 30 June, 1939, the total net surplus revenue from forestry operations handed over to the Treasury for the benefit of consolidated revenue was £3,693,268. The total amount that the various Governments have spent from Loan Fund, Unemployment Relief Fund, and from revenue from the State development tax was £1,029,904, so that while on the one hand we have denuded our forests of a very fine asset we have put back only slightly under one-third in reforestation. There is a very big balance in favour of this sub-department, which has been the milch cow of the Government. As sensible men we must admit that this is not genuine revenue. I have always contended that if we sell an asset we should put back the equivalent in another asset, and there could be no finer way of spending this money than putting the whole of it back into some new asset instead of allowing part of it to hang to the Treasurer's fingers or bolster up consolidated revenue as in the past. All the budgets disclose that every Treasurer has had to fall back on this department to make the Budget look better than it otherwise would.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Do you not think that it is a fair thing to charge some of the costs of reforestation to Loan Fund Account, especially in view of what you have just said—that it takes years to build up a forest?

Mr. RUSSELL: I do not think so.

The Secretary for Public Lands: No business would carry on as you suggest.

Mr. RUSSELL: If a man sold his furniture he would not regard the proceeds as revenue and put it in his profit and loss account and say: "I made this out of my assets." Would not a sensible man say: "I

have sold my old furniture and I will buy new furniture with the proceeds"?' Therefore, as we knock the trees down let us plant new ones with the money that we get for the timber and so help to continue reforestation.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is not how they do it in Canada.

Mr. RUSSELL: It does not matter what they do elsewhere. Canada has an inexhaustible supply, and, what is more important, the Canadian forests regenerate themselves. When the mature trees are cut the young trees spring up like weeds, but it is not so here. We have to plant our trees. It is not economic to replant hoop pine in this State, and it would be better for us to replant some of the cheap pines that grow to-day on our coast. As I said, in Canada the forests regenerate themselves, and all that is necessary is to go through them occasionally to thin out the growth and the forests are back in their pristine condition in half a century. We cannot do that here; the conditions are entirely different.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The keen business men in the United States of America who have forests of their own charge the cost of reforestation to loan account and not to revenue.

Mr. RUSSELL: There is no analogy between private interests and Government undertakings.

Mr. Maher: Do you argue that it is uneconomic to replant hoop pine here?

Mr. RUSSELL: I say it is uneconomic to replant hoop pine.

Mr. Maher: Then why have we not that advice from the Director of Forests?

Mr. RUSSELL: I quite agree with the planting of the exotic types of pine that we have on the coast to-day for the purpose of giving us supplies of box timber in the future, and I also agree with the hon. member for Maryborough that we should give greater attention to our hardwoods because we have a finer asset in our hardwoods than we have in our pine. This is the only country in the world that can grow hardwoods of the description that grow in Australia. We should see that our forests are preserved. After all, hardwoods regenerate themselves. They do not require replanting.

Mr. King: Neither does cypress pine.

Mr. RUSSELL: That is so. That is another valuable timber that regenerates itself. All that is wanted is to go through these forests frequently, thin out the rubbish, and thus allow the good trees to grow. With our hardwood forests all we need do is to clean out the inferior varieties and allow the good stuff to grow. We have hundreds of thousands of acres of land unfit for closer settlement, and this should be set aside for growing hardwoods. I would not bother about softwoods. If we have softwood forests on the coast we can produce our box timber, but we should allow other softwoods to go and devote our attention to hardwoods.

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is what we did last year and the Leader of the Opposition said we should not have done it.

Mr. RUSSELL: Our fancy timbers are gradually disappearing. Sad to relate, it is admitted that it is not an economic undertaking to replant our fancy timbers. They take a long time to mature. We have some of the finest fancy timbers in the world. When in New York I had the opportunity of seeing our beautifully grained walnut, which is used in many of the buildings there. Most of the elevators are constructed of our grained walnut.

The Secretary for Public Lands: They offered to buy all our supply of walnut.

Mr. RUSSELL: That is so, and the Government very wisely refused. The quantity is so small that it would be better to conserve our present supply and spread delivery over a long period, thus giving local millers an opportunity to supply local demands. Hoop pine will not do well unless grown in its natural habitat in the scrub. We cannot afford to conserve acres of scrub to reforest hoop pine, but we can engage in the regeneration of our finest hardwoods and cypress pine.

I have always taken a great interest in forestry matters. In the past there has been ruthless destruction of our forests. Our early pioneers naturally selected scrub areas because of their fertility due to the big percentage of humus that existed in the ground, but, sad to relate, to-day many of our finest scrub areas which have been cleared are affected by soil erosion and have become arid areas.

I should like many of the beauty spots in our scrub lands to be preserved. We destroyed too many of them in the past. We should pay greater attention to the preservation of our beauty spots and make them easy of access to the cities in order to attract tourists, because—I say this advisedly—there are no finer tourist resources in any part of the world than in Queensland. The trouble is that access is poor, and there are no comforts for visitors. I suggest that the Government build a decent chalet in the Lamington National Park to accommodate visitors who visit it. If that is done we should be able to attract a vast concourse of tourists.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (8.10 p.m.): During the course of this discussion hon. members opposite made very flattering remarks concerning Government policy in fostering the timber industry. I have no desire to discredit the work of the Minister and the officers of his department, who are doing all in their power to keep up the supply of Queensland timbers, but an examination of the position convinces me that up to the present the Government have been using the timber industry to bolster up consolidated revenue. I notice that during the last couple of years £750,000 worth of timber has been taken from our forests, and up to the present not a great deal has been done to replace those timbers.

I am sorry that I cannot be entirely with the hon. member for Hamilton when he says that he does not think it an economic undertaking to replant our softwoods. I think the latest investigations have proved that with the aid of the Lindemann process it would be profitable to produce hoop pine at least for case manufacture. I am told that these timbers mature at a sufficiently early age to enable that process to be used.

I am somewhat disappointed with the Government's policy in the distribution of log timbers. I have always understood that one of the foremost planks of the Labour Party's platform was as far as possible to prevent the establishment of combines and monopolies. The Government are, perhaps, creating a greater monopoly for some of the larger milling interests than has ever been known in the history of the timber industry. I was very surprised to discover that people such as Laheys, Proprietary, Limited, at Beaudesert—a big firm of millers who have been in business for many years, and supply the timber requirements of one of the most important agricultural districts in the State—are unable to procure logs. I think that policy is entirely wrong. I think the time has arrived when the Government should review that policy.

The Secretary for Public Lands: What do you want us to do? We have a peak-year scheme on the same basis as the sugar industry. Every sawmilling firm in Queensland, small or large, is getting its proportion of timber.

Mr. MULLER: The fact is that these people are not. The Minister is not justified in calling them small millers.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Where the big miller asks for 100 logs he gets 30 or 40.

Mr. MULLER: Some of the other mills are not able to get any. If it is right to give one company logs, surely it is right to give every other milling company some.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Can you cite any case where a mill is getting none?

Mr. MULLER: Yes.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You have never sent particulars along.

Mr. MULLER: I deny that statement. I have repeatedly made application to the department, and the only reply I got was that it was not possible to supply those people. The people I refer to are Laheys, Proprietary, Limited, in Beaudesert. We have been told their only means of getting supplies was to obtain them through some of the larger milling companies. That policy is entirely wrong. I am glad to know that the Minister's attention has never been drawn to the matter. I understood that the request was turned down because of the policy of the Government.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The present policy is to distribute logs in proportion to the five years' supply.

Mr. MULLER: For a limited number of mills?

The Secretary for Public Lands: No, every mill in Queensland.

Mr. MULLER: If that is correct it is news to me.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I will table the list.

Mr. MULLER: I am prepared to accept the Minister's explanation. I shall make application to his department again on behalf of some of these mills.

I wish to pay a tribute to the work of Mr. Duffy, the chairman of the Timber Advisory Committee. It is generally admitted that he is doing a great work for the Sub-Department of Forestry. I am particularly mindful of Mr. Duffy's tactful method of dealing with the problem that arose some little while since, in connection with the supply of Queensland hoop pine to the butter-box trade in the Southern States. Sooner or later, his work in that direction will bear fruit. Mr. Duffy and the other officers of the department are greatly hampered by a combine that has been established between the Government and the big timber mills.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is not true. I rise to a point of order. I object to the hon. member's making the statement that the Government have entered into a combine with big timber millers. It is not true.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to accept the denial of the Minister.

Mr. MULLER: I accept the hon. gentleman's denial, but point out what is actually happening. Perhaps I was not justified in my choice of words. Government policy is responsible for it. The Minister has now asserted that Government policy is not responsible, and I must point out what is actually taking place. Time and again, I have been asked by customers in the Southern States to endeavour to get supplies of Queensland hoop pine and Queensland boxes for their trade. The timber industry in Queensland is not prepared to quote for that trade.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You are not blaming the Government, are you?

Mr. MULLER: I could assume only that it was because of an arrangement that existed between the Government and the timber milling interests of this State.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I say that there is no arrangement between the timber millers and the Government.

Mr. MULLER: A moment ago the Minister pointed out that all mills in Queensland are not able to get supplies of timber for butter-box manufacture.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Because we have not enough.

Mr. MULLER: That may be an excuse, but it is not a satisfactory one. Supplies

of timber are in the hands of a few people who can form themselves into a combine, and make certain arrangements with interests in the Southern States, and thus prevent genuine customers from obtaining supplies.

The Secretary for Public Lands: What are the sawmillers in the Southern States doing?

Mr. MULLER: I am not in a position to know what they are doing, but they are not in the picture at all. Buyers of butter boxes are not able to obtain quotations from Queensland manufacturers. Whether this is because of an arrangement between the millers in the Southern States and those in Queensland I am not prepared to say, nevertheless, if supplies of timber were spread indiscriminately among all the manufacturers this state of affairs would not exist.

Mr. Collins: Do you mean to export the logs?

Mr. MULLER: No. I do not suppose it would be profitable to export logs; the waste would be too great and the cost of shipping would eat up the whole of the profit. The Government should use their influence to enable these people to purchase their requirements. It has been stated that certain hon. members have adopted an anti-Australian attitude, but the policy that I have referred to is not in the interests of Australia. If we want to sell our goods we should be prepared to offer them to people who are prepared to buy, and not prevent their purchasing at a reasonable cost.

Much has been said of the importation of foreign timbers, and whilst a policy of the description I have mentioned is in operation, one cannot reasonably blame people for importing timbers. An effort should be made to retain as much as this trade as possible. Recently, I was amazed to discover that millions of feet of imported timber have been used for case manufacture, particularly fruit cases, in the Southern States.

Mr. Collins: You would not want to use our butter-box timber for fruit cases, would you?

Mr. MULLER: I am not talking about butter-box timber just now. I say that many of our hardwoods, and perhaps other less valuable timbers, would be suitable for case-making, but whilst people are able to pay duty and transport charges on imported timbers and still land them here at a lower price than that at which we can produce Queensland or Australian timbers, this import trade will continue. Every effort should be made to get that trade. In fact, I venture the opinion that there are great possibilities for expanding our trade if the business is handled in the right way. The Minister and his officers would be well-advised to investigate the matter closely in order to see if it is not possible to get some of the business that is offering in the other States, but is now going to other countries.

Mr. Collins: Much of the timber that comes in for making fruit-cases is landed duty free.

Mr. MULLER: I know that a good deal of it is, but it is not carried free. If that timber can be had cheaper after paying all the many charges that are involved, then all I can say is that there is something wrong with our industry and that the Minister might make a close investigation into the matter.

With the limited time at my disposal, I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the urgent need for developing some of the park lands that are situated close to the city of Brisbane. It is a great pity that the Government have neglected to develop Lamington National Park, which is only about 60 miles from Brisbane. I feel sure that the majority of hon. members of this Assembly had never seen that park. The Secretary for Labour and Industry visited it some time ago, and when he returned he told me that he was amazed at the possibilities that existed there. There are about 50,000 acres of land between here and the New South Wales border, and money spent in developing it would yield a handsome return.

We appreciate all that the department has done during the last few years in clearing tracks, but the greater part of the work is still undone. I should like to see the Government provide enough money during this financial year, if that is possible, to build an access road to that park through either Beaudesert or Canungra. Either route would be suitable, and I assure the Minister that if he visits the park he will agree that there is nothing in the State to equal it. In fact, I go so far as to say that in its undeveloped state it is almost equal to the Blue Mountains.

I have seen the dense scrubs of North Queensland and I know something of their beauty, but I feel sure that in this park, within a stone's throw of Brisbane, we have something that is equal to the beauties of the North. I should like to see the Minister endeavour to arrange with the Department of Public Works to build an access road to that area during this financial year. I do hope that within the next few years work of this kind will be given more serious consideration.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) (8.25 p.m.): The discussion of this vote seems to move very slowly. If we push it along a bit we might be able to finish the Estimates for the Department of Health and Home Affairs to-night, too. I had an idea that those Estimates were in sight. To me the debate seems like a western train going along very slowly with a leaking engine valve.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. YEATES: I compliment the Director of Forests and also Mr. Duffy. A short while ago I asked a question about his salary and his duties. I wanted to know more about what he was doing. I have since found out. A great deal of credit is due to him; he was brought up in a good school—the Moore Government trained him.

All credit is due to whoever was responsible for that magnificent display in George street. I shall go back to it. It was very

interesting. One can see all sorts of inlaid work there—not painted stuff. In Queensland Tourist Bureaus in the Southern States one sees splendid samples of Queensland timbers. Queensland is the star of the group of the States.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. YEATES: Subject to good management. I am referring to the productiveness of this State. Nothing will hold it back and when we change the Government later on we shall move along at a faster rate. I give them credit for what they have done.

I am sorry that there are no exports of sandalwood, but I do not suppose that is the fault of the Government.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Do you know there is a war in China?

Mr. YEATES: I am aware of it. I notice that there has been an increase in log timber from 72,000,000 superficial feet to 186,000,000 superficial feet, between the years 1926 and 1939. That is as it should be. I want to see this trade still further expand. I am not satisfied with the present position. We must keep on expanding and keep on growing more trees, as I said yesterday. There is any amount of room for more trees in this State.

I should like the Minister to consider undertaking some forestry work at the Bunya Range, National Park, outside of Dalby.

I pass from Dalby to Millaa Millaa, on the Atherton Tableland, and I ask whether it is a fact—I am not making a definite charge, and I will not do so at any time unless I know where I stand—the Minister has been very courteous and I feel I could get the information from him—that there is any sort of a monopoly of the timber from the Atherton Tableland—whether the Cairns mills have a monopoly over the Millaa Millaa sawmill?

The Secretary for Public Lands: Quite a lot of the fancy timbers in that area are privately owned and the Government have no control over them. It happens to be on this wretched freehold land you speak about.

Mr. YEATES: Does the hon. gentleman assure me that the Government have no control over the supplies to the Millaa Millaa sawmill?

The Secretary for Public Lands: That is so. We have no control over the supplies of timber from private properties. Those people can do what they like with it because it is on freehold land given by Tory Governments in the past; the owners got it for nothing.

Mr. YEATES: Some of these State forests are so overgrown with noxious weeds that they are in a shocking state and a bad example to neighbouring selectors, who are compelled by local authorities to destroy the noxious weeds on their areas. The seeds from the noxious weeds in the State forests are carried by water on to neighbouring selections, and this makes it very difficult

for the selectors to comply with the orders of the local authorities to destroy the weeds.

I have no desire to hold up this vote any longer. I am anxious to have an opportunity to discuss irrigation and then perhaps the Estimates of the Department of Health and Home Affairs.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, Herbert) (8.32 p.m.): There is not much to which I wish to reply on this vote, but I cannot allow the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern to pass without an explanation. Although the Government have control over the sale of log timber from Crown lands, they have no control whatever over the sale of timber from private property. The mill in the Beaudesert district to which the hon. member refers drew its timber supply for many years from private properties. As he well knows, the Government have established a kind of peak year scheme in the sawmilling industry, somewhat on the same principle as the peak year scheme in the sugar industry. In arriving at the peak year scheme consideration was given to the purchases of timber by the various mills, big and small, from the department over a number of years and quotas fixed accordingly.

Mr. Moore: And the mills that drew their timber from private sources got nothing?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Is that not a fair thing? What else could we do? Lately, consideration has been given to the question of giving preference to small mills wherever possible. For instance, a number of mills may not be prepared to take the quota fixed for them by the Government in accordance with their purchases from the sub-department over a number of years. But the Government do not decide to hand that quota over to the bigger mills. We have exercised our power under the scheme to distribute the quota amongst the small mills. Should the Government be expected to give a preference to a mill that has drawn its supplies for a number of years from private sources and then suddenly wishes to order timber from the Sub-Department of Forestry? For instance, if there are orders for 600 logs but only 100 logs are available, the supplies must be distributed to our various customers in proportion to their quotas. Would it be fair to give a preference to a mill that had not drawn its supplies from the Government in the past and overlook the rights of a customer who had always drawn his supplies from the Government?

Mr. Moore: The owner of the private timber bought it from the Government in the first place.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No.

Mr. Moore: But he did.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Government of those days gave him the land on a freehold basis and he got the timber for nothing. The hon. member for

Aubigny cannot argue that he bought the timber. I know what happened in those days. I know that some men bought land carrying millions of feet of timber for 10s. an acre on a freehold basis, and after cutting all the timber they sold the land at a profit. The hon. member for Cook, who has lived in the North, can confirm my statement that years ago men bought blocks of land on the Atherton Tableland that are now carrying tens of thousands of feet of valuable walnut. These people can sell the timber where they like. How on earth can the Government fill all the orders when there are not enough logs? That is the trouble. For years we were able to supply the orders we got because many firms, such as the firm mentioned, were buying their timber from freeholders. Now that supply has cut out. Those people did not look ahead. Some of the firms did, for they realised that their private supply would eventually cut out, and they gave the Government certain orders. We must try to treat these customers fairly. We think we do by our present method. We take our log supply over a number of years and spread those supplies over those firms for that period.

The hon. member for Fassifern wanted to know why we did not allow people in New South Wales to cut our timber. If we did that, it would mean depriving our local sawmillers of supplies and our local people of work. That would be wrong. It would be wrong to allow our logs to go into New South Wales and to be cut up there.

Mr. MULLER: Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order. The Minister said that I suggested that Southern mills be permitted to obtain supplies of timber in Queensland. I did not make that suggestion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What did you say?

Mr. Muller: I complained that customers in the Southern States were not able to buy Queensland timber to make butter boxes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is exactly what I said. The hon. member's complaint is that logs are not supplied to certain mills to cut timber for Southern mills to make butter boxes.

Mr. Muller: I did not say mills.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Well, customers. We had a man who complained to the Federal authorities that we would not supply him with timber to complete a Federal order for war purposes. We found on inquiry that he never owned a mill; that he was simply a jobber. Later, this man bought timber on the Atherton Tableland and loaded the Commonwealth with his commission. Probably this had to do with the manufacture of butter boxes. The man who would not have a sawmill is out to get this business.

Mr. Muller: You have misconstrued my remarks.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I did not. The hon. member cannot put it over me. The position is that we are out

to protect Queensland. As the hon. member for Hamilton said, we have not enough of this timber to supply all our mills. Therefore, men in New South Wales who are not saw-millers, but only jobbers who are trying to make money out of the supply of timber to butter factories, are complaining that we are not making timber available. We are protecting trade in Queensland, which is our duty as a Government. All we do is to control the supply of logs to our mills. A great quantity of logs of all kinds in Queensland to-day—softwoods, as well as hardwoods and fancy woods—is controlled by private enterprise. These people bought that land with standing timber on it years ago. We cannot control that timber; they can do what they like with it. All we control is a certain quantity of logs in our own forests and plantations. I should like to know from any member of the Committee what fairer method could we adopt than distributing our supply of logs in proportion to the orders we have had from timber mills over a term of years in exactly the same way as sugar-cane is supplied to the sugar mills? I cannot go into any part of Queensland and grow a stick of sugar-cane, because the people in the sugar districts have the right to supply it. That is the position in the timber industry.

I commend the trade of Queensland generally for the splendid way it rose to the emergency and supplied the whole of the Australian requirements in butter boxes when the supply of New Zealand timber cut out. At the time the Premier was away, and I was Acting Premier. The Acting Prime Minister, Sir Earle Page, informed me one evening that as the New Zealand supply had ceased the butter-box trade was in a serious position. The trade naturally approached the Federal Government to allow certain timber to come in from overseas without duty.

I give the Federal Government credit for what they did. As mentioned by the hon. member for Hamilton, they have done much to protect our timber business, and they gave us the option of supplying the whole butter-box trade in Australia for a term of years if I, as acting head of the Government and the responsible Minister, could assure them we could supply them with all the butter boxes they wanted at a price. Mr. Duffy and the officers of the Sub-Department of Forestry got busy during the night following the day I was asked if we could supply them with all the butter boxes they wanted, and at 9 o'clock next morning I was able to assure the Acting Prime Minister that the trade in Queensland assured me it could supply the whole of the demand for butter boxes at a price; and that has been continued up to the present.

The hon. member for Hamilton, who knows something about the Tariff Board, knows that the board was here the other day, and I was able to assure it, after consultation with my officers—whose job it is to advise me correctly—that I could undertake to give two years' notice if we were not able to supply the present demands for butter boxes in Australia. I have assured the board, on

the advice of my officers, that I could give that guarantee—that the Queensland trade will supply the whole of the butter boxes of Australia for the next two years.

I will show the Committee what has been done. For the year 1938-39—this will appeal to the hon. member for Fassifern, who knows something about the butter trade—the number of butter boxes used for local consumption in Queensland, and supplied by the trade, was 607,184, and the number supplied by Queensland for export sales for 1938-39 was 2,167,999 boxes. Up to about two years ago none of that trade was given to Queensland; but the manufacturers of butter boxes in Queensland so organised their business that we were able to supply that number of butter boxes to the trade in the other States.

Mr. Muller: That is not the reason; they were able to buy New Zealand white pine at that time.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Our trade organised its supply of butter boxes in the space of time I have mentioned. It did what the hon. member for Fassifern said it did—it put in Lindemann jointers that enabled it to use the tops of the trees. I give the trade full credit for what it did. The mills spent a considerable amount of capital in equipping the factories to enable them to use jointed boxes which the export official was prepared to accept. I give them credit for organising the trade in such a way last year that we supplied the butter-box trade with no less than 2,167,999 boxes. That absorbed a considerable amount of Kauri pine.

I do say, referring to the situation generally—I take notice of what the hon. member for Hamilton said on this matter, because he understands the business—that we in this Chamber will not see the end of our timber in Queensland, so far as this particular timber is concerned. We have not been idle. Apart from asking the Sub-Department of Forestry, through Mr. Grenning, to make investigations, we have, as hon. members may have noticed by an announcement I made to the Press, reconstituted the Timber Advisory Committee. We found that committee very useful in the past. When Professor Brigden was chairman of that committee, it travelled throughout Queensland, visiting the various units of the trade, and examining the timber industry, and on its return it made certain recommendations that were put into effect and proved very successful. We sent the committee out on a further investigation, under the chairmanship of Mr. Duffy, and when it returned it gave the Government certain advice, which was acted upon. Recently we reconstituted that committee, and only this morning it returned after an extensive tour through the whole of Queensland, investigating the supplies of available timber controlled by the Crown for the whole of the Queensland sawmills. It has investigated the class of timber, its availability, and the possibilities of constructing roads to speed up deliveries. We are anxious to do what the hon. member for Hamilton advocated, and capture the new trade, for

which, unfortunately, the war is responsible. Of course, the position is that everybody, both Southern and local buyers, want one class of timber—case timber—and as the hon member for Cunningham knows, that is one of the timbers of which we have the smallest supplies. The Commonwealth Minister concerned in this matter requested us some time ago to make an investigation and so to organise our business that we should be able to tell him exactly the supply of timber of all classes that could be made available above the normal requirements. The committee will make its report in the very near future.

The Leader of the Opposition contended that the report of the Director of Forests did not give information as to when a supply of a particular class of timber would be exhausted. He could not supply that information. The Director of Forests bases his report on the advice received from officers in the various districts. On the other hand, the Timber Advisory Committee held sittings in every town in Queensland in which timber is the key industry and is now marshalling the facts. Very shortly I shall be releasing the results of the investigation, but I am pleased to be able to inform the Committee that so far as I know from the committee in a general way, the supplies of log timber are very much greater than even officers of the Sub-Department of Forestry thought. I am quite confident that any alarm about supplies of certain classes of timber will be mitigated.

Mr. Maher: Will you release this report to Parliament?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I will release what I think Parliament should get.

Mr. Maher: You are above Parliament.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I will report to the Government, and the Commonwealth Minister will be advised of the position.

There are certain matters in connection with the butter-box trade that it is just as well the Committee should know. There are interests in the South that would gladly smash up the Queensland organisation in this trade. There is no question about that. I cannot control the timber industry of Queensland and say that it should appoint agents here, there, and everywhere. If that industry decides that it is better to have one selling agent for New South Wales or Victoria, that is its job—not mine. It is the trade that arranges for the distribution of timber outside Queensland. The Government cannot do that. All we can do is to arrange for the supply of Crown logs. That is the only control we have. Of course, there is also the licensing of sawmills. It has been said that we have created a monopoly, nevertheless, the number of licensed sawmills is five times greater than when the Bill was introduced. There is no monopoly.

Mr. Edwards: It is true that many of the small mills cannot get logs.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They get them in proportion to their previous

buying from the Sub-Department of Forestry—throughout Queensland. One can only give what one has got. We can only allot that supply according to the quotas. The peak-year scheme in the sugar industry has proved very workable, and the Sub-Department of Forestry has initiated a similar scheme in the supply of logs.

Mr. Edwards: The big mills are all right, the small mills get nothing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is not true. I could lay on the table the sheet that the Sub-Department of Forestry makes up each month. It sometimes happens that a mill with a quota of 10, 15, or 20 trucks of logs may not need them all, and should a small mill require a greater number of logs and there is a surplus we always give it to the smaller mill. Preference is always given to the smaller mill. I say that quite candidly.

I desire now to deal with the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. After all, it is only fair to ask what the Moore Government did when they were in power. When we do that we are asked, "Why bring that up?" We can only ascertain what they would do if they were the Government by telling the Committee exactly what they did when they were in power.

The Leader of the Opposition has complained that this report is not complete. All the information I have given the Committee has been obtained from this report. I can make a complete case from it. I cannot see that anything has been omitted. I say candidly that this report is made by the Director of Forests, a very capable man, and the Leader of the Opposition was good enough to quote passages from his report to show that he was telling the Government exactly what the situation was. How can his report be cooked? That is the expression I should use if I thought anything had been left out.

Mr. Maher: I did not use that term.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am merely stating plainly what the Leader or the Opposition has implied. He says that the report does not contain certain information. All the information that I have given the Committee is contained in this report.

What I should like to deal with in particular is the way in which the Moore Government handled their reforestation work. Did they take money for reforestation from the revenue derived from the sale of logs? Would it not have been fair for them to have done that, if that is what they are asking us to do? Certainly, they had a lesser volume of reforestation work than we are putting through, but they financed that work in exactly the same way as we are doing.

Mr. Maher: No, we did take some from revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The net amount received by the Moore Government by way of timber revenue was £366,569 for three years.

Mr. Maher: What year was that? That is not correct.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In that period they spent £74,230 on reforestation from Loan Funds! The irony of the situation is that they are complaining that during our seven years we have spent on reforestation the equivalent of less than half of the revenue derived from the sales of timber. I say that during our seven years we have spent in reforestation at least the equivalent of half what we received from timber sales. The Moore Government spent the equivalent of only one-fifth of the revenue, and that money was taken from exactly the same sources as we are taking it from to-day. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Why did they finance that work in that way? They did it because they knew it was the best method of book-keeping. As I interjected to the hon. member for Hamilton, I should say, as a business man, that reforestation should not be a charge upon the revenue of the particular year in which the work is done.

Mr. Maher: Your figures are absolutely wrong.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have the figures here. The sum I mentioned is for three years.

Mr. Maher: You said one year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That makes the position even worse.

Mr. Maher: What is your amount for the three years?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Moore Government's net timber revenue for the three years was £366,569.

Mr. Maher: You are wrong again. Why not be fair? You are absolutely wrong again.

Mr. Edwards: He is subject to correction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am not subject to correction. These figures are taken from the reports of the Director of Forests for those years. In their three years the net timber revenue derived by the Moore Government was £366,569, and their expenditure from Loan Funds on reforestation was £74,230, the equivalent of one-fifth of the revenue. We have spent on reforestation—from all funds, I admit—more money than we have derived from the sales of timber. The figures I am quoting are here in the report of the Director of Forests, which the Leader of the Opposition said does not contain the information.

For the information of the Committee I say that reforestation in Queensland was started by a Labour Government 25 years ago. Until then no Government in Queensland attempted to do anything in the way of reforestation. It was a Labour Government who initiated the reforestation policy that we are continuing to-day. It was not done until 25 years ago.

How much did the Moore Government spend in their whole three years on reforestation? The expenditure from all sources for the whole of the three years was £112,916. Dur-

ing the last three years we have spent on reforestation no less than £544,373. For every £1 the Moore Government spent we spent £5, yet hon. members opposite say we have not done enough.

I will give hon. members the balance-sheet contained in the report of the director, and the Leader of the Opposition could have found the information as I did. It is stated in that report that the receipts from the licensing of sawmills amounted to £1,340, and from sales, &c., £763,217. Those would be the gross sales or royalties. The total receipts by the Government from the licensing of sawmills and from royalty on Crown timber for last year, therefore, were £764,557. Administration costs amounted to £50,818, and harvesting and marketing costs to £364,601. That timber was not sold at the tree. It had to be cut and hauled to the nearest railway, and the Crown handled all that money. That is why the sale of log timber royalty is in a trust fund. First of all, the Director of Forests has to provide the whole of the money for harvesting and, as the hon. member for Cunningham knows, the proportion of harvesting to gross receipts for log timber is about 50 per cent. Last year it cost us £364,601.

As to forestry roads, the hon. member for Nanango said that we destroyed his roads and did nothing for him. The amount paid by the sub-department last year in connection with these roads was £53,010. Yet the hon. member said we had spent only a few pounds!

Altogether, in connection with national parks we spent £14,360 last year. We were the first Government in Queensland who ever spent any money on national parks.

In reforestation from all funds we spent £281,756. Altogether, the expenditure of the Sub-Department of Forestry was £764,545 and the revenue £764,557, a balance of £12. In addition, the Public Estate Improvement Branch is building roads into Kirrama and Danbulla and many other stands of timber. From Kirrama we have hauled a tremendous quantity of log timber to market, and that has not been a charge to the Sub-Department of Forestry because it is coming out of special employment money.

On forestry roads alone last year this Government expended £107,000, so that if we take forestry roads alone we are £107,000 in debt to the Government. We are paying no interest to the Treasury on that loan money. After I directed the Leader of the Opposition to a certain page he was able to see where the director had shown the expenditure for the last 20 years. From 1 July, 1919, to 30 June, 1939, the total sum spent was £1,272,511. These are the figures—

	£
Loan Fund	959,765
Unemployment relief	97,001
Harvesting and Marketing Fund	29,285
Commonwealth aid to forestry	35,924
Special Employment Works Fund	150,536

Prior to the time when relief money was used to build forestry roads, the sub-department charged the cost of some of the work

to the harvesting and marketing account, which has been responsible for an expenditure of £35,924. The Government have also given the sub-department a sum of £150,536 for reforestation in accordance with the special employment works programme, but that sum does not include the tremendous amount spent on the State sawmill. The hon. member for Cunningham, as Secretary for Public Lands, was responsible for placing a burden in connection with the State sawmills on the taxpayers of this State. It was costing the taxpayers £1,000 a month when the present Government assumed office, but we immediately closed it, and sold it, and saved the people £1,000 a month. The debit balance of the Forestry loan at the Treasury, excluding the State sawmill, at 30 June, 1939, was £1,009,151, so that really the sub-department owes the Treasury no less a sum than £1,009,151.

What did we do in the way of reforestation last year? There has been a lot of loose talk about it. The Director of Forests points out in his report that he did not plant more trees last year, because he had concentrated on what the hon. member for Hamilton said we should do. Last year, more men were employed on natural regeneration than previously had been employed in planting out trees, but last year we planted more trees than in any year since the sub-department has been doing this work. We planted out something like 2,000,000 trees last year, but the sub-department concentrated on what the hon. member for Hamilton said was the wise thing to do, and that was to take care of our hardwoods. In no year in the history of Queensland was more attention paid to the regeneration of hardwood than last year. I have already pointed out that the Government were good enough to give the sub-department a considerable sum of money from the Unemployment Relief Fund for reforestation. Hon. members opposite have said that this is the best way in which the Government can expend money. The Government recognise that, but the Opposition, instead of giving us a pat on the back for what we did last year—

Mr. Edwards: Why should you want a pat on the back?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

We like to be told that we are doing right when we are doing right, and not to be told that everything is wrong. Last year, we planted 2,746 acres of softwoods and 34 acres of hardwoods, or a total of 2,780 acres, which was the greatest planting of any year in the history of the State. That is not my say so. That is the statement by the Director of Forests in his report. Last year he concentrated on regeneration work, and grew and planted more trees than ever before in the history of Queensland. The previous greatest planting was in 1935-36, when we planted 2,364 acres. The total area planted to 30 June last was 22,019 acres. The number of trees actually planted last year was 1,980,000, and that is the number planted and growing in the various forests. The hon. member for Cunningham knows that if

a tree is planted and dies, it is replaced, and the number I have given is the actual number of trees planted out last year and actually growing. In addition, the number of trees in the nurseries was the greatest we ever had—6,247,000.

It will please the Leader of the Opposition to know the number of men engaged in forestry work, because he said that this was one of the best ways to use the Unemployment Relief Fund to create employment. The number of men employed last year was 1,250, and the previous year 600, so it will be seen that last year we employed an additional 650 men on planting trees and doing reforestation work.

Mr. Clayton: On full-time employment?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

Yes, virtually full-time employment.

Mr. Maher: How does the dry weather affect the young trees that are planted out?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

We have taken care of them. The dry weather, apart from a danger from fires, has not worried us very much. Last year, realising that we were in for a dry spell, we concentrated on firebreaks. The hon. member for Cooroora directed our attention to the great danger to our forest plantations in a dry season, such as the present. We built firebreaks and erected lookouts. We are paying a considerable amount of money to men throughout the country to guard those forest plantations. These men work under an award.

The total area of State forests as at 30 June, 1939, was 3,054,768 acres, timber reserves 3,204,074 acres, and national parks 447,029 acres, or a total of 6,705,872 acres.

That is the position of our forestry operations. We get commendation of our work from people who are fair critics. I should like to quote what the Sydney "Bulletin" says of our reforestation policy.

Mr. Maher: Did the hon. member for Warrego write it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS:

I desire this opinion to be inserted in "Hansard" in order that its readers might read this commendation from a fair source—

"Forestry is a sub-department, with one of the board members, trained overseas—a Rhodes scholar, Victor Grenning—in charge. It treats natural forests, provides firebreaks and lookout posts, removes valuable timber in front of settlement and attends to replacement. In 1938-39 it planted 6,250,000 new trees.

"And it is highly efficient, like the rest of the board machinery. Crown sales of mill logs last year totalled 186,000,000 superficial feet. And the Forestry Branch wastes no chances of developing business. I wrote an inquiry the other day about Queensland timbers suitable for carving. The prompt response was a parcel of 24 samples with a letter describing their qualities. Service of that sort is rare in Government departments."

Last year, and the previous year as well, I had the pleasure of quoting the opinion of the Forestry Association of Australia, which held its congress in Brisbane. Unfortunately, the war prevented that organisation from sitting in Queensland last month. Had this congress been held I am sure I should have been able to tell the Committee its opinion on our forestry operations, which I am sure would have been similar to that expressed previously. It is composed of well-known authorities on forestry, such as Mr. Swain, who formerly was the officer in charge of our Sub-Department of Forestry. On the last occasion the members of the association placed on record the fact that the policy of the Queensland Government in reforestation was the best in Australia.

I now wish to deal with the hon. member for Oxley. In a previous debate he said that the Sub-Department of Forestry discharged its boy employees when they reached an age at which it was necessary to pay them higher wages, and then engaged other boys. I asked the Director to give me a report on the matter. This is what he has reported—

“Information re juveniles. First batch, 1936; 161 boys were absorbed up to the time of last replacement. This figure includes replacements for resignations, reaching adult age, &c. Number of original batch under 21 now engaged, 12; number of original batch now engaged as adults, 112.”

The latter are now receiving the basic wage somewhere in the forestry service. The Director then points out what happened to the other boys. He states that 24 resigned, two left through injuries, five were discharged for certain reasons, and six were discharged as being unsuitable. Of the original batch eight were either overseers or sub-foremen and seven are forest learners.

The second batch, who were appointed in 1939, numbered 95. Ten of those resigned, and two were dismissed as unsuitable. These boys, by consent of the Government and the Sub-Department of Forestry, have an award. The minimum rate of wages payable to juniors under that award is as follows:—

—	District 1.	District 2.
	Per week.	Per week.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Under 17 years of age	2 0 0	2 9 2
17 and under 18 years of age	2 7 6	2 16 8
18 and under 19 years of age	2 15 0	3 4 2
19 and under 20 years of age	3 2 6	3 11 8
20 and under 21 years of age	3 10 0	3 19 2

Thereafter, they come under the usual award.

That is the situation regarding these boys employed by the Sub-Department of Forestry. We have not put one boy off, except those who were dismissed for some reason—and the number of those was small. I am pleased to say that those boys have proved very capable. They have gone through all the routine, and to-day half-a-dozen of them are fit to take their place as overseers.

Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (9.12 p.m.): Forestry is very important to Queensland, especially when we remember how suitable this State is for timber-growing, that we have more timber in Queensland, particularly softwoods, than other States, and that the other States are looking to Queensland for supplies to a greater extent than ever before. That should stimulate us to spend more money on reforestation. I do not think anyone fully realises the value that our timber will be to this State in years to come.

While we have done a great deal there is every reason why we should spur ourselves on to do still more, especially in the planting of softwoods and hardwoods. We are the only State that has the timber, and we can grow it quicker than the other States can grow it. We should exploit this advantage to the fullest extent, because it will prove a great asset to Queensland at a later date.

I have also a few remarks to make in connection with our national parks. The people in Australia do not fully appreciate the scenic assets that we have in our own country. We are more inclined to value something that is far removed from us. We are inclined to look upon distant hills as greener than our own. We hear people who have returned from a visit overseas referring to the wonderful scenic beauties of those countries. They only appeared more beautiful to them because they were so far away from their own country. Moreover, people naturally like to tell their friends of the wonderful things they saw on their travels.

The Premier: Beauty lies in the rover's eye.

Mr. PLUNKETT: Exactly. We should advertise our scenery and climatic conditions to a greater extent than we are doing. Southern people are advised not to come to Queensland during the summer because it is thought to be too hot. Last year, during the summer period, our capital city had a lower temperature at one period than any other capital city in Australia. We should capitalise and exploit the scenic possibilities of the State and climatic conditions of Queensland, which perhaps we Queenslanders do not appreciate.

The National Park, comprising 47,000 acres of country, varying in height from 2,000 to 4,000 feet, is within a two hours' drive of the capital city, and also in proximity to the surfing beaches on the South Coast. We refer to it as a national park, but what is the good of having such a park if people have not access to it? I compliment the Department of Forestry on its initiative in cutting tracks in some of these places. That is a step in their development, but we should let people in the South and overseas know that we have these attractions and encourage them to come to Queensland to see them. Under the present circumstances it is all the more necessary that we should exploit our tourist possibilities. The cutting of 59 miles of track in these park lands is an asset. The public are now able to visit these places, and it is surprising

to note the interest taken by those people who have taken the opportunity of doing so.

Sometimes there has been an agitation for the construction of a road to the National Park, and I take it that the reason why it has not been built is that money is not available for the work. The commencement of hostilities will make the loan market tighter.

Much money has been expended in building access roads before land is opened for closer settlement. That policy is right. We should not ask people to go on the land and put up with all the difficulties associated therewith if we do not provide a road for them. The lack of access roads has been more or less responsible for retarding the development of Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is speaking to the vote for the Department of Public Lands and not the Sub-Department of Forestry.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I have no desire to speak outside the vote, but I was under the impression that the construction of access roads was included in this vote.

I was rather pleased to hear the Minister say that he had now knowledge that the supply of timber in Queensland for the butter-box trade was sufficient to meet the requirements of Queensland and the Southern States for some time to come. There is another angle to that matter and one that is worthy of some consideration. The possibilities are that our supplies of that timber are becoming shorter every year, and it might be as well to ration it instead of endeavouring to sell it all within the next few years. I know that the sawmillers of Queensland are rationed so far as softwood logs are concerned.

Mr. SLESSAR (Dalby) (9.21 p.m.): I have listened with interest to this debate to-night, and I note that most hon. members have dealt with the question of white pine or butter-box timber and have laid stress upon the fact that supplies of that timber are diminishing. If that is so, then I suggest that we give greater attention to the cypress pine, which is grown in hardwood areas. We have millions of superficial feet of cypress pine and hardwood throughout Queensland, and this timber is not being utilised to the fullest advantage. I know that over the last few years the Sub-Department of Forestry has made rapid strides in the cypress pine areas in my electorate, but I suggest that we could go much further by cultivating cypress pine in the natural belt for that timber, the western side of the main range. One has only to visit the forestry display in George street to see to what uses cypress pine can be put.

Twelve months ago I made reference to cypress pine, and, in my opinion, my remarks should be given all possible publicity. This timber has never been thoroughly tested out for building, case-making, or many other uses. Only the other day I noticed that imported timber was used on the Story Bridge. I wondered then why cypress pine or some other cheap timber was not used.

A few years ago I noticed that the Brisbane City Council was using oregon pine on drain and other work, and I believe that cypress pine would have done the job equally as well.

In many of our Western forests we have millions of superficial feet of spotted gum, ironbark, and yellow jacket. I have had a good deal of experience with spotted gum. I have discussed its durability with many timber people for years, and I am sure that it is not possible to find a more durable timber in the world. I respectfully suggest that the Government should help the Sub-Department of Forestry as much as possible to create a better market for spotted gum, cypress pine, and other inland timbers and so relieve the present severe strain upon our supplies of white pine on the coast. Our Queensland white pine would be suitable for the making of butter boxes and will save us from importing timber from abroad for this purpose.

Great strides have been made by the Sub-Department of Forestry in the last few years. The progress is particularly noticeable over the last five years. Forests that were almost untouched have now graded roads built through them, firebreaks provided, and thousands of acres suckered.

I notice that there has been a falling-off in employment in the sub-department. I trust that it will be able to carry on the good work that it has been engaged upon in past years. In years to come Queensland will be proud of its inland forests. Many hon. members may not realise what a tremendous asset our inland forests will be to Queensland as that timber is more favourably known.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. SLESSAR: There is no doubt that it will withstand droughty conditions, and requires no cultivation and no planting. Nature has already provided us with the timber. It needs thinning out, waste timber must be killed. I do not think we can get a cheaper way of improving our forests in Queensland than by improving the inland forests. I realise that we have many valuable softwoods on the coast, which we shall have to cultivate. We can relieve the strain on our coast timbers by fostering our inland timbers such as those I have mentioned, particularly cypress pine. I believe that cypress pine will take the place of many of our coast timbers in the near future. If we as a Government can formulate some scheme whereby cypress pine can be placed on the market we shall save our more valuable timbers.

Mr. Edwards: Those sandy ridges need thinning out.

Mr. SLESSAR: There is no doubt about that. This class of forestry work would be well worth while to the State. The department is carrying out very valuable and cheap work. By that I mean it does not cost very much per acre. I suppose 2s. 6d. an acre would cover the cleaning and thinning out. Planting could not be carried out for 2s. 6d. an acre; it would probably cost £7 or £8 an acre.

I feel quite sure that the Director of Forests and the Committee that just recently toured Queensland will have valuable information to put before us concerning our inland areas.

Progress reported.

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Order in Council, dated 6 October, 1939, under the Sugar Experiment Stations Acts, 1900 to 1938.

The House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.
