

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 1939

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

QUESTION.

ALLEGED UNAUTHORISED LOTTERY ON
MELBOURNE CUP RACE.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) asked the Attorney-General—

“1. Is he aware that lottery tickets headed M.P.I., on the result of the Melbourne Cup, and not showing any authorisation or imprint, are being sold in various places in Brisbane, including the ticket offices of motion picture theatres?

“2. Has the sale of such tickets been authorised?

“3. If so, in whose aid is this lottery being conducted, and what number of tickets has been authorised to be sold?

“4. If permission has not been given, will he have an investigation made and report the result to this House?”

The **SECRETARY FOR MINES** (Hon. D. A. Gledson, Ipswich), for The **ATTORNEY-GENERAL** (Hon. J. Mullan, Carpentaria), replied—

“1. No.

“2. No.

“3. See answers to Nos. 1 and 2.

“4. Inquiry will be made.”

PAPER.

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

Report of the Commissioner of Prices under section 37 of the Profiteering Prevention Acts, 1920 to 1938, for the year 1938-1939.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. JESSON (Kennedy) (10.32 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation.

In this morning's "Courier-Mail," in gallery notes, by "Cynicus," the following remark is attributed to me on the mining Estimates yesterday:—

“There were plenty of ‘tin shows’ in the North, he said, in which a man could clean up for a return of £400 or £500, and then ‘get out quick.’”

I have no desire to object to the "Courier-Mail's" making any remarks regarding myself that convert a respectable paper into "Comic Cuts," but I do object to a remark that may be construed to mean that I was advocating "go-getting" in mining propositions. What I actually said was this—

“This is an instance in which a State portable plant could be used to clean up these pockets quickly. Such a plant would enable a miner to recover £400 or £500 worth of tin in two or three weeks.”

MARGARINE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK (Hon. F. W. Bulcock, Barcoo): I move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Margarine Acts, 1910 to 1931, in certain particulars, and for other purposes.”

Motion agreed to.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—

ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

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

ESTIMATES IN CHIEF, 1939-1940.

DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Question stated—

“That £129,520 be granted for ‘Department of Railways—General Establishment.’”

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Larcombe, Rockhampton) (10.37 a.m.): I wish to reply to a few points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The first relates to railway deficits under previous Labour Administrations. When hon. members on this side of the Chamber refer to a period as far back as 1931-32, hon. members opposite frequently show signs of impatience; they suggest that we on this side are going back too far. But the Leader of the Opposition went as far back as the year 1915-16 and said that there were very heavy railway deficits under Labour Governments from 1915 to 1929 and that the State suffered as a result. I should like to point out, Mr. O'Keefe, that in the history of the Queensland railways only three surpluses were shown up to the year 1915.

Mr. Maher: The surpluses were very slight.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It does not matter, they were there. The hon. gentleman is quite oblivious of the fact that under an anti-Labour Government in 1931-32 and on the reduced capitalisation there was a railway deficit, and in 1929-30 and 1930-31 there were substantial deficits on the unreduced capitalisation. He drew only half the picture. He told only half the tale.

It is quite true that under a Labour Government between 1915-16 and 1928-29 there were railway deficits but there were other factors of which we should take cognisance. A Labour Government built many developmental lines throughout Queensland. From the railway point of view they were not paying lines, nevertheless, they paid from the viewpoint of the State. Further, the Government between 1915-16 and 1928-29 granted substantial concessions to primary industries and gave encouragement to production of wealth in the

State in that way, in a manner that greatly compensated for the railway deficits that were recorded.

Nor did the Leader of the Opposition mention the fact that between 1915-16 and 1928-29, a period of 14 years, Queensland's exports overseas amounted to over £200,000,000. He did not mention that the goods and livestock carried on the Queensland Railways in the period from 1915-16 to 1928-29 amounted to almost 60,000,000 tons, an increase of 20,000,000 tons on the previous 14 years.

Mr. Maher: That is all the more reason why you should have shown a better financial result.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Let us take one period at a time. The most important factor of all is this: the aggregate wealth production of the State between 1915-16 and 1928-29 amounted to approximately £730,000,000 sterling. How fractional, how infinitesimal, were the railway deficits by comparisons! And that wealth could not have been produced and transported without the railway system. Any man occupying the responsible position of Leader of the Opposition should state both sides of the case, but the hon. gentleman gave only one, and his facts were isolated and fragmentary in nature. It is about time that hon. members of this Assembly, hon. members opposite in particular, appreciated that aspect of railway finance and policy. The railway policy adopted by the Labour Governments between 1915-16 and 1928-29 was a splendid investment for the State.

Mr. Brand: That was not the reason for the increased production.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The hon. member can do no good by shuffling and shirking the question. The Labour Government's policy of building these developmental lines, plus concessions that were then granted by the Railway Department and for which it was not recouped by the Chief Secretary's Department at the time, was largely responsible for this enormous increase in wealth production.

Mr. Brand: To which lines do you refer?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I can refer to a substantial number of lines. As one instance I mention the North Coast line. Then there were the Burnett lines, and the Longreach-Winton line.

Mr. Edwards: Many of those lines were built when you came in.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I am speaking now of the lines that were constructed by Labour Governments. That side of the picture should have been presented also by the hon. gentleman when stating that under Labour Governments there were railway deficits during the period I have mentioned.

In reply to the criticism of railway deficits under the Labour Government, I point out that deficits in this department are not confined to the Labour Government. When delving into history the other day I came across

the following paragraph in the "Telegraph" of 31 July, 1931, when the Moore Government were in power—

"The annual deficits have been just about as large on the average as were made before, while the railways are performing a smaller value of service to the community."

That is an interesting sidelight on the railway administration under an anti-Labour Government.

Mr. Moore: You pay a man about £400 a year to cut those extracts out of the newspapers.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It is no use trying to shirk the question. Hon. members opposite who were members of the Moore Government must stand up to their responsibilities and must admit that they were castigated and flayed for their railway policy by the Tory Press of Queensland when they were in power.

One would think that "deficit" was a word not to be found in the vocabulary of hon. members opposite. Let us look at the results of their administration of the Railway Department. During their term of office, between 1929 and 1932, the following deficits were shown in the Railway Department—

	£
1929-30	1,658,189
1930-31	1,619,166
1931-32	1,253,136
Total	£4,530,491

That is the record of those critics of ours who presume to tell us how to run the railways.

The percentage of deficits to revenue for those years were—

	Per cent.
1929-30	22.71
1930-31	25.25
1931-32	21.19

Again, if hon. members will read statistics furnished by the other States of the Commonwealth, and particularly by those States under anti-Labour Governments, they will find that substantial railway deficits have been made for the last financial year and for previous financial years. It will be seen that the railway problem is not confined to Queensland—it applies throughout Australia and is world-wide. To take a one-year period, as is very often done by opponents of Labour in considering railway finances and policy, is to draw the picture in a false perspective.

It is true that last year there was a railway deficit, but at the same time there was a State surplus. The railways are only a branch of State activity and without the railway system and railway policy there would not have been a State surplus. The State surplus, therefore, must be borne in mind when considering railway deficits.

The value of production in Queensland for 1937-38 was £68,000,000, and the national income £110,000,000. Does any sensible hon. member of this Committee say that those results could have been obtained without the aid of the railway system?

Last year the net earnings of the railways, the surplus after meeting working expenses, amounted to £1,588,417, a substantial increase over those for the previous year. During the seven-year period under Labour Government, the net earnings amounted to £11,599,222.

The Leader of the Opposition, of course, mentioned only one year. He quoted the deficit for last year, but he did not state that it showed a reduction on the previous year's figure. He took into consideration neither the whole of the surpluses nor the whole of the deficits under the Forgan Smith regime. For the seven-year period ended 30 June, 1939, there were four surpluses aggregating £720,165 and three deficits amounting to £300,152, a net surplus of £420,013 odd. That is the proper test to be applied. To take one year is not to apply a proper test. A fragmentary test was applied by the Leader of the Opposition; the whole of the seven-year period under Labour Administration was not quoted.

I would also point out and emphasise that for the seven-period £1,603,000 was granted by way of concessions to industries in Queensland, and only £248,000 of that was recouped from other Government departments. We find, therefore, that the Railway Department during the last seven years has fostered industry to the extent of £1,355,000.

Mr. Clayton: What about increased rates and fares?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: And what about increased working costs? Those concessions contributed to the deficit but were nevertheless justified.

In the last six years the aggregate national income in Queensland amounted to £545,900,000, and I submit that the policy of the Railway Department contributed largely to that result. Here is an outstanding example of railway policy and its relationship to the State; the Mount Isa railway cost £600,000 and is regarded as a non-paying line—it does not pay interest and redemption—but let us follow the result of the building of that line. At the end of May, 1939, the capital invested in the Mount Isa Company was £5,509,000, and the production, for the year ending 1938, was £1,973,000, and for the first six months of 1939, £892,000. As a result of the building of the railway to Mount Isa 1,250 employees were engaged, and that great mountain of waste was converted into a mountain of wealth.

Remarkable results came from the expenditure of £6,000,000, but they could not have been achieved without the construction of that line. In other words, an investment of approximately £600,000 on a railway line

helped to bring about a production of £2,000,000 per annum from the Mount Isa mine.

Mr. Brand: Does the Government guarantee still operate?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Partly. There we see a definite relationship between railway finance and Government policy.

Perhaps hon. members opposite would retort, "Your arguments are only a piece of special pleading for Labour policy," but I should like to remind them that only last year—on 21 October, 1938—the "Telegraph," in discussing railway policy, said, *inter alia*—

"It is doubtful whether, in a State of these dimensions, any Government has the right to expect its railways to pay, even when they are administered with the maximum of efficiency."

That is a very significant statement, but it is a recognition of what I have previously termed "the law of indirect advantage," which I stressed time and again when I was Secretary for Railways as being absolutely sound. It may be said that that is only the opinion of an editor of a newspaper, but it is the opinion of an experienced and capable editor, who is not associated with the Labour Party, and it is a view that harmonises with Labour policy in regard to railways.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the expenditure in the Railway Department. It is true that expenditure has increased under Labour Governments, but the revenue has improved considerably, too.

Mr. Maher: The expenditure has always outrun the receipts.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: No. As a matter of fact, the increase in revenue was greater than the increase in expenditure. I submit that the relationship between expenditure and revenue is not abnormal; that it is not unreasonable. I suppose hon. members opposite have read John Ruskin's definition of "Economy." Economy, he said, does not necessarily mean the refusal to spend money, but the spending of money wisely. If we can get good results from the expenditure of money there is nothing unsound, unreasonable, or improper in spending it. Alexander Pope, in discussing figures many years ago, said—

"Some figures monstrous and misshaped appear,

Consider'd singly, or beheld too near.

Which, but proportion'd to their light or place,

Due distance reconciled to form and grace."

Poetry and facts harmonise here. If the figures are viewed in their proper perspective they assume form and grace, and there is nothing abnormal or irregular about them caused by increased expenditure without increased revenue in due proportion.

I have taken out some figures showing the percentage of working expenses to earnings

during 1938-39 in the mainland States of Australia and New Zealand. They are—

	Per cent.
New Zealand	95.74
Western Australia	80.90
Victoria	86.82
South Australia	93.93
Queensland	79.26
New South Wales	75.96

The percentage of working expenses to earnings in Queensland is the lowest, with one exception. Here we can apply the law of comparison, and in doing so there is no sense of disproportion in Queensland, nor do the figures show that there is inefficiency in management. One comparison of a definite nature like that is worth a ton of generality.

I should also like to mention that the percentage of working expenses to earnings was less last year than in the previous year. I would point out, however, that right back in the year 1901—38 years ago—the proportion of working expenses to earnings was 80.34 per cent., a higher proportion than that of last year. In 1929-30, under the Moore Government, the proportion of working expenses to earnings was 81.43 per cent., or higher than last year, under a Labour Government. In 1930-31 the proportion amounted to 77.88 per cent. These figures reveal the present railway administration in a very reasonable light.

The increase in expenditure last year amounted to £314,419, but the increase in revenue was £402,957. So that, although the expenditure increased the revenue increased also. We know, as sensible men, observers, and students, that if we have a greater tonnage to carry, there must be greater expenditure. We cannot earn freight from a greater tonnage without increasing costs and spending money.

Let me now take salaries and wages. Since 1931-32 the increase under this heading has been £1,291,000. That was as a result of this Government's restoring the standard wages that were smashed by the Moore Government. In the same period the increase in stores and contingencies amounts to £281,000, and fuel £135,000. Last year, the Government spent on repairs to rolling stock something in excess of £1,100,000. Workshop expenditure, maintenance, and revenue expenditure in the last seven years has increased £6,405,524.

Mr. Maher: How much did you spend from Loan Fund on purposes that should have been a charge against consolidated revenue?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is merely a suggestion. I am not speaking now of Loan Fund expenditure; this is all money spent from consolidated revenue. It is a very large sum, too.

Mr. Maher: Yes, but your revenue expenditure was not in proportion to your tremendous expenditure from Loan Fund.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: These figures show that we are spending very

large sums from consolidated revenue on rolling stock and repairs.

Last year, the expenditure on permanent way amounted to £1,553,000, while for the past seven years it amounted to £9,265,350. That is money well expended. No reasonable exception can be taken to it.

Another fact that should be borne in mind is that the Railway Department grants preference to Queensland manufacturers. That involves greater cost, but it is a justifiable expenditure. It is an expenditure that a private trader does not incur.

Mr. Maher: Why is it that the Queensland manufacturer has to charge more for his products than one in New South Wales?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: He does not necessarily do so. In the big centres of population, where industries have been built up long before they were established in Queensland, they have a bigger organisation, which very often enables the New South Wales and Victorian manufacturers to turn out a commodity at a lesser price, but in many respects our workshops in Queensland are able to turn out articles at a cheaper rate.

Mr. Maher: You state, in effect, that, owing to the heavy increase in costs, the Queensland manufacturer has to submit higher tenders to the Queensland Government.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I do not admit that is correct at all, because in the last seven years, in particular, there has been a substantial increase in the volume of output of Queensland factories, but whatever the merits or demerits of the workmen are the fact remains that the granting of that preference to Queensland manufacturers increases the cost to the Railway Department.

Hon. members opposite are inconsistent to a degree in their advocacy of low expenditure. They speak with two tongues. In his policy speech, the Leader of the Opposition promised to build more railways, one of which was estimated to cost over £1,000,000 at least, and yet he comes into this Chamber and talks of the necessity for reducing railway expenditure. He cannot have it both ways. The Opposition should be consistent, fair, and honest in their arguments. If they want more railways then they have no right to advocate reduced expenditure, because more railways mean a greater expenditure.

The hon. member for Wynnum wishes to see the railways in the suburban area electrified. I am not arguing against the merit of that, but again it is a question of expenditure. What is the use of talking about reducing expenditure and on another occasion getting up in Parliament and advocating expenditure running into millions, thus increasing railway capitalisation and expenditure very substantially? There is no consistency in that attitude. The two things are contradictory of each other.

The hon. member for East Toowoomba wants to see a large sum of money spent on rolling-stock. I am not going to deny that we could do with more money for rolling-

stock, but that expenditure would still further increase railway capitalisation.

I wish to say a few words about another point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, that is, the question of the efficiency of the railway service. Unfortunately, the curse of party politics intrudes into the discussion of railway issues. In order to score against the Government, very often arguments are used that not only reflect on political administration, but also on a railway administration that is capable, confident, and conscientious. But here again we find the criticism is not all levelled against a Labour administration.

The "Telegraph" of 2 July, 1931, had the following to say:—

"As usual, the principal baneful influence on the Treasury accounts is traceable to the Railway Department."

The things hon. members opposite allege are operating to-day operated under the regime of hon. gentlemen opposite, those great reformers, those great economists.

The "Morning Bulletin" of 22 March, 1939, had this to say:—

"Mr. Godfrey Morgan, could, were he so disposed, wait on Mr. James Lacombe, winner of the Rockhampton plebiscite, and ask his blessing for having carried out so loyally the railway policy he found on taking office, and against which he had so consistently protested."

So hon. members might say with Shakespeare—

The private wound is deepest: O Time most accurst

'Mongst all foes that a friend should be the worst!

The friends of hon. members opposite were those who lashed them most severely when they were in power.

I mention these things because the Leader of the Opposition went back into railway history, and also because I submit it discredits to a certain extent the criticism of hon. members opposite. In order that they should criticise effectively and soundly they should be a party that was not responsible for all those political sins for which the anti-Labour Party said they were responsible.

The standard of efficiency in the railway service to-day is excellent by comparison with previous railway administrations in Queensland, and by comparison with that in other parts of Australia and the world. The organisation, the discipline, and the control are good. No great railway department can be carried on without a percentage of inefficiency and error, but it is not greater in Queensland than in any other railway department in Australia or the world. The Government, the Commissioner, and the officers are constantly concentrating on the problem of eliminating weakness and improving efficiency. That is the constant desire and effort of the Government and the Railway Department.

I should like to mention some of the methods employed to bring about that result. They are as follows:—

1. Staff of statisticians and scrutineers—
 - (a) employed to throw the searchlight of analysis on weakness.
 - (b) To measure efficiency and to increase it.
2. Instructions to staff—
 - (a) Loading of wagons and economy in haulage.
 - (b) Coal consumption and use of oil.
3. Investigating officers are constantly employed in searching.
4. The Commissioner and his general managers—
 - (a) Hold frequent meetings and discuss railway problems.
 - (b) Other committees meet also.

Goods wagons are a reliable guide. The average tonnage per loaded truck is—

					Tons.
1932	..	..	..	..	6.62
1938	..	..	..	..	7.07

That indicates a great degree of improvement in operating efficiency.

Coal consumption is another good test. Gross tons carried per ton of coal used—

					Tons.
1924-25	..	..	..	..	12.82
1931-32	..	..	..	..	12.79
1938-39	..	..	..	..	13.73

That is another test of efficiency and it redounds to the credit of the present railway administration.

Then take train mileage per employee—

					Miles.
1931-32	..	..	..	..	717
1938-39	..	..	..	..	770

Tonnage moved per employee exclusive of livestock—

					Tons.
1931-32	..	..	..	..	231
1938-39	..	..	..	..	259

Tonnage moved per employee inclusive of livestock—

					Tons.
1931-32	..	..	..	..	253
1938-39	..	..	..	..	288

Employees per mile of railway—

					No.
1914-15	..	..	..	..	3.08
1931-32	..	..	..	..	2.34
1937-38	..	..	..	..	2.67
1938-39	..	..	..	..	2.76

An analysis and a comparison of these statistics prove that there is a substantial degree of efficiency in the railway service,

and that efficiency is higher than previously. These statistics are powerful and convincing. They are more eloquent and cogent than the words of any speaker.

I intend to quote from speeches made by hon. members opposite. They should listen very carefully to what the hon. member for Cooroorra, speaking last year on the Railway Estimates, had to say—before getting up to criticise the railway administration—

“I have listened to this debate, and, together with many hon. members sitting on this side, am of the opinion that the department has done remarkably well.”

That is true. It is not every hon. member opposite who is unreasonable and unfair in his criticism of the Railway Department. I am directing my criticism to those who are unfair and unreasonable.

The hon. member continues—

“I go further and say that it is useless to make comparisons between the system in Queensland and those in other States, for the simple reason that we are the younger State and have a bigger mileage of railways, which have cost more because they were built under more modern conditions.

“Many of our railways are not running from town to town where there is a tremendous amount of produce to be picked up, but into areas that are almost barren and never will be any good; yet, in spite of the existence of those non-paying lines, the results in Queensland compare more than favourably with the results in many other countries.”

The hon. member also said—

“I wish to be fair to all concerned, and I say that we ought to be proud of our railways.

“From time to time complaints are made about the lack of comfort of passengers. An improvement in that direction is taking place continually.

“Generally speaking, we should be proud of our railway system in this State. The only trouble that I see is that there are too many trains and too many choices to make. People growl about being delayed for a few minutes, but in some other countries in the world where there is no democratic control the people have no opportunity to voice their grievances. In Queensland the officials help you all they can, and we get 100 per cent. of comfort and efficiency.”

Mr. Jesson: Who said that?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The hon. member for Cooroorra, formerly Secretary for Agriculture and Stock in the Moore Government. He is the father of the House and a man with long experience, a well-balanced critic sitting on the other side of the Chamber.

Mr. Nicklin: You should get his experience when returning home the evening after making that speech.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: He has made several speeches since then.

He has a sense of fairness and of broad-mindedness and is willing to state his faith in the railway system, although it may not help him politically as a private member.

Let me mention the splendid results that have been achieved in the last seven years in paying tonnage carried. The aggregate carried was 32,262,000 tons, which included—

Horses	..	..	..	215,000
Pigs	..	..	..	3,000,000
Cattle	..	..	..	3,712,000
Sheep	..	..	..	15,132,000

All these facts pay tribute to the immense value and efficiency of the railway service.

In conclusion, I should like to make brief reference to the Leader of the Opposition's remarks about Mr. Hooper's report. This matter has been discussed frequently in Parliament. What we did was to prepare the royal commissioner's recommendations and conclusions and submit with them the replies by the Commissioner for Railways. Justification for that action was given by the Premier in his speech on the Railway Estimates last session. On page 1302 of "Hansard" for 1937, the Premier is reported as having said—

"The report by Mr. Hooper deals very fully with costing systems and the cost of certain units of manufacture in the railway workshops, for instance. It is based also on confidential information submitted by private firms who are contractors to the Government. Is it suggested by the Leader of the Opposition that that detailed information regarding costing systems, costs of manufacture, and percentage of overhead expenses in relation to private engineering firms in this State and outside should be embodied in a public document? It is obvious that that cannot be done."

That is a sound and logical attitude to adopt. The Leader of the Opposition desires to make political propaganda out of the report furnished by a royal commissioner and the replies given by the Commissioner for Railways.

Mr. Maher: That statement is only a pretext.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It is a statement of fact. The pretext, excuse, and propaganda come from the speech of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. McLEAN (Bundaberg) (11.12 a.m.): When one considers that although last year the railways had the record net revenue of £1,588,417, this was insufficient by £53,310 to meet interest on capital, one begins to wonder where the leakage is. The ramifications of the Queensland railway system are far greater than those of any other railway system in any part of the Commonwealth. I have always believed that much of the revenue that is now credited to the various State departments should be credited to the

Railway Department. For instance, much of the revenue that goes to the Department of Public Lands should be credited to the Railway Department, because it is made possible only by the service rendered by the railways of the State.

I find, too, that although a State Transport Commission has been established it has not done as effective work as it could have done in the interests of this great transport system. In my opinion, it has not functioned as it was intended to do by Parliament, in that to-day we find a great deal of penetration into the railway domain by private carters. One has only to stand outside Parliament House to see lorry after lorry passing from 7 a.m. till midnight laden with the cream of the traffic, business that should be going to the Queensland railways. I say, therefore, that the State Transport Commission could do a great deal more than it is doing in the interests of our railway system.

I pay a tribute to the railwaymen of Queensland, as I believe they are more efficient in the discharge of their duties and have a greater knowledge of railway workings and the safety of the public than those in any other State in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Edwards: You have lost touch with them.

Mr. McLEAN: No, I have not. I have seen them working in New South Wales. When it is considered that we are working on a single track and a narrow gauge of 3 feet 6 inches, we are doing remarkably well to handle the amount of traffic we do. I take this opportunity of saying that there are many men amongst the rank and file of the department who are competent and more efficient to hold administrative positions than some of the men at the top of the tree. It might be all right to appoint men from administrative offices to high administrative positions, but I say definitely that they have not the detailed knowledge that is necessary to enable them to discharge their duties efficiently. Take, for instance, the railwaymen who have entered this Chamber. The people of the State have reckoned them intelligent and worthy enough to become their representatives in this Assembly. There are other men in the railway service whose capabilities have not been recognised.

Mr. Massey: Do you think one of them should be Minister?

Mr. McLEAN: I do not suggest that, but I do say that there are many men in the rank and file who are fit for higher positions. I was not dealing with the ministerial side of the question at all. I was endeavouring to point out that there are men in the service to-day who are capable of holding higher positions. I have mentioned in this Committee before that men holding the accountancy qualification of Associate, Federal Institute of Accountants, are wielding the pick and shovel on the lengths. I urge that due recognition should be given to their qualifications. Their outlook in life is at present confined to the use of the pick and

shovel. Recently, several competent clerks left the railway service, having obtained their diplomas as local authority clerks, and were appointed to various local authorities in the State. There is also the outstanding example of Mr. Clem Lack, who was an apprentice clerk in the service. He had brains and has progressed since entering the journalistic world. What opportunities did he have as an apprentice clerk in the Railway Department? He could see that there was nothing in it for him; he entered journalism, persevered, and has made good. I could name many other good men who have left the service. If some of these men were given administrative offices there would be greater efficiency in the railways than there is. There are too many square pegs in round holes in the control of the railways to-day. It has been found that men appointed to high administrative posts come from the offices of the general manager or the Commissioner.

Mr. Yeates: Come over here. (Laughter.)

Mr. McLEAN: I am speaking on behalf of the rank and file. There is much more to be done in the interests of the railways. Should an appointment be made in the office of the general manager or the traffic superintendent, who gets the job? A trains clerk or some other person, but one of the rank and file who understands the real workings of the railway, could be found to fill that office.

Engine-drivers, guards, and firemen understand the practical side of running trains, but why should they be subject to control by a clerk who may not even know the front of the engine from the back? The running staff have a better idea of what should be done in the interests of railway efficiency, but they must take orders from a man who was formerly a clerk, and who does not know very much about the running staff. The rank and file are subject to a good deal of humiliation in this respect and they feel it keenly. Mr. Moroney, the secretary of the Australian Railways Union, has repeatedly pointed out that a proper system of classification of positions should be adopted so that all ranks may be given an opportunity to display their ability and to make the railways more efficient than they are to-day.

Mr. Moore: Do you belong to the Australian Railways Union?

Mr. McLEAN: I do. I am very pleased to belong to an all-grade union, and I am only sorry that unionism has slipped considerably in the railways.

The proportion of working expenses to earnings is 79.26 per cent. Our critics tell us that the railways are over-staffed, but that is not true. The railways have been built over many miles of country, there are many duties to be carried out in catering for the people in various parts of the State and the department is not over-staffed.

I should like the Commissioner's annual report to contain information showing the acceleration that has taken place each week in country, mixed trains, mail trains, and fast passenger trains. I have always argued that

there is room for improvement in accelerating the train service. It is done in Victoria and the information is contained in the report of the Commissioner for Railways in that State, and I see no reason why our own annual reports should not set out the hours of travel that have been saved by an acceleration of the various trains. I should also like the report to contain information showing how much time was lost in the running of country trains, mixed trains, mail, and fast passenger trains. That also is done in Victoria. Let us know exactly how often the trains run late in, say, a period of 12 months, how much time was lost, and the reasons.

Mr. Edwards: That is a good idea.

Mr. McLEAN: I should like to see introduced into this State the Hallade track recorder. It would be invaluable in discovering faults on the railway track, such as faulty alignment, incorrect elevation, curves, and grades. In this State we have to depend on the watchful eye of a lengthsman who runs the road—to use railway parlance. I believe that the Hallade track recorder would be invaluable to this State and would make the railways more efficient.

Mr. Brand: A good suggestion.

Mr. McLEAN: When I visited New South Wales I saw the flash system being operated at the level crossings, and I also saw the flash system in conjunction with the wig-wag system. I believe that flash signals would be more effective than wig-wags if they were installed at street crossings, such as that in Bourbong street, Bundaberg. Despite the protection that is given at the Bowen Bridge crossing it would be an advantage if flash-lights were established there.

I have observed in other States that special trains are given a distinctive colouring as a means of attracting the attention of the public and popularising railway travel. Such a scheme is well worthy of consideration in this State, particularly with such trains as we have on the Sunshine route.

Dynamo meters should be installed on our locomotive engines. This would be a means of recording the locomotive's performance, and indicate the acceleration of the train service also. Its introduction would be invaluable.

I should like to see an exhaust steam injector installed on all our locomotives. The enginemmen would then be able to study the effect of water and coal consumption on the engine. These are suggestions that could be adopted with marked improvement to the railway service.

The refreshment-rooms are doing remarkably well, but we find that people are somewhat reluctant to tender for the right to conduct refreshment-rooms in country centres. For instance, in the electorate of the hon. member for Isis a refreshment-room formerly existed at Gin Gin, on the Mount Perry-Bundaberg line. It was very convenient and acceptable to the travelling public. In recent years refreshments have been unobtainable

at this point. The result is that travellers have to remain in this train for eight or nine hours without a meal.

I want to take this opportunity of bestowing my praise on the Commissioner for his encouragement of ambulance classes in the railways. The employees have devoted a great deal of attention to this humanitarian activity. These classes are a fine asset not only to the employees but the general public.

I now want to deal with the report of Mr. W. A. Hooper, who as a royal commission in 1938 conducted an investigation into railway matters.

Mr. Brand: We have not had his report.

Mr. McLEAN: His report is no more than a "dud."

I want to deal with several matters to which Mr. Hooper has given prominence. There are some things in the report that are good.

Mr. Edwards: You just told us it was a "dud."

Mr. McLEAN: I say from an administrative aspect the report is a "dud."

Mr. Brand: Where did you see the report? We only saw a summary of the conclusions and recommendations.

Mr. McLEAN: I am referring to the report that was laid on the table in this Chamber.

Mr. Brand: That contains only the recommendations.

Mr. McLEAN: The recommendations. Mr. Hooper suggests that an inspector be appointed in order to educate the firemen to fire an engine. For how many years is a fireman employed as a cleaner firing engines before he is promoted to the position of fireman?

Efficiency in firing coal depends entirely upon circumstances. There is not a man in the Queensland railway service who can fire the Baralaba coal successfully, because it is deficient in carbon. It also has a deleterious effect on the tubes. It is absurd to suggest that inspectors should be sent to teach the firemen to fire that coal. Many of these firemen have been 20 years in their positions, and during that time have fired all classes of engines under varying conditions.

Mr. Moore: Apparently, they have been doing it wrongly.

Mr. McLEAN: They have not been doing it wrongly. The fact that the trains are running at the maximum speed and keeping to time is an indication of the efficiency of these officers.

No advantage would accrue to the department if it adopted the suggestion to reduce the size of wagons. I entirely agree with the Commissioner's comments on this suggestion.

Mr. Hooper also made the suggestion that there should be stricter supervision to prevent

any tendency to shirk work. When Mr. Hooper was general manager all he did to enforce stricter supervision was to inflict a pettifogging fine of 10s. if a man was not eyes right or eyes left. Quite a number of persons holding administrative positions in the railways to-day are incompetent, and they have carried on by bounce and bluff.

As to the suggestion that locomotives should be examined by fitters instead of drivers, I point out that every driver is familiar with his engine. If an engine breaks down on a run responsibility devolves on the driver to find the trouble and remedy it. It is also the duty of the driver when he reaches his destination to report any repairs that he thinks are necessary to put the engine in first-class running order.

Regarding the return of engines for overhaul, I point out that every locomotive depot now gets its quota of engine power. If an engine from Maryborough is being overhauled in Bundaberg it is returned to its depot in order to make good the power of engines at that depot.

Mr. Hooper also made a suggestion about the appointment of more inspectors on rail motors. Very few rail motors are operating in Queensland, and the man who drives the rail motor has a good mechanical knowledge of it, just as the locomotive driver has a knowledge of his engine.

I agree with the suggestion for the protection of tarpaulins. It is a very sound one.

As to the question of appointments by suitability instead of seniority, railwaymen generally have no complaint against the principle, but they do complain that the heads and the officials pick out their favourites. They do not think this responsibility should rest upon the heads. They have seen too much of it in the past. The result is that an inefficient person may have a responsible job. A boss gets his particular friend and he puts him into a job. These are the suspicions of the railwaymen generally.

Mr. Edwards: An awful thing, to say that. That is a condemnation of the whole system if that is true.

Mr. McLEAN: It is true. It has occurred under all Governments. The Commissioner, Mr. Murton, and Mr. P. R. T. Wills are very able railwaymen, but I am sure that, despite that fact, they would not like to take the responsibility. They have to make promotions on the recommendation of their district superintendents. They do not know every man in the North, Central, or Western Division. They must take the recommendation of their officers, and these men have recommended men who were totally incompetent. That has been the cause of the trouble in the past, and it is to the credit of the men in control of the railways to-day—

Mr. Brand: Hooper must be right.

Mr. McLEAN: Hooper is not right. The suggestion of Mr. Hooper is not a sound one. Railwaymen object to having the right of

appeal withdrawn. What is suggested would deprive the railwaymen of their right of appeal. The idea is to get away from the test of seniority, which the railwaymen make use of before the appeal board.

Taking it by and large there is no valuable suggestion in Mr. Hooper's report. He has shown us nothing. No matter what anybody may say, Mr. Hooper is like a number of others; he is not a practical railwayman. He is not a man to whom one could say, "There is a set of wagons; put up three."

(Time expired.)

Dr. WATSON BROWN (Gregory) (11.38 a.m.): From the figures published by the Commissioner for Railways it appears that in comparison with 1937-38, the year 1938-39 was to be a successful one. The increase in gross earnings is £402,957, but as against this there has been an increase in working costs of £314,419, and the deficit has decreased from £129,091 to £53,310—a reduction of £75,781. These figures appear to be quite satisfactory, except that it costs £314,419 to produce an increased revenue of £402,957. That bears out what the Minister says about costs. The proportion of working expenses to revenue is about 79 per cent. Nevertheless, it appears to me that if it requires £319,000 to produce £402,000, that is slightly excessive.

It is very creditable that we have reduced the deficit by £75,781, but from the point of view of the travelling and paying public, I am afraid that the results of the efforts of the department have not been encouraging. The rates of freight for all commodities and fares have been increased, whereas improvement in the facilities has not been so apparent. A tremendous disparity still remains between coast, near-coast, and western freights.

The recent 5½ per cent. increase will make the disparity even more noticeable. In support of my argument, I propose to quote the differential rates that apply to such essential commodities as flour and butter. Under the old rate flour could be transported from Brisbane to Rockhampton for 22s. 6d. a ton in truckloads. The freight that would be charged to take that flour from Rockhampton to Longreach would be 70s. a ton in truckloads. With the increase of 5½ per cent. there will be an even greater disparity between the two rates. Of course, we know that there is such a thing as a long-haulage rate, which actually does reduce the freight somewhat, but the point is that we do not want to create a condition of centralisation by trading direct with Brisbane. From Rockhampton's point of view it would be far better to levy a rate that would encourage decentralisation of trade to Rockhampton, and the same may be said of Townsville. An increase of 5½ per cent. on 22s. 6d. is not as great as 5½ per cent. on 70s. Therefore, the disparity about which I complain will be even greater under the new rates.

Butter, another essential commodity, could be transported from Brisbane to Rockhampton for 62s. 3d. a ton in truckloads, yet, to take

the same product from Rockhampton to Longreach would cost 150s. a ton in truckloads. Many other commodities are in a similar position. A better system of charging freights for the carriage of these things on the Western line should be introduced.

Actually, the Western lines are earning a greater revenue, proportionately, than are any of the other lines in the State. Table 5, on page 39 of the Commissioner's report, discloses that the percentage of working expenses to gross earnings is lighter in the Central Division than in any other division in the State. There it is 70.27 per cent. In the Southern Division it is 79.99 per cent., and in the Great Northern Division 80.27 per cent.

Mr. Walsh: But the Central Division takes in much of the North Coast line, which is very profitable.

Dr. WATSON BROWN: Even excluding that, I venture the opinion that, with the tremendous traffic on the Western line, a lower percentage of working expenses to gross earnings would obtain. This discrimination is certainly unjustifiable.

Another complaint, so far as the Western line is concerned, is the condition of the passenger trains, the Western mail in particular. I admit that an improvised train has been made up recently, but, up to that time, one of the sleeping coaches used on the Western mail had been a component of that train for over 30 years. If it had not been removed it would have fallen to pieces. A wagon from the Rockhampton-Brisbane mail has been put on the train in its place, so that a slight improvement has been effected. People travelling over 500 miles into the west of Queensland deserve better accommodation than they have received in the past. There has been a cry for many years for better accommodation. This slight improvement does not compensate for the discomfort suffered in travelling to the West, particularly during the summer months. I do urge the Minister to go into the question of improving western trains. I heard a man ask the other day, "How do you like our Sunshine train?" The other fellow replied, "I like the Sunshine train, but I do not like the Sundown train," referring to the western train.

There has been a demand in Western Queensland for refrigerator cars or refrigeration space. Attempts have been made to supply this need in goods traffic. At times, there have been ice wagons on goods trains, but they were later taken out, because they proved unsatisfactory. Nothing but a properly equipped refrigerator car should be placed on the mail train to the West—not only to the Central-West, but to the North-West and the South-West.

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Dr. WATSON BROWN: Such a refrigerator would have to be specially designed. There are many arguments against refrigerator cars, one being that it is not possible to put such a car on a mail train, because none are available. I believe an eight-wheeled wagon would be required for

the mail. Then there is the question of haulage of the mail with such a wagon attached over the range, so far as the Central Division is concerned. However, notwithstanding all these difficulties, I am sure the trouble could be overcome. It should be possible to put a refrigerator car on the mail train and land fruit, milk, and other perishable goods in the West in a palatable condition. It is well known that it is not possible now. I think there is ample justification for asking that a refrigerated unit be placed on each of the three sections.

I wish to make a plea on behalf of the railway workers. The accommodation provided for them, particularly lengthsmen, is nothing short of scandalous.

Mr. Russell: Very true.

Dr. WATSON BROWN: These men are given houses, and, I believe, they pay 6 per cent. of the capital cost. Although these houses have been designed—or rather an attempt was made to design them—to suit climatic conditions, I am sure everyone will agree with me when I say that they are quite unsuitable as dwelling houses for the families of those workers at lonely outposts along the western lines of Queensland.

Mr. Duggan: Did not Mr. Payne recommend that the provisions of the Shearers and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act be relaxed?

Dr. WATSON BROWN: I do not agree with him. I say that the homes are not suitable. I heard it said that the department had agreed to do some gauzing, but I am sure that gauzing, by itself, would be a real waste of money, because, in that area, it has been proved to be uneconomical and virtually useless.

Private enterprise is rightly compelled to supply shearers and other workers with proper accommodation, but it is the duty of the Government, in this case the Railway Department, to set a good example by seeing that their employees are comfortably housed. No man should be expected to live in Western Queensland under uncongenial conditions. The Government have attempted to improve conditions by doing some gauzing, but before anything further is done an inquiry into housing conditions should be carried out by someone competent to deal with the matter in consultation with people who understand the conditions of the West, with the object of introducing a new design of building, or of improving the present design. That inquiry should begin almost immediately.

I also think that the employees of the Railway Department, and indeed of all Government departments, should be transferred from the West after three years of service there. It costs the Government nothing to transfer the men from one area to another, whereas if they are kept in Western Queensland longer than three or four years they lose their efficiency and their will to work.

Mr. Walsh: I know of many men who want to stay in the West.

Dr. WATSON BROWN: They are not the majority, and they will lose their efficiency to work. It is quite an easy matter for the Government to transfer the men after three years' service in the West, and I am sure that that would lead to increased efficiency in the department.

Mr. Walsh: Would that apply to private employment, too?

Dr. WATSON BROWN: It is not possible to make these changes in private employment, but it certainly does apply to banks and such similar institutions.

I am asking the Minister for a favour in the interests of the Bush Children's Health Scheme. I know that an amount of £500 has been placed on the Estimates for the scheme this year, but I should like to mention that since the inception of the scheme in 1935, 1,300 Western children have been sent to the coast at a cost of about £1,300, or roughly a £1 a head. That is the amount that has been paid to the Railway Department. The return fare from Mount Isa is 3s., Longreach 14s., Charleville 20s. 3d., and Cunnamulla 22s. 9d. That sum of £1,300 has been paid to the Railway Department, but it has not cost the department one penny, because it would not have carried those children if the scheme had not been adopted; I have seen most of the children leaving the West, and I have never yet seen a special carriage provided for them. I ask the Minister to remit those fares, as is done in New South Wales, so that we may have more money with which to send more of these worthy cases to the seaside.

The Minister will probably say that we have received concessions. We receive concessions under the so-called Country Women's Association scheme. That in reality was not a concession. It was given under a scheme introduced 40 years ago. It has nothing whatever to do with Country Women's Association.

The Minister for Transport: No, not 40 years ago; about 22.

Dr. WATSON BROWN: The scheme is an excellent one and I whole-heartedly support it, but it is not actually a concession to these people. It is more of an excursion rate that has been used to meet the case. The point is, if those children had not been taken on the railways to the seaside under our scheme, they would not have travelled at all, and the department would not have received this revenue.

There is one feature of this Country Women's Association scheme to which I would like to refer. Women and girls are allowed to travel to the coast on a reduced fare, but a boy of 15, 16, 17, or 18 years of age, who is probably earning half as much as his sister, is unable to obtain the advantage of that excursion fare. He is unable to accompany his mother. I suggest that the Minister look into that aspect of the scheme, and see if something cannot be done for these boys.

We have a railway system that is giving good service over a tremendous area. We realise that it must be very difficult to control such a huge system. Up to the present the department has accomplished good results, results that are comparable with those obtained in other States in Australia.

Mr. DART (Wynnum) (11.58 a.m.): Firstly, I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to his present office. He has had considerable experience in railway administration, which should be of considerable help to his Government and enable them to do justice to the people.

The Minister moved this vote with but a few introductory remarks, but after sleeping on the subject has this morning given this Committee quite a number of figures—at the same time, of course, not forgetting the Moore Government. If the figures of the Moore Government were not as good as to-day's figures, then it was the fault of the depression. The Minister gave the Committee a quotation from Pope, but he might have quoted Robert Burns, who said—

“Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

The hon. member for Aubigny is not a man who is likely to worry about the hon. gentleman's statement. I am sure that much of the criticism that is now hurled at his administration is not deserved, either in the personal or collective sense.

This department is one of the most important of Government departments, and one in which every hon. member is interested. Therefore, we should be able to review its accomplishments without any prejudice or crossfiring, because we must discuss it with the purpose of being helpful to the Minister in his administration. The Minister is a new member of a Government who have been very extravagant. The Commissioner has been appointed only recently. Therefore, they may find it difficult to carry on. I believe however, that given time they will do something that will be to the credit of the State.

I do not condemn the officers of the department. I believe they are doing the best they can. If the policy of the Government is not right, it is the fault of the party which, although it has a majority of members in this Assembly, represents only a minority of the people. They should be broad enough in outlook to cater for the whole of the community, which would be in the best interests of the State.

The Government take much credit to themselves for the fact that the department had a gross revenue last year of £7,657,345. That is a large sum for a department to handle. One would naturally assume that it was ample to enable it to meet its commitments, but it showed a deficit of £53,310. One wonders why there should be a deficit when revenue was so buoyant.

Last year the Government increased railway freights and fares by 5½ per cent., but,

despite that increased revenue, a deficit was shown. The department spent £319,000 to produce £402,000, which is a rather remarkable fact. Evidently something is wrong with the policy of the department. The fact that the department carried 24,549,000 passengers for the year indicates that the service is well patronised. All those passengers had to pay increased fares, which considerably helped the revenue and was largely responsible for bringing about an increase of over £1,000,000 in revenue over the previous year. Any Government who continue a policy of increasing taxation and fail to balance their Budget are on the road to bankruptcy. I believe that the department should have done better than it has done.

It is interesting to read the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Railways that was appointed in 1938. Mr. Hooper was appointed commissioner and the cost of the commission was approximately £2,500. Members on the Government side seem to know a great deal about the report made by Mr. Hooper, but we have not seen it—we have only been given a mere summary of the findings.

If the members of the Labour Government have had the report, and it has not been submitted to us, they are doing an injustice to the whole State. It would be very low-down tactics for one section of parliamentary representatives to withhold information that all should have.

Mr. Power: You say we have had that?

Mr. DART: We are given to understand that a report has been made. It has not been submitted here. Similar tactics of withholding certain information from other public men have been adopted in the Brisbane City Council. If information is being withheld from Parliament, how can we decide on the action that we should take? After public money has been spent on a report it should be submitted to Parliament in time to enable a full discussion to take place.

The summary of the report, at page 2, refers to the electrification of railways—

“In view of the enormous initial costs of electrifying suburban lines and the present financial conditions of the railways, also the many matters to be heeded in connection with Deisel electric trains, the commission makes no recommendation, but is of the opinion that the department will have to improve its suburban services by providing more through trains at peak periods and increasing the rail motor trains in the metropolitan area.”

The electrification of the suburban railway system is a matter for city representatives, the extension into outside areas is for those people who live in the areas affected. They should make representations for what they want. If the representatives of metropolitan areas wish to see our city grow, as those in the South have grown, they must be prepared to have vision and imagine what Brisbane will be in the years to come. There was a

time when housewives were content to use fuel stoves. Nowadays they demand many electrical appliances. The progress that has been made in the use of electricity for domestic purposes was strikingly displayed at the recent Brisbane Show. Why cannot we advance in a similar degree to others? I am sure that the Minister in charge of this department has no wish to see New South Wales and Victoria ahead of Queensland in this respect. Members of this Parliament should not be content to sit down and say: "What was good enough for our fathers 20 years ago, is good enough for us. We do not believe in progress." I believe that every hon. member is in favour of progress.

In the past 10 or 12 years, the number of rail motors has increased from 31 to 71, and according to the Minister's speech this morning I gained the impression that he inclined to a continuation of the use of these trains. Trailers have increased from 58 to 129 in the last 10 years. To my way of thinking, trailers are not all that is to be desired as a means of transport. It might be all right to use them in certain places, but they are nerve-racking and out of date.

With the electrification of suburban railways it would be possible to shorten the distance between Brisbane and Corinda by five minutes, and five minutes is a great deal to the business man. I know that at present we are at war, and I do not advocate expenditure on this proposal at the moment, but it might be kept in view for future years. Many people are contemplating the purchase of electric stoves, but they may have to wait for a few years, although they certainly will buy them then. Just as they are waiting, so should we prepare for the electrification of suburban railways. In a few years' time, I am sure we shall be able to raise the money to carry out this work, just as it has been possible to obtain money in the past to construct a harbour at Mackay.

Although some hon. members might accuse me of advocating extravagance, I say that the time has arrived when consideration should be given to this proposal by the Minister and the Government. Electric railways are a cheap and clean means of transport.

Mr. Jones: There are many things that we want before electric trains.

Mr. DART: That may be so, but it must be remembered that there are some things that will pay and some that will not. We know that in Melbourne the electric trains are returning handsome profits, and I am sure that they would do that here.

Mr. Power: Do you think that electric railways in Melbourne have increased the number of travelling public?

Mr. DART: The electrification of railways in any city will increase the transport revenue, because by their cleanliness and speed they induce more people to live in the outlying suburbs.

Mr. Power: Have not the electric trams done that here?

Mr. DART: Brisbane has reached saturation point so far as trams are concerned. If the Brisbane City Council continues to build trams there will be congestion. On the other hand, the electrification of suburban railways will relieve congestion and benefit the State by populating outlying centres. Brisbane is the capital city of the State, and we should do as much for its advancement as other States are doing for their capital cities.

On page 7 of his report, Mr. Hooper recommends that a costing system similar to that in operation at Newport, Victoria, should be adopted at Ipswich. That is only one of many recommendations that he makes for effecting economies and promoting efficiency in the service.

The hon. member for Bundaberg stated that many tarpaulins are missing. He did not quote the whole of Mr. Hooper's remarks, but if tarpaulins are missing, then I congratulate the hon. member for Bundaberg upon reminding the Minister that pilfering is taking place and that steps should be taken to prevent it.

I take it that the report has been examined by the department but that fact is contained in Mr. Hooper's report—at least that part of the report we have received. If those tarpaulins are missing they must be somewhere. Perhaps they have been carelessly left in a shed. I would not accuse Government employees of taking them, but there are others who might have taken them. One cannot say that employees are dishonest, but if the tarpaulins had been carelessly left somewhere, other people may have decided to take them home.

Another part of the report mentions supervision of the driving of our trains and suggests how economy in the consumption of coal could be practised. Some users of electricity can be taught a lesson as to its economical use, and I believe that railway engineers could be taught a lesson, too, particularly those who feed the engines with coal.

Whilst I have no desire to be parochial I must make reference to the Wynnum line. Last year I reminded the Minister that it was necessary to have some of the old-fashioned carriages used on that line replaced by new ones. So far that improvement has not been given effect to although a few of the carriages have been cleaned up and look a little better.

I approached the then Minister some time ago with a petition signed by several hundred people asking for the provision of a ticket office at a certain place along the Wynnum line. I take it that the matter is still under consideration. This is a place where men and women board the train, but they have to buy their tickets at a later stage of the journey. As a matter of fact, they travel as far as Murarrie before getting their tickets and this involves delay in the running of the train. Yesterday I noticed that a man bought his ticket at Murarrie but had boarded the train again before he found out that it was a single ticket. He

had to jump out of the carriage, go to the window ticket-box, and get a return ticket. Delay was occasioned as a result. A ticket office with somebody in charge of it should be placed at this spot. I understand there is already a shed there that might be converted into an office. Wynnum North is close to a large convent, a place where thousands of people visit, and I think that a ticket office should be erected there.

The department suffers greatly from competition and steps should be taken to combat it. The fare from Morningside to South Brisbane, a distance of 3 or 4 miles, is 6d. single and 8d. return. Trams run from near the Morningside station and one can travel by tram from Morningside to the Custom House for 4d. The railways carry the people only as far as the South Brisbane station, whereas the trams take them to the Custom House for the same fare. Such anomalies must be rectified so that the railways can get all the revenue they can.

The department is making a mistake in running large engines and hauling large carriages in the middle of the day after the peak morning traffic is over. Why not reserve this heavy rolling-stock for the peak hours and run rail motors in the middle of the day to cater for the few people who want to travel?

Mr. Jones: And if there was not enough accommodation you would be the first to complain about it.

Mr. DART: Soon after I was returned as the member for Wynnum, the late Commissioner, Mr. J. W. Davidson, was good enough to arrange for another train to Wynnum. The night service to Wynnum is now fairly good. There is a train at half-past 9, and another at a quarter past 10. Then there is a train for the "drunks"—they are not all drunks—at 11 o'clock. That extra train has helped Wynnum. Wynnum has the largest number of electors of any electorate in the State and they expect me to do all that I can for them. I want to make it clear that it has the largest number of electors of any electorate in the State.

Mr. Power: And you are here on the votes of the minority of them. I want to make that clear, too.

Mr. DART: At the present time boys and girls 15 years of age apprenticed to trades in the city have to pay the same amount for a weekly ticket as an adult. I should like the Minister to consider the possibility of reducing the fare to young workers of this age. They may earn only 15s. a week and very little is left for them after they have paid 5s. for a weekly ticket.

I have no doubt that the railway workers are doing their best in the interests of the department, but there are many ways in which the service could be improved by the Government. I trust that the department will have a successful year and that it will show a surplus.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) (12.23 p.m.): At 30 June, 1939, the sum of £67,751,258 of public money had been expended in the railway system of Queensland, and when we realise that this sum represents more than half the total of our public debt we can understand the importance of this public utility. Consequently, we should approach a discussion of the Estimates of the department in a spirit of advancing suggestions that are likely to be helpful to the railway administration and will relieve the taxpayers of the State.

With Western Australia, Queensland is in the unique position of serving a smaller population than any other big railway system in the world. The difficulty of working, of management, and of fixing remunerative freight charges is increased accordingly. The railways in this State have been constructed across the main dividing range and along the coast, which makes the cost of maintaining them probably considerably higher than that of any other mainland system in Australia. The frequent showers on the coast, for instance, cause washouts.

The railways in Queensland, as in other States of the Commonwealth, have played a very prominent part in the development of our primary industries.

Possibly proper recognition of the important part played by the railways in fostering this development is not accorded to them at the present time. There is a tendency to say that the railways have ceased to function efficiently, that they have outlived their usefulness, and this is an appropriate occasion to scrap them in favour of motor transport. When we remember that more than half of our public debt is wrapped up in this State asset, we realise that we must do everything possible to preserve it as an asset, and, if possible, make it more efficient than it is to-day. It is impossible to assess its value in pounds, shillings, and pence, as Opposition critics seek to do.

The Moore Government, in an endeavour to relieve the department of part of its financial burden resulting from developmental activities, wrote off £28,000,000 from its capital indebtedness under the Railway (Capital Indebtedness) Reduction Act, but the effect was merely to transfer the charge from the Railway Department, which is a Crown department, to the Treasury Department, another Crown department. Therefore, actually no net saving resulted to the taxpayers. It was thought, however, that if this amount was written off their capital indebtedness the railways should be able from that point on to achieve a surplus. That they have not seems to be the burden of the criticism that has been levelled by the Leader of the Opposition against the railway administration. It is true that last year the railway operations resulted in a deficit of £53,310, but that is an improvement on the previous year's workings, because in that year a loss of £129,091 resulted. If, however, relief had not been given by the Railway (Capital Indebtedness) Reduction Act of 1931 an additional amount of £1,056,400 in interest would

have to be borne by the department for 1938-39.

The point I am coming to is this: railway deficits are not by any means peculiar to Queensland. Indeed, they are not peculiar to any country in the world where large-scale railway operations are carried out. There are several books in the Parliamentary Library that amply prove that some control measures have been necessary in almost every country in the world where rail and motor transport have come into competition with one another.

These deficits occur with monotonous regularity, not only in Queensland but in other countries. For instance, in South Australia last year the railway deficit was £1,011,841, as compared with a deficit the previous year of £779,738, an increase of £232,106. New South Wales railways, which had a surplus in 1937-38, disclosed that its workings for the financial year 1938-39 resulted in the deficit of £1,171,522. In Victoria the deficit for last year was £952,056, as compared with a deficit of £241,953 the previous year. The Commonwealth railways showed a deficit last year of £68,577, as compared with a surplus of £31,436 for the previous year.

It must also be mentioned that the Victorian railways, like the Queensland railways, had benefited in 1936 by a writing-off of capital under the Railway Finance Adjustment Act. Under that Act the Victorian railways were relieved of £30,000,000 of their capital indebtedness. Freight increases in other States have also taken place despite this measure of Government assistance. In March, 1939, the New South Wales railways were compelled to impose freight increases and passenger fares increases of 10 per cent. It is true that certain primary products were exempted, but the primary products so exempted attracted a 10 per cent. increase in 1937. Furthermore, in New South Wales the Treasury Department for many years has made an annual contribution of £800,000 to compensate the department for losses sustained on branch lines. It is well that we should recognise these facts, because such a recognition lessens the value of the criticism levelled against the railway administration of Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that the reasons why the Moore Government reduced the capital indebtedness of the railways was the cumulative effect of maladministration of the Labour Government over a period of years.

At 12.30 p.m.,

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

Mr. DUGGAN: The hon. gentleman said that as last year we had a record turnover the railways should earn sufficient to cover costs, and he then went on to say that in 1931-32 the earnings were better than in 1938-39. It is true that the deficit in 1931-32 was only £26,736, compared with the

deficit this year of £53,510; but those reduced working expenses in 1931-32 were made possible because of the wholesale dismissals of men and the pooling of work amongst the men retained, the basic-wage and percentage reduction in salaries and wages, the lengthening of hours in traffic and running sections, and the considerably reduced expenditure on rolling-stock, renewals, and replacements. The net loan expenditure in 1928-29 was £1,224,249 and in the last year of the Moore Government regime the net loan expenditure was £92,474 and the annual flat net loan expenditure by the Labour Government over the last five years has averaged £630,000. So it will be seen that the Moore Government's reduced deficit was only brought about as a result of sacrifices demanded of the men, and not by making adequate provision for replacements and renewal of rolling-stock and other necessary railway material.

The expedient of making inadequate provision for replacements is used stringently enough by the Railway Commissioners in Victoria, where a Country Party Government are in power. Incidentally, I wish to compliment the Victorian Commissioners on the excellence of their report. I believe it would be a desirable thing if the Commissioner in Queensland included in his report certain information that would be of value to members of Parliament and the public—for instance, information regarding the effect of motor transport on railway earnings.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. DUGGAN: I think the present report contains too much statistical information, and that it would be an improvement to have fuller information as to what the department is doing to meet this competition. It would also be of advantage if the department made us fully aware of exactly what steps had been taken to improve the efficiency of the railways and to improve the running time of trains. That would be infinitely preferable to a wealth of statistical information that is not of much value to members of the general public.

To return to my point that the Victorian Railway Commissioners are pursuing a policy that will ultimately be to the detriment of railway transportation system in that State, in their report for 1939 the Victorian Commissioners state—

“We are impelled to stress the increasing seriousness of the obsolescent condition of the rolling-stock, &c., and the need for repair and renewals. To provide for such essential renewals and replacements £5,150,000 should be expended during the next three years. Even current expenditure cannot be provided from railway funds. A special provision of £275,000 is being made in the Budget towards the cost of carrying out arrears of maintenance.”

It will be seen that this sum is totally inadequate, and consequently some future railway administration in Victoria will be obliged to obtain from the Government heavy funds for the purpose of keeping locomotives

at the standard of efficiency thought desirable by the Railway Commissioners.

In South Australia the annual deficit has been not less than £700,000 a year during the last five years. A State Transport Control Board was created to deal with the serious position in that State. When we realise, Mr. Brassington, the effects of the aggregate losses on our railway systems in Australia, I believe more people will take into consideration the need for some control measures over this important public utility. The amount of money expended by all Australian Governments in the construction of the Australian railway system is £338,000,000, and we cannot afford to sit idly by and see this great asset steadily deteriorating.

In times of national emergency, it has been stated by those competent to express an opinion, our transport system is liable to break down under the strain of, say, wartime conditions, and I believe that one way in which this problem could be handled is to give some attention to the suggestion to convene a conference to discuss the carrying into effect at an early date of the unification of the railway gauges of the Commonwealth. There is also the need for rationalising the railway system. Unfortunately, it is true that at present a certain amount of chaos prevails in Australian railway administration as a whole. In suggesting solutions of the general problem of railway transportation in Australia there is no reason why we should not focus attention on our own system in Queensland. After all, it is the Estimates of that department that we are now discussing. There are many much-needed reforms that could be carried out. I join with the hon. member for Bundaberg in saying that I believe that neither the Premier nor the Minister for Transport received from the Royal Commission on Railways the information that they thought that gentleman was capable of giving to the Government, and consequently I am forced to the conclusion the report, unfortunately, was not worth the amount of money spent on it. I personally question the wisdom of appointing a general manager in the Railway Department as a royal commissioner to inquire into railway administration, but I am, as a member of this Government, prepared to accept my share of responsibility for that appointment. The only possible inference that can be drawn is that the reason why Mr. Hooper was selected was that he was, before his retirement, suggesting certain reforms that the then Commissioner for Railways, Mr. J. W. Davidson, refused to put into effect.

Mr. Brand interjected.

Mr. DUGGAN: In reply to the interjection, I say that if the whole of his report is not more informative than the summary of his conclusions and recommendations, it is a big waste of money to print it, and from what I have been able to gather the idea is only to create more tall poppies in the Railway Department. Therefore, personally, I do not think that any further expenditure on the report from this gentleman is warranted.

It is true that the greatest loss of revenue in the Queensland Railways is occasioned by the operations of motor transport. No estimate has been presented to Parliament of the loss caused by this competition, but in the evidence offered to the Royal Commission on Transport a figure of £487,000 was suggested as the annual earnings lost to the Railway Department, earnings that should legitimately accrue to that department.

Departmental officers in Victoria have prepared an estimate of £2,000,000 as the sum lost to the railway revenue annually in that State from traffic that is held by the Commissioner to be legitimate railway business.

There is undoubtedly, and has been for some time, a desire on the part of the Government to cope with this problem, and last session Parliament passed the State Transport Act. Unfortunately, I do not think the expectations of Parliament have been completely realised in the activities of the body appointed under that Act. I should like to see a little greater publicity directed to its doings. I feel sure that the Act is one of the most advanced and common-sense pieces of legislation dealing with the transport problem on the statute-book of any country. Therefore, the responsibility now rests on the State Transport Commission to faithfully and energetically discharge the responsibilities reposed in it by this Government. At the present time, we are unable to say whether the benefits expected from the operations of this Act have been realised.

There are one or two local problems that I think are deserving of consideration by the Minister. One is the problem of level crossings. The urgency of this question is greater to-day than it was 12 months ago, and I believe, therefore, that sooner or later the authorities will be faced with the necessity of finding a solution to it. I respectfully suggest that two methods might be considered by the Minister. The first is the system that has been adopted with success in South Africa, where the railway gauge is similar to ours. There 50 per cent. of the cost of necessary work is borne by the local authority concerned and 50 per cent. by the Railway Department.

If lack of funds prevents the Minister from adopting this suggestion, then it might be possible for him to issue a regulation similar to that operating in New South Wales, which was introduced in 1938 to amend the regulations for motor traffic. That regulation provides that the driver of a motor vehicle upon a public street, whilst approaching and within 100 yards of any crossing where there are no railway gates or where no flagman is on duty at the time, shall not drive his vehicle at a speed exceeding 15 miles an hour. That certainly is an alternative, but I much prefer to face up to the problem of abolishing level crossings at an early date.

Another matter upon which I have strong and definite views is in connection with the Workers' Compensation Act. The Act, introduced by this Government, provides a measure

of protection to workers in industry that is greatly appreciated by them, but, unfortunately, the Crown is exempted from the obligation of paying premiums for workers employed in the Railway Department or any other Government service. The result is that the Commissioner for Railways accepts the responsibility of meeting any claims that are submitted by persons injured in the course of their duties. Under this system, when a railway employee becomes sick, or when his condition is such that in the opinion of the Government medical officer it is questionable whether he will continue in the Railway Department until he is 65 years, or, in other words, if it is thought that there is a likelihood of the man's dying on the job before he attains the age of 65 years, the Commissioner withholds his consent to the reinstatement or re-employment of that man in the service. A distinct and grave hardship is being placed upon loyal men who have rendered great service to the department when, because one medical officer thinks that there is the possibility—not that there is any certainty—of the man's collapsing at work and so involving the Commissioner in a payment of £750, the Commissioner will not agree to that man's reinstatement. If workers in private industry are covered under the Workers' Compensation Act, then it is incumbent on the Crown to see that similar provision is made for employees of Government departments.

Many people are prone to offer suggestions whereby concessions might be given to some sections of the community. One of the most recent advocates, a man who is probably well qualified to offer an opinion on many problems, was Mr. W. L. Payne, the royal commissioner who was appointed to inquire into the economics of the wool industry. I do not suggest that I am competent to criticise his report so far as it applies to the wool industry in general, but to me it is amazing that the graziers of Queensland have such a strong advocate of their claims as Mr. Payne. Amongst other things he recommends that there should be a 20 per cent. reduction in wool and sheep freights from areas in which concessions do not apply at present.

Perhaps it is significant that despite the widespread clamour outside of Parliament for reductions in wool and sheep freights Mr. Payne does not make any recommendation that private enterprise should reduce shipping freights to make some provision for these graziers, nor does he suggest that the wool-brokers should reduce their charges to the industry. He believes that the Government railways should accept the responsibility of making concessions—which I conservatively estimate at about £100,000—to the graziers of this State. If the Railway Department is expected to carry these heavy burdens, how in the name of goodness can we get up in this Chamber and say that the railways should pay?

There are many minor matters I could deal with, as, for instance, the question of giving favourable consideration to door-to-door deliveries in certain towns. Towns like

Toowoomba are adequately served by a railway system, but the increase in motor transport facilities has taken much valuable traffic away from the department. I believe that one way in which traffic might be regained is by a door-to-door delivery. Large stores are now things of the past. We have specialist firms who do not own their own trucks but have their parcels delivered by carrying companies. Although the Commissioner has refused to bring this system into operation, I think it is at least worthy of a trial.

I believe increased comforts could be provided on the rail motors in operation in Queensland. I understand we are having 150-horse-power motors built, which will do much to answer criticism levelled against the rail-motor system. I understand these motors will be more comfortable and more powerful than the rail motors at present in operation. I hope it will be demonstrated that these vehicles can adequately cater for the traffic, and that they will do much to restore the decline in passenger traffic.

Mr. Maher: Lavatory accommodation on many rail motors is absolutely criminal.

Mr. DUGGAN: At the present time, I agree. In New South Wales there are 150-horse-power motors, lined with red cedar and comfortably upholstered, and they generally have all the conveniences and comfort of railway coaches. I hope as time goes on greater comforts will be provided.

In general terms I wish to commend the Minister and the Commissioner for their administration of this important public utility. I am sure they will continue to exercise in the future as in the past a wise and benevolent control over this important undertaking.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) (12.48 p.m.): I congratulate the hon. member for Bundaberg on his contribution to this debate. I agree with 95 per cent. of what he said—(laughter)—and I agree with a small part of what the hon. member for Toowoomba said. First of all, I would touch on three little things. You, Mr. Brassington, may think them insignificant. Suppose a business-man came along here to have a quiet look round the Railway Department. On going to Central Station he would see a sign about baths in blue and white lettering all faded and looking in a shocking state of repair. He would go to Ipswich and hear a bell ringing—a bell that was cracked and horrible. He would by that time think that the Railway Department was insolvent or nobody was bothering about it. When he rang up the head office he would hear: “Hul-lo.” That is no good in business. I should want “Railways here” in a fine musical voice, and “What can I do for you?” The voice is there now but the correct reply is not. These things give a bad first impression. I am one of those who say that there is no other transport system to supplant the railways in the next 50 years for long-distance work and the shifting of livestock and heavy freightage. I am not referring, of course, to branch lines.

The railways are starved by the Government. It is the Cinderella department. I say that with all respect to the various Ministers and Commissioners who have controlled the system. The policy has been one of "penny wise and pound foolish" for a long time. I am not going to criticise the department unless I can offer a suggestion for an improvement. I am very glad that the Government back benches are now full. It suggests that hon. members opposite are willing to learn, like myself. (Laughter.) Queensland has an area of 670,500 square miles, requiring long haulages of railway wagons. I thoroughly understand that cattle wagons may have to be hauled empty from Mayne Junction to Dajarra for the purpose of loading cattle for, say, Dirranbandi, and then brought back to Mayne as empties. I realise all that. I realise also that the railway system is a big undertaking, but the department needs someone to advise it how to remedy the existing wrongs. I do not intend to indulge in carping criticism.

At the very outset I want to say that the Commissioner is ever so much underpaid, and I say that advisedly. Last March 12 months, the Government advertised for applicants for the position of Commissioner for Railways, and asked them to state the salary that they required. What a shocking thing to do! It was a cheapjack sort of thing; it was a lowering of the prestige of the Railway Department. It was absolutely shocking. I should give a responsible Commissioner for Railways £2,750 per annum to begin with, with annual increments. Let me read an extract from the evidence that I gave before the Royal Commission on Transport about two and a-half years ago—

"The railway chief does not necessarily any longer require to be what is termed a 'railwayman.' He should be a keen, active, alert business man, having experience of years of hard competition to get business but closely associated with a 'railwayman,' or vice versa."

Let that sink in. Then I say—

"Officials drawing a salary—wet or dry—year in and year out, brought up in an atmosphere of railway monopoly——"

A policy of "Take it or leave it."

"in the past cannot be expected to have the vision to see the business slipping away from the railways. To some extent they are to be excused, because the department offers no incentive to men with initiative and enterprise."

That view is confirmed by the hon. member for Bundaberg. I go on to say—

"The Railway Department's policy of 'waiting until business offers'—I quote the words from many letters in reply to suggestions made—is quite out of date. It should lay itself out to cater for the travelling public by initiating speedy and comfortable services, and advertise the fact that they are offering. In other words, 'Go after the business in a businesslike way.'"

Would Henry Ford advertise for a Commissioner for Railways and say, "State salary required?" What next will the Government do?

A sum of £67,000,000 has been spent on our railway system, including the sum of £28,000,000 written off capital. This is a huge business concern, and proper planning is required in its management. The Government say that money cannot be obtained. I say that is nonsense. They could find £1,600,000 for the Story Bridge, and money for many other things. Therefore, no matter what they say, I will not listen to such an explanation. This money can be obtained.

At least 20 locomotives per annum will be required for some time. That is, allowing for the obsolescence of 8 or 10 old locomotives each year. In this connection, I want to read an extract from my policy submitted to the electors of East Toowoomba. I quoted the following extract from the 1937 report of the Commissioner:—

"At 30 June, 1937, the number of 3-foot 6-inch gauge locomotives in stock was 743. Of that number, 385, or 51.8 per cent. were between 25 and 54 years of age, and 49 were waiting condemnation."

During the last six years the number of new locomotives put into commission has averaged only four a year, after allowing for those written off. Is it any wonder that the Wallangarra mail train, and other mail trains, lose time in climbing the Main Range? The staff is not to blame. The Government should make £250,000 available for the construction of 25 B18½ and C19 locomotives in order to keep the service up to date, in addition to making provision for a further 20 later on.

I want to draw the Minister's attention to the Garratt engines used in South Africa to pull big loads, in order that he may make investigations with a view to their adoption here. I would also call his attention to the "K" type of engine used in New Zealand. It is a very large engine, and is used on a 3-foot 6-inches gauge. I did not go to any country to look for information unless its railway gauge was 3 feet 6 inches, the same as ours. The reason why I have asked so many questions about the late running of trains, due to engine trouble, was to fortify this argument.

The annual report of the Commissioner for 1939, at page 23, states that one 102-horse-power Diesel rail motor and two trailers were constructed at the Ipswich workshops during the financial year and placed in service. That is positively shameful and downright scandalous. Only one of these high-powered Diesel rail motors was placed in commission last year, when we require at least 25 right now. I am not blaming the Commissioner. I am blaming the Government for not finding the money. More Diesel rail motors are required of a horse-power from 100 to 200. I know that a 200-horse-power engine means stronger construction of the units generally, and consequently costs a little more, but it is worth it.

The 1939 report of the Commissioner discloses that 20 locomotives are in the course of construction. That work will take the department to near the end of 1941. I am not satisfied with such slow progress. I should also like to see more dining cars constructed, particularly for the Sunshine train. A car could be attached to this train in the vicinity of Bundaberg, in order that its progress could be accelerated and delays avoided.

The staff generally compare favourably with any other in Australia. I am not going to say they are better, but 90 per cent. of the staff are first-class men and women—it ought to be all men. Much improvement is noticeable in the staff since the 1916-1926 period. Then one was told to go and see this official and the other official. "There is time enough," was the remark we heard in the goods shed, "Go and see Wally." That is what we were told for 10 years.

At 2.15 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. YEATES: At the adjournment I was referring to the improvement in the staff generally since the years from 1916 to 1926. Whether there are too many on the staff is a matter for the Commissioner to decide.

Is there any inducement for men of ability to join the railway service? I am pleased to note that the hon. members for Bundaberg and Toowoomba agree with me that there is not. I wish to quote another extract from the evidence I gave before the Royal Commission on Transport some time ago—

"There should definitely be a proper superannuation scheme—a compulsory one. What incentive is there for a man, say, aged 60, just promoted to position of general manager or station-master? None! He realises that in a few years he will be relegated to the scrapheap without even a retiring allowance. There is no inducement for him to think out suitable time-tables from 5 a.m. (the best thinking hours) as private enterprise would do. Further, the system of promotion—viz., salary classification and length of service—is not satisfactory. Often an alert officer is 'carrying' a higher grade one along out of human sentiment and loyalty. Promotion on merit alone should be introduced."

There is no doubt we have many cases of square posts in round holes in the department. No artisan would be guilty of such a blunder. There are numerous cases in the service where men and women are in jobs they are not suited for. Such a case is to be found in the statistical branch. A certain good officer is shut up in a room there working out figures when he should be selling Queensland sunshine and scenic beauty in the tourist office in Sydney or somewhere like that. In other words, he is a personality officer. It is only proper that a person who has a genial personality should be dealing with the public. Many officers are unsuited for contact with the public although they may do excellent work in other positions.

The deficit for 1937 was £129,091, and for last year it was £53,310. I wish to emphasise the point that the increase of 5½ per cent. in rates and fares over seven or eight months of the last financial year amounted to about £55,000. The total revenue amounted to £7,657,345, which the department says is a record. It was £86,698 more than the revenue for 1928-29, but that is nothing to brag about.

The department has had 10 years of good seasons in which to develop the passenger traffic in the South-Western Division, and has also been assisted by the settlement on the reclaimed prickly-pear areas, but the fact is it is losing passenger traffic there.

The officers of the department think that because there is a rise in the figures everything is all right. I tell them quietly that it is not so. I want another £500,000 collected. New business which we should be getting in the South-West and some other places is slipping away to the motor vehicle.

They boast about the increase over the previous year of £402,957 in the earnings. But it costs £314,419 to get that, and there is nothing much in that. Any corner shop at Toowoong can tell one that. Page 70 of the report of the Commissioner makes a poor excuse for spending that money. It appears as if it were mixed up with politics, and party politics at that. There is an increase of £28,000 in revenue from the passenger traffic for the year, approximately 2 per cent. That is nothing. The passenger traffic has fallen in the last 13 years. Compared with 1923 the passenger traffic has fallen by 5,000,000 per annum. Where is that business going to? The department is not getting it, and I shall not be satisfied until it gets back a good share of it.

There is a net income of £174,000 for the Cunnamulla section. That is the best-paying line of the whole system, but I shall deal with that on the vote covering the Southern Division.

Then as to the Tourist Bureau, we find that £4,000-odd is required for Brisbane, £815 for Cairns, and for Melbourne and Sydney £1,200 each. What of Toowoomba? Is Toowoomba to rely on itself, as independent and self-reliant Toowoomba has been doing all the time? I want to see a grant of at least £400 to help the wonderful committee in Toowoomba, which is doing splendid work.

Mr. W. A. Hooper was appointed a royal commission in March, 1937. His report was presented to the Premier in 1938, but it is not until October, 1939, that Parliament receives even the conclusions arrived at. That is no report at all. It is a fragmentary report, and that is no good to me. I want to hear more of the commissioner's report on the non-paying sections of line, and I expect that report to come along shortly. There should be an independent investigation before any branch lines are closed. As to the running of trains, I want to see the time when people will be able to set their watches by the running of the train.

I will now give the Committee my recommendations for improving the Railway Department's services generally, after having travelled all over the State, not only recently but on previous occasions. Wool freights should be reduced approximately 20 per cent. And bear in mind this recommendation was written before the report of the Wool Advisory Commission was issued. That is firstly to compete with the heavy motor vehicular carriage, and secondly to assist the wool industry, which ultimately would help the Railway Department.

All fully loaded livestock trains should be accelerated. These trains should have precedence over all others, except mail and through passenger trains. Livestock transportation is much too slow. We find them bumping and shunting about and stopping for two or three hours at certain stations. I can give instances.

There should be an inquiry into freights on galvanised-iron and fencing-wire, and other necessities of settlers. I recommend a reduction of some kind. Such a course would bring about increased production, and would ultimately help the Railway Department.

There should be an interstate commission to deal with border rates, and a commission, not an expensive one, to deal with port rates. There are strange anomalies there.

There should be an issue of excursion tickets at all times at single fares plus one-third on all trains, including rail motors, where the return journey is completed by midnight on the day of issue. This would stimulate business. Certain trains and rail motors are running half-empty at present.

The charge of 2s. 6d. a meal in refreshment rooms should be reduced to 2s., people to be at liberty to buy what they like up to 5s. I am thinking of second-class passengers, sometimes accompanied by perhaps three or four children, who cannot afford to spend half-a-crown for a meal for each child. I do not suggest that the dining-car charges be interfered with. The service rendered by the dining-car in the North in particular is excellent.

I suggest that a system of "anywhere to anywhere travel" be inaugurated for such events as Back to Townsville Week or Back to Toowoomba Week. The Commissioner could be guided by members of local committees in any place in the State, and I suggest that a single fare be charged for the double journey. Then, too, money should be expended on advertising any service, especially a new one, and whenever possible a picture of one of our best trains should be placed at the head of the advertisement. Commissioner Evans did this years ago, but the Government have been yawning between sleeps ever since.

I recommend, too, that the department raise the status of special-class drivers, special-class guards, special signalmen, first-class head shunters, and certain night officers, because of their heavy responsibilities.

Then, too, personal canvass should be made by specially qualified and tactful officers to gain new business.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member not to read so much.

MR. YEATES: I should like to see more done in creating co-ordinated services. If, for example, a train arrives at Wandoan I should like to see a service introduced whereby goods for as far out as Taroom or elsewhere in the vicinity may be delivered immediately from the train by lorries, and hides, skins, and wool brought to the train by those lorries on the return journey.

The department should consider a reduction of fares generally. I suggest that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the advisability of reducing passenger fares generally by 15 per cent. to encourage business.

Another suggestion I make is that a safety-first movement be inaugurated, and that suitable addresses be delivered to mass meetings at the various railway centres on "no accident drives."

Another important factor, in my opinion, is that every encouragement should be given to suggestions, whether from office boys, head of staff, or the public. The present tendency is for suggestions to be pigeonholed for about a year and then accepted quietly.

(Time expired.)

MR. HISLOP (Sandgate) (2.28 p.m.): First of all I desire to offer my congratulations to the Minister upon his being re-appointed Minister for Transport. It has been said that a politician can very seldom do a "come back." Not only has the present Minister done a come back to Parliament, but he has also re-entered Cabinet.

I wish also to congratulate the Railway Department upon the great improvement in conditions disclosed by the annual report. After listening to the suggestions of various hon. members of the Opposition one is apt to think that it might be better, instead of adopting all suggestions put forward, to throw the railways open to everyone, as a free service, and be done with the matter. Nothing could be more ridiculous, for instance, than their request for a 15-per-cent. reduction in fares with an increase in railway facilities.

The department has much to feel proud of, when one realises what it has done during the past year. The Leader of the Opposition complains about the increased expenditure. It is generally recognised as good business to increase expenditure in some directions to encourage business. If greater returns are obtained in this way, the increased expenditure is justified.

This year's report shows that the expenditure was 8s. 9½d. a train mile, as against 8s. 6d. in the previous year. The revenue this year was 10s. 8½d. a train mile, as against 11s. 1d. for the previous year. In other words, an increase in expenditure of 3½d. a train mile has been incurred and an increase

in revenue of 4½d. has been achieved, showing 1½d. gain per train mile.

When one considers the increases that have taken place in wages and the high costs of coal and other commodities, and all the propaganda indulged in by opponents of Labour at various times, one realises that great work has been done by the Commissioner and his staff and by the other employees. Despite all criticism the department's employees have been loyal and carried out their jobs efficiently. It is to the credit of the department, also, that it has been able to reduce its deficit by over £75,000. There is still room, however, for improvement.

Speaking during the last session of this Parliament I advocated the abolition of class distinctions on suburban trains. I repeat that I am of the opinion that the distinction between classes on suburban trains is absolutely unwarranted, particularly as only 2.8 per cent. of the fares paid are for first class accommodation. When one considers the cost of producing first class carriages, the attention necessary to keep them in order, the attention required in the marshalling of trains, &c., one is forced to the conclusion that there would be added revenue and less expense to the department if only one class of accommodation was provided. The expenses I have referred to eat up considerably more money than is represented by the 2.8 per cent. of first class fares paid.

Much has been said about the report of Mr. Hooper, and it is pleasing to me to find that many of the requests I have made from time to time to the department have been mentioned in his report. Despite the criticism as to the vagueness of the report, I am proud to think that some of the things I have been advocating have been given effect to. I refer, in particular, to the improvements carried out in the Northgate workshops. Northgate is a very important centre and much repair and construction work is undertaken there. I express my gratitude to the department for spending considerable money on new machinery in those workshops. I do not mean that machinery has been replaced but extensions have been made to the workshops. These improvements were effected after requests had been made by me from time to time and, by coincidence, they are mentioned in the report of Mr. Hooper.

I particularly wish to mention the Sandgate line. The Minister has promised to give consideration to improvements at Sandgate Central, which has become one of the most important, if not the most important seaside station in Queensland, owing of course, to the trade brought about by the opening of the Hornibrook Highway. During the peak period the Hornibrook Bus Company has 24 busses running to cope with the traffic handled at that station. As many as 5,000 people have been carried in one day during the busy periods and it is estimated that 30,000 passengers carried in one day by train have been added to the revenue of that station. Some improvements are necessary to the station in order that it can cope with the added traffic.

After I had spoken on these Estimates last year and pointed out that the Moore Government had failed to spend a reasonable amount on railway rolling-stock, the hon. member for Keppel, who followed me, said that I had treated the truth very lightly, but my reply now is that if what I said treated the truth very lightly, then the hon. member for Keppel damned truth for all time. He said that in 1929-32 the Moore Government had spent £351,433 on railway rolling-stock, but the correctness or otherwise of that figure did not concern the hon. member for Keppel, because he said that during the period 1932-35 the Labour Government spent only £179,498 on rolling-stock, whereas the actual expenditure during that period was £2,344,702. The hon. member for Keppel was damning the truth for all time in quoting his figure; he was short of the correct figure by only £2,165,204. However, he is typical of hon. members opposite who quote figures to try to support their case.

The hon. member for Keppel made a further comparison of expenditure over what he called a five-year period, from 1928 to 1932, which is only four years. He said that the amount spent on rolling-stock in that period was £1,110,013, whereas the Labour Government in their last year of office, in 1928-29, actually spent £1,124,222 on railway rolling-stock, or considerably more in one year than the hon. member for Keppel said had been spent in five years.

Mr. Nimmo: Who said that? The Secretary for Public Lands?

Mr. HISLOP: If the hon. member for Oxley had been listening he would have heard me deliberately say that those figures had been quoted by the hon. member for Keppel, and that he questioned the truthfulness of my figures. I now say that in using the figures that he used he damned the truth for all time. He said that I had treated the truth lightly, but let me say that I have never treated my income tax returns very lightly, nor have I been fined £500 for not paying my income tax.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Moore: Very clever.

Mr. HISLOP: The hon. member for Keppel went on to say that over a period of five years, from 1932 to 1937, the Labour Government had spent £601,647 on railway rolling-stock, whereas the actual figures should have been £4,313,622.

Mr. Nimmo: You know that he is away in camp and cannot defend himself.

Mr. HISLOP: The hon. member has been long enough out of camp to be back in this Chamber.

An Opposition Member: How do you know?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the vote before the Committee.

Mr. HISLOP: It is not my fault that he is not here to reply to the figures that I have

quoted. I am not like some hon. members who make attacks on Ministers of the Crown and then deliberately go out of the Chamber when the Ministers exercise their right to reply, which has happened here lately. The total amount spent on rolling-stock between 1926 and 1929 was £3,412,000, but the Moore Government reduced the expenditure by £756,098 and thus allowed the rolling-stock to get into a deplorable state. I have not treated the truth lightly. These figures are in public documents for anyone to see, provided he has the ability to search for them. If hon. members are not able to quote the figures correctly then they have not the ability or the right to be here.

The Moore Government during their period of office reduced expenditure by £756,000. During 1932-35, Labour increased railway expenditure by £203,234, and last three years by a further £491,550. Those figures are evidence that Labour pays far more attention to keeping the rolling-stock in order than our opponents did.

I desire once more to offer my congratulations to the Minister and his staff on the manner they have carried out their job.

Mr. CLAYTON (Wide Bay) (2.41 p.m.): I desire to express my appreciation of the kindnesses I have received not only from the officials in the office of the Commissioner, but the staff generally throughout the State. I can assure the Minister that he has an excellent staff who endeavour to do all they can to serve the public. The position in that regard has improved very materially when compared with the conditions existing many years ago. There is a marked improvement in the running of our train services. The mail train by which hon. members for the Wide Bay district travel to and from Brisbane now always runs on time—a very different state of affairs to that existing some time ago when it was often one hour and one and a-half hours late.

The deficit on the working of the railways has been discussed during this debate. All I want to say is that seeing that we have had a very good season and a great deal of additional produce has been carried the railways should have made a better showing than the Commissioner's report discloses. If the Minister is satisfied with the result of the year's working then it is due to the good season and to the fact that the farmers produced more than previously. The farmers have contributed largely to making the position as satisfactory as it is.

Mr. Walsh: They received encouragement to produce from Government policy.

Mr. CLAYTON: Any success that has been achieved is due to the Government's having departed from their policy. They have not stuck rigidly to the policy they believe in. That is why the improvement has taken place.

The department now meets with more serious competition than previously, because of the keen competition from motor transport. To-day many articles attracting high freight rates are carried, not by the railways but by

motor transport, while goods attracting lower freight rates are carried by the railway. If the Government desire to recapture that trade for the railways they must give consideration to their freight scales. I will give the Committee one instance. A man was transferred recently from Maryborough to Murwillumbah. A van travelled from Brisbane to Maryborough, loaded this man's furniture, and delivered it at Murwillumbah at a saving of 45 per cent. on the rail rates. That illustrates the position that exists.

I think the Government should see that something is done. It may be necessary to consider a reduction of freights. If something was done in that direction the department would perhaps be better able to compete with motor transport than it is.

I wish to deal now with the question of sleeping-berths on the North Coast line. The Rockhampton train and the Sunshine Express, on which we are able to obtain cabins, have satisfactory accommodation; but I can assure the Minister and the hon. members who are present that the hon. members for Isis, Bundaberg, Maryborough, and I have to put up with a good deal of discomfort for two nights of the week that we have to travel while the House is sitting. The accommodation in those Pullman cars is in a deplorable condition. Probably while the Minister was out of the Cabinet he may have had to put up with what we now have to put up with. The mattresses are in a disgraceful condition. I hope the Minister will do something to improve the sleeping accommodation for people who are paying 15s. a night for a sleeper.

I understand we have the privilege of working the parish pump on these Estimates, so I ask the Minister to give consideration to the construction of an overhead bridge in the town of Murgon. That proposal has been placed before the department for some time, and the departmental heads realise that it is essential that something should be done. The town has gone ahead by leaps and bounds during the last few years. I have seen traffic so congested in that town that about 20 motor cars were held up waiting for a train to move off the road. I realise that the railway was there before the town was built, and I know the Commissioner has complained that the people built on either side of the line. In addition, we have the Proston and Windera line, and a good deal of shunting goes on. In view of the fact that it is a very rich district and that the town is progressing at the rate it is, I hope the Minister will see if something cannot be done to improve the transport facilities at that centre.

Another matter I wish to refer to is the position of the station at Gundiah, between Maryborough and Gympie. The railway station is on the wrong side of the line, which means that the people, who come in on the right side, have to cross the main line with their vehicles or else carry their produce across to place it on the platform for transport to wherever it is consigned. The Bauple tramline terminates at this station, and the customers of the department are put to much

inconvenience and delay when a train is standing at the station. If the station was situated on the other side of the line it would be a great convenience.

Torquay station, on the Urangan line, is similarly placed. Certainly, that station is not patronised to a great extent by primary producers. It is adjacent to Pialba, a seaside resort made use of by residents of the Wide Bay district and especially the citizens of Maryborough. If the Minister saw the state of affairs that exists on almost any Sunday on which an excursion train is run to the seaside, he would come to the conclusion that the small sum necessary to transfer the station building to the side of the line nearest to the sea was warranted.

I trust the hon. gentleman will investigate and give favourable consideration to the matters that I have placed before him.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (2.52 p.m.): The Committee has had a 25-minute humorous interlude by the hon. member for East Toowoomba. He got up steam and set off for Dajarra, travelled across to South Australia, returned, and was eventually derailed by you, Mr. O'Keefe, on being informed that his time had expired. He made no constructive suggestions whatever. He criticised the Government and the administration of the Railway Department. He advocated the expenditure of many millions of pounds; he wanted a reduction in freights; he asked for higher classifications and a general increase in expenditure; he did not suggest one thing that would give the department a return.

The hon. member for Wynnum gratuitously insulted a number of passengers on the last train to Wynnum. He blamed the department for some alteration in the timetable. It is very regrettable that a man holding the responsible position of a member of Parliament should state that the last train on the Wynnum line at night is known as the "drunks" train. That is a very grave insult to his own electors and to passengers by that train. The hon. member certainly deserves castigation for having made such a ridiculous statement.

The report of the Commissioner for Railways is very comprehensive. It sets out in detail the activities of the department and the policy of the administration. The value of a railway system can be estimated only from the point of view of the State, but hon. members of the Opposition judge it on its balance-sheet and profit and loss account. They give no consideration to the fact that the system has assisted very largely in the development of Queensland, particularly in land settlement. What would be gained by letting the Department of Public Lands open up lands for settlement, if the settlers had no facilities for placing the produce won from the soil on the market?

Production is important, but of equal importance is the transporting of our products to suitable markets. By providing facilities for this the Railway Department has played

no mean part in developing the State. Although no credit is given to it for the fact, we have to realise that the Department of Public Lands and many other departments of State as well as Queensland as a whole have benefited by the service rendered by the Railway Department.

Another important factor to be remembered is that by providing an efficient means of transporting products to overseas ships, which in turn take them to our overseas markets, the railway service has played no mean part in the working up of what is now becoming an excellent overseas trade in such products as beef, mutton, and sugar. Without our railway service Queensland would be stagnating instead of progressing as it is.

Another great benefit that this service has bestowed upon the State is the transporting of starving stock at concessional rates, and in allowing rebates on freight for carriage of fodder. In this way it has played no mean part in preserving the assets of the State.

The officers of the Railway Department have so organised the service that they were able to show a profit over actual working expenses last year. If we exclude the amounts that have to be paid to meet interest on capital we find that the Railway Department showed an actual profit over working expenses of £1,588,417 in that the total revenue earned in the year was £7,657,417, and the expenditure £6,068,928. The Commissioner, his officers, and the employees in general, are to be commended for achieving that excellent result.

One of the greatest difficulties of the department is that it has to make large payments by way of interest on capital. This difficulty could be overcome quite easily if the Commissioner cared to adopt the line of least resistance and increase fares and freights. Although hon. members opposite criticise the Railway Department for not showing a surplus, they would be the first to condemn it if the Commissioner decided to adopt the policy of increasing freights and fares to wipe out the deficit.

Then we have the problem of the non-paying lines. It would be quite easy for the Government to decide that trains were not going to run on those lines. That would help to wipe out the deficit, but I want hon. members opposite to realise that although these lines may not be bringing in enough revenue to meet working expenses, they are playing a very important part in the development of the State, and are giving to people in the remote parts of the State a service to which they are justly entitled. Those of our people who are prepared to go out and develop the land should receive consideration in the shape of railway service or some other transport. I do not advocate the closing down of non-paying lines, because I am of the opinion that the State is receiving a very direct benefit as a result of the extension of these railways into remote areas.

The Commissioner and his staff have been endeavouring to meet the situation that has

always been with us by seeking new business and paying careful attention to the details of the department. There is excellent co-operation between the staff and officers of the department. This co-operation is exemplified by the figures, which show that for last year there was increased business to the value of £88,538. While interest on capital expenditure has increased by £12,757, capital expenditure increased as a result of the carrying out of certain work. The deficit on the year's working has been reduced by £75,781, a fact that the department might be proud of. Furthermore, the department was called upon last year to meet unforeseen expenditure, in common with other departments. Some of that unforeseen expenditure was brought about as a result of an increase in the basic wage and by other things over which the department had no control. Whilst the Opposition might not agree to the principle of increasing wages, we on this side of the Chamber believe in increased wages and better conditions for the workers generally.

Criticism is often levelled by hon. members opposite at the railways, but during the time they were the Government they sought to improve the service by a general curtailment of expenditure. We also know that this Government, since their re-election in 1932, have had to spend much money on the reconditioning of stock left to go to disrepair while hon. members opposite were the Government. Their Minister for Railways advocated that people should go back to the horse, and to show that he was sincere in what he said, he rode a horse from Queen street to Parliament House. I want to give this Committee some idea how the Railway Department was starved during the lifetime of the previous administration, how rolling-stock was allowed to get into a bad state of repair, and how railway lines also were allowed to go to ruin. They decreased the maintenance on all lines by £78,987, decreased expenditure on locomotives by £87,356, decreased expenditure in the traffic department by £87,575, and in addition there was a general decrease of £2,720.

In the Normanby railway yards in my electorate and at the Ipswich Railway Workshops rolling-stock was allowed to get into a tragic state of disrepair. Whenever rolling-stock was required wheels and other spare parts were taken from one vehicle and used on another, and, generally, the rolling-stock section of the Department under the Moore regime resembled the junk yard of a second-hand motor car dealer who bought old cars to scrap. That was how the Moore Government endeavoured to conduct the railways in what they described as a profitable way.

In addition, many hundreds of railway men were thrown out of employment. The work of others was rationed. The employees were denied the right to approach the Industrial Court, and their hard-won industrial conditions were filched from them. I ask hon. members to compare those tragic days with the improved conditions of the present time under the Labour Government. The Labour Government allowed the railway workers to approach the Industrial Court for a restora-

tion of proper industrial conditions, and the court has since granted them. They have enjoyed three increases in the basic wage. There is full-time employment, and there is no rationing of work at the Ipswich railway workshops. Generally, the workers are enjoying good industrial conditions under the Labour Government.

I have already quoted the figures showing the expenditure by the Moore Government, and it is appropriate that I should now quote the figures showing the increases in expenditure in 1938-39 under the present Government. These are the figures—

			£
Maintenance	..	..	76,206
Locomotives	..	..	154,487
Traffic section	..	..	182,314
General	..	..	1,412

The Railway Department is also called upon to meet an expenditure of £140,000 for the ensuing 12 months in automatic increases in salaries. Of course, we have no complaint to make about that because the department is determined to go ahead with its business in the usual way. The increased revenue reflects great credit on the administration and particularly on the workers, who have helped very largely to attract it to the department. Much improvement has been made in connection with tourist traffic, and I have no doubt that a great deal more will be done in the future. There have also been welcome improvements in the Railway refreshment-room service.

One suggestion I have to make to the Minister has to do with the future control of the railways. We have very many excellent young men in the railway service. The Commissioner would be well advised not to allow young men with outstanding ability to remain in one section of the service during the whole of their period of service, but train them in all sections so that when the time arrives for the filling of executive positions men will be appointed with a knowledge, not of one section, but of all sections. I am not suggesting that our present Commissioner is not qualified for his position. On the contrary, I believe he is fully qualified for the high post he occupies, and has done very good service in the department. I am looking to the future.

I desire to refer very briefly to the report of Mr. W. A. Hooper, who was appointed by the Government as a royal commission to inquire into railway matters. I have carefully perused his recommendations, and am of opinion that he has indicted himself in a number of instances. Many of the practices that he has brought before the Government and made recommendations to alter existed for quite a number of years when he was General Manager of the South-Eastern Division. He should have seen to it then that these things did not continue to exist. Again, Mr. Hooper, after having occupied the post of General Manager of the South-Eastern Division for a number of years, now comes forward with a belated recommendation that the position

be abolished. He does not arrive at that decision until his term of office has expired.

Mr. Muller: He is a free man to-day; he was not then.

Mr. POWER: I am making this speech. Mr. Hooper held that position for quite a long time, and if the need did not exist for that office it was his duty to advise the Commissioner that it be abolished. It ill became Mr. Hooper to go round the railway workers in the manner he did seeking information from them. He has made recommendation after recommendation to build up a staff of officials to go round supervising and seeing that work is carried out. If that necessity existed then he, as General Manager of the South-Eastern Division, should have made recommendations to that end while he was a servant of the department.

His report also makes a veiled attack on the administration of the Stores Department. I again indict Mr. Hooper in this connection. If the necessity existed, then, he, as General Manager of the South-Eastern Division, should have investigated this matter and adopted or recommended the control he now suggests. The General Storekeeper, Mr. Reeves, is an excellent officer. He does not live in my electorate, but I do not like the manner in which Mr. Hooper has suggested that there is something wrong with this section of the department.

I regret very much the manner Mr. Hooper went round the service seeking information. Mr. Hooper as a royal commission should have set himself up in an office and with his full powers as a royal commission brought whatever witness he desired into his office and heard his evidence there, but instead of that he "snooped around," and in effect said to men: "What can you tell me about this? It will not make any difference to you if you tell me." That is not the action of a man clothed with all the powers of a royal commission under the Official Inquiries Evidence Act. I say that he snooped around from place to place trying to cajole people into telling him something. He was not by any means fair to the late Commissioner, Mr. Davidson. The decent thing to do was to call the men as witnesses before the commission instead of "snooping around" from place to place.

I say that the report generally is not worth the paper it is written on. There is nothing in it of any value. If some of the suggestions in the report were adopted the department would be like the Russian army, more officers than privates, and we should have a host of generals to supervise the lower-paid men in the department who are battling along doing the right thing in the interests of the service. I very much regret this report was brought before Parliament, because there is nothing in it of any value to the State. The railway men of Queensland are honest and fair and they are doing the best they can. There is less friction in the department to-day than ever before in the history of the State.

In conclusion, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Rockhampton on his

reappointment to the position of Minister for Transport. I think his appointment was well merited, and that opinion is shared by the great majority of the people in the department, where he is highly praised for the efficient manner in which he controls the department.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (2.17 p.m.): After listening to the hon. member for Baroona one would imagine the Opposition appointed Mr. Hooper as royal commissioner. Mr. Hooper was appointed by the Government of which he is a supporter, who consequently have to take the responsibility for the findings he has arrived at.

The Railway Department has an important influence on the finances of Queensland. No doubt, every hon. member would like the Railway Department to be able to present each year in its annual report a statement showing that working expenses, interest, and redemption had been met. After all, that is the objective the department should have, while at the same time giving efficient service to the public.

When we consider how the department was made an employment bureau by past Governments, who gave employment in it to large numbers of men just before elections, it is surprising that it was ever able to show a credit balance. It would be idle to say that the operations of the department are perfect. We must admit that many things could be done to improve its workings; it would not be a department of human beings if that were not so.

We must also realise that it is harder for the Railway Department to keep business than it was a few years ago when it had a monopoly of transport services. Now it meets with keen competition, particularly on road and air, and in many instances what it has lost was the best-paying part of the traffic it used to handle. That must be considered when we review railway operations. I am of the opinion, however, that the railways are by no means a back number and that they will still play a very important part in the transport of any community. That is evidenced in other parts of the world where railways owned by private enterprise have successfully met competition from air, sea, and road transport. This is proved by the fact that many railway companies that for a number of years paid no dividends are now doing so. Why have they been able to do that? By giving that something in the service that the people want.

I think we should analyse the railway problem in Queensland in that way. Is our system offering to the people the service they want? If it is not, then we should endeavour to put forward constructive suggestions that will help the department to get its share of the business and keep it. I hope to be able to make a few observations that will help the department to do this.

What do the people want of goods traffic? A quick and safe transport of goods and a

service that will deliver the goods to the spot where they are wanted within a time to suit the consignee. What do the travelling public desire of a railway service? A comfortable and speedy journey. Is the department giving this service? No person can cavil at the excellent accommodation provided on the Sunshine express, Rockhampton mail, and possibly one or two other trains. Perhaps they could be speeded up, but, in recent years, the department has satisfactorily speeded up these trains, and probably, by laying heavier rails and straightening out bends and curves, the trains will be able to travel even faster than they do.

Mr. T. L. Williams: Safety must be subordinated to speed.

Mr. NICKLIN: When we speak of speed we always mean a safe speed, and I think that is also in the minds of the department. The increased speed of recent years is the result of the improvements made in the tracks, and, as tracks are improved, so will our mail trains be accelerated. It is idle to say that, with a 3-feet 6-inches gauge, we cannot have a speed such as is possible in many other countries that also have this gauge. In many instances, their trains have been able to travel at the average speed of trains running on a 4-feet 8½-inches gauge.

Although it may be wise for the department to concentrate on one or two trains, i.e., the Sunshine express and the Rockhampton mail, it should not overlook altogether the utility services—between Toowoomba and Brisbane, or between Gympie and Brisbane. A person who has travelled on such trains cannot contend that the service is speedy and comfortable. What do we find of the inter-city train between Brisbane and Gympie? It is made up of a collection of nondescript carriages, the majority very uncomfortable. In fact, a number are converted suburban carriages. Nobody can truthfully say that the old suburban carriage—not the modern coach—is suitable for journeys of 100 miles. In very many instances, also, the lighting is wretched. It is impossible to read. After all, this could have been avoided quite easily. A very simple test would have disclosed the fact that the lighting facilities were anything but perfect.

When speaking of carriage lighting it might be interesting to refer to an incident that happened last year when the Railway Estimates were being discussed. After making the glowing remarks about the service that were quoted so extensively this morning by the Minister, the hon. member for Cooroora travelled home by train. The light in the carriage in which he travelled was so bad that it was impossible for him to read. In fact, the lights in two other carriages on the same train were in a similar condition. Such bad service as this should not exist on the most profitable section of railway line in Queensland. The section between Gympie and Brisbane returns £2,000 a mile annually above expenses, yet, despite this fact, we have recurring instances of inefficient service.

The department would be well advised to take a leaf out of the book of the New South Wales Railway Department, which renders an excellent inter-city service between Newcastle and Sydney, the South Coast and Sydney, and the Blue Mountains and Sydney. Distinctively-painted and comfortably-equipped trains give excellent service between those points, and this is helping considerably in combating the severe competition of the road services. At least, the Queensland Railway Department should see to it that on the best-paying section of line in the State these recurring annoying instances of faulty carriage lighting are eliminated.

The hon. member for Gregory referred to the urgent need for a refrigerated service on the Western lines. I raised this matter on previous occasions. In my opinion, it is essential that a refrigerated service be given to the far western and northern areas of the State. It certainly does not redound to the credit of the department that although we have probably the longest section of railway line of any tropical country in the world, we have not one refrigerated wagon that is suitable for the carriage of either fruit or milk. With the use of dry ice it would not be expensive to convert the present C.L.F. wagons into refrigerated carriages for the transport of perishable goods. I understand that at the present time the department is experimenting with one wagon that has been converted and on which a new type of building board has been used that does not need much insulation, and that the trial runs have proved quite satisfactory. I hope that the Minister will keep in mind the advisability of developing refrigerated traffic in this State, especially when we remember that one of Labour's election promises was that fresh milk and fruit would be supplied to the outlying areas of the State. If that promise is to be honoured, refrigerated wagons will be essential. I hope that before long the department will convert some of its suitable wagons into refrigerated wagons for the carriage of perishable goods. In America, a very extensive system of refrigeration is in existence, and train loads of perishables are transported from one side of the Continent to the other. Of course, the difficulty in Queensland would be to get ice when it was necessary to re-ice the wagon. No doubt, however, these difficulties could be overcome.

In the fruit trains the department has given an excellent service to the fruitgrowers of Queensland. At all times it has endeavoured to meet the wishes of the growers by providing trains when required and running them at schedules to suit them. In recent years the department has met with very severe competition in the Stanthorpe district from road transport. The fruitgrowing industry in the Stanthorpe district was made possible in the first instance by the excellent service provided by the Railway Department to fruitgrowers. Unfortunately, that service has been cut into severely by road transport. I am pleased to see a reference in the Press to the fact that the department is endeavouring to

meet this road competition by giving fruit-growers in the Stanthorpe area a later despatch from Stanthorpe with the same early arrival in Brisbane next morning. The fruit-growers of Queensland generally are thankful for the provision of a fruit-train service from Brisbane to North Queensland three times a week during the season at speeds equal to the fastest express train.

One thing to which I would draw attention is the necessity that has been apparent for years for a transshipping shed at Clapham Junction. The department has been approached to provide this shed, but has replied by saying that no money is available. I understand that negotiations are now in progress between the fruitgrowers' organisations and the department whereby the organisations will lend the department money for the building of the shed. The cost entailed will be met by an extra transshipping charge.

Mr. Nimmo: You will have to get good security.

Mr. NICKLIN: The fruitgrowers are prepared to accept the security of the Government for that amount of money. If that shed is built, it will be of great service to the fruitgrowers of this State, because their fruit will be transhipped under cover. The varieties of fruit to be sent to the Southern States could be segregated and the risk of damage reduced. It should not be necessary for the growers to provide that facility themselves, however; it should have been made available by the department.

I wish to draw the attention of the Minister to the running of goods trains at night-time, particularly between Brisbane and Gympie. I do not know whether it is necessary that there should be such a concentration of goods trains in the hours of darkness as there is, because most of the non-perishable traffic could be handled during daylight hours. During the hours of daylight, the section between Brisbane and Gympie carries very few trains, but when darkness sets in one finds there is a train at almost every crossing. If an accident happened the whole of this traffic would be disorganised. Shunting operations can be carried out more efficiently during the day than at night-time.

I think the railway employees would agree that much more work could be done in the day-time than at night. Much of the loading in the Gympie and other banking yards could be handled better during the daylight. Most of our fast express passenger trains run at night, but with heavy haulage of goods during the night, too, a delay to a goods train on one section means a delay to the passenger trains, and thus there is a hold-up all along the line. If much of the goods traffic that is now carried at night was carried during the day-time much of the existing pressure would be removed and it would lead to more efficient and more economic running, because I think that some of the overtime incurred at night would be obviated.

The Minister for Transport: The trains are loaded during the day and we have to shift the rolling-stock at convenient hours.

Mr. NICKLIN: I appreciate the difficulty. For instance, trucks of logs and similar traffic banked up in the Gympie yard could be shifted during the day-time instead of having to wait until night.

Mr. Bedford: There must be technical difficulties that you do not understand.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not think so.

Mr. Gair: Of course there are.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not think so.

Mr. Gair: There are.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not think so, after the conversations that I have had with railwaymen.

The Minister for Transport: We appointed a special committee to reduce night running to a minimum.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am glad that the Minister has taken steps to eliminate some of night traffic because, after all, night running is not advantageous from any point of view.

Reference has been made during the debate to the Suggestions and Inventions Board. It is also mentioned by Mr. Hooper in his report.

Mr. Gair: And many a suggestion Mr. Hooper stole, too.

Mr. NICKLIN: Very valuable suggestions for the improvement of the workings of the department are made to the board by the employees, but I agree with the hon. member for East Toowoomba that the board should be gingered up a bit. Sometimes months elapse before the employee is even told whether his suggestion is of value or not, and thus he is not encouraged to make suggestions in the interests of the department. There are many little suggestions that the employees can make for the improvement of the working of the department because they actually come in contact with the work and fully understand what suggestions will be valuable, but they will never be encouraged to mention them if the treatment extended to them at the present time is not altered. If the department is to be helped then it must be conducted as one huge co-operative unit in which every employee, from the lowest rank to the Commissioner, plays his part.

I have heard visitors from the Southern States frequently comment on the disgracefully untidy condition of the engines on many of our important trains. While the engines on the Sunshine Express and the important mail trains are brilliantly burnished and cleaned and are made to look like railway engines, many of the engines on some of the other important trains, particularly on the goods trains, give the appearance of never having been cleaned since they were built.

After all, it does not take a great deal of effort to give the locomotive an occasional wash and brush up to make it look like a Queensland machine. This may not be a very big matter, but it is an important one. A few years ago when all the interstate traffic went via Wallangarra we saw on one side

of the platform a Queensland locomotive, and on the other a New South Wales locomotive. Those were the days when the department took a pride in its engines. The Queensland engine on this train was a credit to the State. It was nicely polished and painted, and carefully looked after. In those days our engines compared more than favourably with those of New South Wales, but that cannot be said to-day. Nobody could be very proud of some of our engines, as they are in a disgraceful state.

I observe from the report of the Commissioner that he is making a rail-motor instruction car available to visit the various large centres, together with an instructor, in order that drivers and mechanics can become conversant with new departures and mechanism, and the procedure to be adopted in getting the best results out of these cars. That is a very wise move. These rail motors are now giving particularly valuable service in country districts, especially on branch lines where there is not a great deal of traffic.

(Time expired.)

Mr. EDWARDS (Nanango) (3.42 p.m.): One must concede that the efficient running of the railways has a very big bearing on their success. There is no doubt that greater efficiency could be obtained in various parts of the service. I shall not attempt to detail in what direction that efficiency can be obtained, as the Minister and his staff from time to time investigate matters that should tend to an improvement on present-day conditions.

One must admit that the great mileage of railway that has been built over the enormous area of this State has been a great factor in its development. I realise, too, that the officers controlling the service have a tremendous job. It is generally admitted that some of our railways have been built from the wrong centres, and had other starting points been adopted greater development would have resulted in districts they were intended to serve. Take my own district as an illustration. Had the railway in the Lower Burnett been constructed through the Brisbane Valley instead of from Theebine, with feeder lines branching out into the agricultural districts, greater development would have been obtained, in addition to a greater volume of traffic. The present congestion on the North Coast line would also have been avoided. There are similar instances in other districts. If those things had been taken into consideration in the old days the economical running of the railways would now be an easier matter than it is. Some of our lines cover twice the distance of the main road that connects the same centres. It is impossible for the railways to compete with road traffic under those conditions.

My own district affords a good example. The slow mixed train takes 13 to 15 hours to travel 209 miles whereas the motor service can do the journey on a shorter road in five hours. It is obvious that it is impossible for the department to retain the passenger traffic on that line. Anyone who is in busi-

ness realises that time is precious and people cannot afford to spend the time that is occupied in these train journeys. It will be difficult to overcome that aspect of the problem.

Many years ago the Government should have gone into the question whether the rail-motor service could not have been economically instituted on a much larger scale than it has been operated up to the present. As far as I can gather, no real effort was made by the department to compete on fair lines with the road-motor service by speeding up the passenger trains, and so on, and the result was that the road-motor service has attracted much of the passenger service from the railways. After the passenger service had fallen off considerably an effort was made to regain it, and although the road-motor service was made to pay very heavy registration fees it has been able to retain a great deal of the passenger service, which represents a big loss to the railways. Every effort should be made to place more rail motors on the rails and provide a quicker service. I am of opinion that the only chance the railways have of successfully competing with the road-motor services is by instituting fast rail-motor services. Mixed trains should be dispensed with. It seems ridiculous to see a mixed train carrying half-a-dozen people for hundreds of miles. I think it would be in the best interests of the service to eliminate the carriages from the goods train and run rail motors for the passenger traffic. The present rail-motor service has been well patronised, and the department should make every effort to extend it.

Some districts are developing and population increasing at such a rate that road services have to be increased to supply the transport needs. Take my district, for example. It is not so very long ago that one service car running to Brisbane daily would have empty seats. To-day there is a daily service of two or three cars, and a 'plane. On some days the 'plane makes three or four commercial trips. That is an indication of the increase in the passenger traffic, and if the Railway Department were alive to the position much of that traffic would be catered for by rail motors. After all, there are many persons who prefer a rail service.

It is also important that the Queensland railway system should have adequate facilities for trucking and handling stock. The pastoral industry is one of the important industries in the State, and though the department has done much in this connection there remains much more to be done. We cannot overcome the difficulty by merely making comparisons between Queensland and other States and countries. Every country has a set of circumstances peculiar to that country, and Queensland is no exception. We have our own problems, and we must meet them. The railway mileage is great and our flocks and herds are scattered over a large part of the State, but they have to be transported to the market. Any improvement in the handling of stock will be of great assistance. The provision of adequate trucking facilities and other necessities of travelling stock may

result in a greatly increased revenue to the department. It may have the effect of inducing stockowners to make use of railway facilities instead of travelling their stock by road. This applies to store stock as well as to fats.

Recently I introduced a very representative deputation to the department, as the Minister knows. Their concern was to obtain trucking service for the Yarraman district. At present the stock from this great district of Southern Burnett are usually trucked at points on the Brisbane Valley line. The Yarraman trucking yards in their present state are absolutely unsuitable, consequently stock are driven at much expense to points nearer to Brisbane on the Brisbane Valley line, and the department loses revenue, not to mention the loss caused to the producer by having the stock knocked about when being driven to the point of trucking further down the line. The improvement of a trucking yard is not a very large financial undertaking for the department, but it is a very important item to those who have to truck stock from that area. The same applies to the trucking of pigs and paddy calves from my district. As many as eight or nine truckloads of pigs are sent from that district each week. Of course, they cannot be driven to and trucked at stations on the Brisbane Valley line. Certainly, I should like to see them transported by rail through Ipswich, but at present they have to travel 209 miles round through Gympie. When they get to Gympie they are shunted to a siding and not brought to market until the next day. The department would be well advised to take steps to avoid these delays and to provide a quick and efficient service for the transport of stock and produce to market.

I know the difficulties these delays cause to stock-owners, although I do not pose as an expert on railway matters.

Mr. Gair: That would be very difficult for you to do.

Mr. EDWARDS: I know my weaknesses, but, unfortunately, many others do not. From the experience that you have had in the outlying districts of the State, Mr. O'Keefe, you know what tremendous loss can result if a train that is carrying starving stock is delayed for a few hours at any station. In the interests of the assets of the State, it is essential that starving stock be transported as quickly and efficiently as possible. We all know that the railways are not an obsolete method of transporting starving stock. On the contrary, they are invaluable for this work, and the Government might well consider the linking up of certain sections in the West in the interests of the grazing industry of Queensland.

Another suggestion I offer is that the department might give consideration to making a careful investigation of ways and means of improving the present passenger service with a view to regaining some of the business that has been attracted away from it by the facilities offered by road transport.

Mr. Walsh: You have not said anything about the Victorian railways yet.

Mr. EDWARDS: At the beginning of my speech I stated that it is not fair to make comparisons with other States. I pointed out that each State has its peculiar problems.

The Minister will admit that even on those sections of line on which business has improved by as much as 500 and 600 per cent., no steps have been taken by the Railway Department to either improve, renovate, or extend either stations, sheds, or anything else since the lines were first constructed. If the Railway Department desires to retain and increase its traffic, steps must be taken to improve accommodation to cope with any increase in business.

In conclusion, I desire to refer to freights. Careful consideration should be given to the matter to see that no harm is done by imposing too high a rate for the transport of any article. The use of fertilisers is increasing in the country districts year by year, and I think the Government should consider carrying fertilisers and like commodities at the lowest possible rate.

The Minister for Transport: We carry it from Brisbane to Cairns at a farthing a ton a mile.

Mr. EDWARDS: In Victoria for many years they carried it into the Mallee country for nothing.

The Treasurer: It is unfair to make comparisons.

Mr. EDWARDS: I am not making comparisons, but answering the Minister. As a result of that free carriage the business of the railways was increased 100 per cent. and it is for that reason that I suggest that fertilisers should be carried at a very low rate. If this suggestion was given effect to more people would be encouraged to use fertilisers, there would be greater production, and ultimately more freight for the department. I admit that that is a long-distance view, but it is along these lines that we must develop the State. After all, increased production means increased wealth and greater business for the railways. I am sure the Minister will agree with me in that. I would also include machinery in my suggestion. The position of the man on the land must be improved, and if it is improved increased business will result to the Railway Department. We should give every consideration to these things in an effort to assist further production. By this means people would become interested in the railways and would patronise them more than they do, and this would help to pay the interest on the enormous amount of money tied up in the railway system of Queensland.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) (4.4 p.m.): I also congratulate the Minister on his appointment to his present office and I trust that on this occasion he will have learnt a lesson from the past and will not repeat the offences he committed during his previous term of office in piling up high losses on the railways. On this occasion he is very fortunate—in fact,

Queensland is fortunate—in having such fine officers in control of the railways, from the Commissioner down.

Mr. Gair: Have you any innuendoes to make against the late Mr. Davidson?

Mr. NIMMO: I thank the hon. member for reminding me. I am sorry the late Commissioner did not have a longer period in retirement. We all regret his early demise. He did a great service for Queensland.

At 4.5 p.m.,

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

Mr. NIMMO: The officers of the department appear to be doing their very best in the interests of the public, and I am satisfied that the railways would tell a different story if these men were given a free hand in the management of the department. We shall never be able to get a high standard of management while we have political interference. I believe that too much political interference is the cause of all the troubles in the department. It has been converted more or less into an employment bureau instead of being conducted as an undertaking in the interests of the State as a whole.

Mr. McLean: That is not fair; there is no political interference in the Railway Department.

Mr. NIMMO: The losses in the department have been so tremendous that taxation has to be maintained at a high level to meet the total commitments of the State, including those of the Railway Department. It has often been said that the railways cannot be made to pay, but looking over the figures of the past I find that before the first Labour Government were returned to office the railways were able, not only to earn enough to pay interest, but also to show a surplus of £48,651. Looking back over the figures, one feels almost constrained to say that what happened in the past in the management of the department was a miracle.

In justification of the record of the Labour Government the Minister said that his Government had constructed a number of railway lines, but he knows very well that the main network of railways was built before the Labour Government were ever returned to power, and it was at that period that the railways were able to pay interest and show a surplus. When the Minister was asked to mention the railways that the Labour Government had built he mentioned the Longreach-Winton link and the completion of the North Coast line, but does he not realise that the completion of the North Coast line should have brought in more revenue than the department got in those far-off days when it showed a surplus?

There is no doubt that the railways have been a great drain on the general revenue of the State. The general taxpayer has to provide money to pay interest on the £28,000,000 written off the capital indebtedness as well as the interest on the total

deficits of the department, amounting to £19,000,000, which have been incurred since the Labour Government were returned to power in 1915. The taxpayer has had to find about £9,500,000 since 1931 as interest on the £28,000,000 capital written off. In addition, he has to find money to pay sinking-fund charges and the cost of exchange on loan money borrowed by the department. So that, generally speaking, the Railway Department has been a heavy drain on the general revenue of the State. The present Minister has just taken up his ministerial position for the second time in the department, and I hope that he will profit by his experience of, shall I say, the folly of the past and endeavour to remove the financial octopus that the Railway Department has been responsible for placing on the taxpayers.

I know that even if we discuss these Estimates until doomsday we could not do very much here to improve the working of the department, because the main thing is efficient management and, as I said before, the management would be all right if the officers concerned were given a free hand.

The time is long overdue for a reclassification of freight rates. The freight on certain classes of goods is altogether too high and when the vote for the Agent-General's office was under consideration I endeavoured to point out that the Agent-General said that wool prices could not rise to any very great height because of the competition from artificial fibres, but the Standing Orders prevented my elaborating on the subject then. He pointed out, too, that costs in the wool industry would have to be kept down. One cost that is a bugbear to the people in the West is the high freight rate on wool. It cannot be questioned that it has been increased tremendously. I think that the rate on greasy wool railed from Longreach was increased by 35s. a ton, simply because a high price prevailed for wool at the time. That increase must be removed. We have to encourage people, not only to go out into the pastoral areas, but to stay there and develop them.

Another matter that requires rectifying is the freight on many articles affecting the standard of comfort in our western areas. These articles should be carried at a cheap rate. For instance, if a resident at Dirranbandi decides to buy a refrigerator, it immediately attracts the highest freight rate. That also applies to wireless sets, batteries, and lighting plants. All these so-called luxuries make it possible for people to live in the West and enjoy some of the comforts of city life.

The service given generally by the department in the Brisbane area is very good. The trains are a very great credit to the department on most of the lines. I would rather live in a suburb served by the railway than one served by the tram.

Mr. Power: That is because you have a pass. (Laughter.)

Mr. NIMMO: Apart altogether from the possession of a pass a person can travel by

rail in comfort, and read his paper on his way home. Tram travellers, particularly in wet weather, or at peak periods, suffer a good deal of discomfort. In addition to comfort, the railway supplies a quicker service. It seems to me, too, that the service from Brisbane to Kuraby, at the extreme end of the suburbs, is well nigh hopeless, although it is on a line from which the department derives valuable traffic. In fact, the line right through to Southport carries a big traffic. The suburban traffic from Kuraby in is the Cinderella of the department. It would be an advantage if the Minister gave this service his personal attention. I suggest, also, that the rolling-stock on it is capable of much improvement. The carriages in use are of the old type that have been discarded on other lines. That does not tend to good business. In fact, I have heard very severe comments by users of that facility. Yeronga is a very important suburb, but anyone who saw the station there would not think that our railways were progressive. First impressions are the best with the people, and very often a decision is made then whether a service is worth using. The railway station at Yeronga is the same building that was erected 50 or 60 years ago. Doubtless, it has had an occasional drop of paint since.

Mr. Riordan: The Premier lives there.

Mr. NIMMO: Yes, and the only thing that has occurred as a result of his living there is the construction of concrete footpaths in front of his house. There are no concrete footpaths elsewhere.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must get back to the vote.

Mr. NIMMO: I am sorry, Mr. King, if I offended. It is also necessary that train travelling should be made more comfortable, especially over long distances. I notice that when the Premier went up to open the Mackay harbour he travelled by boat.

Mr. Gair: The Leader of the Opposition went up by boat, too.

Mr. Maher: It was a very enjoyable voyage; I should like to have another one.

The Treasurer: The steamship company provided the ship.

Mr. NIMMO: When the Premier was returning from Mackay special instructions were issued to the driver of the train and staff generally that they were not to jerk the engine in any way.

A Government Member: Who is your informant?

Mr. NIMMO: The staff were very hurt because they contend that the jerking is caused by the bad condition of the track, and it is not due to any faulty work of the driver. I can assure the Committee that it has not been a good advertisement for the railways to issue special instructions of that nature. I am not "putting anything over." That statement is absolutely correct, and the Minister knows that if he turns up the files he will find those instructions were issued

to the driver on the train—that the usual jerking of the train was not to take place while the Premier was on the train.

Mr. McLean: It was not any suggestion of the Premier; it was done by the departmental heads who were smoozing to the Premier. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. NIMMO: Oh, that is what happened? I am glad the hon. member for Bundaberg confirms my statement.

The improvement of the track is a very important matter. I notice that on certain sections the department is joining the rails by oxy-acetylene welding, thus eliminating the continual knocking that one hears as the train travels over rails that are not joined by that method. They have been connected by that method on the line running to our suburb, and I can assure the Committee the improvement in travelling comfort is very great, indeed. I hope that work will be extended and many more sections will be treated in the same manner. I think if that is done passenger traffic will increase.

We must realise that the department received a great advantage when £28,000,000 was written off the loan indebtedness. It was expected that after that was done the railways would pay their way and gradually reduce the capital debt, but instead of that the indebtedness has gone on piling up. I do not know whether hon. members have noticed the continual increase in indebtedness. If it continues, the total indebtedness will soon reach the old figure.

Mr. Russell: It has increased by over £4,000,000.

Mr. NIMMO: Yes, since 1931 the indebtedness has increased by over £4,000,000, and nothing has been written off. When the £28,000,000 was written off we were all optimistic enough to think that each year the department would be able to provide a certain sum towards liquidating that amount, but instead of that we find that the total indebtedness has been increased by over £4,000,000. I am afraid that much of the loan money is used for carrying out services that should be paid for from revenue. I am afraid that, since replacements are charged to loan and repairs to revenue, the department prefers building new rolling-stock to effecting repairs to old stock.

A very great indignity has been placed on Mr. W. H. Hooper. He was a very valuable servant of the Railway Department. The Premier picked on him to make a special report. In fact, Mr. Hooper was made a royal commissioner, and the country was put to the expense of £2,000 to £3,000 to have his report supplied to Parliament. However, we have not the report at all, merely the commissioner's conclusions—more or less extracts.

Mr. Maher: Not even extracts; just bare recommendations.

Mr. NIMMO: That is so. The report also gives the replies of the Commissioner for Railways. The recommendations are not left open in the ordinary way for discussion by this

Parliament. During the debate on this vote comments rather ridiculing Mr. Hooper have been made. Such ridicule is not merited. Mr. Hooper went very extensively into the matters submitted to him, and if the department is not prepared to consider his recommendation carefully, then the money spent on the inquiry has been wasted, and Mr. Hooper himself treated in a very, very cavalier manner.

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) (4.22 p.m.): The report of the Commissioner for Railways makes very interesting reading. We look upon the department as being the bad boy of the family, and although I congratulate the Minister on his accession to office, I sympathise with him. We have all found him very courteous, but I hope he will be more successful than his predecessor. He has the satisfaction of knowing that he is associated with a Commissioner, Mr. C. A. Murton, who has rendered good service to the State. Although we very much deplore the loss of Mr. J. W. Davidson, in Mr. Murton we have a very worthy successor. In fact, it can be said that this department has produced very fine public servants. Those gentlemen who have filled the office of Commissioner have proved themselves to be men of very high ability and unquestioned integrity.

The Minister has come up against a brick wall in the Railway Department. In spite of all that has been done in the past, the report shows it up very badly, indeed. In 1931, under the regime of the Moore Government, we did try to put this department upon a fairly stable basis by writing off what we thought represented lost assets. It was fair to assume that on the adjusted basis the department at any rate would pay interest and be able to set aside annually a sum for depreciation—to take care of renewals and wastage of assets—but in only one year was it able to set aside a sum equal to 1 per cent. of the profits of the undertaking, and that was away back in 1934-35.

The Government congratulate themselves in that for last year the department showed a very high record of receipts, but it must be remembered that no provision has been made for depreciation. It shows that last year there was a loss of £53,000 after allowing £1,600,000 odd for payment of interest on the adjusted capital, but, as the Auditor-General in his report pointed out, the accumulated deficit representing the deficiency has not provided for renewals and replacements amounting to £2,000,000. So that the railways are gradually reverting to the position they were in years ago. In 1931-32 the capital was decreased to about £35,000,000, and to-day, although it has been increased by over £4,000,000, it is probable that the great part of that extra capital has been utilised for the purchase of rolling-stock and the relaying of lines, because the report discloses that the increase in mileage has been negligible.

We want to avoid getting into the position we were in some years ago, and it seems to me that some of the recommendations made by Mr. Hooper had some bearing on this

point, and probably that is the reason why his findings have penetrated the skin of hon. members. I think it is disgraceful that the hon. member for Baroona should revile Mr. Hooper in the way he did this afternoon. The hon. member should remember that Mr. Hooper was appointed a royal commissioner by the Government, and that at least his report should be treated with courtesy. If there is anything wrong with any of his recommendations the Government can refuse to accept them.

The Commissioner for Railways has commented upon Mr. Hooper's report. As we have had no opportunity of perusing Mr. Hooper's full report, we do not know what sections of it annoyed the Commissioner for Railways so much. The whole of Mr. Hooper's report should have been tabled so that we might have been able to form our own conclusions. Surely we are entitled to more than the bare recommendations by Mr. Hooper and the comments thereon by the Commissioner for Railways?

Commenting upon the first chapter of the report the Commissioner for Railways states that it mentions where and when evidence was taken, that it refers to deputations and visits of inspection and investigation, and to witnesses examined, and that it thanks the Governments and others who supplied information and rendered assistance in other ways. He goes on to say—

"The terms of reference rendered the scope of the investigation very wide indeed and have entailed considerable research in order to formulate a report. The commission has covered the ground comprehensively in an endeavour to show how improvements in the railway administration can be effected, and has reviewed the subject-matter in a series of chapters."

Mr. Hooper's report contains many recommendations that could be put into effect by the Government without damaging their dignity in any way or reflecting on the ability of the Commissioner for Railways. The extract I have read is a commendation by the Commissioner for Railways of Mr. Hooper's report. He admits that it is extensive and that he went to a great deal of trouble to get to the kernel of things. After that comment by the Commissioner for Railways it is extremely bad taste to attack Mr. Hooper in the way the hon. member for Baroona attacked him this afternoon. In formulating his report, Mr. Hooper merely carried out his bounden duty to the Government. He has attempted to show the Government where the fault in administration lies, and he has tried to the best of his ability to show how present troubles could be avoided in the future. As he carried out the duties for which he was appointed, I think it is wrong for the hon. member for Baroona to describe his activities as "snooping around the departments." Mr. Hooper cannot defend himself and the Minister should tell the Committee that he carried out his investigations in a manner befitting any royal commissioner.

There are one or two items in the report of Mr. Hooper with which I wish to deal briefly. He suggested that we should send a man to South Africa to investigate and report upon many aspects of railway operations in that country. I think that a very wise recommendation, because the South African railways have a narrow gauge and have been successful. Trains attain a high rate of speed and at the same time provide very comfortable accommodation for passengers. I understand that the trains in that country run at 40 miles an hour between Capetown and Johannesburg; they are well patronised, and what is more important, they are paying. South Africa has a sparse population of white people, as we have in Queensland. The large native population are not able to travel on the railways. Conditions obtaining in that country, therefore, are similar to our own. I think it a wise recommendation that somebody should investigate conditions there and see if we cannot copy some of them. If the South African railways can be made to pay under conditions similar to those that exist in Queensland, then there is no reason why the railways in this country should not pay. We have a larger variety of products to handle than South Africa.

The report also deals with the electrification of railways, and while I, personally, should like to see the electrification of the suburban railways brought about, I can understand that the expense would be excessive. Brisbane has the smallest percentage of suburban rail traffic of all the capital cities in the Commonwealth. One has only to go to Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and Perth to see that what I say is correct. Our system is out of date. The Government should either desist from catering for suburban passengers or bring the system up to date. I am sure the electrification of railways is out of the question at present, but at the same time it is worthy of consideration. A long-range policy is needed. We cannot expect to put this reform into operation immediately; it would take many years to accomplish. It took many years to bring about electrification in Sydney, but to-day the electric trains carry enormous numbers of passengers. If our railways were electrified I have no doubt the suburban railway service of Brisbane would be a profitable business to the department. It cannot expect to make a profit with the antiquated system now operating in the city area.

The matter of level crossings has been worrying the Commissioner for Railways for many years. It is a relic of the dark ages to have in the city of Brisbane level crossings at Woolloongabba, Bowen Bridge, Clayfield, and Hendra, where there is enormous traffic. Those crossings are danger spots and the dignity of the city of Brisbane demands that they should be removed, and something up to date put in their places.

A Government Member: What would you do?

Mr. RUSSELL: I would remove the level crossings and install something up to date. We should demand that it be done. However,

you cannot move the Railway Department. It says that level crossings should be done away with and something else substituted at the cost of local authorities. One must bear in mind that the roads were there before the railways, and I do not think it is a fair thing to say that the whole cost should be borne by local authorities. It might be possible to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the trouble whereby the cost would be distributed evenly between the local authorities concerned and the department.

The recommendations in the report are well worthy of consideration. I think it behoves the Government to come to a decision and let Parliament and the Railway Department know if any of the recommendations are to be given effect to.

I do not want to traverse the same ground as other hon. members, but I was impressed by chunks of wisdom from the hon. member for Bundaberg. He is of the opinion that there are many men in the railway service who are not getting fair treatment to-day. That is to say, they are being overlooked; the plums go to those "in the running" or to the favoured few, and the method of selection is wrong. Well, I dare say that that system obtains throughout the Government service and that there are a great number of very valuable servants in the country who never get a chance. What is the matter? What is wrong with the system?

Mr. Gair: All the positions are advertised.

Mr. RUSSELL: That may be so, but that does not mean that the right man gets the job. We know that the gates to the Temple of Fame are open wide, and that the halls are always full, and that some get in by the door called "push" and some by the door called "pull." Many men are overlooked. It may be due to the fact that in the Government departments there are men who are striving for positions, and to-day there is not that accord between the employees and those at the top of the tree that there should be. There is not the same esprit de corps amongst the Government servants to-day as there is amongst the employees of private enterprise. In a private concern, the administrative heads rub shoulders with the employees, but not so in the public service. I am not advocating that the railways should be controlled by private enterprise, because I believe that a utility like the railways should be publicly controlled.

Apropos of this subject, I should like to refer to a very valuable article that I read a few days ago in the American "Readers' Digest." Hon. members may have seen it in the Parliamentary Library. The title of the article is, "Working Together on the Railroad," and the remarks are very relevant to what the hon. member for Bundaberg said this morning. The article, which is condensed from the "Kiwanis Magazine," is by Frank F. Taylor. It deals with the Union Pacific Railroad. It says—

"Last February, William F. Jeffers, president of the Union Pacific Railroad,

invited 200 freight conductors, brakemen, engineers, station agents, and other employees to Omaha to meet with 300 of the line's executives. In opening the meeting, Jeffers said—

'I want you men who run the trains and handle the freight to talk up frankly and tell us fellows in the management how you think we can make this a better railroad and how we can get more business.'

"For two days the rank and file fired away at their bosses. Then the executives had a chance to talk back, either to explain why things couldn't be done the way the men in overalls suggested, or to say, as most of the bosses did, that they had learned something about railroading they didn't know before."

As the article says, the president was a man named Jeffers. He said—

"We have got everybody on the railroad after new business, and in the past five months they have picked up £16,000,000 of freight we did not have last year—a 40 per cent. increase in less than carload tonnage."

The article then goes on to say—

"All this had its beginning when, during an inspection trip, Jeffers ran into a freight conductor who, in his spare time, had made it his business to call on shippers and ask them why they used the motor trucks instead of the railroad. This conductor had uncovered some comments anything but complimentary to railroad management, and, having known Jeffers on a first-named basis for years, he let the boss have them, and concluded with—

'Bill, if we could only break a few of your cockeyed operating rules, we could get this business back.'

'All right,' replied Jeffers. 'We'll break them, but first we've got to find out what the shippers want. How'd you like to spend the next three months calling on every shipper in this division to find out what they say about the railroad?'

Mr. Jones: Is this by Charles Garvice?

Mr. RUSSELL: I will pass the booklet over to the hon. member after I have completed my speech. It cost me 1s. 6d. It proceeds—

"The conductor agreed and, with two other employees, spent weeks calling on business men. They gleaned an earful and relayed their conversations in writing to the president's office. Soon Jeffers enlarged the survey and by the end of three months had received 9,875 specific suggestions and complaints."

The article goes on to say that after listening to all these suggestions Mr. Jeffers appointed his staff to mix up with the general public to glean what their complaints were and make themselves au fait with those complaints.

"Then Jeffers swung into action. He rebuilt the old cars into air-conditioned coaches, in cool colours, with comfortable

reclining seats. The dining service was overhauled on the modern coffee-shop plan with prices that enabled a passenger to eat for a dollar a day—three substantial meals."

The article concludes—

"Jeffers says he is going to keep the rank-and-file men on the traffic survey job, checking up on the management. He is going to see that they have plenty of opportunity to confer with the management. They will continue to go out after business—for more business means more jobs."

I have read that to show that if the Railway Department executives could get together with the employees and make every employee a co-operator and collector, and if the railways adopted modern methods to compete with motor transport they would have a greater chance of competing for the freight business.

We must look to the Railway Department as the main carriers of this State. While the motor traffic is deserving of its share of community interest, still as possessors of the railways the Government will see to it that the railways as the main factor in this problem are not to be displaced. The remedy is to get more business. We have the railway system, the rolling-stock, the staff, and enormous liabilities. The only remedy is more business, and to get that business we must go after it, at the same time instilling into the service the spirit of the employees of the Union Pacific Railroad. Can that be done? I am afraid there is too much antagonism between union and union and between the staff and those at the top to do as I suggest, by making for a more co-operative movement, imbuing every man employed by the department with a sense of the need for assisting to increase the turnover of this very important department, and making it a prosperous one instead of, as it is at present, a drag on consolidated revenue.

Mr. GAIR (South Brisbane) (4.44 p.m.): At the outset I should like to say that it is a matter for regret that the hon. member for Mundingburra, the ex-Minister for Transport, was compelled to relinquish office by illness resulting from an accident he met with in the course of his duties as Minister. During the years that the hon. member for Mundingburra was Minister it can be truly stated that he rendered excellent service and at all times extended courtesy to hon. members. In addition, he endeavoured to the best of his ability to meet the wants of the public in his important office. I am sure that hon. members join me in expressing regret that illness caused him to relinquish his office, and wishing for him better health in the future.

I also take this opportunity of congratulating my old friend and colleague, the hon. member for Rockhampton, on his election to the office of Minister for Transport. The hon. member for Rockhampton and I have known one another for many years; in fact, he knew me in Rockhampton when I was a very small boy. He has been a very assiduous member of Parliament and a very active

representative of his electorate, and, as Secretary for Railways over a period of nine years, he rendered great service to the State.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. GAIR: I am sure that his previous experience will enable him to fill the office with credit to himself and advantage to Queensland.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. GAIR: This is a very important debate, because railways are a very essential phase in the national life of any country. The large amount of money invested in the construction and maintenance of our railways is also evidence of its importance. The development of any State or country depends on its railways. An efficient transport system is essential to the development of land and the opening up of the wealth of any country. The early history of this country reveals the fact that the greatest difficulty experienced by our early pioneers who engaged in primary-producing pursuits was not production but transport. The high cost of transport destroyed the profit value of their product, and it was not until railways were constructed that primary production was made profitable. The establishment of our great wheat, wool, and meat and other primary industries in Australia was made possible by the development of the railway system throughout this extensive continent.

In spite of the opinion of the advocates of road transport I claim that the railways are indispensable to any country. That has been proved in the allegedly progressive country of America. Some years ago it was suggested that it would be more profitable for them to pull up the railroads in that country and lay down roads for motor transport, but they recognised that the railways were indispensable. The same applies to Australia or any other country in the world. The public, however, expect many more concessions from a railway conducted by the Government than they do from any other system of transport conducted by private enterprise. Members of the Opposition spoke on transport this afternoon, and from the tenor of their speeches one can detect that at all times they expect a system of transport controlled by the Government to extend to the public every concession they ask for. Do those hon. members expect the same concessions from a system of transport privately-owned—i.e., motor, aerial, or shipping companies? No, Mr. King, they do not, but they expect all such concessions to be granted when the transport system is controlled by the Government. Their attitude is distinctly unfair. As was pointed out this morning by the hon. member for Toowoomba, hon. members opposite never agitate for a reduction in fares or freights or for rebates from their shipping company friends, who in many instances are competitors with the railway system of Queensland. They overlook the important role that the railway system has played in the development of the State. Having played that role they now feel that

it can be thrown aside, but are not courageous enough to suggest that non-paying lines, many of which pass through their electorates, should be closed. If this was done the railway system of Queensland would be the paying concern that hon. members desire it to be.

Mr. Maher: Do you favour the closing down of non-paying lines?

Mr. GAIR: I do not favour the closing of the non-paying lines. As a big Queenslander I recognise their importance to the development of the State. I do not subscribe to the belief that because people are prepared to go into far-distant places and carry out the work of pioneering and developing they should be isolated from society. They should be served just as well as those who remain in the capital city and the principal towns.

But if I am prepared to subscribe to that belief, and to give that service to the public, I cannot expect the utility to make a profit, but in the final analysis from the broad view of the State the railways do return a profit. Of course, I do not expect hon. members of the Opposition to take the broad view of anything. They are too parochial. The hon. member for West Moreton would not suggest the closing of lines in his electorate, but yesterday he suggested that because the Railway Department had shown a record turnover it should have been able to balance its budget and should have shown a surplus, not a deficit.

Mr. Maher: On the reduced capitalisation.

Mr. GAIR: If the Commissioner for Railways closed all non-paying lines he would probably be able to adjust the budget. As the Minister reminds me, the Government of hon. members opposite failed to do what the Leader of the Opposition suggests we should do.

Mr. Maher: Under entirely different circumstances.

Mr. GAIR: That is the old cry. I was about to elaborate on the point of the service they expect—that a system controlled by the Government should give concessions they would not demand from a utility controlled by private enterprise. We know, and so should they know—most of them being primary producers—just what great service the railways render to the primary producers of this State in granting rebates on the carriage of starving stock, fodder for starving stock—in fact, all the rebates granted to them by the Railway Department during times of drought. Would they expect such concessions from privately controlled transport systems? What is more to the point, do they obtain such concessions or rebates from privately controlled motor transport systems? I say emphatically that they neither expect nor receive them.

Mr. Maher: Motor transport is much cheaper, as you know.

Mr. GAIR: That may be so, but any intelligent person who has studied the position knows that motor transport picks out the cream of the traffic. It does not carry the bulky loading for primary producers, nor any non-paying traffic. The unprofitable business is left to the railways, because as a common carrier the department cannot refuse to transport it. The motor-transport people, not being common carriers within the meaning of the Act, enjoy the privilege of selecting what they will carry and what they will leave to the railways to carry. That is the unfair competition with which the railways have to contend, but I think that the State Transport Commission proposes to deal with that matter in due course.

Mr. Maher: You said that no request has been made to the motor-transport people for a reduction. I merely say that they carry things cheaper.

The Minister for Transport: Only for shorter distances.

Mr. GAIR: That is so. Dealing now with the Commissioner's report, it is pleasing to note that the railways have enjoyed a record year in traffic and turnover. Earnings show an increase of £402,957, as compared with the previous year. Although that is offset to some extent by increased expenditure, it is consoling to know that most of that increased expenditure was incurred by an increase in the basic wage and a general improvement in the conditions of the workers employed in the railway service.

Yesterday, when discussing the Commissioner's report, the Leader of the Opposition advanced a unique argument. He stated that, so far as railways are concerned, Victoria is at a disadvantage as compared with Queensland in that Victoria is a small State, gridironed with main roads and motor transport between most of its towns and the capital city. He went on to say—

“That makes it very difficult for the railways. Queensland is a State of great distances. Our railways run through remote areas where there are no roads worth mentioning. Therefore, it is impossible for motor traffic to encroach on the domains of the railway in anything like the same degree as in Victoria.”

I think, Mr. King, that it is a unique argument, because it is the most unsound argument anyone has ever heard advanced in a comparison of the railway systems in Australia. Any sensible person analysing the railway systems of the Commonwealth must recognise that Queensland is at a distinct disadvantage as compared with the other States. We have a very expansive State carrying 6,500 miles of line as compared with, approximately, 4,000 miles in Victoria. We have in Queensland a population less than that of Melbourne, and, furthermore, the employees of the Queensland railways enjoy better conditions than the employees of Victoria, New South Wales, or any other railway system in the Commonwealth. For those reasons I say it is very unfair and stupid to

compare the railway system of Victoria with that of Queensland.

Who would argue for a moment that it is cheaper to maintain the railway system of Queensland than Victoria? No-one with any knowledge of railways would advance such an argument. Who would suggest that because Victoria was a small State that was an argument in favour of Queensland? It is unquestionably an argument in favour of Victoria, because it is our extensive railway system, flung right throughout a large State, that has helped to develop the State—right out to Mount Isa, the Central West, and the South-Western parts of the State, which makes the position in Queensland more difficult than that of Victoria.

Mr. Maher: There are no roads out there, no motor competition.

Mr. GAIR: I will come to that very point. The Leader of the Opposition said that Victoria was gridironed with roads from capital to towns. Can he tell me, if he has travelled the State—I have and I have seen most of it, because I believe in seeing my own State first—of any railway existing in Queensland at the present time that has not a road running parallel or almost parallel with it. You can go from Brisbane to Cairns by road. (Opposition laughter.) The Leader of the Opposition knows that out in the back country along these railways there are roads trafficable enough to carry road transport sufficiently well to compete with the railways. Let the hon. gentleman go into the northern part of the State—to the Tableland, for instance—and he will find that the roads have a distinct advantage over the railway.

Mr. Maher: The tourist area.

Mr. GAIR: He knows by the geographical layout of the country—

Mr. Maher: What about between Rockhampton and Longreach?

Mr. GAIR: That distance is trafficable by road. I have travelled along it myself. One can go from Longreach to Winton quicker by road than by train, so that the road has a distinct advantage over the train.

I think I have proved the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition to be without foundation. It was the most stupid argument I have heard advanced against the Queensland system. On account of the extensiveness of the State, the lack of population, and the great train mileage Queensland is at a disadvantage when compared with the other States. When one takes into consideration the figures in connection with the railway system of Queensland and compares them with those for New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, one feels pleased with the administration in Queensland.

Mr. Maher: You miss the point. There is no motor competition with the railways in those remote areas that you mentioned.

Mr. GAIR: I understand the point all right, because I obtained a “Hansard” proof

of the hon. gentleman's speech, I analysed it, and I know exactly what he said. I have not made any mistake about his remarks. I have not misquoted him.

Mr. Maher: No, not at all. You have quoted me correctly, and it is true.

Mr. GAIR: As the hon. gentleman still contends that what he said is true, I can only say how stupid his argument was.

Mr. Edwards: Anybody can say that a thing is stupid, but he may not know what he is talking about.

Mr. GAIR: The hon. member may have some knowledge of Ananias. Before I was rudely interrupted by the hon. member for Nanango, from whom I expect very little in the way of courtesy, I was about to say that the Leader of the Opposition's contribution to the debate yesterday was very disappointing. After making a very foolish comparison he went on to say that because there had been a record turnover in the railways, there should also be a record profit.

Mr. Maher: I did not say that; I said there should be a profit.

Mr. GAIR: I am not going to quibble over the one word "record."

Although the earnings of the department increased last year, the expenditure was heavier, too, because the conditions of the workers had been improved. The increase in the basic wage alone would account for a considerable increase in expenditure. I can clearly understand what the Leader of the Opposition and his party mean when they say that there should be a profit in the Railway Department, and as an ex-railway employee who worked under the Moore regime, I have no illusion as to what is meant. I remember how the Moore Government attempted, but failed, to produce a profit in the Railway Department between 1929 and 1932. I know that if they had the opportunity again to try to make a profit in that department, it would be at the expense of the employees. They would ration the work, reduce wages and salaries, increase working hours, and generally re-introduce the deflationist policy that they carried out in 1929-32.

(Time expired.)

Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (5.9 p.m.): This is a very important vote, and it is regrettable that opportunity should have been taken by some hon. members to use it for purposes of political propaganda and to make nasty insinuations. The hon. member for South Brisbane said that the speech of the Leader of the Opposition was disappointing, and he proceeded to use the rest of his time in trying to contradict what the Leader of the Opposition had said. If the speech of the Leader of the Opposition was disappointing from the point of view of the hon. member for South Brisbane, there was no occasion for him to try to criticise it.

Generally speaking, I do not think that any fault can be found with our railway

system. It covers a vast area of country, and much development has been carried out by it. This large area can be developed as we desire to develop it only with the aid of railways. And it is therefore our duty to give such railway facilities as the State needs for that purpose. The railway service given to the people, during the last few years especially, has improved out of sight, although no doubt greater improvements can still be effected, and it is our job to see that these are made.

I am very loth to speak about the report made to the Government by Mr. Hooper as a royal commission. It is very unfair that the report of a high railway official, who after his retirement was appointed a royal commission by the Government, should not be available for the perusal of members of Parliament. That report is the property of the people of Queensland and should be made available to their representatives. If, after reading it, we do not agree with it, then we do not adopt it. Surely to goodness, there must be something in the report of this gentleman, who for years was General Manager of the South-Eastern Division, and no matter what it costs the public of Queensland are entitled to have it. As Parliament has had access to only small extracts from the report, it is very unfair and ungenerous for hon. members to criticise the Commissioner.

Mr. Maher: Whom they appointed.

Mr. PLUNKETT: That is so.

The returns from the railways during the last financial year were a record. We are all pleased to see that. That is a direct result of the conditions operating in industry. We had a wonderful season, and more traffic requires more staff. It is our duty, if possible, to maintain that increased traffic. Of course, railway expenditure has increased in sympathy with the increased business done. Instead of making the railways the football of party politics, we should tackle their problems from the other standpoint, and do everything possible to make them efficient in order to give the people the very best possible service. The cost of any facility that gives an essential service to the community cannot be regarded as a loss.

The hon. member for Nanango mentioned that the railways carried certain fertilisers free, but it showed a profit by doing so, for the producers were thereby able to fertilise their land and reap bounteous crops which created both freight and wealth. It is essential that we should have railways and it is the duty of each hon. member to help in developing our country by supporting the railways whenever necessary. There is no need to debate what happened in 1931 or 1932. That will not get us anywhere. Our job is to plan for the future. Talking like that in Parliament does not help the country or the railways themselves. The railway staff, generally speaking, are very efficient and courteous and give good service. If it is not possible to make the railways pay I do not blame those who do the work of the railways.

I wish to refer particularly to the Tourist Bureau. I notice that the vote has been increased this year. I think we might very well develop the tourist business to a greater extent than we are doing. We have not fully appreciated the benefits that accrue to the State from the tourist trade. In 1928-29 the expenditure was £8,142, and last year £19,332. It is apparent that we are not developing this trade, which is a very profitable one to the State, to the extent that we should. The turnover in 1928 was £1,360, and last year it was £131,120, of which £25,663 was paid to the Railway Department for services rendered. Even people who are born here do not realise the attractions that are available in Queensland. We should exploit our many beauty spots to a greater extent, and I trust that more money will be spent on the Tourist Bureau with that object.

I notice, according to the report of the department, that new offices have been opened in various parts of Queensland. That is an excellent idea and I hope as time goes on the tourist traffic will have improved to such an extent that it will be necessary to open up many more new offices.

In order to attract tourists it is necessary to provide facilities, such as good roads. Within the last few weeks, in company with the Secretary for Public Lands, I had an opportunity of seeing what can be done in that regard. The construction of tourist tracks at many of our beauty spots by the Public Estate Improvement Branch of the Department of Public Lands is a very valuable work. At Springbrook, with the outlay of a small amount of money, tourist tracks have been made that represent an asset because of the increased tourist traffic they will bring to the State worth thousands of pounds a year. The construction of these tracks is not costly, and the money expended will show a handsome return.

Many beauty spots in Queensland are not available to tourists because up to the present we have not been able to build access roads to them. The Tourist Bureau, although doing good work, is not speeding up to the extent it should. In these modern times the people wish to travel quickly and see as much as they can in a short time, and facilities to enable them to do those things must be provided if we wish to attract that trade. Many of our beauty spots represent frozen assets; although some of them are within a few hours' travel of Brisbane they have not been made accessible to tourists.

In many parts of the State local authorities combine to give publicity to their districts and develop their scenic areas. They are spending money, and I suggest that the Tourist Bureau should co-operate with them and other interested people in districts that have attractions for tourists. I am satisfied that these organisations are prepared to co-operate with the Tourist Bureau. For goodness sake, do not let us limit the activity of the Tourist Bureau by not granting it finance to carry out the necessary work. If there was co-ordination between the various

local bodies and the bureau, greater results would be achieved more speedily. Queensland has something to sell that cannot be taken away by the traveller. Our climate, especially in the winter months, is an invitation to the people of the Southern States to come to Queensland, and I trust that the Minister now in charge of the department—and I congratulate him on his appointment to this important office—will take heed of the demand of the public for speedy transit to scenery that is not available to them in other States or countries. Many people like to study nature's handiwork at first hand, and if the Minister will direct his energies towards developing our scenic attractions and tourist resorts, and providing quick transit to them, he will have given good service to the State.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) (5.23 p.m.): Despite the bombardment to which the Railway Department has been subjected, in the course of this debate, I sincerely hope that all trains running to-day will reach their destination safely.

The railway system serves a good purpose in the State, an even greater service to the community than many realise. The progress of this great Commonwealth, particularly our own extensive State, is closely associated with the extension of the railway system, and the provision of railway facilities to settlers. It is only a few years ago that I was stationed as a teacher in various small centres scattered over the State. There was very little settlement there, and a small amount of development, but, on the extension of the railway system to such centres, great development at once took place. In one district there was only one police station and one school in a distance of 97 miles. To-day, with the extension of the Mungar and Monto line, that area has no fewer than seven police stations, 30 railway stations, and 75 or 76 schools. The provision of a railway does assist in the development of the country generally.

At 5.24 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: Queensland has just cause to be proud of its railway system, the service it gives, and the railway employees. I travel a good deal—most hon. members do when journeying to and from their electorates—and I have visited many parts of the State and other States. Generally speaking, with very, very few exceptions, I have found that the officials of the Railway Department, from the highest to the lowest, compare more than favourably with the employees of the railway departments of the other States of the Commonwealth.

I cannot see any justification for the continual complaints that the railways do not pay. It is only natural that we should like to see every business concern—and the railways are a business concern—meet its obligations, but I have said before, and I repeat now, that the railways should not be expected to pay their way if it is not possible for them to do so without causing somebody or something to suffer. As I stated previously,

the railways render great service to the community. The value of that service is really incalculable, nor can it be divorced from the settlement of our land and the extension of population into the farthest corners of the State.

One aspect of the matter that is not generally recognised is that railway deficits are not peculiar to Queensland. I am informed on good authority that last year not one State in the Commonwealth showed a surplus, which bears out my contention that there is no urgent need for a railway service to pay its way.

Loss of revenue by the railways can be attributed to a number of things. One is that road and aerial transport systems are increasing daily, and another that a number of railway lines in country areas in particular do not pay their way. The argument, "Why not close non-paying lines and so help the Government to make their railways pay?" might be advanced, but my reply to that is, "Why should those unfortunate people who live in centres that are served by non-paying lines be penalised by having to do without a railway service because somebody wants to see the railways pay their way?"

Within the last week or two I have been informed from a fairly reliable source that certain classes of material used for railway construction purposes are frequently found to be faulty shortly after being put into use. Whether that is so I am not prepared to say. My informant states that it is so. If it is, then I humbly suggest to the Minister that he give consideration to the appointment of a board of three competent men to inspect and test, before purchase, all materials required. In this way, faults will be disclosed and much inconvenience avoided.

I was pleased to read in the Press the other day a statement by the Minister that the railway service has planned to meet what might be called a state of emergency in the event of an attack by an enemy. In that statement he points out the value of the railway system at such times. The article says—

"Mr. Larcombe pointed out that in a time of national emergency the value of the railway system to the State was enhanced. It carried a large traffic due to the movements of troops and equipment, and immense quantities of produce for the war-time requirements of Great Britain were brought to the seaports."

No-one realises more than I do the enormous value that the railway system is under such conditions.

Another pleasing announcement by the Minister is that his employees have received instruction in air raid precaution methods. Quite a number of railway men have taken time off, not only to go to camp for military training, but also to equip themselves with the knowledge necessary to be of service should any such emergency arise. Workers have been told off to give first-aid and others to deal with outbreaks of fire.

I wish to refer now to the class of home supplied to workers in the Department of Railways. I understand this matter was mentioned this morning by a previous speaker and I support him in whatever he may have said in the direction of an improvement in existing conditions. I wish to refer to the homes provided for fettlers, particularly in the far western areas of the State. It is necessary that a better type of building be planned for these people. The present cottage supplied is sometimes inadequate on account of the size of the family, and is sometimes uncomfortable, not being waterproof, and I know railway fettlers have often had to get a tarpaulin or tent to make the family comfortable. Sometimes provision has not been made even to seclude the older members of the family from the younger. I think a Government department should set an example to the public generally in the matter of housing accommodation.

Mr. Yeates: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS: I know that much has been done by the Minister and his predecessors in office in this respect. Improvements are being effected as finances permit, but there is still room for improvement in the type of cottage provided for fettlers.

I wish also to refer to the work on the lengths throughout the State. There are many heavy lengths in Queensland, and by that I mean lengths controlled by three or four or four or five men in mountainous country where maintenance is very heavy. I think that in some cases an additional man could well be appointed. The Minister might take this matter up with the Commissioner to see if something along the lines of my suggestion cannot be done. Two or three years ago I brought the same matter under the notice of the Minister, and he was pleased to add to the number of men on certain lengths in my electorate through range country. That action was much appreciated.

I want the Minister to consider the advisability of continuing the relaying of many sections of railway, main line in particular, with a heavier type of rail. This would tend to make travelling easier and safer and at the same time effect economy in various ways. Regrading activities have been carried out in parts of the State, and I think this work might be continued.

I was pleased that mention was made of our tourist traffic, and I hope something can be done to improve facilities for tourists. I recognise that we have a young State and, as the hon. member for Albert pointed out, much remains to be done. The tourist trade could be developed in many ways. For instance, our hotels might be improved at the points where tourists arrive and depart during the season. The appointment of an officer to meet public bodies and oversea interests could very well be considered. I should be prepared to leave my present office to take such a position because I believe much could be done by such an officer who would make a point of getting into contact with our Southern and overseas visitors.

I desire to deal with a number of matters of local concern that I have brought up in this Chamber before, and so that the Minister may be able to consider them in their order of importance to me and to my electorate, I have made a list of them. First of all, I desire to refer to the Gladstone yards. At one time, they were big enough to cope with the traffic. Of course, I could quote figures and returns and estimates of the probable cost of the improvements required there, but there is no need for me to do that. Gladstone is a busy centre, and a growing centre. The trade of the port, and particularly the trade of the Railway Department, will show that I am not exaggerating when I say that. At one time cream was the only commodity that came in from the outside districts to Gladstone, and Gladstone was the only factory that treated it, but at the present time there are branch factories of the Port Curtis Dairy Association at Bundaberg, Monto, Wowan, Biloela, and Mackay. The surplus butter from these factories is loaded at Gladstone into overseas ships, and that in itself means that there is a considerable congestion at times of the railway facilities at Gladstone. The loading has to be handled by the railway men, but it could be considerably relieved by providing a single facility. Sometimes the cream that comes to Gladstone and the butter to be shipped overseas is side-tracked for one, two, and three hours. Surely the department will consider the value of this trade?

In addition to the butter traffic, there is also raw sugar and wool to be handled at Gladstone by the department, and in late years this trade has grown to considerable proportions. Again, the Shell oil people have established an oil depot there, and fuels of all descriptions are supplied to the far West, as far as Blackall and Longreach, to the far North, and as far South as Maryborough. All this traffic has to be handled by the Railway Department.

Since Swifts Proprietary Limited have taken over the Gladstone meatworks, there has been a considerable increase in the work imposed on railway officials. In fact, one night a week a special train is sent to the Monto branch to cater for the pig and calf traffic, which is all dealt with in the local yards, and further encroaches on the limited space for unloading purposes.

The timber traffic on the Gladstone to Monto section of the Monto branch is also very heavy. At one time, a small engine known as a P.B. was sufficient power to work Monto trains and handle a load up to 200 tons. Three trains to Monto and three from Monto each week were enough for these requirements. This meant that the total tonnage handled for a week was not more than 1,000 gross. At present, it is necessary to run eight trains each way to handle the traffic offering, and all trains are now worked with engines of the C17 type, which can haul a load of 320 tons each. This means that loading in the vicinity of 5,000 tons gross is handled, which is a big increase in the course of a few years. All loading is dealt with in the local yards.

Taking the facts and figures that I have mentioned into consideration, I am not surprised at the complaints I am continually receiving and the deputations that have waited on the Minister and the late Commissioner and the present Commissioner concerning the present yards. They are totally unsuitable for requirements and create a serious problem to the men directly concerned with the handling of the traffic. As a result of the congested state of those yards, accidents, some of them fatal, have occurred in recent years, and will continue to happen. I know the Minister is concerned about the loss of time caused by the congested state of these yards, and I feel sure that when the money is available something will be done.

A closer investigation should be made of isolated stopping places along branch lines to see if it is necessary to appoint station-mistresses to handle traffic. I have two instances in my electorate, one at Kalpowar and the other at Bancroft. Both places are in the Upper Burnett area. Kalpowar is the centre of a busy timber area in the Many Peaks district, while Bancroft is the centre of a very rich agricultural district. The local people are concerned. At one time, particularly at Bancroft, a station-mistress was in charge. To-day, nobody is in charge, and guards, drivers, and firemen are blamed for the frequent delays that occur. Loading has to be dumped in all weathers and at all hours of the night on the platform and is at the mercy of everyone. The waiting shed of the railway building can accommodate only a certain amount of loading, the rest being left on the platform exposed to the weather. On my taking the matter up with the Commissioner some time ago, he pointed out that the returns from Bancroft would not warrant the appointment of a station-mistress, or other officer. When a railway station is closed people are compelled to go 30 or 40 miles on either side to rail their produce and receive their goods. It is only natural, therefore, that the station should not show a particularly great return. No storekeeper, as I pointed out to the Commissioner, could close his doors for any length of time and expect to show any return. I am pleased to say he is going to make further investigations into this matter.

Before concluding, I should like to congratulate the Minister on his re-entry into Cabinet and his reappointment as Minister for Transport. I feel sure he has lost nothing by his holiday from Cabinet, or his break from office. He is handling his ministerial duties in a very pleasing way to me and, I think, to every other hon. member of the Committee. I want also to express regret at the fact that sickness compelled his predecessor, the hon. member for Mundingburra, to relinquish office. The hon. member for Mundingburra, as a result of his unfortunate accident, could not concentrate quite to the extent he hoped and felt that sooner or later he would have to give up his important office. I feel sure that the officers of the department, together with the Minister, will carry on the good work accomplished by previous Ministers and Commissioners.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (5.45 p.m.): Undoubtedly, railway administration is becoming increasingly difficult, and it is a very easy matter to come into this Chamber and criticise officers of the department for not reorganising that department. I believe the Minister in charge of this department is a very conscientious man, and I have a good deal of sympathy for him in carrying out his important duties.

I realise that motor transport has so encroached upon railway business that it is difficult for the department to compete with it—in fact, I hold the view that the time has arrived when motor transport, if it was given a fair go, could almost compete successfully with the railways; at any rate, to such a degree as to suggest that the day is rapidly approaching when there will be no need for a railway system. I realise, of course, that long-distance transport is still favourable to railways. One of my objections to road transport as against rail transport at the present time is that we have to import fuel for motor vehicles. Should we be successful in finding supplies of petrol in Australia we should have reached the stage at which there would be no need to continue operating steam railways; but until that time arrives we shall have to make every effort to run our railways as efficiently as possible.

It is amazing how many of the road carriers, who have to pay very heavy license fees, are able to carry on. If they were charged a fair license fee—a fee in proportion to the extent to which they use the road—I believe they could successfully compete with the railways. At the present time the number of vehicles allowed to run on the roads is limited, but if there was no limitation to the number that could embark upon this business I believe that they could quote customers an attractive rate for all classes of goods. Up to the present time the motor vehicles have not been able to compete successfully with the railways in carrying farm produce, but if they were charged fair license fees and a greater number were given permission to operate I believe they could reduce their transport charges very considerably; but it would be unwise to allow more of these vehicles to operate while we are importing fuel.

I believe the Minister appreciates the importance of reorganising the business of the railways, and placing it on a better footing. Although the railways may become obsolete, whilst we continue to operate them we should do everything possible to make them as sound an enterprise as possible.

I believe there are many ways in which the department could attract the business that has been lost to it during the last few years. The department has put on a number of rail motors with the object of retaining the passenger trade; but they are not giving good service. I feel sure the Minister must be aware of that fact. The service does not enable people to travel in comfort. Many of the carriages are draughty, and I have known passengers to get wet when it rained. Often one does not know whether

the motor will run or not. Twice in one week on the Boonah line I was compelled to leave the railway station and go to my home to obtain my car to travel to Brisbane. It is a frequent occurrence on the Boonah and Beaudesert lines for the rail motors to let the passengers down in this way. You cannot expect patrons of the railways to put up with a service of that kind. People leave their homes in the morning with the intention of going to town to do their business, and when they reach the railway station they find that the rail motor is held up somewhere along the line. People will not be fooled about like that. The timetable is not being adhered to, and it can be understood why would-be railway patrons use other forms of transport.

In a number of country districts, if a road-motor service was available, there would be no need for a rail motor to run. The present policy of denying to country districts a road-motor service is very unfair. I have in mind districts such as Boonah and Kalbar, which have not a good railway service. Only three goods trains a week run on the Mount Edwards line, and these run at most inconvenient times, but the owner of a motor vehicle is refused a licence to run a road service to this district, with the result that those people who have not motor cars of their own are compelled to hire a car to travel to town. If the department is not prepared to supply a train service, at least it should be prepared to allow some other form of service to operate. If the department wishes to retain that service, it should be prepared to provide either a light steam train or a decent motor service. The present service is a disgrace.

A number of country branch lines that are described as non-paying lines are not given a fair deal. They are given credit only for the freight to the arterial or trunk lines. From the junction of the branch and the main lines the credit is given to the trunk line, although, but for the traffic on the branch line, the trunk line would not show the return that it does. I hope that will be taken into account before the department closes any of the so-called non-paying lines.

Mr. Gair interjected.

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member has not been out in the country.

Mr. Gair: I have been in the administration.

Mr. MULLER: He has not had practical experience.

Mr. Gair: I have had that, too.

Mr. MULLER: If he had been out in the country for a time he would see my point. Before any action is taken there should be a careful investigation. If these branch lines are closed, provision must be made to transport agricultural or other products to market. If the Government interfere with road carriers operating in those districts, it will be impossible for the people to live in them. If the people in the district were left alone, and motor vehicles were allowed to operate, they

would get their goods to market and passenger traffic also would be catered for.

There are two tramways in the Beaudesert district, and I ask the Minister to give them very serious consideration in the next year or two. A tramway was constructed from Beaudesert to Rathdowney, and another from Beaudesert to Lamington, at a time when a number of branch lines were constructed under the guarantee system. Shortly after this system was abolished, and, as the result of the loss shown by these branch lines, they were operated by the Railway Department. These tramlines paid for a number of years. Like many other branch lines at the present time, they are not paying as well as they did then, and the district has to carry the loss. Both these branch lines are important feeders of the main line, yet they are credited with business only as far as Beaudesert. But for those tramlines the main line would not pay nearly so well as it does.

It is quite an easy matter for officers of the Railway Department to report to the Minister that these lines are not paying and that, therefore, there is no reason in the world why the Government should take them over. All we ask is that these important feeders to the main line be taken over by the Government.

The Secretary for Mines: If they were showing a profit you would not want them to be taken over.

Mr. Gair: Give them to the motor transport people.

Mr. MULLER: The question is not whether they are showing profits. The reason why these branch lines were built was that the Government were not prepared to supply the district with rail facilities and the people of the district had enough enterprise to construct their own lines. For a number of years those lines were operated at a profit but to-day they have met with a fate similar to that which has befallen other branch lines, and the people of the district are penalised to make good the losses. Profits are made by the Railway Department on the main line and the deficits shown by the branch lines, which help to make the main line profitable, have to be carried by the people of the district.

Two deputations have waited upon the Commissioner for Railways with a view to getting the Government to consider taking over these lines, but so far they have not met with success. If it is right for the Railway Department to carry the losses made on other branch lines, then it is only fair that it should carry the losses made on these two lines. I hope that the Minister will give favourable consideration to our request.

I am of the opinion that the closest survey should be made into the whole of our railway administration. Apparently, a number of railway officials believe that comparatively small losses are of no great importance. An article that interested me appeared in the "Railway Advocate" some months ago. Although I do not say that everything that is

published in that journal is correct, the statements contained in the article that I propose to read has not yet been refuted.

Mr. Walsh: It is remarkable that you read that paper at all.

Mr. MULLER: I propose to read it now. I desire to quote a short paragraph that appeared in the issue of 15 June, 1938, and so far I have never heard any refutation of the statements contained in it. By reading it I do not desire to imply anything against any Minister or any hon. member of this Committee, but if the free passes are not abused then I should like the Minister and his officers to investigate the matter and tell the people of Queensland that the statements contained in this article are untrue. It says—

"Free Travel for Ministers' Relatives.

"(To the Editor.)

"Sir—As a member of the public and part-owner of the Queensland railways (see the slogan), I would be pleased if you would inform me if free passes to travel over the railways are granted to the relatives of Cabinet Ministers, other than those relatives already included in the list of "deadheads" and those employed in the department."

I wish to continue to read the article that I was reading before the tea adjournment. It states—

"If free passes to travel over the railways are not allowed to all of the relatives of all Cabinet Ministers, is the Minister for Labour and Industry empowered to secure a pass for an adult son in employment in Townsville to travel to Brisbane?"

That was signed "Anti-Deadhead."

Mr. GAIR: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member for Fassifern in order in reading that extract from the "Railway Advocate" imputing improper conduct by the Secretary for Labour and Industry, a gentleman who has no adult son?

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot see that there is anything wrong in quoting the article. If something appears in a newspaper article, hon. members can quote from it.

The Secretary for Mines: What is the date of the paper, and to whom does it refer?

The CHAIRMAN: I think it would be fair if an hon. member makes a statement or reads from a paper to make it plain to whom the article alludes.

Mr. MULLER: I want to be fair to the Minister. I am not making an unfair attack on that hon. gentleman. It is not my practice. This article appeared in the newspaper, and it has not been refuted.

Mr. Gair: What is the date of the paper?

Mr. MULLER: I am willing to read the whole of the article—

"The list of relatives and friends of Cabinet Ministers who receive the privilege of free passes over our railways

seems to be unlimited; and in most cases, those who receive the concession are in comfortable circumstances and could afford to pay their fare. Not only are passes issued, but free tickets have been obtained by friends of Ministers on 'Indigent' requisitions which are supposed to be available only to persons in indigent circumstances travelling to employment or for other necessary purposes.

"If, as our correspondent suggests, a free pass has been issued to the employed son of the Minister of Labour and Industry, it amounts to a public scandal. Workers seeking employment are imprisoned for using the railways without first purchasing tickets, yet a Minister's son is given a free pass, and the daughters of another Minister are taken to and from their place of work and to keep social engagements in Government motor cars. Apparently these people have no sense of shame; and the only way in which they could be prevented from using their authority to benefit their relatives and friends, would be to deprive them of the office that confers the authority on them."

That is not a charge against the Minister, or, for that matter, anybody else. That article appeared in the 'Railway Advocate'—

Mr. Gair: What was the date of the paper?

The CHAIRMAN: I think hon. members in quoting an article from a newspaper or making imputations about a Minister or hon. member of this Chamber should at least quote the date of the paper in which the article appeared and the signature, if any, attached to it.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: The hon. member for Fassifern has been quoting from a clipping which referred to the Secretary for Labour and Industry. I wish to make it quite clear that I have no sons in employment, and at no time have I ever requested or obtained a pass from the Railway Department for any of my family other than myself.

Mr. MULLER: I am pleased to accept the Minister's explanation.

Mr. Mann: You are only a coward and a cur.

Mr. MULLER: I am not referring to any particular Minister. My object was to discuss the practice of issuing free railway passes.

Mr. Mann: You are a coward and a cur.

Mr. NIMMO: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member for South Brisbane in order in calling the hon. member for Fassifern a coward and a cur?

Mr. Walsh: The hon. member for South Brisbane did not say anything of the sort.

Mr. NIMMO: He called him a coward. It was the hon. member for Brisbane.

Mr. Gair: You said South Brisbane.

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member for Brisbane made that statement I ask him to withdraw it because it is unparliamentary.

Mr. Mann: The late Mr. Hynes was a personal friend of mine, and the hon. member for Fassifern, who is an immigrant to this country, is implying that the late Mr. Hynes—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Mann: That the late Mr. Hynes who was the Secretary for Labour and Industry, did something and he is making a cowardly attack on him.

Mr. MULLER: I object to the statement that I am an immigrant to this country. I am an Australian and a Queenslander.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Brisbane to withdraw the statement.

Mr. Mann: In deference to your ruling, Mr. O'Keefe, I will withdraw it, but I say it was a cowardly attack.

Mr. MULLER: I am rather surprised that there should be all this excitement over this thing. I think the matter should be cleared up. There is nothing sinister at the back of it.

Mr. Mann: You know that there is.

Mr. MULLER: I was dealing with the question of issuing free railway passes.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to give the date of the paper.

Mr. MULLER: I was reading an extract from a paper and not making a personal attack on anyone. I have the date of the paper. I have already given it, but owing to the noise I suppose, Mr. O'Keefe, you did not hear it. The article is dated 15 June, 1938.

Mr. Gair: Before the Hon. T. A. Foley became Secretary for Labour and Industry, and so it must refer to the late Mr. Hynes.

Mr. MULLER: I am not suggesting that the report is true. All that I am trying to do is to clear the air. These things are said.

Mr. Gair: It is a rotten attack on—

Mr. MULLER: It has not been refuted. The charges are made that free railway passes are issued to people. It does not refer to the late Mr. Hynes at all.

Mr. Power: It is a dirty, mean attack on an honourable man who is dead.

Mr. MULLER: A principle is involved. It may be only a small matter. I have no objection to the issue of free railway passes to an hon. member or his wife while he is in Parliament, but it is wrong to issue free railway life passes to people in the public service. That is the point I want to make and I see no reason why it should have created all this excitement. It is not an attack on anybody.

Mr. Power: It is a cowardly and dirty attack.

Mr. MULLER: A Government member referred to me as an immigrant to this country, but I want to tell him that I am an Australian, and perhaps a good deal better one than he is in this Chamber and outside.

Here is another extract from one of their own papers dated 15 August, 1939—

“The entrance examination for junior clerks into the railway service is regarded by many educationists as being equally as difficult, if not more difficult, than the Junior Public Service Examination. We have the name of one lad who passed the Junior twice, yet failed in the railway examination. In any case, while a pass in the Junior is considered sufficient to qualify for entrance to the public service, a further qualifying examination, on at least the same lines as the Junior, is required of candidates for entry to the railway service. But if a lad is fortunate enough to be the son of an influential father, the difficult railway entrance examination can be dispensed with and an especially easy entrance examination can be arranged. That is very convenient in cases where there is difficulty in passing the regular examination.

“For some time past, three lads have been employed as temporary junior clerks in the audit office. Their names are Power, Shields, and Frawley. Power is the son of ‘Bill’ Power, M.L.A., Shields is the son of first-class auditor Shields, and Frawley is the son of the late ‘Pat’ Frawley, who was station-master at South Brisbane.

“Although an examination for junior clerk was held recently these lads were not called to undergo it.

“But, before all the appointments of the successful candidates in the recent examination. . . .”

(Time expired.)

Mr. WALSH (Mirani) (7.26 p.m.): It is regrettable that the hon. member for Fassifern should take the opportunity, under cover of this vote, to make an attack—I say very advisedly an attack—on the honesty and integrity of a very highly respected ex-member of this Chamber who is now deceased. I am not prepared to believe that the hon. member is as innocent as he would make himself out to be. I think he has been to some extent encouraged by a certain hon. member of the Opposition benches to read that article. The slightest intelligence, which the hon. member should have, should have caused him to perceive that the date of the article indicated that the Minister concerned was the late Mr. Hynes. He could have easily established his point without resurrecting a matter of this kind, which attacks a dead man.

Mr. MULLER: I rise to a point of order. I say, Mr. O’Keefe, that the hon. member is not justified in saying that I made an attack on a dead man.

Mr. Gair: Of course you did.

Mr. Power: You did.

Mr. MULLER: I have a right to read a report relating to a public matter. I have

every respect for the late Mr. Hynes, and I object to the hon. member’s remark.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr. WALSH: I am entitled to my view on the question, just as much as the hon. member for Fassifern. I still say that the article could have reference to no other person than the late Mr. Hynes, and that a man with any decency in him could have endeavoured to establish his point on some other grounds.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WALSH: If hon. members opposite desire to indulge in any mud-slinging I wish them to understand that although I do not desire to do so, I can sling my bit should the occasion arise.

Mr. Muller: I am not responsible for what appears in your paper.

Mr. WALSH: It is a pity that the hon. member did not exercise more discretion.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not know whether the hon. member realises that the Committee is considering the vote of the Chief Office of the Railway Department, not a point of order. Therefore, I take it he received the call of the Chair to deal with those Estimates.

Mr. WALSH: With all due respect to you, Mr. O’Keefe, I should say that I am at least entitled to refer to the matter brought forward by the hon. member for Fassifern. However, I have no wish to pursue the matter further than say it is a pity he did not accept the advice of his colleague, the hon. member for Albert, and discuss a vote of this nature in the manner in which it should be discussed.

There is little room to discuss these Estimates on the basis of party politics. They are largely administrative and can be discussed from that angle without the introduction of paltry matters of this nature. If such matters are raised by hon. members opposite they cannot blame us if we in return adopt similar tactics.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WALSH: Some sensible speeches have been delivered by hon. members on the Opposition benches on this vote, speeches that indicate that at least there are some hon. members there who are inclined to look upon this important Crown instrumentality as it should be—from a public point of view. I agree to some extent that making comparisons is not very material on a vote of this nature. For example, the Leader of the Opposition quoted the deficits incurred in the administration of the railways by this Government, but if we are going to make comparisons we must take all phases of the question into consideration. I venture the opinion that if the Leader of the Opposition carefully investigated this phase of the matter he would see that there was more ground for criticising the administration of the railways prior to the advent of Labour Governments than there is to-day. It must be remembered that most

of our developmental railways have been constructed during the past 25 years under Labour Governments. One appreciates the fact that considerable mileage of those lines does not show the financial returns that similar lines in well-settled areas would be expected to return. Many railway lines throughout the State are rendering a great developmental service, although the construction of which would not be justified on purely commercial considerations.

I do not wish to discuss the report of the Royal Commission on Public Works on the Charleville to Blackall, and Longreach to Quilpie proposals, with which you, Mr. O'Keefe, were associated, except to refer hon. members to the evidence tendered before that commission by Mr. P. R. T. Wills, an officer whom I regard as a very capable administrator, and whose opinion is worth considering in matters of this nature. It will be noted that Mr. Wills referred to the fact that the estimated deficit on such a branch railway as one of those mentioned would amount to £73,000 a year. We have to approach the matter either from the point of view of whether such a railway would show a surplus or whether it would be justified as a developmental agency. I should say that the second factor should prevail. There are many undeveloped areas in the State in which railways are essential, and although those railways show losses their value to the State from a development point of view more than offsets those losses. It is difficult to name any of our developmental railways as being the most important in the State, but we must appreciate the fact that our agricultural, pastoral, and dairying industries could not continue on the present progressive lines without our developmental railways. This is particularly noticeable in the pastoral areas where railways have been constructed over great distances to serve this industry. All these industries are valuable to the financial stability of the State as a whole, and it is only reasonable to expect every section of the State to carry some of the loss incurred on these developmental lines in the far-distant portions of the State.

It would be better if hon. members opposite, instead of debating this matter from the point of view of particular industries they are interested in, approached it as they would approach a private business conducted by themselves. It might be politic for me, for instance, to argue there should be a reduction in the freight on sugar-cane or sugar, as my electorate is mostly concerned with that industry, but I do not propose to adopt that line, because it would not be right. There is no reason why the wool, dairying, or sugar industry should claim reduced freights if it cannot show good cause for a reduction.

Mr. Maher: Did you read the report of the Wool Advisory Commission?

Mr. WALSH: I do not intend to criticise that report other than to say that Mr. Payne is regarded as a man who knows his business. On the other hand, I am entitled to my views.

Mr. Maher: You have not investigated it.

Mr. WALSH: That may be so, but from the reports that come before Parliament from time to time I find that officers who have been appointed to deal with these matters appear to give the big pastoralist the advantage and not the small selector, and from the summary that has been given, without having seen the full report, I suggest that the same thing will operate in Mr. Payne's report. Not so much assistance would be given to the small selector by way of a reduction in freights as to the big pastoralist. You, Mr. O'Keefe, from your knowledge of the far western districts, know as well as I do that the big vested interests in the pastoral industry will reap the greatest advantage from the assistance that is recommended in the Wool Advisory Commission's report. But it is all very well to argue along such lines. I have no intention of getting away from the vote, but after all, each industry is of value to the State in a different way, and quite candidly I say that I could probably argue that the wool industry is not as valuable as some others to the State, and is not as efficient as hon. members opposite may make it out to be. Every industry plays its part in the economy of the railway system, and a perusal of the returns in the Commissioner's report discloses that the agricultural industry plays a very important part. The wool industry returned to the railway revenue equal to approximately only 30 per cent. of the revenue from the agricultural industry. It is all very well to make a plea for a reduction in freights, but a careful examination of the policy of the Government in that regard, either in the cattle, agricultural, or dairying industry, will disclose that freights have approached very near the limit of possible reduction.

Mr. Maher: It is regrettable that you speak like that when you admit you have not read a very valuable report.

Mr. WALSH: I am going by the summary, and when I peruse the report I shall probably find it to be of value. But I have read other reports, and in my study of them I have not been able to find anything in reports that did not give the major advantage to the big vested interests in the pastoral industry. I reiterate that I am entitled to my views on the subject, with all due respect to Mr. Payne's ability in these matters. After all, his report is based on his point of view, and he may be more capable of investigating the matter than would the majority of hon. members in this Chamber. That is admitted. The majority of us have at least had some practical experience in these matters and realise that there is a tendency for these industries to lean on the Government when they encounter a somewhat lean period, and no adequate consideration is given to the period when they enjoyed very favourable seasonal conditions and prices and could have stored away a little to tide them over a difficult period. I repeat that each industry has its value from the railway point of view.

I do not agree with the suggestion that the Commissioner's report contains too many

statistics. One cannot have too much information about the working of our railway system. If the report could be improved by adding further information, all the better, but I think that most of the information contained in it now is very valuable to hon. members in enabling them to come to reasonable conclusions as to the working of the railway system.

Page 9 of the report contains an analysis of the revenue derived from the various industries. In goods traffic the revenues derived were—

	£	Comparison with Previous Year.	
		%	
Minerals	696,180	·92	decrease
Timber	433,172	6·89	decrease
Agricultural produce ..	1,185,601	18·31	increase
Wool	434,151	6·53	increase
General merchandise ..	1,878,809	4·0	increase
Livestock	776,422	15·59	increase

Although the Railway Department benefits materially from better seasons, such as those we experienced during the past few years, we must not overlook the fact that most of the increase noted in these returns must be the result of the encouraging policy of the present Government. For instance, the increase in revenue from freight must be the result of the Government's road construction policy which encourages new settlement and increased population in various parts of the State. We must examine all these phases when we are making comparisons of deficits or reviewing the financial position of the railways. Considering the matter as a whole, I should say that the railway administration has done excellent work, having regard to the many problems that have to be overcome, problems such as long distances and the maintenance of many miles of track over useless territory in order to render service to the fertile areas.

Apart from that, however, I do not wish it to be thought that I do not think that some of the activities of the department are open to criticism. It is a pity that hon. members opposite did not follow the line of debate adopted by the hon. member for Albert. I think all hon. members on this side of the Committee commend him for his contribution to the debate.

Mr. Muller: It is a wonder you do not object to our speaking at all.

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member wishes to drag me in again, I would say that he certainly did not contribute anything very useful to the debate.

Mr. Muller: Of course, you did not like it.

Mr. WALSH: I could get up and indulge in the same dirty tactics in which he indulged, if I so desired, but that is not my way.

I repeat that there are some phases of the department's activities that are open to criticism, and this is the place in which to criticise them. I do not say that I am in agreement with everything that the depart-

ment does. If matters are not conducted in a proper manner, why should I not express my opinion here about some of the activities of the department? I say that, on the whole, the railway system has been conducted in a businesslike way, having regard to the many problems confronting it.

Whilst I have had no practical experience in the Railway Department, I, like other hon. members, can make myself conversant with the problems associated with the administration of the system. I take the view that in the railways, as in every other department, the Commissioner and his executive officers should have the right to select the persons whom they believe to be most fitted to fill the various positions in their respective sections. If there should be some man in the department who shows exceptional capabilities in a particular direction and who happens to be a misfit—not a misfit exactly but is perhaps, for example, occupying the position of a porter when he would make a much more useful clerk—and if he demonstrates that he has that capacity—the Commissioner should be at liberty to put him anywhere in the department where he thinks he will render better service to the public. The same principles that apply in commercial businesses should apply in any Government department.

Mr. Yeates: Hear, hear!

Mr. WALSH: I did not hear the hon. member for East Toowoomba say anything constructive to-day. As I was saying, it does not matter which department is concerned. Very often commercial institutions go outside their own businesses for the right man for a certain job. Crown activities should be conducted on the same lines.

Mr. Yeates: They should, but they do not always do it.

Mr. WALSH: The matter of tarpaulins was mentioned to-day, and I desire to bring under the Minister's notice the situation that has arisen at Plane Creek mill in the hauling of sugar. Since the harbour has been constructed at Mackay the whole of the Plane Creek sugar will have to go by rail instead of by lighter, and I have had a complaint from the management of the mill to the effect that its sugar has been held up because there are not enough tarpaulins to cover it on showery days. I do not think that should happen where there are between 1,200 and 1,300 tons of sugar offering each week. I should like the Minister to see that this matter is rectified. I do not think it right that sugar should be held up, either from the point of view of the farmers or that of the mill or the railway department.

I wish to stress the need for encouraging visiting sporting bodies to use rail motors. I know the department's point of view in this matter and I know that the Minister has gone as far as he can under the circumstances. In areas remote from many of the closer settled places there seems to be no reason why football teams, cricket teams, and similar sporting organisations should not be allowed to have the use of a rail motor for week-end

excursions. We should encourage sporting activities by quoting as low a rate as possible. We do not want to come down to the profit-making basis entirely. People should be encouraged to use the railway service, especially where there is no main road and there is no likelihood of getting one constructed, particularly where roads are under the jurisdiction of a shire council comprised mostly of squatter interests who want to live on a rate of 2d. in the £1 and expect to build first-class roads with it. These sporting organisations cannot get the benefit that a first-class road would give them; carriers cannot get permits to carry sporting bodies to different places in order that they may play a week-end game of cricket, football, or tennis. I should appreciate it if the department could make arrangement along the lines I have suggested, not only for my own electorate but for other districts similarly situated as Carmila and areas south of Sarina, where there is no possible chance of getting to the major centres to take part in sporting fixtures except by rail. I think people should be encouraged to go in for sporting activities a little more than they are.

Generally speaking, the department has set about giving of its best so far as train services are concerned in the cane areas. I have, however, heard considerable complaint made of the delay at sidings caused by waiting for cane trucks. Obviously, if a man has got out early in the morning he does not want to be delayed at a railway siding for two or three hours for trucks to come along to pick up his cane. I do not think, from inquiries I have made, that everything that could be done is being done in the transport of cane to mills. I have personal knowledge of instances where there seemed to be undue delay. I hope the Minister will go into the matter and see that the producers are not subjected to the considerable delay that has taken place in some parts of the State. Perhaps an inquiry was made and an excuse obtained from the officials and the whole thing was allowed to drop without a full investigation. However, since the Minister has taken the matter up there has been some relief.

(Time expired.)

Mr. JESSON (Kennedy) (7.51 p.m.): At the outset of my remarks, I should like to congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank and on his appointment as Minister for Transport. I can say without fear of contradiction that he is directing the affairs of one of the largest State enterprises.

I was rather surprised to hear the hon. member for Fassifern make the speech that he did on this vote, and I was particularly shocked, when he divulged the date, 18 June, 1938, to know that he had carried this injustive and grievance against the Railway Department round in his mind for over 18 months.

Mr. Power: The hon. member for Oxley gave him the information.

Mr. JESSON: On his own statement the hon. member for Fassifern carried this grievance against the Railway Department in his mind for 18 months, and for the first time to-night made an unwarranted attack on the late Mr. "Mossy" Hynes.

Mr. Muller: That is not correct.

Mr. JESSON: It is correct.

Mr. Muller: I told you half-a-dozen times that it was an attack on a practice.

Mr. JESSON: I have listened to the hon. member for Fassifern in this and other debates, and I have continually heard him ask for a reduction in railway freights and in other Government charges. In the past he has had made a big mouthful about hospital precepts. He wanted those reduced. He is the type of person who wants everything for nothing. He complained that industrial inspectors went into factories to see that the workers got reasonable working conditions. He is one of those persons who want to pay nothing and get all the benefits at the expense of someone else.

Mr. Muller: He pays his way.

Mr. JESSON: He also read in a paper a letter written by some bellyacher who probably could not get the job that he mentioned.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: He read a letter from the "Railway Advocate" regarding alleged back-door methods of appointing to the railway service three persons whose names he mentioned. One was a lad named Power, who had passed the Junior University Examination, and another was a member of a large family, the head of which had really given his life for the Railway Department. I refer to Mr. Frawley, who was killed on duty in the Railway Department. The Government did the right thing in giving his son a job to help support the remaining children in the family. Then we have an individual like that over there who will come into this Chamber—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: He made an unwarranted attack on a valuable railway employee. He made a shocking attack. I listened to him more in sorrow than in anger.

Mr. Power: The hon. member for Oxley prompted him.

Mr. JESSON: Yes, the chief mud-slinger of the Opposition. Much has been said by hon. members opposite about the recommendation by Mr. W. L. Payne that graziers should be allowed a 20 per cent. reduction in freight on wool, but I have no recollection of any suggestion by the woolgrowers or the squatters of this State that they should pay an increased freight on wool when they were selling it at 5s. and 6s. a lb.

Mr. Maher: Nonsense. They never sold it at that price.

Mr. JESSON: Well, 45d. and 46d. I shall say "approximately." (Opposition laughter.) The Opposition very often take off a few noughts to suit their arguments and add a few when making a charge against the Government, so surely I can put a few pence on. (Laughter.) It is all very well for a public servant to make a report like that recommending action at the expense of the remaining sections of the community. I have no doubt as to Mr. Payne's ability. He has a great deal of ability in his own sphere; he is interested purely in land matters, and it is only natural that his sympathies should incline in that direction.

Mr. Yeates: Your Government appointed him.

Mr. JESSON: I am not saying anything about his appointment. His appointment was received with unanimous approval by hon. members. He is doing his job, and I am only pointing out that it is very easy for him to suggest that the Government should be generous to one section of the community at the expense of another. If it is right to give a 20 per cent. reduction in wool freights, then we might just as well give 20 per cent. reductions in every other charges and go "bung" quick and lively.

During the afternoon we were entertained by the hon. member for East Toowoomba. I expected to hear a good deal from him on these Estimates, particularly as he toured around the State at the expense of the taxpayers. Early in the present session he told us that he did not have any complaint about the railways—particularly referring to the Sunshine route, and North Queensland branches—and that he had received the greatest courtesy from the staff on those lines. That is quite obvious.

Mr. Jones: He made application for a special rail motor.

Mr. JESSON: But he was knocked back. (Laughter.) His chief complaints concerned a blue and white notice at the Central railway station—it upset him—and the fact that a cracked bell was rung on a train going through Ipswich. I cannot see that those are reasonable complaints against the department. I did not hear him voice one serious complaint. He referred to the Railway Department as the Cinderella of Government departments. It certainly was the Cinderella of Government departments under the Moore Government's regime. Its expenditure was cut down, many of its employees were sacked, others were placed on a rotation system, the whole service were taken from the protection of the Industrial Court, and the condition of the rolling-stock was shocking when this Government were returned to office in 1932. The rotary system of employment has never worked out satisfactorily anywhere. No man can take an interest in his job when he knows he is employed for a period only. The policy of this Government has been to keep men in regular employment. That has enabled the railway employees to take an interest in their jobs. The result has been better and more efficient working. The rotary system of employment is one of the

worst possible systems that could be perpetrated in any industry. Any person who is worth his salt takes an interest in his job if it is a permanent one, not if he is to be discharged in a few weeks and he does not know when he will get his next work. From an efficiency point of view that policy was the worst that could possibly be applied to the railways.

Mr. Nimmo interjected.

Mr. JESSON: It is all right for the chief mud-slinger of the Opposition to interject.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to confine himself to the vote.

Mr. JESSON: I should like the hon. member to keep silent.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: The rotational system of employment operated in the Railway Department away back in 1930. From then on till this Government took office, the rolling-stock and the workshop machinery was allowed to get into such a dilapidated condition that this Government had to spend thousands of pounds to bring it up to a reasonable standard of efficiency. The treatment of the North Queensland railways by the Moore Government was absolutely shocking.

Mr. Yeates: Why not go back to the time of McIlwraith and Griffith?

Mr. JESSON: That is the time when the old train that is now on view in Countess street was operating.

The point I wish to make—if the hon. member will remain silent or go out and have a hot pie—is this: if the Townsville workshops had been kept up to an efficient standard, much work that had to be sent from the Northern centres to Ipswich and Mayne Junction and other railway workshops could have been carried out up there. The railway system in North Queensland was allowed by the Moore Government to deteriorate to such an extent that it has taken many years to bring it up to a proper standard of efficiency. Last year the department had to spend many thousands of pounds in installing machinery at the Townsville workshops in order that they could cope with repair work; that work should have been carried out during the depression period in order to create employment for the unfortunate people who were out of work.

It is ridiculous for hon. members opposite to assert that the Railway Department is the Cinderella of the Government service. The Railway Department is an immense one, and we should be thankful that we have men in the executive positions in that department who can handle it efficiently. One does not fully appreciate the magnitude of that organisation until one investigates its various ramifications. Many of the people who travel on our railways do not appreciate the enormous organisation and the number of people engaged in ensuring the safe transport of passengers.

The hon. member for Nanango made some remarks about logs being left at Gympie all night and transported during the daytime. The hon. member shows complete ignorance of the matter. After midnight the Gympie line is virtually clear of traffic. There is a certain amount of danger in shunting goods trains during the night. The department transports its goods in the most economical, speedy, and safe way. If they adopted the suggestion of the hon. member for Nanango it would mean an increase in the cost of transport of from 75 per cent. to 100 per cent., and next year the hon. member would complain of the increased deficit.

All these things have to be taken into consideration when discussing the Railway Department. It is a business enterprise involving millions of pounds. I venture to say that no private enterprise that carries on such a big business, and the employees of which handle such a large volume of money and goods, is carried on with such a small percentage of loss as the Railway Department. The percentage of loss by clerks handling many thousands of pounds is indeed very small.

An hon. member made a great noise about a few tarpaulins that were supposed to be missing. It often happens that a tarpaulin will be misplaced, but in the majority of instances it is found at some siding. With few exceptions, missing tarpaulins find their way back to the department.

Representation has been frequently made to the department through the Northern manager for a gatekeeper at Moongabulla. The head office is in Brisbane, approximately 900 miles away from this siding, and probably the officials do not realise what is necessary. Three or four years ago the Department of Labour and Industry was responsible for constructing a road over the range to the health resort at Mount Spec, the nearest railway siding to which is Moongabulla. At that time there were about 12 men working in this locality, and their requirements were conveyed from Townsville by the trucks of the Main Roads Commission. The road is now complete and officially opened, and a number of people have built week-end cottages at Mount Spec. There are also guest houses. The construction of this road, connecting, as it does with the Gregory Highway, has opened up thousands of acres of land, and a large mining area. As I pointed out on the vote for the Department of Mines, the miners bring their tin to Moongabulla, whence it is taken by road to Townsville. The railway is thus deprived of this revenue. The same thing applies to people living in the Ewan Valley and other places such as the Kangaroo Hills. It would pay the department handsomely to install either a full-time or part-time gatekeeper at Moongabulla siding. The miners in need of the necessities, instead of wasting time by running into Townsville—probably meeting a few friends there, and having a convivial party, and perhaps delaying their return—would come down to the siding, deposit their tin, pick up their goods, and go back to their work. Moreover, much

pilfering takes place. There is now no gatekeeper in charge of the siding, and the people are compelled to go into Townsville to get their goods. The position has altered considerably since the first application for a gatekeeper was made several years ago, and I venture the opinion that if a gatekeeper was installed, Moongabulla would be as busy as Bambaroo, 18 miles away, at which a station-master is employed. No doubt, the Commonwealth Government would co-operate and appoint the gatekeeper to be post-mistress and establish a branch of the savings bank. That would meet some of the expenses of the gatekeeper. I feel it incumbent upon me, owing to the very strong representations that are being made by all sections of the community up there, to re-open the matter.

I ask the Minister and the Commissioner to send up to Ingham the first large rail motor that they feel they do not want down here. We do not want a new one; all we want is a larger one than we have, one that is equipped with all the conveniences that are essential to the public when travelling over 60 miles.

Mr. Muller: I should like to give you ours.

Mr. JESSON: And we should probably take it. We do not want a new rail motor, which might cost a great deal of money; we want one properly equipped to serve the convenience of the people travelling long distances up there.

I should like to suggest, too, that much good would be done by attaching a dining-car to the Sunshine train at Brisbane, so that passengers might be able to get refreshments, cigarettes and tobacco, and a cup of coffee at night. Although the Sunshine Express is remarkably well patronised by the public the amount of traffic that is being taken by aeroplanes and flying boats from Brisbane to Townsville and Cairns in particular is causing the loss of a great deal of revenue to the department. As aeroplanes and flying boats each make two trips a day, usually loaded to capacity, an average of 20 to 25 people travel by them each day. Even placing the fare at the small sum of £5, this means that the railways are losing revenue to the extent of £200 a day. I know that there is no way of stopping this, because the public have a right to travel by whichever means they choose, but I do think that the provision of a dining-car on the Sunshine train at Brisbane and the speeding-up of that train might do something to regain some of the traffic that is now being lost to aerial transport. I believe that the running of a Sunshine train express on three days in each week from Brisbane to Cairns, stopping only to change engines or take on fuel and water, would lead to an increase in railway patronage.

Mr. Yeates: Hear, hear!

Mr. JESSON: If I did not think that the hon. member would have supported me in this, I should not have mentioned the matter. I leave this matter in the hands of the Minister, who I know has given the matter

thought. I have also discussed the matter with the Commissioner, and I know that the matter will be looked into.

Before resuming my seat, I desire to say again that I was extremely sorry to see such an exhibition of spleen as we witnessed to-night. It was unfortunate, and I think the hon. member was ill-advised in adopting that attitude. I trust that he will not discuss the Estimates in that manner again.

Mr. MOORE (Aubigny) (8.14 p.m.): This report is another beautiful example of the fact that immediately any increase in costs takes place it is passed on to the users of the railways. We have often heard that increased costs add to the cost of living, yet we find in the annual report of the Commissioner for Railways that the railways are adopting the practice of passing on costs to their customers. I remember that when the 44-hour week was first introduced there was an immediate rise of 10 per cent. in freights and fares. The people in the country, who were working 60 hours a week, were sacrificed in order that somebody else should work four hours less. The Commissioner's report states—

"The all-round increase in freights and fares forecast in last year's report was introduced as from 1 November, 1938, the added charges being necessary to meet additional expenditure due to increased payments to the staff on account of basic-wage increases, award provisions, and higher cost of coal and other commodities."

One increase follows the other immediately. An increase is given to one section of the community and another section of it is called upon to pay. People have extra costs placed on their shoulders and no secret is made about it. It does not matter what conditions or benefits are given to employees of the railways, because all that has to be done is to increase freights and fares and pass the burden on to the people who send their goods by rail.

Mr. Duggan: You do not think that the carriage of agricultural products is remunerative to the railway?

Mr. MOORE: I intend to speak about this matter in my own way; the hon. member has made his speech. As a matter of fact, the carriage of agricultural products is remunerative because full train loads are usually carried and distances are short. On page 21 of the report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year ended 30 June, 1939, there is this interesting paragraph—

"Mount Isa Mines Traffic.

"Revenue from this traffic declined by £42,527, due to both the decreased tonnage carried, and to sliding scale rates which are charged on the company's traffic on the basis of the spot prices of lead and spelter in London."

That is the only instance I know of in which the Queensland railways takes into consideration the price the sender receives. Mr. Payne made the suggestion that there should be a

20 per cent. reduction in the freight on wool. Why? Because when wool was selling at a high price in 1925 the freight rate was put up to the highest point that the article could carry, and there it has stood, regardless of the fact that wool prices have come down. It was in justice to the people who had wool to sell that Mr. Payne made his recommendation. Why not extend the principle carried out at Mount Isa?

Mr. Walsh: Why not reduce rates on agricultural and dairy produce when prices fall? Why talk about wool only?

Mr. MOORE: Why is the exception made in regard to Mount Isa? Why should not the rate of freight be based on the price at which the product sells in England—if prices fall, reduce freight rates? Why should this company be singled out for a special system of freights?

Mr. Power: It keeps a lot of men in employment.

Mr. MOORE: Exactly. The same thing happens in every industry. It is a very excellent system!

Mr. Walsh: You know the reason why. You know the truthful answer.

Mr. MOORE: What is it?

Mr. Gair: A former Premier! No wonder you were kicked out.

Mr. MOORE: You started the new principle.

Mr. Walsh: Why did you pass the Industries Assistance Act?

Mr. MOORE: We passed an Industries Assistance Act. Under that Act it was not proposed that the cost of the assistance should come out of railway revenue.

Mr. Walsh: Out of revenue just the same.

Mr. MOORE: Here is a principle introduced into the department where the freight charged is based upon the selling price of the product overseas.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: At any rate that is a payable one. If you applied it to all products the railways would be out of their difficulty.

Mr. MOORE: Why not apply it to all products? The Minister speaks entirely without the book. He does not know whether it would be profitable or not. In this case it is not profitable.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: Yes, it is.

Mr. MOORE: It is not much use speaking to the hon. gentleman, because he knows it is not profitable.

Mr. Gair: Because you say it is not it does not follow that you are right.

Mr. MOORE: I am trying to point out that instead of arbitrarily increasing the freight as the price of wool goes up and

then appointing a royal commission to see what is wrong when the people cannot pay the freight and have it recommend arbitrary reductions, it would be better to adopt the principle set out in the Commissioner of Railway's report in relation to Mount Isa. If it is a good principle for one industry, why not adopt it for another? It seems to be a sensible and a reasonably sound proposal. I remember that when wool freights were increased in 1925 it was said that they were justified because of the high price for wool and that the woolgrowers could then contribute more to the revenue of the State.

Mr. Gair: And are the freights not reduced by rebates during a drought?

Mr. MOORE: Yes, by rebates in accordance with certain specified conditions, but that has nothing to do with the price at which the wool is being sold.

Mr. Gair: It is a reduction in freight.

Mr. MOORE: That is a very different thing altogether. All sections of the community help an industry in a time of distress in some way or other. They cannot allow the industry to go out of existence.

Mr. Walsh: There are more luxurious motor cars amongst the squatters than in any other industry.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member seems to have an edge on the squatters. A moment ago he said that they controlled the local authorities in his area but how many squatters are there in his area? Have we not got adult franchise in local authority elections, and why are the squatters in control, if what he says is true? It is because the majority of the people there think that they are the most competent people to take charge of local authority affairs. What has the hon. member to growl about? He always wants to have an edge on somebody who has a little bit of land. He regards them as a good target to hit.

I should like to see this principle of fixing railway freights extended to the wool industry, or to any other industry if you like. I cannot see why one industry should be singled out for this favourable treatment.

Mr. Duggan: Perhaps the principle could be extended to private enterprise, to the charges by woolbrokers and things like that?

Mr. Walsh: And to bank interest.

Mr. MOORE: Those charges have been reduced to some extent. Hon members opposite talk a lot about bank interest, but some years ago the people who subscribed to bank loans were asked to accept a reduction in interest rate. I cannot see that there is very much in that argument. I am not abusing anybody. I am contending that the principle laid down in this report should be extended to other industries. I am satisfied that that would be a good idea, because it would be just and equitable. It is a reasonable proposal. I have no objection to the Railway Department's doing this, but it seems to be

a new principle and one that may be extended with success.

Mr. Power: Do you think that you are more competent than the Commissioner for Railways to decide these things?

Mr. MOORE: Does the hon. member think that the Commissioner for Railways decided this matter off his own bat? I should be inclined to think that it is a question of Government policy. I should not think that the Commissioner decided this matter himself, but that it was a decision of Cabinet. I am not criticising the Commissioner in any way whatever.

Mr. Power: I thought you were.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member must have a very poor sort of intelligence if he thinks that. I have been trying to explain exactly what it means.

Mr. Jesson: You had better send your speech to the big banking companies.

Mr. MOORE: I am sure that if I did that they would read it with interest and probably with a great deal more interest than the speeches of the hon. member. His speeches would only create a laugh, and the banking directors would wonder how it was possible for the people to elect a member of Parliament who would make such idiotic speeches as his. I suppose the hon. member made it to put in time. I cannot imagine any other reason. (Government interjections.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask hon. members on my right to allow the hon. member for Aubigny, who has the floor, to continue his speech.

Mr. MOORE: I was very glad to hear the hon. member for Mirani express the opinion that suitability and ability should be the main factors in promotion, and in placing men in positions most suitable for them. That is a principle that has always been advocated as long as I can remember from this side of the Committee. In this connection I refer to the summary of conclusions and recommendations of the Royal Commission on Railways, which, by the way, embodies one of the most extraordinary methods of presenting a report of a royal commission that I have ever seen.

Mr. Gair: A most extraordinary commission.

Mr. MOORE: It may have been; I did not appoint it. I understand that someone else was also appointed, but he was not allowed to continue, for as soon as the Premier left for England his appointment was withdrawn.

Mr. Gair: Do you mean the man you intended to appoint General Manager of the South-Eastern Division if you were re-elected in 1932?

Mr. MOORE: I did not have any idea of what would happen had I been returned. In this matter I have just made a deduction from what I read in the paper. The Premier made a certain announcement, then

left for England, and the appointment was then withdrawn.

Mr. Duggan: A very wise decision.

Mr. MOORE: The summary of conclusions and recommendations at page 35 states—

“System of Promotion of Staff and Other Matters.

“Recommendation.

“The commission agrees with the remarks of the witness referred to relating to promotion and the appointment of clerks as station-masters, and that preference should be given to men of ability as against seniority.

“It recommends that steps be taken to have the present system amended in accordance with the suggestions outlined.”

Then the comment follows. To me it is a very extraordinary one. It says—

“Suitability is a recognised factor in promotion, as well as seniority. Section 21 of the Railways Acts reads, *inter alia*, as follows:—

‘When any vacancy occurs in any branch of the service not open for competitive examination it shall be filled, if possible, by the promotion of the most suitable employee next in rank, position, or grade, to the vacant office, if he applies for same.’

“This definitely establishes suitability as a factor in promotion.”

If Mr. Hooper had not been a railway man he might have been pardoned for not knowing that section of the Act, but he had been in the service in different positions, including that of General Manager of the South-Eastern Division, for about 40 years. He knew that section 21 was there. He recognised that it did not go far enough and therefore made this recommendation.

Section 21 is very limited. It says—

“... it shall be filled, if possible, by the promotion of the most suitable employee next in rank. ...”

What the hon. member for Mirani says—and I quite agree with it—is that if the Minister finds he has a particularly smart man in his office, or any other part of the railways, it should be possible for him to appoint him to a post where he can get the most value from his services.

Mr. Walsh: I cannot help it if people do not agree with you.

Mr. MOORE: I am agreeing with this recommendation, which is eminently sound. I remember that on one occasion when travelling up North with the Empire Parliamentary Delegation, one of the delegates, who was a Socialist from Glasgow, expressed himself as being very disappointed at the failure of State enterprises, and his not being able to see them at work. He said he had given his life for this sort of thing, and he could not

understand why they had been a ghastly failure.

The Secretary for Public Works: Your Government sold them.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. gentleman can thank his lucky stars we did sell them, otherwise his Government would be in an infinitely worse financial position than they are to-day. This gentleman asked Mr. McCormack how they secured a manager. Mr. McCormack said, “First of all, we look for a man in sympathy with our ideas.” This gentleman said, “That is the trouble. If we started a State enterprise we should look for the best man, no matter where he was, and if we had to pay him £10,000 a year we would get him all the same.” Mr. McCormack said, “That is not socialism; that is capitalism,” and this gentleman said, “We call it common sense.” That is quite right. If you want to get someone who will show the best return you pick the most suitable man for the position, even though you have to pay a high salary. You always have to pay for brains. That is what the hon. member for Mirani was saying.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. MOORE: We reduced our own salaries for a substantial reason. I do not suppose the hon. member would understand. He would like to keep his own salary up while everybody else’s was reduced. We do not believe in that principle.

A Government Member: Many had no salaries at all.

Mr. MOORE: They were on the same basis as thousands of others in Australia and throughout the world. There are a number here to-day who have not any salary after all these years, and after all the prosperity that has existed. The hon. member might perhaps remember that; instead of talking about past days he should look to to-day and see what might be done. Ignorant criticism is easy. The only thing I am proud of is that I happened to be in the position at the time when I could join with the rest of the Premiers in placing this country on a sound foundation instead of seeing it go insolvent. It is very easy to talk and criticise. One thing hon. members have to recognise is that every Government in Australia at that time were faced with a national crisis and they did what they thought was the best thing to do and they succeeded. That is what stings hon. members opposite.

The Secretary for Public Works: What about the £4,000,000 you had in the Treasury?

Mr. MOORE: The £4,000,000 in the Treasury for the use of the State of Queensland had to last over a period of two years.

The Secretary for Public Works: You lent some to other States.

Mr. MOORE: I should expect that from a man with the knowledge of the Secretary for Public Works. That sort of thing is all right outside. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well what the position was. He

did not criticise Mr. McCormack when he lent £250,000 to South Australia.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask hon. members to allow the hon. member for Aubigny to continue his speech. He is drifting right away from the vote.

Mr. MOORE: I am sorry that the recommendations of the royal commissioner, Mr. Hooper, were not placed before Parliament in their complete form. I think it is the only time that a royal commission's report has been handed over to somebody else to attach a reply to it before it has been given to Parliament. If it was worth while appointing the man, it was worth while giving his conclusions to this House in order that we might study them. It is extraordinary that of 35 recommendations seven minor recommendations have been put into operation or were to be put into operation either before or after the recommendations were made, and nine have been half carried out. Personally, I have very little knowledge of Mr. Hooper, I do know he was held in high esteem when he was General Manager in North Queensland. We heard everywhere that he was a good man in the job and carried out his work efficiently. The only time I had anything to do with him he was courtesy itself, and I have no fault to find with him. I was told when he went up North to take over that position that the state of affairs there was not altogether satisfactory and he remedied the position to a great extent. It seems to me that when he was appointed as a commission, at least the courtesy should have been extended to Parliament of allowing us to see whether the conclusions he arrived at were justified by the reasons he gave for them. We should not have a completely emasculated report given to us and his findings torn to pieces more or less at the end of the same report. That does not appear to me to be fair or reasonable. It is a total waste of money.

I remember an occasion when hon. members of this Parliament were appointed a commission to investigate railway matters. The copy of the report presented to Parliament was so big that it virtually had to be carried in on a stretcher. All the evidence given before the commission, their recommendations, and their reasons were presented to Parliament. In fact, I do not think anybody to this day has ever read the report completely.

Mr. Hooper was chosen as a man competent to form an opinion, and it is most unreasonable that barely a summary of his conclusions is placed before Parliament. No reasons are included, reasons that would enable hon. members to ascertain on what grounds the conclusion was arrived at. Then, moreover, the whole position is literally torn to pieces. That is shocking. Does it not suggest that the party opposite found the conclusions come to by Mr. Hooper did not suit them—they were very anxious that there should not be a full discussion on them and consequently it was decided to nullify them in order that there should not be any criticism? I know that Mr. Hooper must have had excellent reasons for coming to his

conclusions. He would not have come to a decision unless he was perfectly convinced he had grounds for doing so.

Mr. Power: A libel on the late Commissioner.

Mr. MOORE: No. There is the position. It was not doing that at all.

A Government Member: He wanted this to help him.

Mr. MOORE: I can understand that. That is why I say what I said—he was blocked. It did not suit the party opposite. They then allowed Mr. Hooper to go on, but his conclusions were also blocked.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Lacombe, Rockhampton) (8.38 p.m.): With reference to Mr. Hooper's report, I desire to state that that gentleman had a long and honourable association with the department. He was a very capable officer and his recommendations and conclusions have been considered in the proper spirit. No spirit of hostility has been displayed by the department to the recommendations and conclusions. (Opposition interjections.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Each is entitled to his own opinion. I am expressing mine. The conclusions and recommendations have been carefully and sympathetically studied by the Commissioner and his officers. It will be noted that at the conclusion of the report of the Commissioner for Railways he states that—

“The recommendations and suggestions of the royal commission have received, and will continue to receive, the most careful consideration of myself and the officers of the Railway Department.”

That is the spirit in which the recommendations have been approached; in the same spirit as that in which the department approaches the comments concerning railway administration made in this Chamber. There is need for examining with an open mind everything that is said about railway administration.

I am sorry that the hon. member for Aubigny endeavoured to draw an invidious distinction between the treatment given by the Railway Department to the Mount Isa Company and that extended to industries generally in the State. Nothing should be said to discourage the investment of capital in Queensland. Nothing should be said or done to discourage a company that has invested £6,000,000 in this State, and whose annual production is worth almost £2,000,000. To-day that company employs 1,250 men in an area that was previously a barren waste.

The hon. member for Aubigny states that other industries are not treated similarly. The report proves that they are, because hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of concessions have been granted to the pastoral, agricultural, and other primary industries at various times. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that big concessions are being

given to the pastoral and agricultural industries to-day. Instead of trying to drive in a wedge to cause ill feeling he should endeavour to inspire confidence in all the industries of this State.

Mr. Edwards: What big concessions are you giving now?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Agricultural rates are lower to-day, special consideration is given to all industries in times of depression, drought, or difficulty, and substantial reductions are granted on the transport of fodder for starving stock. During the last seven years, as I pointed out earlier to-day, concessions amounting to over £1,600,000 have been granted by this Government to various industries other than Mount Isa Mines Limited.

Mr. Edwards: Surely you did that in the interests of the railways, too?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: We did not do it in the interests of the railways in particular; we did it in the interests of the State.

Mr. Edwards: The railways, too.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Graziers and other primary producers of the State. We recognise the same principle in that respect, so far as other industries are concerned, as we are doing now with regard to Mount Isa Mines Limited.

Mr. Nimmo: They would have gone broke if you had not done it.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The fact is that we are guided by the same principle in our consideration of every industry.

The hon. member for Aubigny mentioned promotion of staff and referred to the remarks of the hon. member for Mirani and other hon. members who have suggested the desirability of recognising suitability when making promotions. I admit that promotion of the most suitable man is a phase of railway work that should be given most careful consideration. The hon. member for Aubigny did not seem to me to quote the Commissioner fully. The Commissioner states—

“When any vacancy occurs in any branch of the service not open for competitive examination, it shall be filled, if possible, by the promotion of the most suitable employee . . .”

Mr. Moore: Next in rank.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: “Next in rank, position, or grade.” Does not that recognise suitability as well as seniority?

Mr. Moore: To a very limited extent.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Not at all. All vacancies are advertised and the right of appeal exists.

Mr. Nimmo: And the senior applicant gets the job every time.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: He does not. That is a misstatement.

Mr. Gair: It is a stupid statement.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It certainly is not in accordance with fact. We know that every system has its weaknesses. We know, too, that in the olden days, when there was no such provision in the Railways Act, officers promoted their friends and relatives.

Mr. Healy: We do not want to go back to those days.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: No. To-day, the right of appeal is allowed, and any applicant who thinks that there has been any unfair treatment or favouritism has his remedy. No-one is stronger than I am for promotion of the most suitable employee. Every system has its weaknesses. Absolute seniority has a great weakness, and, in the past, the system of giving absolute discretion to officers, has led to great abuse. Now the Commissioner is empowered to give promotion to the most suitable employee, and those who are passed over have the right of appeal against the appointment.

I wish now to deal briefly with some of the comments and suggestions made by hon. members. Any absence of elaboration in my reply is because time is limited; the speeches of hon. members have been carefully marked and will be considered by railway officials. I can assure the hon. member for Kennedy that the problem of gatekeepers will be considered with all other recommendations made.

It seems to me that there has been an attempt this year to recognise more fully the difficulties besetting the railway service. Here in Queensland, a State, as hon. members know, containing 670,500 square miles, we have approximately 6,500 miles of line with an enormous length of single line and very remote districts. We have rail connections running from the extreme South-West to the extreme North-West for over 2,000 miles. In no other part of Australia are the same difficulties experienced. Therefore, it has been pleasing to see a greater recognition of the difficulties of the department. There has been a recognition of the wonderful results achieved by railway officers. Nothing nettles me more than to hear vague, general, superficial, irresponsible criticism of railway officers and employees generally. After many years of association with the Commissioner, his administrative officers, and employees generally I say they can compare more than favourably with the officers and employees in any other part of Australia. In no private employment would one get a better set of officers and employees. They give their time unsparingly to duty. They have ability and energy and are enthusiastic to a degree. If they had their own capital invested they could not look after it more conscientiously and honestly than they look after it for the Railway Department, the Government, and the State.

I acknowledge the suggestions made by the hon. member for Mirani. His complaints of delay will be carefully investigated. The hon.

member for East Toowoomba made some suggestions that will be carefully considered. I see that hon. member sitting ready to leap at the call of the next vote. He measured his time this morning and worked out to a minute what time he would have if he dealt fully with every vote. I say to him in his enthusiasm that his suggestions do not harmonise with pure logic. He complained about the deficit and at the same time made several recommendations—the merits or demerits of which I will not discuss—to increase revenue, but they would have the effect of increasing the deficit.

Mr. Yeates: I differ with you.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:

The hon. member is entitled to differ, as it is a matter of opinion.

The hon. member for Port Curtis mentioned the purchase of faulty material, and suggested that a committee be set up to inquire into the purchases of material with a view to avoiding such weaknesses. The stores branch, like every other branch, has its committee. Sometimes there might be an oversight, but careful consideration is given to all quotations by the various committees before purchases are made by the stores branch. I stress the fact, as I did on a previous discussion, that the Commissioner has his own stock-taking. The Auditor-General's Department has a complete stock-taking periodically, and the officers of the Commissioner go carefully into the ramifications of the stores branch.

The hon. member for Gregory made several suggestions concerning wool freights, fares for women and children, and a western train service. I should like to emphasise that the concession fares for women and children of the West was not granted, as the hon. member seems to think, 40 years ago, but was done on my recommendation to Cabinet about 1922. The cash value of those concessions to date exceed £400,000, which is no mean concession to the women and children of the West. In many cases it amounts to 70 per cent. of the fare. While it may be very popular to say that the railways should carry women and children free, it is beyond the capacity of the department to do that at the present time. Again, that reminds me that while hon. members opposite criticise the railway deficit, at the same time they make suggestions that will have the effect of enlarging it. That does not apply to the hon. member for Gregory. However, I should like to impress upon him the value of these concessions and to remind him that special parity allowances are granted to the Western workers by the Industrial Court. No-one is more anxious than I to give the utmost help and consideration to the men and women of the West. We know that our own poet, Essex Evans, in his poem, "The Women of the West," eulogised those grand people, and his poem was based on fact and on actual life.

The Railway Department has certainly improved the service in the past few years, but with the limitation of funds it is very

difficult to do all that hon. members suggest. In the hurly-burly of political life they are perhaps inclined to overlook what is done and to concentrate on what has not been accomplished. I should like to remind hon. members that the present Government have spent £9,619,000 on maintenance, renewal of rolling-stock and new rolling-stock, which includes a good many new carriages that are now being used throughout the State. That shows that the railways are not being starved financially. We have spent £9,619,000 on those items in seven years.

The hon. member for Murrumbidgee and the hon. member for Port Curtis stressed the need for a better permanent-way. That is a problem that is not overlooked. The present Government have spent £11,221,000 on ways and works since they have been in office and much improvement has been carried out.

The other suggestions by the hon. member for Gregory have been noted and will be considered.

The hon. member for Wynnum advocated the electrification of the railways. That is an excellent reform but cannot be carried out at present because the money is not available. Considering the relative urgency of expenditure, if the department had £2,000,000 at its disposal we should spend it in other ways at the present time rather than on the electrification of railways. I readily admit that an electrified system would be efficient, speedy, and clean. It is a reform that should not be overlooked, but, as I have said, it cannot be brought into operation now.

The suggestion made by the hon. member for Wynnum about concession tickets for apprentices, new carriages, rail motors, and other matters will receive careful consideration.

The hon. member for Toowoomba made some valuable suggestions, and these will be considered. One concerned level crossings and the necessity for the Railway Department's assisting local authorities by making provision for them. We do that to a limited extent. Wherever possible, and if the money is available, we help local authorities in the way suggested by the hon. member.

General reference has been made to tourist traffic. The hon. member for Albert in particular made an excellent speech on the subject. I entirely concur with the general views he expressed. Queensland is a State of great fertility, but it is also a State of transcendent beauty, it is a State of glorious sunshine, healthy climate, wonderful conditions for the tourist, and we must do as other countries are doing, commercialise those advantages to encourage tourists to come to Queensland and get the maximum revenue and maximum patronage from their traffic. We have shown practical recognition of that statement, and of the ideal I have mentioned. The Main Roads Commission, as well as the Railway Department, is doing good work in providing facilities for the tourists who come to this State. The evidence of that

success is found in the substantial improvement of the turnover in the Tourist Bureau. In 1929-30 the revenue of the bureau was £6,598; in 1938-39 it was £131,120. One finds from those figures evidence of the proper recognition of the needs of the tourists.

We are constantly increasing the facilities and opportunities for the comfort of travellers. The international disturbance will, no doubt, create a tendency for some travellers to come from the United States to Australia. There will also be a tendency for travellers from other parts of Australia to come to Queensland, particularly those who cannot leave our shores in safety. I should like to mention some of the methods adopted in the extensive publicity campaign conducted by the bureau, particularly in other States, where the Press, radio, cinema screen, hoardings, and windows are utilised. Films in natural colours are also displayed to selected audiences. Queensland has branches of the bureau in all States of Australia with the exception of South Australia. In Adelaide, the South Australian Bureau represents the Queensland Bureau. Therefore, we are well represented in Australia and these branches are doing excellent work. We considered a scheme for sending a Queensland representative to New Zealand in conjunction with New South Wales and Victoria, but New South Wales withdrew from the agreement temporarily, and nothing further has been done.

On the railway side there is the Sunshine train, which has rendered splendid service to travellers going North. It is a very comfortable and convenient train, and is run as speedily as possible consistent with safety and the general requirements of the State. The tourist roads that have been built by the Main Roads Commission have immensely assisted in opening up beauty spots and tourist resorts, and have been largely availed of. Hotel accommodation is an important factor in the tourist traffic. It is absolutely necessary that the best accommodation be provided, and, wherever possible, action has been taken to induce hotelkeepers to provide the best possible accommodation for tourists.

Mr. Moore: Induced! You will not give them licenses if they do not do it. You do not persuade them.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Mr. O'Keefe, we do not compel the hotel-keeper to provide a standard based on two months of the year for the whole of the year, but we do our best to see that good general accommodation is provided and special accommodation if it is found convenient.

Mr. Moore: You might call it persuasion; it is absolutely coercion.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Through the Bureau we have written to hotelkeepers when complaints have been made of the accommodation at their hotels, making a special appeal to them—quite apart from the legal powers we have—in order to try to improve the standard of hotel accommodation.

Mr. Nimmo: Why do you not write to the Licensing Commission?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Since the Licensing Commission came into operation over £800,000 has been spent in improvements by hotelkeepers in Queensland, which shows that the Commission in doing good work. I might add that if we find flagrant breaches of the law we communicate with the Commission.

Grandstand cars have been constructed for use in the Cairns district. There has been an extension of services to tourist resorts and frequent inspection by escorting officers with the object of keeping up the standard of tourist resorts as high as possible. In addition, we are revising the Tourist Advisory Board, consisting of representatives of the Railway Department, Sub-Department of Forestry, and other departments, with a view to giving further consideration to this important subject. So hon. members will understand in regard to the Tourist Bureau traffic and activities that there is constant and intense application to the problem, and there is no neglect.

I find it is common in the department that officers who do excellent work do not advertise their activities. That is something I very often have to ascertain myself. Perhaps not having the political outlook or being modest the officers do not broadcast everything they do to the public or to Parliament, but an immense amount of valuable work is being done quietly and continuously.

Finally, I wish to say a few words about motor transport competition. There has been some discussion on that part of railway policy and administration. It is important to fight motor transport competition in the most effective way possible. I should think the figures I quoted this morning indicated that a great measure of success has been achieved by the work of the department in that respect; especially when we realise that last year over 5,000,000 tons of paying traffic was carried, representing an increase of 1,345,000 tons on the 1931-32 figures, which indicates we are more than holding our own.

Mr. Edwards: You must admit the good seasons have some bearing on that.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I am not trying to make any political propaganda at all; I am endeavouring to show that the department is successfully meeting the demands made on it to recover traffic and increase it.

A comparison with many other States on this matter is very interesting. The following table shows the decreases in goods and livestock carried for the 10-year period ended 1938-39:—

		Tons.
Western Australia	..	811,000
South Australia	..	100,471
Victoria	..	2,211,235
New Zealand	..	152,211

In Queensland there was not a decrease but an increase of 621,722 tons. That is an interesting comparison by which we can measure the

splendid work that is being done in Queensland in combating motor transport competition. In New South Wales there was also a substantial increase during that 10-year period.

Then we have the figures of the co-ordinated rail and road services. The goods services show an increase from 2,954 tons in 1934-35 to 15,473 tons in 1938-39. There is also a substantial increase in passenger services—91,000 in 1935-36 to 154,000 in 1938-39.

Although there has been an increase of passenger traffic between 1931-32 and 1938-39 of 3,853,600 passenger journeys, there was a reduction for last year as compared with the previous year, but there were certain factors, such as the coal strike, that caused a reduction in the number of passenger journeys for the past financial year. There was certainly a large increase between 1931-32 and 1938-39.

Hon. members speak of the motor competition, but overlook the large part played by private motor vehicles. In the past few years there has been a very great increase in the number of private vehicles in Brisbane and Queensland, the increase, as between 1934 and 1939, being 13,530. We must keep that factor in mind. A former Commissioner for Railways in Victoria, Mr. Clapp, has stated that the private car was responsible for a greater drain on railway passenger traffic than organised competition, therefore, it is pleasing to find that, notwithstanding the reduction last year, there was a substantial increase over the period I have mentioned.

In conclusion, I emphasise my opening remarks—that the suggestions and comments of hon. members, irrespective of party, will receive the most careful consideration of the Commissioner and his staff.

Vote (General Establishment) agreed to.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.9 p.m.
