

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 14 OCTOBER 1941

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

QUESTIONS.

SECRETARY, TOWNSVILLE HOSPITAL BOARD.

Mr. MOORHOUSE (Windsor) asked the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

“Did he request the Townsville Hospital Board to forward to him the applications for the position of secretary, so that he could make the recommendation for appointment?”

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

“No.”

EXPERIMENTS WITH PANICUM MUTICUM GRASS.

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

“1. Has the planting of Panicum muticum grass in wet and low-lying lands in the North increased to any great extent in the past two years?

“2. Have any experiments been made by the department with this grass in the Central or Southern portions of the State?

“3. What are the results of experiments with this grass to date?”

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

“1. There has been a considerable increase in the acreage of Brachiaria mutica (Para grass), previously known as Panicum muticum, grown in North Queensland in the past two years, and this is practically the only grass used on flat or low-lying lands in that portion of the State.

“2. and 3. Extensive experiments have not been carried out with this grass in the Central and Southern districts of the State, but numerous small observational plots have demonstrated that the grass has fair growth on swamp lands, particularly in Central Queensland. It has been fairly definitely established that it can only be grown on an extensive scale in areas north of Rockhampton, and its cultivation south of Rockhampton should be confined to swampy areas only. This grass is susceptible to frost.”

LOAN TO W. L. ROGERS FOR COTTON-GROWING.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley), for **Mr. MACDONALD** (Stanley), asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

“1. What is the total amount lent to date to Mr. W. L. Rogers for cotton-growing in the Theodore area?

"2. What was the area and rent per acre of his lease?"

"3. Is the lessee still in possession?"

"4. If not, what was the net loss to the Crown on account of (a) loan, (b) rent?"

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. T. A. Foley, Normanby) replied—

"1. to 4. Under the Government's cotton stimulation policy, and to test out on a large scale cotton-growing under irrigation conditions, advances totalling £6,200 were made to Mr. Rogers for the 1939-40 and 1940-41 cotton seasons. Repayments totalling £2,966 have already been made, and further repayments are due from the Queensland Cotton Board on Mr. Rogers's 1940-41 crop."

COST OF APPEAL BY J. W. COCKINGS, C.P.S.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) asked the Premier—

"What is the approximate cost to the Crown of the appeal against dismissal by Mr. J. W. Cockings, Clerk of Petty Sessions at Dalby?"

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

"Total cost, £92 2s. 1d."

PAPERS.

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

Report of the State Electricity Commission of Queensland for the year 1940-41.

Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Building Societies, and Industrial and Provident Societies for the year 1940-41.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Regulations, dated 3 October, 1941, under the Diseases in Poultry Acts, 1923 to 1940.

Regulations, dated 3 October, 1941, under the Fruit Marketing Organisation Acts, 1923 to 1940.

By-laws Nos. 414 and 415 under section 134 of the Railways Acts, 1914 to 1934.

Order in Council under the Supreme Court Act of 1921.

FEES PAID BY CROWN TO BARRISTERS AND SOLICITORS.

RETURN TO ORDER.

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

Return to an order relative to fees paid to barristers and solicitors, 1940-1941, made by the House, on the motion of Mr. Macdonald, on 21 August.

NATIONAL EDUCATION CO-ORDINATION AND THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, Mackay): 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 provide for a co-ordinated system of national education, to amend the University of Queensland Act of 1909 (as amended by subsequent Acts) in certain particulars, and for other incidental purposes."

Motion agreed to.

SCARTWATER STATION TRUST EXTENSION BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Gair, South Brisbane, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. E. J. Walsh, Mirani) (10.37 a.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to make provision whereby the benefits of a certain trust property known as 'Scartwater Station' shall be applied and extended to certain soldiers and their dependants in respect of the present war, and for purposes incidental thereto and consequent thereon."

At this stage, I will give a brief outline of the Bill for the benefit of the Committee. It is a Bill dealing with a certain trust created by an indenture entered into with the then Secretary for Public Lands, the late Harry Coyne, for the working of a pastoral property known as "Scartwater" in the Bowen district for the benefit of returned soldiers and disabled soldiers during the Great War, who had enlisted in the electorates set out in the trust, and their dependants. The property has been worked and maintained by managing trustees, and the lease of the property was vested in the Public Curator as custodian trustee. Provision is made in the trust for the allocation of annual scholarships known as the Scartwater scholarship and the Cunningham scholarship. At the outset priority of application for the lease was given to the Public Curator against competition, and although the Crown has the statutory resumption rights provided for in all pastoral leases, up to the present it has not been considered necessary to exercise that right. The stocking of the trust was provided for by certain gentlemen who were interested in its activities at that time, and it is very interesting to note that the number has increased from 1,500 in 1920 to over 11,000, according to the latest returns.

I do not desire to go into the matter extensively at this stage, but on the second reading I will give hon. members some information as to the working of the trust generally.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (10.41 a.m.): I am sure no objection can be offered to the object of this Bill. According to the information the Minister has given, the intention is to provide that the benefits under this trust will apply not only to the soldiers who fought in the last war but to those who return from the present conflict. Those responsible for the creation of this trust deserve every commendation. I do not know the gentleman or gentlemen responsible for it in the first place, but they certainly did a very good job.

The Premier: They have done excellent work.

Mr. NICKLIN: They did a very good job in putting this property in trust for the very excellent purpose of looking after the returned soldiers of the last war and their dependants. It is now the intention to extend the provisions of the trust to soldiers returning from this war and their dependants. I commend the Bill.

Motion (Mr. Walsh) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Walsh, read a first time.

BUFFALO FLY CONTROL BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Gair, South Brisbane, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK (Hon. F. W. Bulcock, Barcoo) (10.46 a.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced for the purposes of the control and/or eradication of the buffalo fly (*Lyperosia exigua*), and other diseases affecting cattle, and for other purposes.”

From time to time we have outbreaks of pests and diseases in this Commonwealth. Australia probably had a unique advantage in the early stages of her history inasmuch as her isolation effectively controlled the introduction of disease and pests. Finally, however, they made their appearance. The position here is not nearly so dangerous or difficult as that of other countries, but we must not live in a fool's paradise, for I believe that with the rapid means of communication that we have at present we cannot remain immune to very grave diseases that are not yet in this country—but may make their way here at any time.

The classic example of the terrific levy that can be made on the stock of our State by pests is to be found in the cattle tick. Nobody attached very much importance to tick infestation in its early stages. So far as I can glean, nobody was very interested in whether the tick was controlled. So, like an advancing army, the tick came ever south until it enveloped a large part of Queensland, and finally crossed the border of New South Wales. If we were to take into consideration the economic loss caused by the tick—

and, in addition, we must calculate the cost of control and eradication—we should find that it runs into a very significant sum indeed. So far as I know, nobody has ever been able to assess accurately the toll the cattle tick has taken of the cattle industry in Queensland and Western Australia, but I estimate that it would run into a staggering number of millions of pounds. It is probable that this very extensive invasion occurred because those who were charged with responsibility for the stock industry had no comprehension of its real dangers. We have learned some valuable lessons about the tick, and it is obvious that we should translate those lessons into actual practice in any other visitation. Such a visitation has occurred, in this instance, by the buffalo fly. The buffalo fly was in Central Australia probably 70 or 80 years ago, so far as can be ascertained. Finally it came to Queensland. I think it was found here first in 1923 on Westmoreland Station. Certain surveys were made year in and year out, and the indications are that the buffalo fly has made east over those years. It is true that climatic factors have affected it, and that, at times, it has retreated, but, generally speaking, it has invaded new territories each year.

I do not think anybody in Queensland wants to be caught napping. My friend the hon. member for Coorooora had some comprehension of the danger of the introduction of the buffalo fly when he was Secretary for Agriculture in a previous Government. His Administration sent the hon. member to make a survey of the invaded territory, and in the report he made he emphasised the absolute necessity for immediate control.

If I were asked—and I have seen some of the operations of the buffalo fly in other affected countries—whether the buffalo fly could be as great a scourge as the tick, I should say that, given suitable conditions, it could be a greater scourge. It is useless to argue, as it was at one time argued, that the buffalo fly would be limited to a certain habitat by climatic conditions. A learned professor attached to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research who made a survey of the operations of the buffalo fly made the statement a few years ago that it would not extend south of Rockhampton. He was almost immediately confounded, because in the following year this particular buffalo fly, *Lyperosia exigua*, was found in Central China, whose climate is obviously a climate much more temperate than that of our Gulf and Peninsula country.

In order to test the possibilities, the Department of Agriculture in Western Australia succeeded under natural conditions in hatching several cycles of the buffalo fly, and it has been established that Perth is favourable to multiplication of the buffalo fly, and as Perth is a fair representation of the average climate on the seaboard of this Continent, it may be stated with some degree of certainty that the buffalo fly is capable of spreading over the whole of Australia. It is found in the Commonwealth Territory, Western Australia, and Queensland.

The only body of people who do not seem to be very much concerned with the incidence of the buffalo fly is the Federal administration of the Northern Territory. Western Australia is spending large sums of money each year in endeavouring to confine the fly to its present areas. Queensland, over a number of years, has also been spending quite a lot of money. We started off with one control centre at Kajabbi. Whether it was the right centre at the time I do not know, but during the past year it has been necessary to open control centres at Gilliat and Mungana. The control centre at Gilliat was established for the purpose of the country lying at the back of it, and the Mungana centre for the purpose of controlling the outlet of cattle to the eastern seaboard.

Mr. Maher: All a waste of time and money.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: I do not know whether the hon. member knows anything about the buffalo fly, but I should be inclined to say that an interjection of that nature indicates an absolute ignorance of the menace of the buffalo fly. I think we might go back to the days of earlier parliamentarians, who, when the Diseases in Stock Acts came before this House, made similar interjections about the control of the tick.

Mr. Maher: That was a different matter.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: May I tell the hon. member that the incidence of the buffalo fly in countries where it occurs is regarded as being equally malignant with the incidence of the tick? May I tell him that in the United States of America, where the buffalo fly was for many years a tremendous scourge, it was regarded as the parasite of maximum harm associated with cattle life? May I tell him that in South Africa the same buffalo fly as we have here is causing a tremendous amount of apprehension on the seaboard of Natal, where it has appeared? May I tell him that scientists all over the world, men associated with research work in this matter, regard the buffalo fly as being a malignant enemy of the cattle industry?

Mr. Maher: How can you control an insect that flies?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: Fortunately, there are some natural boundaries that do aid in the control of insects.

Mr. Maher: Nature controls them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: Nature, aided by man, can control them, but nature without the aid of man cannot control them. Although the buffalo fly first appeared in the Gulf country in 1923, it has not yet reached our eastern seaboard.

Mr. Maher: It is still in the Gulf country.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: Does the hon. member suggest that because it has not reached the eastern seaboard climatic conditions have

prevented its reaching it, or will the hon. member be just and agree that the treatment at Kajabbi and later at Gilliat and Mungana was responsible for divesting its hosts of the fly, and so the cattle went through in a clean condition? The people who understand this question agreed without hesitation that cattle should be sprayed before they are removed from the infected country, and so there is need for effective control of the problem.

Mr. Maher: Yet you dropped the Bill last year.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: I dropped the Bill because I did not desire to do something that would be rather difficult so far as it related to the people in the dairying industry. The Bill was dropped because the drought prevailed throughout the State.

Mr. Maher: The elections were on.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: The elections had nothing whatever to do with it; nor can the question of elections be allowed to interfere with a menace to the State. Anybody who suggests that the motive was other than that stated by the Premier at the time has no comprehension of the tender solicitude of this Government for the wellbeing of the primary producer.

I admit that this problem should be a national one, that it calls for co-operation between Western Australia, the Federal Territory as controlled by the Commonwealth Government, and Queensland. Unfortunately, we have not had the required co-operation from the Commonwealth Government up to the present, but I am hoping for a realignment of conscience in that respect.

Mr. Nicklin: A change of Government?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: Yes, there has been a change in the Federal Parliament, and the present Commonwealth Government have a sense of their responsibilities. Consequently, I am hoping that the resolutions that have been carried by all the States, emphasising the need for regarding this problem as a national one, will at long last be given effect to.

Let us examine the problem in relation to the territory in which the fly now exists. Up to the present consolidated revenue has borne all the costs of control, and it is obvious that these costs will increase rather than decrease. I am not one to take the view that—

“God’s in his heaven;

All’s right with the world!”—

that the buffalo fly will not extend. At the present time probably the buffalo fly is under control in the territory in which it exists, but the cattle there are less vulnerable to attack than cattle outside those areas. It is a well-established fact that the cattle in the dairying industries, the highly sensitive, thin-skinned animals in the low and high rainfall areas, are more liable to attack than the cattle in the buffalo-fly-infested districts, and thus it may be said that the dairy cattle will

be economically doomed if the fly should be allowed to reach its maximum development in those areas. Any man who argues otherwise shows that he has no knowledge of the vicissitudes connected with buffalo-fly destruction. It is true that the people in the Gulf country have carried the burden for years, and it is also true that we have thrown a cordon round the infected districts. It is true, too, that we have said to the people in the territory, "This is your job, it is your misfortune, and apart from the finances that the State will provide—and we have provided adequate finance—you will have to carry the burden of control."

That is obviously unfair. Why should one section of primary producers in the distant areas of our State, people who probably live under the harshest conditions that any producers within the State have to endure, be required to man that line and hold it to protect the industry in southern parts of the State and in other parts of the Commonwealth? Any man who has a sense of proportion and a sense of justice will realise that that is a wrong attitude. I believe that this is a national problem, but if we cannot treat it as a national problem then we must treat it as a State problem, and in doing so everybody who is being protected should be asked to make a contribution to the cost of that protection.

It must not be assumed that the contribution asked for under this Bill—1d. in each £5 on the sale of stock—is going to cover the whole cost, but I do hold the view, and I hold it very firmly, that the industry has a duty to make some contribution to its own welfare. If an industry is not willing to make a contribution to its own welfare, can you logically ask the public to make a contribution? These things are apt to cut both ways. Let us take a case in point, that of dairy stabilisation. The public in Queensland, and the public in Australia, willingly agreed to make a contribution to the welfare of the dairying industry of Queensland by paying a stabilised price for butter in Australia after the downfall of the Paterson scheme. Can it be argued that the producer shall take everything and that a generous public, and a sympathetic Parliament, should be willing to go on making contributions to their welfare? It must become more and more evident, and it must be established to a greater and greater degree, that industry has some responsibility for its welfare, as in this instance.

We have had for many years a Diseases in Stock Act. This Act requires a contribution from the grower, who is the producer, and that contribution is being subsidised by the Crown on a particularly generous scale. The Crown has already made a contribution, apart from consolidated revenue expenditure, that can be gauged by a debit balance of a quarter of a million of money to the credit of the Stock Diseases Fund. Hon. members can verify the fact, as they have access to the proper tables. If this were a charge on consolidated revenue, it would merely add to the deficit.

The State has been particularly generous in this regard. It is futile to think that the

£5,000 or £6,000 that it is proposed to raise under this Bill is going to finance the whole of the cost of buffalo-fly control. It is obvious that the cost is going to be a great deal more than that. I hold that these people in the Gulf country should be freed of a burden they should not carry. I hold that that burden should be distributed over the whole of the producers in Queensland. The question is: how best can that burden be distributed? It can be distributed in the way I suggest, and in my opinion in no other way. On a previous occasion when this measure was before this Chamber hon. members argued that the cost should be collected, if it was collected at all, by an increase in stock assessments. The difficulties in respect of stock assessments are that there are limitations on the number of cattle that may be assessed. A person has to own a certain number of cattle or sheep before he is assessed. Suppose we altered the Act and brought every beast within the ambit of the Diseases in Stock Act? It would require so many returns and assessments, and the sum collected from the men with, say, two head of cattle would be so little and the cost of assessment would be relatively so heavy that the required £6,000 a year would be absorbed in administration expenses. So obviously that method falls to the ground.

The questions are briefly these: first, are these people in the Gulf country to be required to carry the whole of the burden? I think hon. members will answer that with me by saying, "No." The second is: does the buffalo fly constitute a menace within the State? All the evidence available constrains me to answer that question with an emphatic "Yes." The third is: who should be responsible for the cost? Should they be the people interested in protection of their own assets and the preservation of their own industry? The answer to that is: the people who are most intimately concerned, those people being the producers.

The measure I contemplate will provide for a fee of 1d. on every £5, or part thereof starting at £2, of the amounts paid on the sale of stock. That obviously is a fair and just way.

Mr. Muller interjected.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: The hon. member knows there are no calves going through the abattoirs now. Perhaps the hon. member will give expression to his well-known sense of responsibility and so do the right thing about this Bill. He realises that it is of State significance, not Gulf significance, and he will argue this from the point of view of State significance and not of parochial significance, and so he will not selfishly allow the Gulf man to continue to carry the burden and let the dairymen or the coast men escape scot-free. I think that would be a wrong attitude and a wrong approach to this question, because I believe everybody should make some contribution to the solution of a national question. I propose to make the incidence of that contribution as wide as possible.

This Bill provides for a stamp tax and assessment attracting tax at the rate of 1d.

in each £5 or part thereof on the sale of stock. As far as I can see the revenue will amount to £5,500 to £6,000 per annum. Our expenditure last year on the control of the pest was over £6,000, and I can see no reason to hope for any diminution of expenditure. I am not optimistic enough to believe that we can adequately keep the fly within the area he is at present occupying, but I do believe that with adequate control we can materially limit the area.

No country was ever successful in evolving a way of dealing with the buffalo fly except by the control of stock movement. It may be that by experimenting we shall be able to evolve some system whereby we shall be able to use a repellent. We have over the last 12 months been doing some material work in that matter, but there is no indication at the present time that we have found a repellent that will control the fly. Obviously, over the years the fly has become acclimatised, and probably is capable of invading new territory.

I commend this Bill to hon. members. I believe it is a fair way of approaching this question, and I can see no other way. I am not willing to allow the system to continue under which the Gulf man is penalised for the benefit of the people in the coast areas. There is no material hardship in the application of the principles of this Bill. It enunciates a principle that an industry is under a duty to make some contribution to its own welfare in general. It is a Bill that, I believe, will do the job. It sets out to provide the finance that up to the present has been found by the Crown for the control of the fly.

Mr. Nicklin: What are the other diseases that it is proposed to deal with?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: There are no other diseases that we propose to deal with under this Bill.

Mr. Nicklin: The motion reads ". . . and other diseases."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: I understand that is the legal requirement. Probably it will be found that the method of control may be biological. We hope it will be, but the Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has after several years of biological research abandoned the idea of biological control, and Sir David Rivett frankly admitted to me when we discussed this subject last year that so far as the investigations of the institute were concerned any possibility of biological control appears to have disappeared. However, that was the view held for many years about prickly-pear.

I agree that too much importance may be attached to biological control. I know of many instances in which people neglect to destroy things that should be destroyed, because of some feeble hope that at some time some form of biological control will rescue them from their trouble. It is a wrong approach to the question. The biological control of prickly-pear was a reasonably simple matter; indeed, it involved one of the

elementary phases of biological control. The form of biological control that attempts to destroy one parasite by another is obviously a great deal more complex. Obviously, that work will have to go on and obviously parasitologists and entomologists will have to be very closely associated in that. It is essential that we should control movement on the one hand, but that we should not be satisfied with that, but do all the things that are necessary to find out if we can discover some other form of control. This will involve the use in the Gulf country of certain officers of my veterinary section. Those men, obviously, because they are indirectly associated with buffalo-fly control, should have their salaries charged to the fund that will be created.

That is the whole story. In any case, it would not be a bad idea, in view of certain developments, to have three or four veterinaries permanently stationed in the Gulf country. For two years I have had a veterinary stationed at Clonecurry making investigations into tick fevers in regard to the transfer of Gulf cattle to the artificial pastures of the coast. We made very valuable contributions to the solution of that question. The diseases of cattle are interrelated and incidental. No person can argue that, because a veterinary is engaged in this particular type of work and there is suddenly an outbreak of contagious pneumonia he should say, "I cannot attend to that, because I am on the buffalo fly and only on the buffalo fly." Obviously, it would be his duty to attend to such an outbreak or anything of a widespread character that might occur.

It is not intended—obviously it could not be done—to utilise the £6,000 that is to be raised here for the purpose of the subsidising of my veterinary service. If the hon. gentleman will look at my Estimates for this year he will see that there has been a material increase of the veterinary services to the people of the State. I do not want all the difficulties of transfers, merely because a man is on diseases in stock or brands or anything else. The whole work that will be associated with this will be the buffalo-fly work and there will be no charge on this fund except for work that is directly associated with buffalo fly. But if there was a veterinary in the vicinity and something occurred, it might be wise and proper for him to be made available for the general service of people who are not materially suffering hardship owing to the incidence of the buffalo fly.

That is all I have to say about this Bill. I believe that control is essential and for that reason I move the motion.

Mr. WALKER (Cooroora) (11.15 a.m.): Again we are indebted to the Minister for the great amount of information he has given us concerning the ravages of the buffalo fly during the last 12 months. Last year we listened attentively to what he had to say on this subject, and it was news to many of us to hear of the spread of the buffalo fly up to that time, and we realised the damage it could do to the dairying industry if it came south. The Minister has emphasised these points

to-day and I agree with what he says. I realise the menace this fly will be to the State if it spreads much within the next couple of years. If I thought that the buffalo fly was likely to come south I should spey all my cattle and leave the industry because I know that dairy farming on low country would not be profitable if we had to suffer the ravages of both the tick and the fly. One can imagine what conditions would be like at the present time if our stock, which are now poor, were attacked by the tick and the fly during hot, muggy weather. I venture the opinion that under such circumstances 90 per cent. of our herds would die.

I am not exaggerating when I say that I hold this menace in dread, but I do admire the Minister for the endeavours he has made to do something to check its onslaught. I wish to point out, however, that we shall continue to fight to-day against what we resisted last year—additional taxation. Many years ago a Stock Diseases Fund was created for such purposes as the retarding of the spread of pests like the tick and the buffalo fly. If the Government failed to do something in the matter to-day it would be tantamount to a repudiation of the contract entered into by them with the stockowners at that time.

This is really a national matter, for it is possible that this menace will spread to other States. It is just as much of national concern as the control of any other cattle or human disease. When I was Secretary for Agriculture and Stock the Scullin Government were in power in the Federal sphere, but they did nothing to help us, and nothing has been done by any of the succeeding Commonwealth Governments.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: You had a more ambitious scheme than mine.

Mr. WALKER: Yes, but we received no help from the Federal authorities. The Commonwealth Government should do something to combat not only the tick but also the buffalo fly. The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock has not told us whether he has approached the various Commonwealth Governments during the last five, six, or eight years.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: I have approached them until I am tired of doing so.

Mr. WALKER: I should like the Minister to approach the present Federal Government. It is not fair that the Commonwealth should refuse to do anything. The spread of a human disease, such as plague, is more a matter for the Commonwealth than for any individual State, and the same applies to cattle diseases.

We have been living under the shadow of the buffalo-fly menace in Queensland and Western Australia for the last 40 or 50 years, but Western Australia has been more fortunate in that the fly has been more or less controlled by the spraying of cattle whilst being transported by boat from Wyndham to Fremantle. We have to do our spraying in yards, and, as the spray is only a repellent, its effect wears off in one or two days.

I remember spraying done in the Kajabbi yards about 10 years ago, and I remind

the Committee that the first practical attempt to control this menace was made by the Moore Government. I was pleased to hear the Minister refer to that fact, just as I was delighted to hear of the establishment of other spraying yards. I feel that because of this work the spread south of the fly has not been as rapid as one might expect.

I really thought years ago that by the way it was spreading the fly would be with us here by now. The very fact that we have a little high country to travel our cattle over seems to have stopped it, because the fly seems to leave the stock at a certain altitude. As soon as the fly gets over the range between the Gulf of Carpentaria and the east coast, however, it is going to be a very sad day for the whole of that hot, muggy country right down the coast to Brisbane. Personally, I think that the buffalo fly will travel wherever the tick has travelled. We all know that the tick does not thrive on the Darling Downs. I am in agreement with the Minister in trying to keep this menace down, just as I should be if his efforts were directed to coping with any blight or stock disease or, for that matter, any human disease.

The Minister said that the Bill introduced last session was dropped because of the drought conditions that prevailed—that the time was not opportune, that it was not fair to the farmer. My contention is that the farmer is in a worse position to-day than he was then. He is faced with a drought that is almost as bad as that of last year. There is every indication that the present drought will be as bad as the preceding one. The time is arriving when we shall have to get relief from the Government in the purchase of fodder. Furthermore, our butter market is in a doubtful position, and we have virtually no sale for our second-grade butter. As a matter of fact, everything looks particularly blue. We all have the worries of war to contend with, and I suppose 90 per cent. of our eligible boys are away fighting. If it was deemed wise to drop the Buffalo Fly Control Bill last session, are there not greater reasons why this Bill should not be proceeded with now?

I am opposed to the principle of taxation embodied in the Bill. I think the cost should be met from the Stock Diseases Fund. The Kajabbi yards cost about £1,200, and I suppose, with other railway expenses, the whole costs run into about £2,000. We endeavoured to work with the stockowners to get stock thoroughly sprayed. They were trucked away in the middle of the night, and the manure taken out of the trucks at intervals to ensure complete protection. All that expense came from consolidated revenue or the Stock Diseases Fund. No tax was imposed on the cattle industry at that time, and I say that the cost of controlling buffalo fly in Queensland should be put on the shoulders of the whole of the people of Queensland and not on the unfortunate man who has a poddy calf to sell for a couple of pounds. A general levy would be a fair thing, because then the cost of the operation of the Bill would come from consolidated revenue.

The Minister said that he did not think anybody should be exempt from this taxation, but that is contrary to the argument we generally hear from hon. members opposite—that a tax should be on the shoulders of those best able to bear it. It is just too bad that the man who sells a poddy calf for £2 has to pay 1d.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock:

No, he does not.

Mr. WALKER: I may be wrong—my hearing is not the best, and I have to rely to a certain extent on the movements of the Minister's lips. I thought that on every sale amounting to £2 or over the farmer would pay a small tax. I should be pleased if the Minister would enlighten me. Perhaps he will tell me the minimum amount?

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock:

£2, but not on calves.

Mr. WALKER: That is a big tax, but the worst part about it is the inconvenience that will be caused. A farmer will be obliged to carry a receipt book about with him. The farmer is held responsible should the agent lose his receipt. All these little things trouble us. The responsibility is cast upon the farmer all the time. He may forget to take his receipt book when he goes to town—he has so many things to remember that he must do for the Government. Indeed, I almost "go dippy" filling in all the forms that I have to make to Government authorities. What with petrol-rationing and all these other things one does not know where one stands. The making of returns should be simplified.

When the Minister is delivering his second-reading speech I should like him to tell me how much more the graziers in the North are now paying for buffalo-fly control than they paid before.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock:

They are paying the fees that you imposed.

Mr. WALKER: They are paying the charges imposed for spraying, but that is simply paying for a service. In any case, it amounts to only a few pence a head and it is a perfectly legitimate charge for a service. We have to keep a man there to supervise the work. The Opposition are 100 per cent. behind the Minister on the subject of control, but to make hon. members more conversant with the menace I suggest that he select two hon. members from the Opposition and two from the Government Party to visit the North and thoroughly investigate the problem so as to see what damage is being done. Of course, the Minister has not the time to spare to make the visit himself.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock:

As a matter of fact, I went up early this year; I went to see what the problem was all about.

Mr. WALKER: Then I should like the Minister to relate his experiences so that hon. members will have a better knowledge of the depredations of the fly. It is about 100 years ago that the buffalo fly was introduced

by its then natural host, the buffalo, and so the buffalo has been responsible for its spread to other districts. The Minister has attempted to control its spread by proclaiming an infested area, but there is nothing to prevent its further spread by a buffalo, which will simply walk through any fence, and so the flies will be free to spread to other districts. The buffalo fly breeds very rapidly, something like the house fly that breeds in the dung of cattle.

There is a further danger and that is that after the buffalo fly has migrated from the hot, sultry belt of the North it may become acclimatised in the more temperate regions in the South. Therefore, I hope the Minister will approach the Commonwealth Government as soon as possible soliciting their help in the prevention of the spread of the fly to the existing clean areas. I know that the Commonwealth Government have given some service through the experimental work of their officers in the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. When I was Secretary for Agriculture and Stock I was asked by the Commonwealth Government if I would establish a buffer area in the North for a couple of years while the officers of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research carried out some experiments with wasps and other parasites to be introduced from Borneo. That was 10 years ago, but no success has been achieved by them up to the present.

To a large extent we are ignorant of the experimental work that has been carried out. With an important measure like this before us it would be wise if the Federal scientists acquainted the responsible Minister in the States affected—in this instance Western Australia and Queensland—with all the details of their investigations in order to give us some idea whether success has been attained. If a wasp could be introduced from some other part of the world to cope with these flies, a very easy method of overcoming our difficulty would have been found. We all remember when prickly-pear was infesting almost every district in Queensland. Our scientists introduced that little grub called *cactoblastis*, which made such inroads into the pear that very little of it is left to-day. That shows how easy it is to cope with a pest when we know how. It is obvious that there is a natural enemy or enemies of buffalo fly in our far north-western areas because the fly is making very little progress into clean areas. We must, however, support the Minister in his measures to prevent the fly from coming south.

Anyone who has visited the infested districts must realise the seriousness of the position, particularly the difficulties that confront us in dealing with the problem. The first difficulty is that all our cattle travel from north to south. Therefore, the buffalo fly is working southwards and the fly breeds in the dung of the cattle as they travel. That causes one to think that there must be some climatic barrier or natural enemy that keeps the fly in check, because the fly has been in existence in Australia for 100 years and if it had no enemy,

climatic or otherwise, it would have penetrated to the southern parts of Australia before to-day.

These are factors that are well worth investigating. The damage done by the fly is particularly heavy, and the toll levied on cattle-owners in the infested districts is a big one. As a matter of fact, very few fat cattle are now dispatched from the infested districts. They are mostly sent away as stores, and these are going to be of poor quality if the damage caused by the fly is allowed to continue. In my opinion, little advantage is obtained from spraying. After spraying cattle are taken by train to their destination and the eggs of the fly are spread in transit. Spraying is only an ameliorative measure, one that is effective for 24 hours at least, but at the end of that period more flies are bred.

Reference is made in the departmental annual report to the work of the entomologists and the use of fly traps. I do not know if the Minister can give us an explanation on that point. I hope that the Minister will see that no silly business is going on with these entomologists or officials of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and that they are not setting traps to catch this fly. It is too serious a question to make such experiments, and I hope that he will put his foot down on the use of such traps and that will be the last we shall hear of them.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: I think you have it wrong.

Mr. WALKER: The expenditure on fighting the buffalo fly has up to the present been borne by the Stock Diseases Fund, or what the Minister has been able to "pinch" from some other fund.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE AND STOCK: Mr. Gair, I rise to a point of order. I strongly resent such an expression.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must withdraw. He knows it is unparliamentary.

Mr. WALKER: I merely used the word "pinch" in a joke. The Minister knows I did not use the word seriously. I was about to refer to the expenditure from the Stock Diseases Fund and then to the bull tax as another source from which the expenditure was probably met. The Minister knows that the bull tax was unfairly levied—I should not have used the word "pinched"—and that at the present time his department is getting about £7,000 a year revenue from it and we are getting no benefit.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: That is untrue. Both your statements are untrue.

Mr. WALKER: That is perfectly true, but I am sorry I used the word "pinched." The same thing is true of many other taxes. The farmer is put to considerable expense by our dairy regulations. He receives

instructions to buy sterilisers and new separators and new cans, and a hundred and one things that, in many cases, are quite unnecessary. Have these regulations improved the grade of butter? The Minister knows that the grade is worse to-day than it was two years ago.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Rubbish!

Mr. WALKER: My statement is based on the report of the Under Secretary for Agriculture and Stock. We should not impose a further tax on dairymen or cause them to spend any money unless it is absolutely necessary. It must be remembered that there is a drought on and the dairy farmers are having a bad time. Many of their sons are away at the war, prices are bad, and it is almost impossible for many of them to make enough to live on. The farmer is confronted with many obstacles not connected with the Government at all. For instance, the drought is something over which the farmer has no control; then there is the difficulty of doubtful prices; in addition to that, there are many new diseases that afflict his stock. During the last couple of years the three-days sickness caused a considerable number of deaths amongst dairy stock and the loss of revenue to the dairy farmers was great. There is also the problem of diseases in plant life—our grasses, for instance. We have pastures in the coast area—I am not talking about the Mary Valley or the Burnett—that are being ruined by mat grass. The only thing it is good for is to run a few horses on it. Those are a few of the difficulties with which the people on the land have to contend.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Do you think we should hand the country back to the blacks?

Mr. WALKER: No, but I think the gentleman ought to be thankful he is a canegrower.

I assure the Minister the time is not opportune to impose a new tax on the farmers or the small graziers. It would not be fair, for the reasons I have given. The difficulties of the men on the land are great, the cost of living is going up, and their opportunity for getting the entertainment to which they are entitled, just as much as their fellows in the city, has been curtailed owing to petrol-rationing.

I hope at this eleventh hour the Minister will again listen to the arguments of the Opposition, as he did last year, and withdraw the Bill.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (11.39 a.m.): I thought that since a similar Bill was debated in Parliament last year and its defects had been emphasised by the Opposition the Minister had been converted to our point of view, because he withdrew the Bill when it had reached the third reading. However, for some reason best known to himself he has decided to introduce the Bill in a slightly amended form.

Different views have been expressed in the Committee this morning as to the length of time this buffalo fly has been in the Gulf country. I think it would be appropriate if I gave to the Committee the period of time that has elapsed since the buffalo fly was introduced to Northern Australia.

Volume 1 of the "Australian Encyclopaedia," to be found in the Parliamentary Library, under the heading of "Buffalo," states—

"In 1825 Maurice Barlow, then commandant at Melville Island, imported three buffaloes to that station from Timor; as they thrive, and the cattle sent up from Sydney did not, another consignment of 15 was imported in December, 1827, and 16 more in August, 1828, out of which eight were sent to Raffles Bay. In February, 1829, however, Collett Barker reported against further importations; the buffaloes, he said, were too poor to kill on arrival and too wild to retain in captivity when once ashore. When, however, the Port Essington settlement was garrisoned in 1838, buffaloes were again imported from Timor."

That shows that buffaloes came to the Australian mainland in the 10-year period between 1828 and 1838. For all practical purposes, we have had the buffalo with the tick and the fly on the Australian mainland for over 100 years, and the fly has been known in the Gulf country for at least 60 years.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: There is no evidence to support that.

Mr. MAHER: Practical men with whom I have discussed the buffalo fly with reference to the Gulf country have informed me that it is so. The Minister used the year 1923 as the commencement of the buffalo-fly infestation in the Gulf country. Its effect may have become more extensive by that time, but the fly has been known in the Gulf littoral for 60 years. During all that time there have been vast movements of cattle from the Northern Territory and the Gulf down through the back country of New South Wales and Queensland to the markets of Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. The Territory has been breeding country. North Queensland also has been breeding country. Why has not the fly, with its partner the tick, spread to the southern areas?

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Why has it spread so much in the last 12 months?

Mr. MAHER: Professor Seddon can throw some light on that. He states—

"The buffalo fly favours very humid areas in which to live and propagate, and for this reason it has persisted in an area around the Gulf ever since it was introduced from the East Indies about 1825."

He stated further—

"A belt of comparatively dry country between Normanton and Burketown has acted as a barrier to its passage east and south. However, following on the wet

season in the Gulf country last year, it spread quickly.

"It spread inland from the southern shores of the Gulf further than at any other time previously. It also extended over the Norman River in the vicinity of Normanton for approximately 30 miles.

"All the recently infected areas were within the area quarantined this year, and it is to be emphasised," said Professor Seddon, "that the spread of the fly was due to the natural flight of the insect, and, of course, could not have been controlled any further than it was."

That is the considered opinion of a man who is a veterinary officer in the Department of Agriculture and Stock. That is an expert opinion: the natural flight of the insect results in its spread to the areas he refers to, and no method of control could possibly prevent that flight. It will thus be seen that it comes back to the question that I asked of the Minister: by what means or expenditure could we hope to cope with an insect that can fly? That was the poser I put to the Minister: how can we control a flying insect?

The Secretary for Public Lands: Cut off his wings.

Mr. MAHER: The Hon. the Minister is in a jocular mood, and I can say in the same spirit that if the Minister intends to expend money for the purpose of cutting wings off the insect, of course I will oppose the vote. It must be regarded as a sound and logical argument that this fly, which has been here for so many years, has never got down below that dry country, despite the vast movements of cattle to southern areas over the past 50 or 60 years.

Another interesting reference to the subject is to be found in an article written in the "Queensland Agricultural Journal" of 1 July, 1941, by Mr. F. H. S. Roberts, Doctor of Science at the Animal Health Station, Yeerongpilly. It would well repay any hon. member who is interested in this subject to read the article right through. Mr. Roberts makes this interesting comment—

"Buffalo flies appear incapable of surviving any length of time away from their hosts. Even under warm, humid conditions very few flies will live for 24 hours, whilst under dry conditions their survival does not extend beyond a few hours. With moderately low temperatures, on the other hand, the flies become inactive and may live up to five days. Newly emerged flies, under normal conditions, usually die within an hour or so unless they find a host, but, again, low temperatures may extend their survival up to six days. . . Strong winds, low temperatures, and low humidities are very unfavourable to the adult fly, and when such conditions prevail, the number of flies on cattles are rapidly reduced."

Another interesting point he makes is—

"Buffalo flies dislike dust, and infested cattle being worked under dusty conditions quickly lose their infestations. When being

driven, it frequently happens that the animals in the lead are very much more heavily infested than those in the tail, a phenomenon considered to be also associated with dust."

It seems to me that the buffalo fly has a natural habitat, that its life cycle is governed entirely by the humid conditions on the northern littoral of Australia, and that it has no chance of survival in more southerly latitudes.

Take the tick as an example. It certainly has come further south, but there are many areas of South Queensland in which it does not and cannot live. With my partner, I have a property on the Dawson, on the eastern fall of the main Dividing Range. That country is ticky, but just a few miles on the western fall of the range, in the direction of Miles and Roma, not a tick is to be found.

Mr. Dunstan: The tick did tremendous damage before measures were taken to combat it.

Mr. MAHER: Combative measures do not matter one iota when considering these natural factors. There are men living not many miles from my place who never have to dip their cattle, and they are able to send their stock to the Sydney market.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Would you abandon tick control?

Mr. MAHER: I am not suggesting the abandonment of tick control—that is an entirely different matter—I am emphasising the point that there are natural conditions that govern the life of both the tick and the buffalo fly.

The tick cannot live on the western fall of that range towards Roma and on the southern fall towards Miles; it exists on the eastern fall. That fact shows that the tick can thrive only in climatic conditions suitable to its life cycle.

Mr. Collins: You say that we should do nothing about it.

Mr. MAHER: I am not saying anything of the kind. Control measures in ticky country are absolutely essential—they are applied on my own property—but I am saying to this Committee that nature plays a part in the control of ticks and also in the control of the buffalo fly. In certain parts of Queensland on innumerable occasions ticky cattle have passed through areas where the tick does not thrive. Despite the efforts at control, ticky cattle have moved over country not subject to ticks, and there has been no big outbreak of ticks of any sustained length in those areas. You therefore see, Mr. Gair, that the tick is controlled by natural barriers. Precisely the same thing applies to the control of the buffalo fly. There is a line in North Queensland where humid conditions merge into dry conditions, and it is north of that line that the buffalo fly thrives and will continue to thrive despite the efforts made to deal with it.

I wish to give hon. members of the Committee the experiences of a practical man—

not a theorist—who has been amongst stock all his life. I quote from "Queensland Country Life," dated 6 February last, and refer to the remarks of Mr. H. D. Atkinson, Wyandotte Station, Ingham. He states—

"Nature a Buffer to Buffalo Fly.

"A Concrete Case.

"If the buffalo fly were a menace to the rest of Australia, it would have spread with the tick."

"This is the viewpoint of Mr. H. D. Atkinson, of Wyandotte Station, Ingham, after a lifetime in the North.

"He quotes a concrete case to show that the buffalo fly will not travel out of its environment.

"Mr. Atkinson writes: 'There has been a lot of loose talk about the buffalo fly, and the claim has been made that it is essential to have a "buffer area" to stop the fly from coming into the central cattle area. The "buffer," I presume, would be a strip of country from Normanton to somewhere about Gilliat.

"I have travelled a lot in this country. I also know that the cattle are practically intermixed from Ingham to Burketown. As the fly came in with the ticks when buffaloes were imported to Darwin, it is a wonder they have not spread as the ticks have done.

"I can quote an instance why, in my opinion, they will not live in the upper Burdekin country.

"In 1928 my father bought 1,000 bullocks from a number of settlers about 250 miles on the Boorooloola side of Burketown.

"In October (so as to have the benefit of the storms) we took delivery at Turnoff Lagoons (that is 80 miles from Burketown), and the cattle had a good number of buffalo flies on them. However, we decided to take them in and risk spreading the fly in our herd, because we were both confident that the fly would not live at Wyandotte.

"We inspected the cattle at the Flinders River, and while there were some flies on them, they were not nearly so numerous. The next time we saw them was on the Einasleigh River, about 40 miles below Abingdon Downs homestead.

"There were no flies. The drover told us they left the cattle soon after getting to Normanton, and there was not a sign of the fly afterwards.

"The cattle lauded in here, fattened, and were sold the next season."

Mr. Atkinson then goes on to say—

"The present system of spraying is a waste of time. The cattle should be allowed to come in as they did in the past and give the poor battler a chance.

"If the fly were capable of living away from the coast, it would have spread with the ticks."

There is the considered opinion of a practical man of North Queensland who makes the important point that although there has been a continuous link-up of cattle stations from Ingham to Burketown, and there has been a thorough intermixing of cattle as a consequence, the fly has not extended to the coast. It must appeal to any hon. member as being a reasonable and sound conclusion that, if it were possible for it to thrive under the conditions of the coast, the fly in those 50 to 60 years would have spread from station to station, and from beast to beast, as a consequence of this continuous linking-up of pastoral properties until it had found a natural environment on the coast at Ingham. The buffalo fly has been in Australia for over 100 years and it has been known to be in the Gulf country for at least 60 years, but with the great movements of cattle up and down the stock routes of Western Queensland from the Northern Territory south there has been no marked spread of the fly southwards, and that seems to present a strong case against the contention that it ever will come south.

When the hon. member for Cooroora was Secretary for Agriculture and Stock he, as a practical cattle man, was alarmed at the ravages of the buffalo fly, and who would not be in the area where it thrived? He said that 10 years ago it exercised his mind, and that judging from its ravages in the North he expected that it would have reached the southern areas of the State long before this. Those 10 years have gone and the buffalo fly is not here yet. Even the Secretaries for Agriculture and Stock who preceded the hon. member for Cooroora were also concerned with precisely the same problem. When the Bill was being debated last year the Premier said that when he was Secretary for Agriculture and Stock he was concerned about its threatened movement to the South and that he and his officers were taking steps to see if it could be controlled or eradicated. This problem has been a recurring one in this Chamber in every decade over the past 50 or 60 years, but the fly is not here yet. I venture to say that if any hon. member in this Chamber can emulate Methuselah and live for another 100 years he will hear the same fears expressed and the fly will still be living and thriving in its natural habitat along the northern part of Australia.

That is my opinion and that is why I interjected when the Minister was speaking that certain proposals by him were a waste of time and money. I have lived in a cattle district, and I have had experience with cattle for quite a number of years, and although I have never been in the far Gulf country and I have not seen the buffalo fly, I am willing to admit that it is a scourge in those districts, but I do feel in my own heart that it is never likely to penetrate to the southern latitudes.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Do you suggest that all control should be abandoned?

Mr. MAHER: I am not going so far as to say that the Minister should not do what

is considered reasonable and necessary to control the buffalo fly, although I do not see how he can do it effectively by his proposal. However, if there is a general feeling that some good is being done, that is all right.

Then it comes to the question of the cost involved, and according to the Minister he requires at least £5,000 or £6,000 a year for this purpose. Last year he told us that he needed this amount and I suggested in this Chamber that he should rely on the Stock Diseases Fund for the purpose. Here is a fund that is built up out of taxation levied from year to year upon the stock-owners of Queensland. What for? To control diseases in stock. Why then depart from a recognised form of stock taxation and establish a new principle altogether that confuses the issue and forces stockowners to pay two taxes instead of one? After all, this comes within the scope of the Stock Diseases Fund, which could well be utilised for the purpose of eradication or control of the buffalo fly. Section 6 of the Diseases in Stock Act provides for the establishment of the Stock Diseases Fund by a levy upon sheep, cattle, horses, &c., and during the year 1939-40 the Minister received £46,076 in levies.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: That was not direct revenue; that was revenue from the tax plus the contribution from the Crown.

Mr. MAHER: That was the amount of money available to the Minister for the specific purpose of controlling stock diseases. When we come to 1940-41 we find that the fund was far more buoyant, for that year he received £51,149. The fund for 1940-41 was £5,073 up on the previous year; yet the Minister has not enough money. I venture to say that if we voted him the £3,000 he expects by virtue of this tax in 12 months' time, even with his still more buoyant revenue, he will not be satisfied. He seems to have an insatiable thirst for levies and taxation paid out of the pockets of the cattle-owners of this State. Why should cattle-owners be singled out in this manner? If he requires this small additional expenditure, what is preventing him from drawing on consolidated revenue? If a man is in temporary trouble or in indigent circumstances the Government do not impose a special tax but call on consolidated revenue to meet the expenditure involved, and no hon. member raises any objection. Why select the cattle-owner for a discriminating tax of this nature when a community service is involved? If what the Minister says is true—and I dispute his statement as to the need for this Bill—then the risk of the spread of buffalo fly would cause a depreciation in the value of all our cattle herds. The expenditure to combat that spread, then, should fall on every section of the community. If a tax is necessary, why not take it from consolidated revenue and spread it over the whole community? The Minister recognises that in the wider sense because he desires the Commonwealth to take up the responsibility, and he would not scrutinise the source of any money made available by the Commonwealth or consider whether it came from consolidated revenue or from a special tax on cattle-owners.

If it is a good principle for the Commonwealth Government to take it from consolidated revenue and look upon measures to be taken to combat buffalo fly as a national matter, why it is not a good principle for him to draw upon consolidated revenue for the £6,000 involved here?

Let us look at the position of our dairy farmers, for example, as they will be called upon to contribute to this special tax. Surely the Minister agrees that they have been through a very hard time and that they have had to bear drought losses! Last year the Minister introduced in this Chamber a Drought Relief to Primary Producers Bill to afford assistance to a very deserving and hard-hit section of the community—namely, the dairy farmers.

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

Mr. MAHER: I desire to move the following amendment:—

“After the word ‘cattle’ insert the words—

“at the expense of the Crown.”

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I informed the hon. member that he had exhausted his time. I cannot, therefore, accept the amendment.

Mr. COLLINS (Cook) (12.5 p.m.): I regard this as an important question, and I commend the Minister for bringing down this Bill.

I have listened with interest to two prominent hon. members of the Opposition who were totally at variance one with the other about the merits of the Bill. On the one hand, the hon. member for Coorocora, who is an ex-Secretary for Agriculture and Stock and a man who probably knows the diseases that afflict dairy cattle as well as any hon. member sitting opposite, said that he regarded the buffalo fly as a very serious menace and one that should be controlled by every reasonable means in our power. He regarded it as one of the major problems affecting the cattle-owners of Queensland, and as Secretary for Agriculture and Stock he took steps to prevent its spread as far as was humanly possible. I thoroughly agree with his view, which, of course, is also that of the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock. Then the hon. member for West Moreton, who is largely interested in cattle, expressed entirely different views. He denied that it was necessary to take any action to control this very serious pest. His main argument was that natural conditions would control the buffalo fly, because it has been in Australia for 60 years or more, and that it is waste of time doing what we propose to do under the Bill.

I am surprised at the hon. member's expressing those views, because his views on problems affecting the cattlemen are usually sound. Apparently, he fails to realise that this fly is gradually spreading all the time. It has spread from the Northern Territory away up about Darwin and Melville Island, and gradually worked down through the

Northern Territory, and during recent years has crossed into Queensland and become a very distinct menace that is causing much worry to the cattlemen in the Gulf country. If there is no occasion to do any more than we are doing, can the hon. member for West Moreton or anyone else tell me why this pest is gradually spreading all the time? Mr. Atkinson is a cattle-owner and his views are very interesting, but I should not say that he is thoroughly seized of the position, because the fly has already spread over an area of country that was clean when Mr. Atkinson brought those cattle through. It is possible that the cattle that came through on that trip left the buffalo fly behind.

The hon. member says Abingdon Downs Station, in the Gulf, was found to be free of the buffalo fly after this mob of cattle had passed through that station. I was speaking to the manager of Abingdon Downs about three months ago, and the buffalo fly is on that station now, and the manager is alarmed about it. I venture to say that the view expressed by Mr. Atkinson was the same as the view held by many station-owners in the Gulf country a few years ago. The buffalo fly is gradually spreading all the time, although I do not say it is spreading as rapidly as the ticks spread.

Mr. Sparkes: Do you think the tick regulations stopped the tick from spreading?

Mr. COLLINS: I do not say the tick regulations did stop the tick. While I do not believe that you can entirely stop the spread of the buffalo fly by regulations, I believe that the longer you delay the spread of that fly the greater will be the advantage to the owners of cattle in Queensland. I venture the opinion that the fly will acclimatise itself in almost every area in which the tick has acclimatised itself. It is only a matter of time, although it may be a long time, before the buffalo fly spreads to the southern coast of Queensland. It may even spread to the Northern Rivers of New South Wales. Is it not worth while doing what we are doing to delay the spread of this awful pest as long as we can? The Minister has pointed out that the fly will live in Perth, and that being so it will live probably in districts as far south as Sydney. That fact goes to show how necessary it is that we make every possible provision to stop its spread. The tick certainly spreads very much more quickly than the buffalo fly, and there are biological reasons for this, but the fly is spreading and will follow the tick just as surely as day follows night. This year it has spread approximately 100 miles in one season on the east of the Gulf, because of the favourable climatic conditions. Can any person say that the conditions on the east coast on which dairying operations are carried on are unfavourable to the spread of the buffalo fly? The climatic conditions round Daintree on the Atherton Tableland may be a little cold, but the dairy-men there are certainly very worried at the gradual approach of the fly. Moreover, if it gets to the east coast it will gradually spread southwards through the dairying and cattle-raising districts until it infests the dairy herds

in Southern Queensland, to which it will be a great menace.

Mr. Sparkes: Have you any idea how much was spent trying to keep the tick out of New South Wales?

Mr. COLLINS: I have not, but I know, as does the hon. member, that if we could get rid of the tick we should be getting rid of one of the serious menaces to cattle. I know of instances in the Gulf country in which the owners of tens of thousands of cattle have to dip continuously in the hope of eradicating the tick, and at a cost of thousands of pounds annually, to say nothing of the knocking about the cattle received in the dipping process. However, we are discussing the buffalo fly—we are not talking of eradicating it, inasmuch as at present we have no reasonable means by which that can be done. Hon. members must realise that the buffalo fly is spreading through the herds of the Northern Territory and the Gulf country, which are very thinly populated with cattle. In many instances the cattle run only 10 or 15 head to the square mile, but notwithstanding this the fly is gradually spreading. One can visualise the rapidity of the spread in our dairying districts, in which the cattle population is probably 400 or 500 to the square mile. The effects would be most serious.

Those who have anything to do with dairying are seriously alarmed at the spread of the buffalo fly. The dairymen on the Atherton Tableland have discussed this matter with the director of the butter factory, the Council of Agriculture, and the Minister, and ask that all necessary precautions be taken to stop its spread. We must realise that the dairying industry is worth approximately £10,000,000 a year to Queensland. Are we to follow the advice of some hon. members opposite and sit idly by and see this valuable industry ruined or brought to such a state that it may be ruined, simply because we are too inert to take any action to try to stop the spread of the buffalo fly?

When the hon. member for West Moreton was asked if he disagreed with taking any action at all, he did not answer the question directly. The whole trend of his argument was that natural conditions will control the buffalo fly and that nothing you can do matters at all. I contend that, as the buffalo moves from place to place, it will gradually acclimatise itself to slightly varying altitudes and climatic conditions. It has already done that in the Gulf country. To-day, round Georgetown and Forsayth—considerably higher than round Normanton and the stations close to the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria—the buffalo fly is rampant. It has acclimatized itself even to areas in which the tick will not live. There are areas round Georgetown that are absolutely immune from the tick. No-one has been able to give an adequate explanation of this fact, but cattle in those areas develop redwater as soon as they leave that country and go into tick-infested areas. The fly is already acclimatized to the area in which the tick will not live, and that being so, there is nothing to prove that it

will not acclimatise itself to the Darling Downs, for instance.

Mr. Sparkes: Does not your argument go to show that the regulations for the eradication of the tick have not had the effect of eradicating it?

Mr. COLLINS: I do not say that this Bill will eradicate the buffalo fly, but I do say that we must delay its spread as much as we can. No-one is foolish enough to believe that the establishment of spraying facilities will eradicate the buffalo fly, but if we can stave off the ravages of this pest for 10 or 20 or 30 years and so save the dairying industry, which alone is worth £10,000,000 a year to the State, surely no-one will suggest that we should not spend the £6,000 a year, as suggested by the Minister, for that purpose? I say that we should spend all that is necessary. It will be essential for the Minister to spend whatever money is necessary to control this fly as much as possible.

Mr. Maher: But the insect can still fly after you spray.

Mr. COLLINS: Does the hon. member know how the spraying is done? The cattle are not just sprayed and then left. They are sprayed as they go into the trucks, and the trucks are sprayed as they are moving out from the station. This spraying is usually done at night, when the fly is not very active, the purpose being to allow the train to leave the station without carrying any of the fly with it. Up to the present that is the only practicable means of delaying the spread of the fly that we know. The Minister would be unwise to discontinue this spraying. Many people in my electorate were very alarmed late last year about the spread of the fly. They waited on me and asked me to make representations to the Minister to have spraying facilities erected to check the fly in Mungana. At that time it was thought by officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock that these men were unduly alarmed about the position, but we find to-day that these spraying facilities were necessary and will be used during the wet season this year. Some of the graziers themselves are more alarmed than the officers of the department. They see the fly every day. They are living in the infested area, and they see how it is spreading from day to day. They realise the harmful effects a spread of this pest will have on cattle.

It has been suggested that the method of paying for this work amounts to the imposition of a further tax upon the cattlemen. Hon. members must not forget that the men who are living in the buffalo-fly area have had to carry the whole of the expense in the past.

Mr. Nicklin: What expense?

Mr. COLLINS: About £6,000 a year, and that is not all by any means.

Mr. Maher: There is no special levy on the Gulf men.

Mr. COLLINS: They have had to pay. They have had to pay to spray their cattle going out of that area, not to keep their own

cattle clean, but to keep the rest of the cattle in Queensland free of buffalo fly. They have done that to keep the cattle of the hon. members for West Moreton and Stanley free. It is all very well for the hon. member for Stanley to want to keep these people paying costs when he has a legitimate duty to share in those costs.

I say that it is totally unfair that the people in the Gulf should be carrying the whole of the costs incurred in the spraying of cattle to keep the rest of the cattle in Queensland free of buffalo fly. The cost of the spraying is not the only cost they are obliged to pay. They have been obliged to walk their cattle hundreds of miles in order to truck them at a certain trucking station. Their costs have been at least 10s. a head instead of 1s. or 2s. a head. I suppose I should be right in saying that they are paying about 10s. to 15s. a head extra on the whole of the cattle they send out of the area concerned, just because they happen to live in the buffalo-fly area. Yet many hon. members opposite sit back and say complacently, "That is all right so long as we have not to pay; let them go on paying." I want hon. members opposite to get it firmly established in their minds that these men are doing that to protect the cattle of hon. members opposite and not their own. I say that the Minister is right in doing what he contemplates, and he would be negligent if he did not bring down this Buffalo Fly Control Bill to protect the cattle in the rest of Queensland, particularly in the dairying industry, from the ravages of this pest.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) (12.23 p.m.): I understand that the tax is 1d. on every £5 worth of cattle sold, whether by private sale or auction, with an exemption of £2.

From what I can gather, this pest is confined to a small area in the Gulf country east of Normantou and extending from round Croydon, past Miriam Downs, Kajabbi, and Mount Cuthbert, and north over the Gregory River, striking the border of the Northern Territory. I also understand that since last year the buffalo fly has spread east of the Gulf slightly, thus threatening the country towards the Daintree, where we have some dairy herds. I believe that they are not very large herds at the moment, but it is to be hoped that they will be large in the future. Without taking up much time in discussing the matter, I want to say that I feel that whatever is done to check this pest should be a charge on the consolidated revenue of this State.

Perhaps the Government can induce the Commonwealth Government to assume full control of the problem. Instead of imposing an additional tax to raise the paltry £6,000 that is said to be required under the Bill, it would be preferable to use the levies imposed under the Diseases in Stock Act or defray the cost from consolidated revenue. Of course, I am assuming that the proposal this year is the same as it was last year.

Then there will be the need to plaster stamps on statements of accounts. Goodness

knows, there are enough pests, without any more taxation stamps and returns. There are public servants all over the place working from morning to night—they are not killed at their work, of course—doing these jobs of checking up the plastering of stamps on account sales, receipts, and the like.

I strongly object to the imposition of another tax. Let the whole community bear the cost, but do not impose any more taxation on the cattlemen. Of course, I know that a charge of 6d. is made for the spraying of cattle within the infected area, and that the cattle trains are sprayed before they leave, too, but I suggest that the spraying charge should be reduced to 3d., and thus some measure of help extended to the cattle producers. I shall return to the subject a little later on.

Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley) (12.27 p.m.): The hon. member for West Moreton was prevented by the expiration of his time from moving an amendment that he proposed to move. Therefore, I move the following amendment:—

"After the word 'cattle,' insert the words—

'at the expense of the Crown.'"

It is only right and reasonable that the charge should be defrayed out of consolidated revenue. Already the dairying industry is financing many governmental activities in connection with research. For instance, approximately £6,000 is collected under the bull tax, which is supposed to be used for the improvement of cattle but which is really used only for administrative purposes.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: That is not true.

Mr. MACDONALD: That is my opinion.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: You do not know anything about it when you express an opinion like that.

Mr. MACDONALD: I confess I know nothing at all about the buffalo fly, but I think that the cost of controlling it should be paid out of consolidated revenue. Why should the small dairy farmer be singled out to pay the cost? Last year the Bill was dropped because the Premier realised the sincerity of the case submitted against it by hon. members on this side of the Chamber. He realised that it was introduced at a time when the dairy farmers were not able to bear the further impost, but their conditions are worse to-day than they were last year. Last year they were suffering from the effects of a drought, but they are faced with a drought again this year. They have just experienced the severest winter on record, with no rain since May. Dairying is largely a family business, and many sons of farmers have enlisted. On top of all these difficulties the Government propose to impose a fresh tax.

I think the department has done fairly well out of the dairy farmer and the cattlemen. It is all very well for the hon. member for Cook to say that the cattlemen in the

fly-infected area have to pay so much for the spraying of their cattle. He went on to give a description of what was done in this respect at Kajabbi, but I want to tell him that on the North Coast we have to go to the expense of dipping our cattle every fortnight.

Mr. Collins: They have to dip just the same up North.

Mr. MACDONALD: That is so. My point is that we are continually dipping, but we are not eradicating the tick. For the last 20 years we have dipped our cattle every two weeks, but we still have the ticks. We have never had a season when ticks were more numerous than last season, when seed ticks appeared on the cattle every week after dipping. Very few owners dip their cattle at longer intervals than a fortnight. We had to bear that expense and yet we are not growling. We realise that we are keeping the tick from going into New South Wales.

The same principle should apply to the cattle-owners in the far North-West. The hon. member for Cook said that those people drove their cattle to a certain point where they were sprayed. There may be border-line cases in the eradication of the buffalo fly just as we have border-line cases in dipping our cattle to prevent the spread of ticks. The hon. member for Carnarvon quoted the case of a cattle-owner taking cattle to New South Wales who was forced to expend £700 to comply with the tick regulations. That would meet a great deal of the cost of spraying cattle for buffalo fly, which, after all, is merely a business risk. Cattle-owners in the South are keen in the work of eradicating all pests. We hear about the cattle tick on sheep, for instance. I have shorn thousands of sheep in the cattle areas, and although I have seen them with kegs—the sheep tick—I have never seen a matured cattle tick on a sheep, although they were running daily with infested cattle.

Mr. Collins: And you never saw cattle carrying a matured sheep tick.

Mr. MACDONALD: No, because they are not natural hosts.

Mr. Collins: That is true in both cases.

Mr. MACDONALD: Cattle-owners are compelled to dip twice at times before going from one area to another. I want to protest against the dairy farmer's being singled out to pay this tax.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Why do you say that? The dairy farmer contributes only a small fraction as compared with the cattle-owner.

Mr. MACDONALD: The Minister must bear in mind the relation of the tax contributed by the dairy farmer to the total of his income.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: You have mentioned the dairy farmer, but you have not said one word about the grower of beef cattle.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Stanley has moved an amendment

that, in my opinion, will impose a charge on the Crown not covered by the message. For that reason I rule it out of order.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) (12.23 p.m.): I am sorry that the Minister has seen fit to reintroduce this Bill. When he brought it down last session the Opposition proved clearly that it would impose a hardship on certain persons in the community. The Minister mentioned the cattle tick, but an earnest endeavour has been made to grapple with it. I can remember when the cattle tick entered the Esk, Yarraman, and Nanango districts, and how the inspectors went round those districts looking for it. Some of the people were so sceptical that they went so far as to say that the inspectors carried the tick in a matchbox in order that they might say it was in the district.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: It had been in the district 20 years before that.

Mr. NIMMO: Notwithstanding all the precautions, the tick could not be eradicated. All owners were compelled to dip their cattle, but the Government of the day never attempted to saddle the community with that cost.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Of course they did, under the Diseases in Stock Act.

Mr. NIMMO: They forced the cattle-owners to dip and prosecuted them if they did not do so, or erect a dip for the purpose. The Government of the day also took certain powers to prevent the tick from moving from one district to another.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: The Diseases in Stock Act of 1883 put a financial obligation on them.

Mr. NIMMO: The Diseases in Stock Act still places an obligation on the cattle-owner, and the Government now see fit to saddle him with another tax in order to prevent the buffalo fly from spreading.

There is no doubt the buffalo fly is a serious menace, and the Department of Agriculture and Stock is to be commended for taking an early stand in the matter. I remember that when the hon. member for Cooroora was Secretary for Agriculture and Stock he caused steps to be taken to confine it to certain localities, and I am glad the present Minister has followed that policy. If the buffalo fly reached the southern part of this State, and then got down to New South Wales, it would be the concern of everybody. The whole community would suffer if any serious damage was caused to the cattle population of this country.

What does the Minister propose to collect by this small tax? I think he said it was £6,000. Is that going to cover the whole of the cost of the buffalo-fly eradication? It is certainly a small amount, and it does not seem worth while setting up a new instrument of taxation to collect it. Why not take the amount out of consolidated revenue? The hon. member for Cook pointed

out that the people in the Gulf country had been taxed very heavily in order to keep this pest under control; but that was only political propaganda, because these people will still have to spray their cattle and pay this tax as well.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: How do you know?

Mr. NIMMO: I know definitely.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: How do you know?

Mr. NIMMO: Because the hon. member for Cook admitted it.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Have you seen the Bill?

Mr. NIMMO: The hon. member told us the provisions of the Bill.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Do you know that these people will still have to pay spraying fees?

Mr. NIMMO: I know the Minister will compel them to do so. Every cattle-owner, I take it, will take precautions where he declares an area to be infested, and go in for spraying. Common sense leads me to think that if those people have been spraying in the past he will still make them spray and pay the tax as well.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Where do you think the spray is—on the farm, on the holding, or on the run?

Mr. NIMMO: That is a matter for the Minister to decide; I should say it would be on the farm. I should think, if we are going to stop the pest from spreading, it will have to be done by each individual owner and not by a Government department. If it is to be left to a Government department you will not arrest the pest.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Let me tell the hon. gentleman that the sprays are used to enable the owner to send cattle out of an infested territory, to get rid of the fly so that they may be travelled out of the territory, so the sprays are on the boundaries of the infested territory and not on the run at all.

Mr. NIMMO: That may be quite correct. The point I make is that these people will still pay the tax although they will still have to do the spraying.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: I tell you, confidentially, I do not think they will pay.

Mr. NIMMO: They will be exempt?

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: I hope so.

Mr. Maher interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. gentleman to proceed with his speech. I ask the Minister not to encourage interjection and conversation across the Chamber.

Mr. NIMMO: That is an extraordinary statement the Minister has made: That he

is going to exempt these people from the payment of the tax and that other people will have to pay it.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: I did not say that at all.

Mr. NIMMO: The other people will have to pay the cost of spraying. At any rate, it is a great mistake to raise the small amount of £6,000 by spreading it only over the cattle people, inasmuch as if the buffalo fly spreads south we do not know how far it will go. I make my protest this morning because the Government last session brought down a Bill to control the buffalo fly and because the wonderful case put by the Opposition proved absolutely that there was no need for it it was withdrawn. Was that Bill withdrawn because Parliament was just on the eve of an election? Did the Government come to the conclusion that if the Bill was passed they would lose the vote of every cattle-owner in Queensland? It looks suspicious that the Bill should be reintroduced in the first session of the next Parliament.

I hope that the Bill is not as bad as we think it is, but the hon. member for Cook let the cat out of the bag in some respects this morning.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12.41 p.m.): I cannot understand the Government's introducing this Bill after having withdrawn a similar measure last session. There is very small difference between the two Bills, the only change that I can see referring to some slight exemptions of small stockowners. The Minister did not say anything that would lead the Committee to surmise that this measure is in any substantial way different from the Bill discussed at great length last session.

The first question I would ask is: Is it necessary to introduce legislation to control the spread of this fly? The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock says he is obliged to set up some means of preventing its spread, but on the other hand there are those who think it is debatable whether the fly will ever spread much further south than it has or reach Southern Queensland.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: It is not a debatable question.

Mr. MULLER: A responsibility is on the Minister. It must not be forgotten that if the fly spreads a section of the community will blame him if he refuses to take action, and there is another section who will criticise him if the action he proposes proves ineffective. It is very difficult for any of us to prophesy that the fly will reach Southern Queensland, or, if it does, that it will then have any harmful effect. I have discussed the habits of the fly with at least one member of the committee appointed to investigate the question, and I am satisfied of the untold harm done to cattle by this pest. I am, therefore, satisfied that it is necessary to take some action to prevent its spread.

I was amazed at the statement of the Minister that we did not attach very much importance to the cattle tick on its first appearance in Queensland. I do not know from whom or where the hon. gentleman got that information, but as a cattle-owner—and I think I speak for all the cattle-owners in Southern Queensland—we wondered what would happen. We were afraid we should be wiped out. We were of the opinion that the tick was a greater scourge than it has proved, but we must admit that all the application of science to the problem applied has not done much to combat its spread to the Darling Downs or into New South Wales. That tick has now reached localities in which it will thrive despite all the official regulations, permits for travelling stock, and other measures. After all, if practical men had control and attacked the tick in their own way I believe they could do much to minimise the evil. Perhaps the same may apply to the buffalo fly.

No-one has been able to satisfy me that the buffalo fly is likely to reach this territory. The Minister made a strong point when he said that it is possible that the fly will acclimatise itself and that therefore we should do all we can to combat it because if it spreads to our dairy herds and cattle-fattening areas it will do untold damage. I agree that something should be done.

Just what does the Minister propose to do? After we had discussed this Bill for weeks last session the Minister told us that he proposes striking a levy on the sales of cattle to raise £6,000. We do not object so much to the £6,000, because I believe that the object of the expenditure is an excellent one and the whole of the cattle industry will benefit if we are successful in preventing the spread of the fly. My point is that before supporting the imposition of this levy we should like to know what the Minister proposes to do with the money. The establishment of a fund will not prevent the spread of the fly. The fly will not be bluffed simply because we have some money in Parliament House with which it is proposed to kill all the flies in the State. The Minister may have been wise in withdrawing the Bill last year until he decided upon the means to be used in combating the spread of the fly. We know that three or four qualified men went into the infested area to study the fly's habits, and one would imagine that they would have been able to recommend what could be done to counteract this menace. We know that the tick can be transported only by a host, and that by dipping the host we can destroy the tick. But spraying will not kill the fly. It can travel even without the host, and it is reasonable, therefore, to ask the Minister what he proposes to do. If he could tell the people of this State what was contemplated the Bill might be received more favourably. It is no use saying that we want the money, that we might do something, and that more men will be sent into the territory to study the fly's habits.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: Is the initiation the right stage for getting

those details? There are other stages of the Bill.

Mr. MULLER: I am aware of that, but our action in dealing with the spread of the fly does not seem to get past the initial stages. We just say that something has to be done. Everybody knows that.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: The hon. member for West Moreton does not know that.

Mr. MULLER: I am not discussing what he knows. The Minister is responsible for introducing the Bill, and I do think that in fairness to the hon. members of this Committee he should tell us what he proposes to do. Striking a levy and appointing inspectors will not get over the difficulty. The inspectors can do very little with the fly on the wing. They can do little to overcome climatic conditions. We are told that in hot, rainy seasons the fly multiplies greatly and that in the cold, dry weather it does not. We know all these things. I understand that neither the officers of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research nor the Minister's experts have been able to make one constructive suggestion for combating the spread of this pest.

The fly is a curse and will destroy stock and there is the danger of its coming further south. That is just where we should begin, and I think that if we had an idea of what might be done nobody would object to the spending of a few pounds in combating the menace.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (12.51 p.m.): A Buffalo Fly Control Bill was introduced into Parliament last session but was withdrawn after a very long debate, the reason given being that the cattle industry was suffering from the effects of drought. If that was an adequate reason last year for the withdrawal of the measure, surely the conditions that prevail in the cattle and dairying industries to-day warrant the withdrawal of this Bill!

Mr. Collins: Do you think that the cattle industry should suffer from the fly as well as the drought?

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not suggesting that, but it is apparent from scientific investigation into the habits of the fly that if there was a drought in Queensland there would be no buffalo fly, because under droughty conditions the fly is killed.

Mr. Collins: But not extinguished.

Mr. NICKLIN: I realise the dangers of infestation by buffalo fly. If as the Minister has stated the buffalo fly will spread into the closer-settled dairying districts it will be a serious menace, but there seems to be quite a reasonable doubt among scientific men as to whether the fly will spread from its present habitat.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: There is no reasonable doubt whatever.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is the Minister's opinion.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: It is not. It is the crystallised opinion of all workers associated with the buffalo fly.

Mr. NICKLIN: The article that appeared in the "Queensland Agricultural Journal" under the name of Dr. Roberts does not altogether bear that out. The history of buffalo-fly infestation in Australia does not bear it out. The fly has been in Australia for over 100 years and has not spread to any great extent in that time. In the last 12 months or so, owing to particularly good seasons in that dry belt south of the Gulf, the fly has crept over to the shores of the Gulf and nearer to the closely-settled dairying districts. The question is whether unfavourable conditions, which all scientists say adversely affect the life and spread of the fly, will drive it back. In the history of the infestation in Australia, the area of infestation has contracted when weather conditions have been against it.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: If that were so, it would have retreated to Central Australia where it was first seen.

Mr. NICKLIN: Not necessarily, because areas south of the Gulf have had fairly regular seasons, but the dry belt has prevented the more rapid spread of the fly up to the present. Although the Minister's statement is definite, it seems to be debatable whether the fly will spread. Practical opinion, as quoted by the hon. member for West Moreton, indicates that the fly will spread only if suitable climatic conditions exist.

Mr. Collins: You cannot deny that it has spread.

Mr. NICKLIN: In the last 12 months, no, because climatic conditions have been suitable. On previous occasions adverse climatic conditions have driven the fly back to its natural environment.

The Secretary for Public Lands: I could mention a number of cattle-owners who are very much worried by its threatened spread.

Mr. NICKLIN: The varying climatic conditions will tend to confine the fly to a more or less defined area. However, if it spreads as the Minister fears it will, it will become a menace, not only to the cattle industry of Queensland, but indeed to the cattle industry of Australia, and thus it is not the problem entirely of Queensland, but a national one that should be controlled by the Commonwealth Government. In his introductory speech the Minister mentioned that there was now a sympathetic Government in control at Canberra, and I suggest that perhaps that Government will be willing to find the £6,000 the Minister hopes to raise from the cattle-owners of Queensland under the Bill.

The hon. member for Cook said that the cattle-owners in the Gulf country complained at having to pay the cost of spraying to prevent the spread of the buffalo fly to the other cattle-growing districts.

Mr. Walker: They want the rest of Queensland to pay for the cost of their spraying.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is the point I was about to make. If it is fair to ask the rest of the cattle-owners of the State to pay the cost of spraying in the buffalo-fly infected area, then it is equally fair to ask the rest of the cattle-growers to bear the cost of dipping cattle in the tick-infested areas. After all, the dipping regulations were framed to prevent the spread of ticks from the infected to the clean areas.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Do you think that no action should be taken to prevent the spread of the buffalo fly?

Mr. NICKLIN: No, I am in favour of action to prevent its spread, but I am firmly against any proposal that the cost of spraying in the buffalo-fly area should become a charge on the rest of the cattle-growers of Queensland. If it is not reasonable to ask the rest of the cattle-growers to bear the cost of dipping cattle in the tick-infested areas—

Mr. Collins: For whose protection is that done?

Mr. NICKLIN: For whose protection?

Mr. Collins: For whose protection are the cattle sprayed in the buffalo-fly area?

Mr. NICKLIN: For whose protection are the cattle dipped in the tick-infested areas?

Mr. Collins: That is a different thing.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is not. They are both the same. They are both major problems arising from pests in cattle, and if it is fair in the one case that the rest of the State should bear the cost, it is fair in the other also. All that I am asking is that the cost should not be borne by one section of the community, but that it should be met out of consolidated revenue.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: It is being met unfairly and unjustly by one section of the community at the present time. Do you think that the insignificant amount charged for spraying represents their total loss?

Mr. NICKLIN: No. My point is that if the Minister says that it is essential that the cost of spraying should be borne by all the cattle-growers because it is a measure of protection for the dairying industry, then it is just as essential that the cost of dipping cattle in the tick-infested areas should be borne by the whole community.

I should like to know from the Minister later in the debate what control measures are taken in Western Australia to combat the spread of the buffalo fly in that State, and what they cost.

I should also like the Minister to tell us whether the £6,000 that he estimates will meet the costs of the control measures he intends to set up includes the cost of spraying all cattle in the infected area, or whether that amount is additional to present spraying costs. If the amount includes the cost of spraying, I repeat that as cattle-tick treatment costs have to be met by the cattle-owners themselves, it is logical to argue

that cattle in the buffalo-fly area should be treated by their owners at their cost.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock: The greater number of people in the buffalo-fly area are also in the tick-infested area.

Mr. NICKLIN: That may be so, but owners do not spray for the buffalo fly all through the year. They have only one series of spraying—that is, when their cattle are about to leave the infested area to go into a non-infested area. Actually the cost of buffalo-fly control is not as great as the cost of tick control.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (2.16 p.m.): I do not know whether to sympathise with the Minister on the introduction of this Bill or not. We have the unusual experience of a slaughtered innocent of the last session of the last Parliament being resurrected in the first session of this Parliament. It makes one wonder why that is so. We know an animated debate took place upon it in the closing stages of last Parliament, and we know, too, that it created a difficulty with the Minister's own supporters. Notwithstanding that, as soon as the elections are over Parliament is asked to pass this Bill. I should say that the objections of his own supporters would apply with equal force to-day as in 1940. If it was correct to scuttle this Bill in the closing stages of the last Parliament, then those self-same reasons should apply to-day. I believe it is on all-fours with another vexed question that is likely to be brought forward—namely, the 10 to 10 proposal with respect to hotels. I cannot understand why a Government should delay matters to try to blind—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind the hon. member that the subject-matter before the Committee is a Bill to control the buffalo fly.

Mr. BRAND: I am only referring to that matter in passing, which I have a right to do.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will decide that.

Mr. BRAND: I am entitled to refer to an analogous subject.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BRAND: That is my right in this Parliament. I was about to say that I do not think it is a good thing that we, as a Parliament, should decide not to proceed with a measure in order to blind the electors when an election is imminent, and after that election, without any warning at all, bring the subject before Parliament again, notwithstanding the fact that it had not been submitted to the electors. After all, we were entitled to think that the Bill that was discussed in the closing stages of the last Parliament had been forgotten by the Government, but evidently that is not so. It seems that political strategy to-day is along the lines of smothering up what you intend to do and not allowing the electors to know about it, and then bringing the Bill down before Parliament and saying, "There it is, and we will make it a statute."

The Bill will entail heavy expenditure by people who are least able to bear a further burden, and who are not affected by the menace that the Bill proposes to deal with. These people did not have an opportunity of registering their protest against the Bill at the last election, and the Government have decided to bring down the measure without first submitting it to them. Irrespective of what may be the virtues of any Bill brought down, it is only right that the people should be consulted.

I lodge an emphatic protest against the Minister's bringing down such a Bill after a similar Bill was thwarted in the dying stages of the last Parliament.

We have heard of the ravages of the buffalo fly in the Gulf country since 1923, and been told from time to time that it would shortly threaten the coast areas of our State—the Minister made that statement in the closing stages of the last Parliament—yet the hon. gentleman has not produced any evidence to show that this pest has made any rapid progress outside the area in which it was confined, or that it is likely to make such progress in the future. I maintain that before we are entitled to place imposts upon a body of people who are least able to bear an added burden, and in an area where the pest is not likely to come, consideration should be given to the checking of the fly in the areas where it is established.

I can understand that in evolving policies for this Parliament Ministers are prone to bring before us legislation that will, in their opinion, help in some way the various industries of our country.

The Secretary for Public Lands: What is wrong with that?

Mr. BRAND: I am not saying there is anything wrong with it. I have already said it is only to be expected that Ministers would do so, but at least before this Bill is passed some very excellent grounds should be submitted—more than have been submitted by the Minister this morning—for imposing extra cost on people without any guarantee of results.

So far the Minister has not guaranteed that by the passage of this Bill he will be able to stay the progress of the buffalo fly in Queensland any more than the measures taken to-day have done, and as he cannot give that guarantee why should we ask the dairying community of Queensland, who are passing through one of the most tragic periods of their history and who are hard pressed to make a livelihood, to bear the burden of the cost of the prevention of the spread of this pest, which will be for the benefit of a better-paid section of the community of the State.

Surely to goodness, after the experience of the closing scenes of the last Parliament the Government should be able to evolve a measure that will not impose the same conditions and imposts as those to which we objected. If there is any justification for this Bill it should be that at least a different method is to be used to finance the project. I protest

against having before us again a Bill that will place a very high impost on a section of the community—the dairying industry, which of all sections of the community is least able to bear it.

Question—That the motion (Mr. Bulcock) be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 26.

Mr. Brassington	Mr. Mann
" Brown	" Moore
" Bulcock	" O'Keefe
" Collins	" O'Shea
" Conroy	" Power
" Devries	" Smith, W. Forgan
" Dunstan	" Theodore
" Farrell	" Turner
" Foley	" Walsh
" Gledson	" Williams
" Hilton	
" Jesson	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Jones	Healy
" Larcambe	Smith, A. J.

NOES, 13.

Mr. Brand	Mr. Sparkes
" Dart	" Walker
" Luckins	" Yeates
" Macdonald	
" Maher	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Müller	Decker
" Nicklin	Massey
" Nimmo	

PATRS.

AYES.

Mr. Bruce	Mr. Deacon
" Cooper	" Edwards
" Dash	" Plunkett
" Hanlon	" Clayton

NOES.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Bulcock, read a first time.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Gair, South Brisbane, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. T. A. Foley, Normanby) (2.35 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts, 1932 to 1938, in certain particulars.”

Only a few principles are involved in this Bill, none of them of a serious nature. The first refers to the payment of double time for work done on holidays. At the present time the Act provides that double time shall be paid for work done on such days as Good Friday, Labour Day, Christmas Day, and Anzac Day, and that time and a-half shall be paid for work done on 1 January, 26 January, Easter Monday, the Birthday of the Sovereign, and Boxing Day. It is now proposed to bring those holidays into line and provide that work done on those days should be paid for at the rate of double time.

Another principle in the Bill is that Labour Day shall be a paid holiday throughout the State. Hon. members know that on this day Labour celebrates the advance that has been made since the inception of the Labour movement. Very great strides, indeed, have been made. At one time it was contended by economists and others that many of the principles advocated years ago by Labour would mean the crippling and stifling of industry, but time has proved that many of the reforms that were pressed by reformers have come into being, and it is now recognised that they have not had the effect economists claimed for them. Naturally, the workers celebrate on Labour Day in all parts of the State, but at present only some of the awards provide for payment for that day. Those awards are on a weekly basis, and it is now proposed to enact that all awards shall provide for payment for Labour Day. For the information of hon. members, let me say that there are 357 awards and industrial agreements in operation to-day, 274 of which are on a weekly basis, 83 on an hourly or daily basis, or piecework rates. It will be seen that the imposition on industry will not be very great, as the greater number of the industries are already paying for that holiday.

Mr. Maher: Why are you taking it out of the hands of the court?

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: It is not so much a matter of taking it out of the hands of the court as the laying down of a principle. The court has adopted the principle in awards where weekly rates prevail; on some occasions it has provided for Labour Day where hourly rates prevail, but it is now desired to apply the principle to all awards of the State by statutory authority so that Labour Day will be a real workers' holiday in future in this State.

The Bill also provides that where a prosecution is launched against a Government department for a breach of an award, it shall be laid against the permanent head of the department and not the Minister, as in the past. Hon. members will remember that some time ago the Treasurer was proceeded against by the Seamen's Union for a breach of an award for which he was not responsible and which was committed by one of his servants. In the future, the complaints will be laid against the Under Secretary as the permanent head of the department and not against the Ministerial head.

Mr. Maher: Ministers do not like it?

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: The next principle is one that will, to a certain extent, be welcomed by the various unions. The Act provides that a claim for arrears of wages may be made in respect of a maximum period of six months. One section provides that where a plaintiff is lodged for arrears of wages, the industrial magistrate may order the payment of arrears for 90 days or for such further period up to six months as he so decides. However, in the case of an industrial prosecution, no such provision applies, and it is now proposed to

bring the two provisions into line by making the one in relation to a plaint applicable to what is usually known as a prosecution. In other words, the magistrate will be empowered to order the payment of wages up to a maximum period of six months in the event of a prosecution.

The Bill does not contain any very contentious principles, and I shall content myself with this brief explanation of it at this stage.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (2.43 p.m.): As the Minister has said, the provisions in the Bill are not extremely contentious except, perhaps, the one that provides for the payment of double rates for all holidays and for the inclusion of double pay for Labour Day in all awards. The question arises whether it would not have been preferable to leave those matters for determination by the Industrial Court than do it arbitrarily by Act of Parliament. Apparently, when the court fixed double time for the payment of certain holidays, it did so for some very good reason, and it is doubtful whether it is desirable to provide by Act of Parliament that double rates should be paid for all holidays. Labour Day is a day that is recognised throughout the State, and, indeed, throughout the world, as one on which Labour celebrates the achievement of its improved industrial conditions.

The Secretary for Public Lands: A lot of blood has been shed for that right.

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes, and it is still shed on the occasion of the celebration of May Day in some Continental countries.

Mr. Maher: And on the very day of the holiday.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is a day that is set aside for the purpose of commemorating the improved industrial conditions that have been won by Labour throughout the world. I personally believe that workers are entitled to have that day recognised as a holiday and there are not very many awards that do not make that provision. I think the Minister said that there were some 80 awards providing for daily and hourly rates.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: Not the whole of those 80, only some of them do not provide for the recognition of Labour Day as a holiday.

Mr. NICKLIN: I understood the Minister to say that not all of those 80-odd awards on a daily or hourly rate provided that Labour Day should be recognised as a holiday. That is quite a minor matter; nevertheless the determination of that principle also could have been left to the Industrial Court.

As the hon. member for West Moreton interjected, Ministers apparently do not like being prosecuted for breaches of industrial awards, and the Government in this Bill are seeking to overcome that difficulty by making the heads of departments liable for prosecution instead of the Minister. I appreciate that principle.

The Premier: We are merely placing the Minister in the same position under our industrial laws as under the ordinary laws. Under the ordinary laws the Minister nominates a nominal defendant.

Mr. NICKLIN: Personally, I agree with that amendment, as I think that the head of the department, not the Minister, is the proper person to fight any process for an alleged breach of an industrial award.

One point that struck me about this Bill is that we could extend its scope to make more effective provision against illegal strikes and stoppages of work. In order to achieve that end I move the following amendment:—

“Add to the question the words—

‘including effective provision against illegal strikes.’”

We must all admit that it has been rather disturbing of late to see the number of stoppages there have been in industries, particularly in those connected with our war effort. It is not quite clear who is to blame, but, unfortunately, while we have very excellent industrial machinery in this State, its provisions have not been used to the full to bring about a speedy settlement of them. We might well increase the scope of this measure to provide effective machinery against illegal strikes and stoppages.

Section 51 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1932 states, *inter alia*:—

“A strike shall not be deemed to have been authorised until all the members of the industrial union who are engaged in the calling and in the district affected have had an opportunity of participating in a secret ballot”

The ballot is now conducted by the union, but it would be preferable to have it conducted by the court or an industrial magistrate. The penalties provided at present for unauthorised strikes are, for a union, not exceeding £100 and an individual not exceeding £10. That provision gives the opportunity for persons who may be concerned in an industrial trouble to say whether it is a union decision or whether some trouble-maker in the union is stirring up unnecessary trouble.

Mr. Healy: The trouble is not always caused by the union, either.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is so. If an employer or employers lock out their employees they should be dealt with in the same way. Whoever is responsible on either side should be effectively dealt with and the industrial machinery put into operation quickly and effectively in order to deal with these unfortunate stoppages. There is no doubt it is very disturbing to many people to see these industrial troubles dragging on day after day—particularly when they affect the supply of munitions for our troops overseas—without any effective steps being taken to stop them.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: We have been fortunate here; we had only

four industrial disputes in 1940 as against 313 in New South Wales.

Mr. NICKLIN: But there is no doubt industrial stoppages in this State have reached considerable proportions. According to the Summary of Statistics for March, 1941, Queensland is not in such a very good position as the Minister would have us believe. The figures are as follows:—

	Working days lost in 1940.
Victoria	108,035
Queensland	131,628
South Australia	9,506
Western Australia	7,387
Tasmania	10,466

Those figures indicate that we lost more working days than we should have as a result of industrial trouble; therefore, while we are considering an amendment of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts, steps should be taken to deal effectively with strikes and industrial troubles in this State. Everybody will agree that a strike or a lockout is contrary to the public interests, and when we have industrial machinery, why should we not use it to stop strikes and lockouts expeditiously and effectively?

Mr. Healy: You think a fine would rectify it?

Mr. NICKLIN: In many instances I think a fine may have a deterrent effect on the individual who is responsible for these troubles.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The inexperience of one of the Ministers in the Menzies Government was responsible for much of the trouble.

Mr. NICKLIN: If an inexperienced Minister in the Menzies Government was responsible for industrial trouble he should be dealt with, the same as anybody else. We are not advocating a law for one section of the community only. If there is an industrial law it should be equally binding on all the parties concerned. An illegal strike or a lockout tends to bring the law into contempt. What is the position when there is an industrial disturbance in one of our industries? There is a stoppage of work. The industrial machinery is not put into motion, and sometimes when it is put into motion the parties defy it and the strike or the lockout goes on until the thing fizzles out and everybody goes back to work again; in the meantime there is a big loss to industry, perhaps a vital loss to Australia's war effort, and our industrial laws are brought into contempt.

I think we must admit that very many strikes are contrary to the wishes of the majority of the members of the union concerned, but certain methods are used to keep the majority from expressing their true opinion. The Act contains provision for a secret vote. That is the fairest way to get a decision of the persons involved, and it should be utilised to the full. When we look over the history of the industrial troubles—even in recent weeks in this State—we must

admit that the law is obviously ineffective. The railway strikes have gone on and then fizzled out irrespective of the law, and orders of the court have been flouted by union executives and no action has been taken against them. It is on those grounds that I move this amendment with a view to extending the scope of this Bill so that steps will be taken to have a more effective use made of the industrial machinery of the State.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, Mackay) (2.56 p.m.): The point raised by the Leader of the Opposition is one that concerns not only this but all Governments of democracies in the world. It is quite easy for members of Parliament to rise in their places and condemn stoppages of work. It is a very easy thing to place on the statute-book Acts having for their purpose the prevention of strikes, lock-outs, and stop-work meetings. But the real remedy is to provide such a standard of industrial law and justice as to reduce the basic causes of dispute to the absolute minimum. In Queensland we have been very fortunate in that during the last 10 years we have had less industrial disturbance than in any 10-year period in the last 40 years of the history of Queensland. That speaks very well for all concerned, and for the industrial laws of Queensland. If hon. members care to peruse certain judgments of the court they will find that what I have said has been set out in full by the President of the court.

There are fewer strikes in Queensland than elsewhere, chiefly because our method of dealing with disputes is much more expeditious than those used elsewhere. In addition to the Industrial Court and proceedings in the court we have 40 industrial magistrates who have power to hear and determine the great bulk of industrial matters that may cause disputes. An award cannot cover every activity in which a man may be engaged and matters of interpretation, for instance, naturally arise. Our method of dealing with these things through industrial magistrates has been a complete success, so successful that I repeat that, for the 10-year period I am alluding to, Queensland has had fewer major industrial disputes than for any 10-year period in the past 40 years.

One of the most fertile causes of industrial disputes is the overlapping of jurisdiction. There is a Commonwealth law dealing with industrial disputes, but under normal conditions the Commonwealth law is not supreme because it can be put in motion only when a dispute extends beyond the boundary of one State. The Commonwealth court cannot act until there is, *de facto*, an interstate dispute.

Then delays take place before hearings are held and awards made. In order to cover the position, a number of regulations have been introduced under the National Security Act, and it is said that these regulations have validity over any award of the courts. In other words, the regulations issued by the Minister for Labour can amend, vary, or override anything contained in Federal or State awards.

That gives rise to many difficulties. It has led to anomalies under which certain classes of workers have received increases of wages, whilst other classes of workers, equally skilled, have received none. Anyone who knows anything about industries in which large numbers of men are employed realises what a fruitful source of dispute and discontent lack of uniformity in wages and conditions can be. For example, you have men in engineering shops on war-time work receiving the war-time loading, whilst men of equal skill and perhaps longer experience engaged in what is not looked upon as war-time work may be receiving a lower wage, although the work upon which they are engaged may be more arduous and the skill involved sometimes greater. A good deal of munition work is merely repetition work. A great deal of industrial unrest has taken place in the Southern States because of the lack of uniformity in wages and the lack of parity between men of equal skill doing similar work. That has been a fruitful source of industrial dispute.

My own view is that it would have been better if the Commonwealth basic wage had been increased when the matter was set down for hearing. The figures justified it, but evidently there was a desire to peg wages and price levels. Up to date, it has not been found possible to peg price levels, and, as a consequence, wage levels have not been pegged. Employees in a number of industries have received varying increases, sometimes in the same class of employment, and that is one of the fundamental causes of labour disputes in Australia to-day.

Every effort should be made to reduce to an absolute minimum any stoppages of work or stop-work meetings. This applies in particular to essential industries and those upon which our war effort urgently depends. But one could easily get into the habit of exaggerating the effect of these things. As a matter of fact, there have been more industrial disputes per thousand men employed in America over the last 12 months than there have been in Australia. Australia publicises these things—they are frequently made political questions, and matters for disputation between men in the street—and so the fundamental reason for the industrial disturbance is frequently lost sight of. In America these disputes are not published, nor are they publicised in New Zealand, and as a consequence disputes in New Zealand are not of long duration. That is a very interesting fact to remember. In Australia, however, the people immediately take sides in every industrial dispute and very frequently the basic cause of the dispute is lost sight of.

Under the Queensland law, there is ample provision for dealing with industrial disputes without recourse to strikes or stoppages of work. During the past year Commonwealth regulations have been made applicable to industrial disputes. Mr. Menzies, who was Prime Minister at the time, recognised the value of the Queensland law and saw the immunity of Queensland from

industrial disputes and made arrangements that these regulations, so far as was humanly possible, should not apply to Queensland, but that the Queensland court should continue unfettered and its power to hear and determine any industrial matter arising in Queensland unimpaired. To-day it is very hard to say how many regulations of the Commonwealth Department of Labour apply to a given matter. Take, for instance, the recent dispute at Ipswich concerning the appointment of apprentices. It could be argued, and indeed it was argued, that the Commonwealth regulations applied there. They certainly did apply to some industries, and the natural question was: If they applied to some skilled trades, why not to all? The question how many elevates or dilutees shall be admitted to any industry is now a matter for a board established under Commonwealth jurisdiction under the Commonwealth National Security Act, and the State Industrial Court has very little authority to deal with either matter. I mention that to show how disputes often arise through lack of uniformity and lack of understanding of those responsible for the interpretation and application of awards.

In the Queensland Act there is ample provision to deal with industrial disputes. It is easy to talk about them. For instance, Mr. Menzies, as reported in the "Telegraph" of 18 June, said—

"Moreover, the time has passed for merely protesting against strikes or lock-outs in war and allied industries. We propose to prohibit them."

He introduced a Bill, but did not go any further in the matter.

In America the militia are frequently called out, and sometimes the army, to deal with strikes. Nearly every strike is accompanied by bloodshed, but that does not stop strikes from taking place. I repeat that in America per thousand men employed during the last 12 months there have been more industrial disputes than in Queensland or the whole of Australia.

Justice and the will to reason are, of course, the real basis of industrial peace. I repeat that in our law we have ample provision for any set of conditions that may arise, but our law can apply only where we have jurisdiction. We cannot make it apply where the National Security Regulations prescribe the wages, the conditions of labour, the methods and conditions of employment, or what class or classes of persons may be called upon to do certain work.

I am raising a point of order on the amendment. I submit that no amendment is relevant if it seeks to amend a Bill to provide for something that is already covered by the principal Act. Section 51 of the Industrial Arbitration Act gives ample power to deal with illegal strikes, and that power has been frequently exercised. It is there, full and complete, and so there is no need to amend the law in the way suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. The amendment deals with something already contained in the

principal Act, and it should be ruled out of order on the ground that it is irrelevant and especially so in relation to section 51 of the Act.

Whether the point of order is sustained or not, however, I do not see how any amendment of the law can achieve any beneficial results that are not being achieved at the present time. The law is there, has been used, and it can continue to be used. Under it Queensland has had a greater measure of industrial peace in the last decade than during any other decade since Queensland has obtained self-government or, at least, has had a substantial population. Reason and justice constitute the best method of dealing with these problems.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! As there is already provision in the principal Act to meet the desires of the Leader of the Opposition as set out in his amendment, I must uphold the point of order. I rule that the amendment is superfluous and therefore out of order.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (3.13 p.m.): I believe that it is a good thing to bring about uniformity in all awards, as far as practicable. There is a multiplicity of awards, and so the Bill should have the fullest support of hon. members. Some awards are open to various interpretations and I should like to ask the Minister, through you, Mr. Gair, to say what is meant by the terms "time and a-half" and "double time." The meaning of these terms is not widely understood. It is held by some people that "double time" means time and time again, while others believe that "double time" is time plus time plus time.

Mr. Mann: Anybody working in industry knows what "double time" means.

Mr. DECKER: I am directing my request to the Minister.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) (3.15 p.m.): I have no objection to our workers' getting double time for working on holidays, but we must remember that we have set up a very costly system of arbitration to decide such matters. We pay our Industrial Court judges £2,000 for the purpose, and notwithstanding that we have all the machinery available for the purpose, we are asked to pass an Act of Parliament to override those judges and tell them exactly what to do.

The awards of the court provide for certain things to be done. Some of them say that holidays if worked must be paid for at the rate of time and a-half, while others set out that they must be paid for at double time. Yet the Minister comes along and asks Parliament to enact a statute providing that there shall be double time for all holidays worked! Surely we can leave the court to decide such a question! The court with all its expensive machinery, which the people pay for, can inquire into the pros and cons of the subject, and that being so we should leave it to that body. I object to Parliament's being asked to usurp the power of the court. If the Government are right in this matter why do they

not go a step further and ask Parliament to legislate and make awards for industry, setting out what wages and conditions shall be observed? Once Parliament starts interfering in this way there is no need to set up a court.

My argument also applies to Labour Day. The Industrial Court has heard all the evidence that has been put before it and has made awards on this question accordingly. It is wrong for us as a Parliament to interfere with the court.

At 3.18 p.m.,

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

Mr. NIMMO: Although my leader said that another amendment, seeking to make the head of the department and not the Minister the nominal defendant in all actions for breaches of industrial awards, was a good one, I cannot go that far. The head of the department must approach the Minister to get authority to fight the case or not, and again to get the money to contest it; therefore the right person to be named as defendant is the Minister.

We heard a long statement from the Premier on strikes, but I think we have had our very fair share of strikes in this State. The Premier declared that in the last 10 years we had fewer strikes than in any corresponding period. I remember the strike that took place at the abattoirs. It went on week after week and eventually the farmers had to come from the country to carry on the work. The Government did not interfere; apparently they had no machinery to bring about a settlement. Much time was lost, and had it not been for the farmers' action the people of Brisbane would have gone without meat. The same remarks apply to the strike of the brewery employees. It was a very vicious strike and the Government appeared to be totally incompetent to settle it. Evidently they had no power or if they had did not use it in order to bring about a settlement.

The Premier: Do you think it is the duty of a Government to interfere in every industrial dispute?

Mr. NIMMO: If the Government have power they should interfere. We should not sit idly by week after week and allow a strike to drag on. Strikes hang up the business of the country. The moulders' strike at Ipswich was an absolute disgrace. It lingered on week after week and was against the war effort, and everybody felt disgusted. The rank and file of the unions do not want to go out on strike. Therefore, if we have the law on the statute-book to settle strikes it should be enforced.

The Quarterly Statistics of the Commonwealth Statistician for the March quarter of this year, page 57, disclose that Queensland lost the greatest number of working days through strikes—131,628. The coal strike went on and we were apparently powerless to

settle it. During 1940 there were a number of strikes in this State.

The Premier: Do you know that the coal strike was under a Federal award?

Mr. NIMMO: I do not care what award it was under. We say we have power in this State to settle strikes, but that strike went on and no effort was made. The Premier came home and was going to do a lot to settle the strike, but it still went on.

The Premier: It did not go on very long.

Mr. NIMMO: The hon. gentleman had no hand in settling it.

The Premier: Had I not?

Mr. NIMMO: As a matter of fact, the strike settled itself in the South and Queensland lost a great deal of time.

The Premier: You are the only man in the State who would be shabby enough to say that.

Mr. NIMMO: I am saying it. I know definitely one man connected with the union at Ipswich—the secretary of the miners' union, I think—who I consider was a very brave man because he stood out and told the true position. He was more responsible for settling the strike than any politician in the State.

Queensland is a very small State from the industrial point of view, compared with the other States. Victoria has a very big industrial population, and more days should be lost in Victoria on account of industrial trouble than in Queensland, yet the figures show that the number of working days lost in Victoria in 1940 was 108,035 as against 131,628 lost in Queensland. South Australia, which has a great manufacturing population, had the insignificant total of 9,506 working days lost.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. NIMMO: We have to face this thing in a big way. We have an Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The Premier has told us that he has complete power to settle any strike, that he has power to call a compulsory conference or have the matter settled in a proper way, but nothing is done and these strikes go on.

The Premier has told us that there is information in a certain document of the court—he did not say what that document was—that showed that during the last 10 years there had been the least industrial trouble in the State.

The Premier: In the last 40 years.

Mr. NIMMO: In the last 40 years. The hon. gentleman did not tell us what that document was in order that we could verify the statement by looking it up.

The PREMIER: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. gentleman in order in proceeding with a debate based on an amendment that the Chairman of Committees has ruled out of order on the ground of irrelevancy?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Oxley to deal with the principles of the Bill as enunciated by the Minister.

Mr. NIMMO: I was endeavouring to point out that the Bill should have gone a bit further than the proposal outlined by the Minister and should have taken steps—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Brand: You have not got the Bill.

Mr. NIMMO: We had it explained by the Minister. If the Premier objects to my talking about matters—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! A ruling has been given, and I ask the hon. gentleman to address the Chair.

The PREMIER: I rise again to a point of order. I submit the hon. member for Oxley has made a reflection on the Chair. When the Leader of the Opposition moved an amendment I rose to a point of order on the ground that the amendment was irrelevant and gave reasons why I thought it was irrelevant. The Chairman of Committees ruled that amendment out of order. I again rose to a point of order while the hon. member for Oxley was speaking and asked you whether he was in order in pursuing a debate on a matter that the Chairman of Committees had ruled out of order. You, Mr. Brassington, ruled that he was not in order and I now submit that the hon. member for Oxley is reflecting on the Chair inasmuch as he has said that "if the Premier objects to my proceeding on those lines, we have to do so and so." You are the custodian of relevancy in this Chamber, and it is a reflection on the Chair.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. gentleman to continue his speech on the principles of the Bill as explained by the Minister. I ask him to respect the Chair and proceed.

Mr. NIMMO: Mr. Brassington, I have dealt with the provisions as outlined by the Minister. If I can go no further and suggest that there should be other provisions in the Bill I shall have to resume my seat.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (3.27 p.m.): We have had submitted for our consideration the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Industrial and Conciliation Acts of 1932 to 1938. The Minister has outlined some of the principles of the proposed Bill, and I have no doubt that when we get the Bill we shall be able to analyse those principles.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that an amendment to our Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act is a very excellent subject of discussion for hon. members of this Parliament, particularly as to-day one of the questions of concern to the people of Australia in general and Queensland in particular is good order in industry. As hon. members of Parliament, we are anxious that there shall be industrial peace at all times in this country. From what we have gathered this afternoon the Government propose that there shall be inserted in the Act certain conditions

to apply to time worked out of the ordinary working hours, and that in certain instances double-time shall be paid for work done on certain days, and that all holidays recognised by the court shall be paid at double-time and that Labour Day as we know it will be paid for as a holiday.

Mr. Riordan: What is wrong with that?

Mr. BRAND: I should say that there would be nothing much wrong in paying for Labour Day—it is a recognised holiday—but surely if we have an Industrial Court in which we have the fullest confidence, we should be willing to leave rates and conditions of employment to it. Why should we direct the court in that respect? From our experience of the Industrial Court we are entitled to have the fullest confidence in its deliberations. I believe that the Industrial Court is more capable than this Parliament of assessing the correct rates of pay for work done on holidays. That tribunal devotes a great deal of time to inquiring into all factors relating to industry and the preservation of industrial peace.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Your party took from Crown employees the right to approach the Court.

Mr. BRAND: I do not desire to refer to the state of affairs that obtained in New South Wales at the time referred to by the Secretary for Public Lands. I do not intend to refer to happenings in New South Wales at a time when a Labour Government were in power there. I am more concerned this afternoon with the position of industry in general.

When we propose to amend legislation dealing with industry, we should give all the consideration we can to ways and means of maintaining industrial peace throughout the State. We have some magnificent industries, of which we might justly feel proud and which depend for their success largely upon the activities of industrial unions and employers' federations, and I should say that we can best devote our time to a consideration of those things that will tend to bring about industrial peace. It is of deep concern to me that five or six men may decide to strike and be the direct cause of a total strike within an industry, even though 90 per cent. of the men engaged in it have no desire to strike. Such happenings have occurred in recent times, they are continuing to happen, and I cannot see how the proposal suggested by the Secretary for Labour and Industry this afternoon can in any way help to prevent those instances of industrial turmoil that are so frequent in this State.

I agree with previous speakers who say that this Parliament should be concerned about the difficulties that are besetting industries and the workers engaged in them, and that we should see that every possible protection is afforded the workers and the industries in order that continuous work may be carried out at a time when it is necessary to supply our troops overseas with munitions of war. Almost all employees in Queensland are engaged on munition work to-day. It should

be our desire to frame legislation with a view to protecting our employees in every possible way and with a view to assuring continuity of employment in industry.

I regret that the Chairman of Committees should have given the ruling he has given this afternoon. I should have liked very much to discuss the matter that he ruled out of order. The proposal that has been submitted to us this afternoon is not likely to help in those matters that the public of Queensland desire to see settled, particularly at a time when it is essential that this Parliament should be giving mature consideration to the great problems affecting industry. I regret that the Minister has not seen fit to give us that opportunity, but when we see the Bill we shall be able to judge it upon its merits and see how we can perfect or improve it.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (3.36 p.m.): The outline of the Bill given by the Minister seems to strike at the fundamental principle of our industrial system. It has been generally established and recognised over the years that it is not the function of Parliament to determine wages and hours and payment for holidays worked. Those are matters for the Industrial Court. Why have the Government abandoned that definite principle and brought up such a contentious matter? It is impossible for hon. members, without knowing the facts relating to an industry, to determine whether it is right to make an arbitrary decision such as that demanded of us under this Bill. The Industrial Court is there to discharge that function, and it is empowered by Parliament to take evidence from workers and employers and give its decision according to the weight of evidence. The Minister is not satisfied to leave that decision to the Court but brings a Bill before this Committee asking us to determine the important question of holidays and say whether time and a-half shall be paid or whether double time or time plus time and so on to the end of time shall be paid. These matters are no concern of this Parliament but are important details the settlement of which belongs to the Industrial Court.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Important principles, not details.

Mr. MAHER: All the more reason, therefore, that they should be left to the Industrial Court. Parliament has delegated the power to the Industrial Court to determine these things. If it is an important principle that Parliament should decide the question of holiday time, then I say that the Minister could argue that Parliament should decide the amount of the basic wage. Parliament does not determine the basic wage because all political parties are agreed that Parliament is not able to do justice to the detailed evidence submitted by the parties to it. This is a matter for the Industrial Court to determine after hearing all the evidence. Exactly the same principle applies in the matter of hours in industry.

At 3.40 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. MAHER: Apparently, in the past the Industrial Court has found that it was just to make varying decisions in different industries concerning the payment of time and a-half or double time for holidays and what holidays should apply. The court has decided those questions on the relevant facts available, but now, without going into the relevant facts, Parliament is asked to give such rulings here. To that extent we are called upon to undermine the Industrial Court; that is a wrong principle.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: Parliament has made many amendments of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

Mr. MAHER: Of course, it has made many amendments, but not to the extent of undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of the Industrial Court. The court is charged by Parliament with the responsibility of determining the wages in industry, the hours of work, and, of course, the natural corollary of wages, the payment for holiday work; it is not for this Parliament to determine such issues. The Industrial Court is really an expression of the principle held by all political parties in this Parliament and one specially advocated by the political party to which the Minister belongs. If it is a good thing to constitute an Industrial Court, why encroach upon its rights, and why take away any of its powers and privileges? Why not allow the court to function in the future as it has done in the past?

Mr. Power: Why did you not ask that question of the leader of the Government in 1929-32 when he removed certain employees from the ambit of the court?

Mr. MAHER: That is an entirely different issue. If we are going to admit the right of Parliament to decide holiday pay it is only a short cut to allowing Parliament to decide all pay in industry. The hon. member for Baroona asked why the Government of 1929-32 found it necessary to pass special legislation, but he knows full well that the circumstances at that time bear no relation to the conditions to-day, that there were depressed conditions in industry and that special action was found necessary by the Government at that time. To-day we have no parallel conditions, and the Minister has given no reason to justify the proposals contained in the Bill.

It is a moot point whether the Minister or the Under Secretary of a department should be the nominal defendant in a case launched against the department for a breach of an industrial award. It seems to me that the only difference is that between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. I do not see why the Minister should be so sensitive that he cannot be a nominal defendant where the interests of the State are involved. It seems to me that he is not willing to stand up to his responsibilities. If mistakes have been made by the department the Minister is nominally responsible, and he is responsible to Parliament for them. Therefore, I do not see why he should seek to pass on the responsibility to

the Under Secretary of the department. However, it is not worth arguing about one way or the other, but it looks to me as if the Minister were not willing to accept his proper measure of responsibility in a matter of this kind.

There are one or two other points upon which I should prefer to reserve comment until I have had an opportunity of studying the Bill.

I propose, however, to move the following amendment:—

“Add to the question the words—

‘including provision for appeals against convictions by the court for contempt.’”

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAHER: That is an important provision that should be inserted in this Bill. To-day we are asked to debate what this Bill should contain—that is the object of the initiatory debate before we have actually seen the Bill—and we think the Bill should contain a provision on the lines of the amendment.

This amendment, of course, arises out of the proceedings for contempt instigated by the Industrial Court against me prior to the last State elections. I was fined £20 by the court, plus costs of court, which amounted to £21, yet I had no right of appeal from its decision. I concede that the provision in the existing Act is sound enough so far as industrial cases are concerned. Section 21 (2) of the principal Act provides—

“... every decision of the court shall be final and conclusive, and shall not be impeachable for any informality or want of form, or be appealed against, reviewed, quashed, or in any way called in question in any court on any account whatsoever.”

I am willing to support that provision so far as it affects an ordinary industrial case, otherwise a union or an employer would be bankrupt because of ceaseless appeals to higher authorities, but that is true of industrial matters only. Contempt is a quasi-criminal matter, if not an outright criminal matter, because anyone found guilty of contempt can be sent to gaol. The law as it stands gives no opportunity for a person convicted of contempt in the Industrial Court to appeal to a higher authority against the decision of that court. If under the ordinary laws of the State a man is found guilty in the Supreme Court or Magistrates Court of some offence he has the right of appeal. An appeal can be made from the Supreme Court to the Full Court and then to the High Court of Australia. There is ample opportunity for anyone dissatisfied with its decision to appeal from the Supreme Court to a higher court. Look at the violation of justice as applied in my individual case! The Industrial Court, acting as the accuser, subpoenaed me to appear before it. It accused me of contempt. That court, after having accused me, then sat in judgment on me, and then went on and decided the penalty

to be imposed. Against that penalty I had no right of appeal. Is there any British justice in a proceeding of that kind?

The Secretary for Public Lands: It happened in the Supreme Court also.

Mr. MAHER: It has not happened in the Supreme Court. A man can appeal from the Supreme Court to the High Court.

The Secretary for Public Lands: A judge can accuse you of contempt and then try you for it.

Mr. MAHER: That is wrong, too. The judge who accuses should not be the judge to determine the contempt. Another judge should make the determination. I can see no justice in any provision that makes the accuser also the judge and denies the right of appeal from his decision. That is precisely the position to-day, and, therefore, I maintain the time is overripe for an amendment of the nature that I have foreshadowed in order to give the right of appeal to anybody who might find himself in the position I found myself in. How extraordinary that the Industrial Court should have the right to accuse a man of contempt and then act as judge and jury! Having accused the individual, it then finds him guilty and he has no right of appeal against its decision.

I am not saying this in any party spirit. I accepted the decision of the Industrial Court in a sporting spirit; I paid my fine and I have no regrets. At the same time, that does not remove from my mind the sense of injustice because the accuser was also the judge in my case, and I had no right of appeal.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Are you sure you did not invite the charge?

Mr. MAHER: That is quite beside the point. The point is that I was accused by the court and summoned to appear before it; the court then became the judge and I had no right of appeal. If I had the right of appeal to the Supreme Court, who knows but that the decision might have been reversed? After all, there is very often only a marginal difference of opinion between legal men, and who knows that I should not have won an appeal to the Supreme Court? Undoubtedly I should have had that right. So it is only just that while we are considering this amendment to the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts we should rectify that wrong and give to every person who is placed in a similar position in the future an opportunity to appeal from the decision of the Industrial Court.

Dealing with the matter of the fine, I wish to bring under the notice of the House the fact that I noticed by the Press that the Moulders' Union that had been on strike had not paid the fine of £70. When the matter was referred to the secretary of the union, he was quite defiant and refused to give any indication of what the union proposed to do. If the Moulders' Union is not going to pay its fine, I shall ask the Registrar of the Court to refund the fine

I paid. There should be one law for all. If I have to pay a fine that is imposed on me—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I cannot connect the remarks of the hon. member with the Bill under discussion, or even with his amendment which provides for an appeal.

Mr. MAHER: Perhaps I am a bit wide of the mark. The questions were allied in my mind. I shall have a further opportunity of making reference to that aspect of the matter.

I submit the amendment, not in any party spirit but from a sense of justice, which should be our pride. It is our pride and our boast that our courts of justice are fair and aboveboard in every respect, and we all have admiration for our judges and those who are called upon to exercise the functions of judges. Every citizen is entitled to fair play. It is me to-day, it may be the hon. the Minister to-morrow, and it may be the hon. member for Gregory the next day. Who knows? It is the rights of the individual citizen that are at stake in this. Although many people may have been glad to see me fined, and may have been glad that the court decided that an offence had been committed, that is only looking at the matter in a partisan spirit. The main thing is: What is right and just for all the people when the heat of politics is forgotten? That is an important aspect of the matter. I hope the Minister will not consider this matter in any rash spirit, and decide that it cannot be, but that he will consider the merits of the amendment, accept the direction that it gives, and thus do justice for all.

Mr. TURNER (Kelvin Grove) (3.56 p.m.): I know of no amendment to an Act brought down in recent years that will give the amount of satisfaction to the industrialists as will this amending Bill. The subject of the Bill has been a burning question for a number of years. It does not interfere with the court, as hon. members opposite would have us believe. The Act sets out days that are double-time days and those that are time-and-a-half days, and the meaning of double time and time and a-half. That also has been a very burning question for a number of years. Employees on a weekly rate of pay receive a full week's wages if they do not work on any of these holidays, but if they do work on such a day they receive only a half-day's extra wages if it is a time-and-a-half day and an extra day's wage if it is a double-time day, in addition to their weekly wages. That does not make sense. In other words, if an employee does not work on the holiday he receives his full weekly wage, but if he does work and it happens to be a time-and-a-half day he receives four hours' extra pay only for eight hours' work done. As I have said, that does not make sense. A number of employers, particularly in Brisbane, take advantage of the time-and-a-half days. They work their employees on those days, because they get an extra day's work done for a half-day's pay, but on the other hand refrain from working them on double-time days, because

they have to pay a full day's wages for that day.

Mr. Maher: Is there any reason why the court should not make a decision?

Mr. TURNER: The court cannot go outside the Act. Parliament has passed this Act, and the Act is a guide for the court. The court cannot go outside it. Hon. members opposite have been suggesting that we are interfering with the rights of the court, but the court cannot go outside this Act. The Act sets out that time and a-half shall mean one-half day's pay in addition to the week's wages.

Mr. Maher: But it does not prevent the court from awarding double time for a day on which it previously awarded time and a-half.

Mr. TURNER: It certainly does. No-one has suggested that the members of the court should go outside the Act. The Act is for their guidance and they cannot go past it. Hon. members opposite would be the first to complain if the court attempted to interfere with anything contained in the Act.

Mr. Nimmo: Why do some awards provide for double time? How do they do it?

Mr. TURNER: Because the award provides it. The court decides a weekly rate of pay for certain industries, but there are other industries on an hourly rate of pay. If an employee in an industry in which the award is on an hourly basis does not work on these specified days he gets no pay, but if he is in an industry in which the award is on a weekly basis and is called upon to work on such a day, he gets, if it is a double-time day, one day's pay in addition to his weekly rate of wages, but if it is only a time-and-a-half day he receives only four hours' pay in addition to his weekly pay. No hon. member opposite will contend that that is fair, but it is so and it has been the cause of a considerable amount of discontent in industry. I am confident that the amending Bill will give greater satisfaction in industry than has existed for many years. If hon. members peruse section 10 subsection (2) of the Act they will see that what I have stated is correct. At present the court has no power to give anything outside this Act. Now it is proposed that all the holidays mentioned shall be paid for at the rate of double time.

I could never understand why one holiday should be paid for at the rate of double time and others at the rate of only time and a-half. I rejoice in the fact that the Minister has seen fit to remove that anomaly by abolishing time-and-a-half days and providing that every employee who works on a statutory holiday shall be paid an extra day's wages on his weekly earnings. I think that every hon. member opposite will agree with me when he understands the position.

Mr. Barnes: We will agree with the amending Bill if you will give the right of appeal.

Mr. TURNER: The hon. member for Bundaberg does not deserve the right to

speak on anything. We are intelligent people here.

Mr. Barnes: Who told you that?

Mr. TURNER: We know it. I commend the Minister for introducing the proposed alteration to the Act, and I feel confident that it will give the utmost satisfaction to those engaged in all industries.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. T. A. Foley, Normanby) (4.2 p.m.): I can quite understand the feelings of the hon. member for West Moreton on this matter, knowing as we do that after having adversely criticised a decision of the Industrial Court he was brought before that tribunal and fined. The position is that the Supreme or any other court of this land reserves to itself the right to bring before it any person who, in its opinion, is guilty of contempt, and that court has jurisdiction to punish the offender. I do not think there is any law that gives to the offender the right of appeal against that decision other than a decision of the Supreme Court. Under section 21 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act all "industrial matters" come within the scope of the Industrial Court, no other court having the right to alter its decisions.

It is interesting to note that the party of which the hon. member for West Moreton is a member had an opportunity at one time to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act. Instead of amending it, they repealed it, and introduced a measure that they thought more in keeping with their ideas. That Act, the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1929, was the source of no end of industrial distrust in the community, but the only right of appeal to the Supreme Court allowed under it was on the question of jurisdiction, and that was raised on only one occasion to my knowledge.

I cannot see that the suggested amendment can serve any good purpose. The court must be supreme in all phases of its jurisdiction. After having thoroughly investigated the economic position of the State, and having heard the cases presented to it for an increase in the basic wage, for instance, it may decide either to increase or decrease it. It might, in a certain set of circumstances, increase the basic wage for a given period. After having done that, it has the right, if some individual or organisation takes up an attitude of contempt and decries its decision, to cite that individual for contempt and bring him before the court. The hon. member for West Moreton was so brought before the Full Bench and had an opportunity of stating his case. The court made its decision. If it is right that the case should go before another court, then the whole purposes of the Industrial Court would be nullified. Such a procedure, although provided for under the rules or the powers guiding the High Court or the Supreme Court where such cases are brought before them, is not, and never has been, there in respect of the Industrial Court and for the reasons

stated above. I cannot accept the amendment.

Amendment (Mr. Maher) negatived.

Motion (Mr. Foley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Foley, read a first time.

FISH SUPPLY MANAGEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Gair, South Brisbane, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. T. A. Foley, Normanby) (4.10 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Fish Supply Management Act of 1935 in certain particulars.”

The board set up under the principal Act, which has been in operation for some time, has done particularly fine work in organising fish supplies to the market of Brisbane. It has extended its operations as far north as Townsville to enable it to control a greater catch in that area when the mackerel come in to spawn. By the extension of its operations it has been better able to organise the supplies of fish for the Brisbane market than it otherwise would have been, and thus make good the deficiency that occurs in the local supplies here.

The lack of supply arises from different causes. For instance, we have experienced dry weather for some time, with the result that many edible fish remain at the head of the rivers, but when rain comes they will be forced down into the bays and estuaries where the net fishermen will have an opportunity of catching them and so providing a supply for the Brisbane market. For some time, we have suffered from a lack of supply. Naturally, as time goes on, it is found desirable in the administration of the Act that certain things should be tightened up and improvements made to enable a better organisation to be brought about.

The Bill contains a number of principles. The first relates to the constitution of the Fish Board. It provides that members of the board shall hold office for a fixed term. Apparently, that provision was overlooked when the Act was framed, and it was brought under my notice because of certain action by some of the distributors, which was mentioned to me by a deputation that waited upon me and asked me to provide for a definite term of office and also for the election of such members. At the present time the board comprises four members—a representative of the Government, who is the chairman of the board, a representative of the fishermen, a representative of the distributors, and a representative of the consumers. At one time, Mr. Lindsey, the Commissioner of Prices, was the representative of the consumers,

but latterly, owing to the amount of work imposed upon him, that position has been filled by Mr. Dick, an officer of the Fisheries Department.

The Act provides that the members shall hold office for such term as the Governor in Council shall think fit, but shall be eligible for reappointment. No term was prescribed and the present members have held office since 24 June, 1936. The Act does not specifically provide for the election of members although the regulations provide for regulating the appointment and, if necessary, the election of members to the board. It has been decided to make this provision by statute. We are now laying it down that on and after the 31st day of December, 1941, those members of the board shall cease to act. Provision would be made then for the distributors and fishermen constitutionally to elect their particular representatives for a period of three years.

It has also been found necessary to amend section 4 of the principal Act, in order to give greater power to the board to exempt seaside areas from its provisions. That section provides that all fish caught at a seaside area must go through the Brisbane market and be sold at auction. It is desired by this amendment to give an assurance to the seaside people that they will be able to obtain their full supplies. Unfortunately, the present Act does not give the board sufficient power to do so. Two different bases, containing fairly wide powers, have been laid down for the board. They permit the board in its discretion to determine how to arrive at the amount of fish required for a particular seaside area or resort.

We have found it necessary to enact another principle seeking to prohibit certain buyers or distributors from making purchases by private treaty either inside or outside the board's district, or an area that is proclaimed as a district in which the board is operating. That is necessary because certain buyers in the Brisbane market, probably as a result of the shortage of supplies and in their enthusiasm and desire to keep up supplies to customers, go as far as Tin Can Bay and Tewantin and there enter into private treaty with certain fishermen. The result was that the supplies concerned, instead of being consigned to the market in the usual way in the name of the fishermen and auctioned on their behalf, were consigned in the name of the firm of distributors who bought them from the fishermen.

Mr. Walker: That has been going on for a couple of years.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: That is so. The difficulty we are up against is that when that fish arrives at the market no other distributor can successfully compete against the firm of distributors because the more he competes with them the greater the benefit to the firm concerned. We are now seeking to tighten up the Act to prohibit any buyer or distributor from going outside or inside the area controlled by the board and making these

purchases by private treaty with the fishermen. I understand that when the system now in operation was being established a committee investigated the whole position and reported against allowing any buyers to enter into private treaty with the fishermen, but this practice has been reported to have occurred just lately. A big deputation comprising the bulk of the buyers or distributors waited on me asking that the Government take some action to prevent such practices in the future.

Provision is also made for the registration of buyers or distributors, and licensing them, so that, if there is any violation of the board's decisions or the regulations, the board will have power to deal with offenders in an effective manner.

Another practice that has been carried on for some time is to be made law by giving the board power to advance money or guarantee a loan to fishermen for nets and gear and other things required by them. In the past it has often helped ice-vendors in the purchase of ice-runs and vehicles to supply ice to the consumer. It is not desired to go any further with that—it is all done and finished with, and the board has a fairly successful ice trade as a result of the good plans laid down over a period of years—but it is desirable to have the necessary power to help fishermen in any part of the State if the board thinks it proper to do so. For instance, it may be necessary to help a man to go out deep-sea fishing; that would increase the number of fishermen and thus increase the supplies on the market for the consumer.

Those are the principal points we are asking the House to deal with, and if Parliament agrees I feel sure no-one will be hurt in the carrying out of the principles laid down, and no firm will be at a disadvantage compared with others.

I might point out that one firm that handles large quantities of fish has entered into a private treaty, and several other smaller firms have been forced to follow suit, and if that goes on it will mean that the whole of the fish coming to the markets will eventually be under the control of certain big buyers who have the necessary finance behind them. What we want is that every distributor and every buyer should be on an equal basis.

Mr. Nimmo: You said the board was constituted by a Government representative, a fishermen's representative, and a distributors' representative. Must the fishermen's representative be a fisherman and must the distributors' representative be a distributor?

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: It is desirable that the fishermen's representative should be a fisherman. I understand that the Fishermen's Association nominated a man who was not a fisherman, and the then Minister refused the nomination, and they then nominated another man who had been a fisherman and who knew something about the business. I think it is desirable that the representative of the Fishermen's Association should be a fisherman or a man who had been a fisherman.

Mr. Walker: He should be.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: Yes. He would be of great help to the board. Before the Bill goes through I will look that point up.

Mr. Walker: There is nothing to stop a big man from getting over half-a-dozen fishermen and getting their votes.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: On the other hand, it may not always be practical for a fisherman to carry out his duties properly on the board.

Mr. Walker: There are some pretty able men amongst fishermen.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: The trouble is that if we insist that a fisherman shall be the representative of the fishermen, it may affect the appointee's carrying out his work as a fisherman. I will look into that point and see what can be done. There are a number of problems associated with the industry that have to be solved before the people can obtain adequate supplies at satisfactory prices.

For the benefit of hon. members I might mention a difficulty that has been discussed by the board this afternoon. As I have previously mentioned, we agreed recently to the establishment of a depot at Townsville and have entered into an arrangement for the purchase of the whole of the mackerel catch in that area, which during a period of from three to five weeks is very large, indeed, at 5½d. per lb. The catch is much greater than the requirements of Townsville. The idea is to rail the surplus supplies to Brisbane. The cost of packing, storing, and railage to Brisbane increases the price to somewhere in the vicinity of 8d. per lb. The whole trouble is to supply the fish to the consumer through the retailer at a reasonable increase on cost because of the fact that up to date supplies have been coming in only in dribbles, as it were, of 2,000 and 3,000 lb. consignments. If the supplies came forward in consignments of 10,000 or 20,000 lb. it would be an easy matter to distribute the cost pro rata to the different buyers or distributors, who, in turn, would distribute to the public at a price of about from 11d. to 1s. per lb. Unfortunately, in the past we have not been able to get the buyers to agree to any arrangement under which we can distribute the fish equitably to them and at the same time have a guarantee that it will reach the consumer at the price I have mentioned. For instance, they have to buy other fish on the market and, up to date, the suggestion has been to take the fish at 7½d. or 8d. per lb., mix it with their own and average the price. The difficulty there is the big risk that the consumer would not get the fish at a price desired by the Government, and consequently this afternoon the board is endeavouring to formulate some plan by which the fish that comes to Brisbane from the North can be distributed at cost price to the distributor, who, in turn, will add his cost, and the people get the fish at a reasonably low price. Up to date, owing to the small quantity coming forward, no scheme could be formulated, and the fish has been purchased by the board and landed in Brisbane at approximately 8d. per lb., and we

have been compelled to put it up for auction to give every buyer a chance, with the result that it has been fetching a price of 1s. 1d. to 1s. 2d. per lb. Naturally, the buyer adds on 40 to 50 per cent. to cover loss in wastage and costs of cleaning, delivery, and refrigeration, and with added profit the price to the consumer will, naturally, be from 1s. 10d. to 2s. per lb. As I have stated, that is due to the small quantity coming forward, but I can assure hon. members that the policy of the Government, and what the board is endeavouring to do, is to formulate some plan whereby we can supply the fish to the buyers at such a cost that they, in turn, will pass it on to the consumer at the lowest possible price, taking into consideration their costs.

Mr. Walker: Are you giving any protection for the fishermen?

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: The return referred to by me, under which we are paying a fixed price, is considered by the fishermen to be a reasonable price, according to what was said at a conference with them. In other words, they have agreed to catch the fish and supply it to the depot at Townsville at 5½d. per lb., and as a result of this arrangement approximately 40 boats will operate at that port during the mackerel season, and when it is at its peak, naturally, large supplies will be brought in.

I have endeavoured, as briefly as possible, to give hon. members some idea of the principles of the Bill and of the problems confronting the distribution of mackerel supplies.

Mr. PIE (Hamilton) (4.30 p.m.): I am very much interested in the question of fish-marketing, and I am pleased to know that the Government propose to bring forward a Bill of this kind, because I think it will tend to overcome many of the difficulties that are besetting the fish industry to-day.

I have been very interested in fishing in Queensland waters for a number of years. I was a member of the Queensland Game Fishing Association and I was interested in Queensland Fisheries (Proprietary) Limited in its latter stages, when I realised that no company such as that could stand up to the competition that took place under the present law as administered by the Fish Board.

In order to give hon. members an idea of what the industry is up against, I have made a thorough investigation in the hope that possibly a company such as Queensland Fisheries (Proprietary) Limited may be successful in the future, and I desire to place on record the following facts.

The board as at present constituted is comprised of four members—a representative of the Government, Mr. Thompson; a representative of the fishermen, Mr. Ackworth; a representative of the distributors, Mr. Freeleagus; and a representative of the consumers, Mr. Lindsey, our Commissioner of Prices.

I understand that it was the Government's intention originally that the representative of the distributors should be appointed by a ballot of the distributors. A ballot, giving a majority of 60 per cent. to one man, was

taken, but notwithstanding that Mr. Freeleagus was appointed to the board, the reason given being that the man who had been elected by that majority was not a distributor in the true sense of the word. This man was a buyer for many firms round Brisbane, and he was also a cleaner. I just want to make it clear that Mr. Freeleagus was appointed not by ballot but by the Government.

It was considered, quite rightly, that Mr. E. H. Lindsey, our Commissioner of Prices, should be the consumers' representative, because it would be reasonable to assume that he would be the only man qualified to fix the retail selling price after the fish had been auctioned by the board.

We all know that the Act provides that before being sold, fish—in the case of Brisbane—must be brought to the Brisbane fish market, which is controlled by the Fish Board, and sold by auction. This eliminates any private buying or treaty, by the board or anyone else. The Act also says that it shall not be lawful to sell within the district any fish that has not first been inspected by the board. It is well known that one member of the board has by far the largest controlling interest in the fish-distributing business. I understand also that the statement has been made that if at any time the policy of the board interferes with that of the firm in question that representative of that firm would see to it that the firm's interests came first, and this appears to be partly provided for under section 32 of the Act. It is the practice of this member of the board to negotiate with fishermen before they send to the fish markets and guarantee them a price. For example, he might guarantee a price of 15s. a case and the fish concerned might, when auctioned, realise up to 30s. a case. The result is that the fisherman do not get any benefit. I know of fishermen down the bay who have told me time and again that they will not go out and catch fish because it does not pay them. I have said to them, "Why, look at the prices you get at auction." They have told me that they do not get those prices. The fishermen do not receive any benefit because the guarantor is virtually selling his own fish, and therefore, receives the difference between the guaranteed price to the fishermen and the price realised at auction, less 7 per cent. selling commission. It is obvious that the guarantor to the fishermen can bid up to any price and still not pay any more for the fish than the guaranteed price plus commission on the price realised. He can run up the price of his guaranteed fish to any figure and, if it suits him, let a bidder have the fish, because the higher the market price the more profit he makes. It is only when fish are scarce that he buys back at a high rate.

The public have the opinion that fish always sells at a high figure because the retailer has his selling price in the shops based on the average auction price for the day. On the other hand, fish are consigned to the Fish Board under no guarantee and might realise up to 30s. a case. The average buyer is compelled to buy at this figure and has a small margin of profit to work on when compared with the big man who has been getting the

bulk of the fish under contract. This is the very thing that the Minister is providing for in the Bill, and that is why I say it is an excellent measure.

It is an acknowledged fact in the fish market that certain fish are the property of a member of the board and when offered for sale the auctioneer invariably notifies all buyers—I have been to the markets when this has been done—to whom the fish belongs or to whom it has been consigned. Buyers, therefore, unless fish is scarce, become uninterested and seldom bid, knowing they have little chance of buying on a payable basis. I understand that recently—and this can be verified—board fish realised 30s. a case and guaranteed fish 20s., the result being that on the fish knocked down to the guarantor the Government lost 7 per cent. revenue on the 10s.

Under existing legislation I say that no company can run trawlers for its own purposes. I am speaking of a company that wishes to process fish to take the place of Scotch or South African smoked fish. Under existing legislation you cannot process the fish of your own catch without its going over the market and incurring a 7 per cent. sales commission, which, it is apparent, puts you out of business. As in the case of the Queensland Fisheries (Proprietary) Limited, it is impossible for any company to operate economically under those conditions. The sufferers in those cases are the public and the fishermen, as the latter will not go out and fish. I can verify all these facts—I do not make a statement in this Committee unless I can verify it. I am making these submissions free of all party interests in the hope that the legislation before the Committee will overcome the difficulties I have pointed out.

The Minister mentioned the hauls of mackerel that were obtained at Townsville. I know, as he does, that the guaranteed price for mackerel at Townsville is 5½d. per lb.—there is a fair run of it at present—which can be landed in Brisbane at 7½d. per lb. It was sold at auction last week at 1s. 5d. and 1s. 6d. per lb., and it was sold yesterday at 1s. 2½d. to 1s. 3d. per lb. I want to know where this profit goes—the difference between the two figures. There is something radically wrong with the legislation relating to the fishing industry. I hope that we can clear it up. I am sure that everybody wants to be in a position to encourage the fishermen to go out and fish so that it will be possible for all of us to buy fish. I have a few kids and the other day my wife went out to get some fish for some of the kiddies who were sick and I know that it cost her 1s. 10½d. for two whiting. That seems to me to be wrong, and it suggests that the present legislation is not giving us what we want. I am bringing these facts before Parliament, in the hope, as I said before, that we shall have legislation to overcome the unfavourable conditions that now exist, otherwise the industry will be forced so far back that it will be unable to recover.

Mr. Nimmo: How long has it been going on?

Mr. PIE: I have no idea.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (4.42 p.m.): The proposed Bill will serve a very useful purpose in connection with fishing in this State. For a considerable time the opinion has been held by the suppliers to the board, and I think by the public, that some amendment of the law was necessary to help the fishermen and to bring about a better distribution of fish in Brisbane and throughout the State. If the matters that have been outlined by the hon. member for Hamilton are correct, then the introduction of the Bill is fully justified. There is no doubt that since the board has been in existence it has done much for the fishermen and for the consumers, but there appears to be some weaknesses in the Act, which have allowed anomalies to creep in and it is high time that the amendments suggested by the Minister should be made.

At the present time the board consists of four members, a Government representative who is the chairman, a representative of the fishermen, a representative of the distributors, and a representative of the consumers. Actually, the Government have two representatives on the board—the chairman, and the consumers' representative, who is a public servant. I think we might very easily decide that the chairman who is the Government representative shall also be the consumers' representative and thus have a board of three members comprising the Government representative, the representative of the distributors, and the representative of the fishermen. With four members on a board, the voting is likely to be even on some occasions.

Mr. Hayes: You would still have to appoint a consumers' representative.

Mr. NICKLIN: What after all is the Government nominee but a consumers' representative?

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: It would be necessary to nominate another man to act as the consumers' representative.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not urging that the consumers' representative should be elected by the consumers. I contend that the board should consist of three members—a chairman, who would be the Government and consumers' representative, nominated by the Government, and two members to be elected, one by the fishermen, and one by the distributors. That would be a more workable and better-balanced board than the present one, which consists of four members, one being a Government nominee, one a consumers' nominee appointed by the Government, and two elected representatives nominated by the fishermen and distributors. It is wise that the term of the board should be fixed, as is proposed, for a period of three years, and that the distributors and fishermen be given an opportunity of electing their representatives.

It has been questioned whether the representative of the fishermen should be a practical fisherman or not. Personally, I am of opinion that he should be. The difficulty mentioned by the Minister against a practical fisherman's attending board meetings could easily be overcome. One of the many practical

fishermen could spare the time from the supervision of his business to attend board meetings. After all, the knowledge of that man on the board is essential, particularly as he is intimately acquainted with the fishermen's difficulties—we all know they have enough difficulties at the present time.

I do not hold with the hon. member for Hamilton's view that fishermen do not go out to fish because the price of fish does not encourage them to do so. Their difficulty at present is to catch the fish, not the prices ruling in the fish market. Recently prices have been particularly good—high enough, at any rate, to induce any fisherman to go out if fish were to be had. The fish are in neither the river nor bay.

The provision to exempt fishermen at seaside resorts from bringing their catch to the market in Brisbane before making provision for the supplies needed in those areas is one that has been wanted for a considerable time. The present method has been a farce. Fish caught at Redcliffe or Wynnum have had to be consigned to Brisbane and passed through the fish market before any of the catch could be sold in those areas.

The object in establishing a Fish Board was to ensure that the competition at the sales was aboveboard, and to assure to suppliers maximum prices for their product. Apparently, the system that has grown up, of buying fish at the producing centres and having them consigned to the Fish Board in the buyer's name, has tended to prevent free competition at the fish sales. There is no doubt that this practice has been detrimental to fish prices, and to the fishermen themselves, although many fishermen getting these guaranteed prices have been quite satisfied. They say that the average price they have been getting throughout the year was better than the price they could have obtained by selling their fish in open competition on the board's floor. Those sellers of fish right through the flush mullet season say they obtained a better price—average than they would have obtained if they sent their fish to the board to be sold on the fish floor in open competition. At the same time, it is a practice that is not desirable, as it has the effect of restricting competition, and at the present time, when fish are particularly scarce, the firms operating that system have an unfair advantage over the other buyers. I think the free competition at auction on the board's floor will be the best in the long run for the fishermen.

The provision for registering buyers and distributors is a machinery one and will help the board and the Minister to keep control over buyers and distributors.

One difficulty the board is up against at the present time is in the distribution of mackerel bought at fixed prices at Townsville. There is such a scarcity of fish that buyers will pay a price for it and the public also are apparently willing to pay a price for it.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: When fish comes in in bigger quantities they will be able to handle it satisfactorily.

Mr. NICKLIN: If there were a surplus of fish, if the supply approximated market requirements, the board would have no difficulty in passing out the mackerel at landed cost, and the public would get the benefit of the cheap fish. At present, when there is a shortage of fish, the board has taken the right action in putting it on the market and selling it by auction, thereby giving everybody the opportunity to get it. That is the only way it can distribute it properly. I think the position will right itself when the supplies of mackerel increase and approximate market requirements.

The provision empowering the board to advance money to fishermen for the purchase of nets, boats, gear, and things of that nature is an interesting one, but one that will have to be handled with care. The board will need to be careful to ensure that it is protected against loss by failure to meet payments. The fact that it handles the fish will be a protection, but it will need to be careful if it is to avoid trouble. No doubt the experience gained by members of the board during the past years will prevent it from advancing money to a man who is not likely to be able to repay it.

Taking the Bill on the whole, I think it will be useful and will enable the Fish Board to give greater value to the fishermen and the consumers.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (4.54 p.m.): I recognise that the Fish Board has had a very hard job to satisfy the fishermen and the public because there have been periods of glut and periods of shortage. There are buyers who for a long time have been buying fish outside the market and having it consigned to the market and resold on the guarantee system. While fish were plentiful the practice operated temporarily to the advantage of the fishermen, but in the period when there was a shortage it operated in the other direction. That state of affairs has been going on for a considerable period owing to the continued shortage of fish.

I predicted on a previous occasion that the fish shortage would be a recurring shortage, that our fish in the southern part of the State, from Double Island Point to the Tweed, are diminishing year by year, and this would continue until action was taken to protect the fish on the ocean beaches.

The Premier: We want a close season for fish and fishermen?

Mr. DECKER: That is a suggestion the Premier has made jestingly, nevertheless it should be given serious thought.

The Premier: I made it interrogatively.

Mr. DECKER: It is worthy of the most serious consideration. Gradually the Brisbane market will have to depend on supplies from further north and the idea of establishing a depot at Townsville to deal with mackerel in the mackerel season is a good one, but we must remember that supplies even in the North are subject to fluctuation. The mackerel season is not a long one, and when it ends

we shall have to look for other supplies. No doubt there will be another shortage which will be replenished only by extending our fishing grounds further north again. It is indeed a big problem. When the board took over originally supplies of fish were more or less plentiful, and, consequently, the board had an opportunity of regulating the market to the advantage of all concerned, but they have been hamstrung in a small way. Although they had the right to permit fishermen in the seaside areas not to bring their catches into town, as the Minister pointed out the Act was not quite clear on that point and there were instances in which local fishermen brought fish to the Fish Board in Brisbane to have them inspected there and then taken away for resale. That was neither economical nor right. The board knew that these fishermen were distributing only fresh fish—fish that were caught approximately 8 to 12 hours previously. I understand the board will now be able to permit these fishermen to have their catches inspected in a seaside area. It can be left in the hands of the board and that will be an advantage to all concerned. The board will be set a very hard task in carrying out the suggestion proposed by the Minister in regard to seaside areas. There is no doubt that they will share in the general shortage the same as the city.

It is a wise policy to allow the board to advance money to fishermen for gear. They know the men with whom they are dealing and the supplies they bring to market, and whether they are to be regarded as reliable. No doubt there will be a lien over the boats and gear of these fishermen and also a lien on the fish sent to market. There should be no loss if the business is done properly, but it will be of great assistance to the fishermen. I find that fishermen have this attribute, in common with a number of other people: when seasons are good they make no provision for deterioration of boats or gear. They always appear to be struggling after the right gear or the right boat, in both good and lean times. At times they need help and this provision will be of great advantage.

Registration of buyers and distributors has not been effected previously, but it is absolutely necessary that it should. The board should have full control, otherwise its power is limited.

The Government should have the right to appoint two representatives to the board. After all, it is a Government board. The State fisheries were taken over by the board at a time when they showed a big loss. The board took over the job of guaranteeing to repay a certain sum—I think £25,000—for the assets to the Government. When that amount is paid it will be in possession of an asset that will make up a little for the original loss. The Government are right in having at least half or a majority of representation on the board. Nothing would be gained by having anything else. Provided the distributors and fishermen have representatives, everything will be all right. The board will consist of four members only, and with the experience that they have gained over the

years will carry on for the benefit not only of the fishermen but of the public also.

There is one matter that wants a little explaining. I refer to the purchase of fish at Townsville for 5½d. a lb. and its auction on the open market. The hon. member for Hamilton raised the point as to who got the profits. I should say that the board is receiving a profit out of that, but I think that it should deal with the matter in another way when it buys fish at a set price. That fish should not be auctioned so that the profit goes to the board and not to the fisherman.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: When supplies are plentiful we may have to sell some of it at a slight loss.

Mr. DECKER: That is so, but the board might consider the idea of apportioning the fish at a certain price instead of auctioning it. It could then be retailed at a reasonable price to the public.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: We asked our auctioneer to call for suggestions as to how the board could do that, and no-one in the markets could put forward any suitable suggestion.

Mr. DECKER: There seems to be some room for improvement there. If fish can be bought at 5½d. a lb. there should be some way by which the board could apportion the fish to the suppliers, after allowing for certain costs, at such a price as to make no profit from its activities.

I have nothing but praise for the proposed measure.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) (5.2 p.m.): The fishing industry seems to have been neglected in Queensland. There is no doubt that people are paying too much for fish, whilst the fishermen do not seem to be getting an adequate reward for their labours. Perhaps it might be possible to appoint an expert to see what might be done to put the industry on a better footing. I appreciate the difficulties confronting the industry. At times I have seen mullet coming into Southport in such quantities that it was impossible to handle them all, and if the whole of them had been caught many would have been wasted. It would have required an army of cleaners to deal with all that fish, and the difficulty is to get the labour at the time when it is wanted, and the whole of the fish really should have been dealt with at the time because they are in for only a fortnight or three weeks.

Then we must consider the point raised by the hon. member for Sandgate. The Government should take some action to prohibit net-fishing within 4 or 5 miles of the entrance to our bays and estuaries. It has been proved that many of the large travelling shoals of mullet and other fish have been forced away from the entrances to our bays and estuaries by fishermen who were using nets in the surf. An expert should be appointed to investigate the possibility of encouraging these fish to enter our bays.

It is my opinion that the Fishermen's Association should have two representatives

on the board. An unbalanced board is of no use whatever. If there are two Government representatives on the board, one representative of the distributors, and one of the fishermen, with a Government representative as chairman, the Government can overrule the others on every occasion. They become the board. If the position is as the hon. member for Hamilton said—and I understand he was referring to Mr. Freeleagus—then this man is dominating the whole position. If that is so, the Government through the Act of 1935 set up an absolute ramp in the fish industry, because this state of affairs has been going on—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. gentleman to withdraw the term "ramp," because, to me, it is an objectionable term.

Mr. NIMMO: I submit the words "monopoly" or "cornering" and say that there has been a cornering of the fish market. If, as was stated in this Committee this afternoon, the guarantor of fish has been making big profits, then the Act has not been working in the best interests of the people. An effort should be made to see if we cannot get over the difficulty.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: That is one of the principles of this measure.

Mr. NIMMO: What guarantee has the Minister that the same men will not be elected? I say that there should be two practical fishermen on the board and no-one should be able so to dominate other fishermen as to cause them to vote for him.

The fish industry is a matter to which we should give more than passing thought and I think the time has come when an expert in the business should be asked to advise us. The shores of Queensland are not devoid of fish, but something has been happening through careless management—and in this matter I am not speaking against the Government—at the source where the fish are caught. I say that fish are being driven out of our bays. An expert would be able to tell the Government what should be done. The Premier interjected something about a close season, and I do not know whether it would not be a good thing on some occasions to prevent people from taking large quantities of our fish from our bays and other waters, particularly during the spawning season. I am not speaking of line-fishing now, but of netting. When fish come in to spawn they are usually caught and sent to market before the actual spawning takes place. This whole matter really calls for expert investigation.

I think that under certain safeguards loans might be made to fishermen, and the greatest security one could get would be the character of the man to whom the loan is made.

I hope that the Bill will tend to make for the improvement that is necessary, and I trust that some consideration will be given to the representation on the board. I remember that when the Act was before the House in 1935 the hon. member for Cooroora moved that there should be five members on the board, two of whom should be fishermen. I think he showed wisdom on that occasion, and

had his amendment been accepted the tragedy described by the hon. member for Hamilton would not have happened.

Motion (Mr. Foley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Foley, read a first time.

The House adjourned at 5.12 p.m.