

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1942

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER, 1942.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. E. J. Hanson, Buranda) took the chair at 11 a.m.

COAL AND OIL SHALE MINE WORKERS
(PENSIONS) ACT AMENDMENT
BILL.

Assent reported by Mr. Speaker.

QUESTIONS.

FINAL PAYMENT, 1941 SUGAR CROP.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) asked the Premier—

“In reference to the announcement of the ex-Premier on 15 September last that a further payment of 12s. per ton of 94 n.t. sugar would be available on the 1941 sugar crop, can he state when the producers concerned can expect such payment to be made to them?”

The PREMIER (Hon. F. A. Cooper, Bremer) replied—

“On 26 September the C.S.R. Company was requested by the Chairman of the Sugar Board to effect payment of the additional amount as soon as possible.”

CHIEF INSPECTOR OF COAL MINES.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) asked the Secretary for Mines—

“1. Has a person from outside the State been appointed to the position of Chief Inspector of Mines?”

"2. If so, will he kindly explain why a member of the existing staff of inspectors could not have been appointed to that position?"

"3. Was there no one in this State with the necessary qualifications?"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. V. C. Gair, South Brisbane) replied—

"1. Yes; to the position of Chief Inspector of Coalmines.

"2. See answer to 3.

"3. No."

OPENING OF SCHOOLS.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville), without notice, asked the Premier—

"1. Has his attention been drawn to statements in the Press which infer that the Commonwealth Government were in no way implicated in the decision not to permit the attendance of the younger children at schools from Townsville North?"

"2. Is the State Government expected to confer with the military authorities on matters of this nature?"

"3. Will the Government give consideration to the further relaxing of the order now applicable respecting the school attendance of all children of school age?"

The PREMIER (Hon. F. A. Cooper, Bremer) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Yes. Regulation 35A of the National Security (General) Regulations prescribes inter alia that the Premier of any State may issue certain Orders after consultation with the Minister of State for Home Security and with the Commandant of a military district. In accordance with the National Security Regulation referred to, the Australian military authorities in Queensland were consulted and the following views inter alia were expressed to the Premier by the military spokesman in a letter dated 30 April, 1942:—

"My view is that the proposed order should not be made and I definitely advise you against making it. . . .

"I am strongly of opinion that this is no time to begin a reversion to more normal conditions or to relax in the slightest degree the utmost caution and preparedness against raid and invasion

"Further, one powerful effect of an order reimposing compulsory education and sending children back to school will undoubtedly be a lulling of the public appreciation of the danger, the growth of a spirit of complacency and false sense of security, and in particular the encouragement of a drift of voluntarily evacuated civilian personnel back to danger areas. . . ."

The matter was again discussed at a later date with the Australian military authorities in Queensland and concurrence was

obtained in August last for an amendment of the original order for the relaxing of certain prohibitions as to the attendance of children at schools. The Minister for Home Security also concurred in the proposals.

"3. This question is being investigated by the Minister for Public Instruction. I desire, however, to point out that the advice of the Australian military forces in Queensland in April last indicated that 'more and more schools, particularly in the North, may well be required for military use.'"

PAPERS.

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

Report of the Queensland Meat Industry Board for the year 1941-1942.

Report of the Land Administration Board on the operations of the Department of Public Lands (Sub-Departments of Prickly-pear Land Commission, Irrigation and Water Supply, and Forestry) for the year 1941-1942.

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Direction, dated 29 September, 1942, under the Public Safety Act of 1940.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 24 September (see p. 328) on Mr. Nicklin's motion—

"That in view of the importance of maintaining supplies of various primary products to meet the needs of Australian and Allied armed forces and of the civilian population and to provide for adequate exports to Britain during the war and to various countries upon its termination, it is essential that further steps by Governments be taken immediately to relieve the industries concerned of their present difficulties."

On which Mr. Muller had moved the following amendment:—

"Add to the motion the following words:—

"That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Commonwealth and State Governments.'"

Mr. COLLINS (Cook) (11.9 a.m.): Last Thursday I was speaking on the need for post-war planning and dealing in particular with the settlement of returned soldiers on the land. I repeat that this question needs a great deal of consideration, certainly much more consideration than it received after the last war. I believe, however, that most of the difficulties experienced then may be overcome if we have been wise enough to learn a lesson from the failures of those days and to ascertain the reasons for those failures.

(Time, on motion of Mr. Dunstan, extended.)

I thank the House for the courtesy extended to me, and I promise not to trespass unduly on it.

I believe that the tobacco industry has great possibilities from the point of view of the settlement of returned soldiers. We have demonstrated since the last war that much of our land is capable of growing excellent tobacco, which is being used more and more to-day as the Australian smoker becomes accustomed to it. We are fortunate in that tobacco does extremely well on land that before the introduction of tobacco had little or no value for closer settlement. It could be used for grazing, but it would carry only a very few cattle to the square mile. The rental derived by the Crown for any of that land that may have been leased was about 5s. a square mile, but, when put under tobacco, it is capable of producing a crop worth £100, £120, or more.

Mr. Edwards: Without irrigation?

Mr. COLLINS: I am coming to that. In some areas a great deal of tobacco is being produced without any irrigation, but I do not say that that method is entirely satisfactory.

Climatic conditions in North Queensland are suitable for the production of tobacco with the exception that sometimes the rainfall is too heavy and the period between the falls is too long, so that some measure of irrigation is needed to help nature. It is a crop that must be kept steadily growing from the time it is planted until it is harvested if a leaf of good quality is desired. It must be planted at the certain time of the year so that the harvest will be completed before the winter sets in, bringing with it the ravages of blue mould and other diseases.

Mr. Edwards: And what time is that?

Mr. COLLINS: The cold weather sets in about April or May, and it is when the temperature falls below 69 degrees that blue mould makes its appearance. Of course, blue mould in plants has been very largely overcome. In the North tobacco must be planted in November, December or early January, and harvested not later than the end of April. I am pleased indeed that the need for irrigation for tobacco cultivation is recognised in the Budget. There is a scarcity of tobacco in Australia to-day, and so I hope that steps will be taken immediately to make money available for irrigation with the idea of producing more of it. It is also necessary to plan for the construction of weirs and to prepare schemes of irrigation so that when the war is over people will be attracted to that form of primary production and will find a remunerative occupation in growing tobacco. At present Australia is not producing more than 20 per cent. of her requirements and thus it can be seen that there is an expanding market for this primary product, one of few for which there is such a market. Furthermore land suitable for the cultivation of

tobacco formerly had very little or no economic value. Large areas are available without any need for resumptions and the amount of capital required by a tobacco-grower is not as much as is required by men in some other industries. It requires very intensive cultivation, because, like market gardening, virtually each plant must have some attention all the time, especially during the harvesting period because the leaves cannot be harvested by cutting off the entire plant or pulling it out by the roots. Three or four leaves may be plucked from a plant to-day and a few days later a few more leaves are plucked from the same plant just as they reach the ripening stage and so on until the whole crop has been harvested. Immediate attention should be given to the extension of irrigation for the purpose of increasing tobacco production and it is also a scheme that could be very favourably considered in connection with post-war planning.

Another matter of vital concern to us all, and to the primary producers in particular, is the difficulty in obtaining jute for bags required to market primary produce. Nearly all primary produce, such as maize, potatoes, and onions, has to be marketed in bags because many primary products do not lend themselves to bulk handling. Bulk handling has never been a big feature of marketing grain in Queensland, although it has been carried out up to a point in New South Wales. As Australia has been cut off from her jute supplies from India it is necessary that we should investigate the possibilities of growing our own fibre for making bags. I have raised the subject in this Chamber on many occasions before but the need for jute is very much greater to-day. The pastoral industry depends upon bales for marketing its wool, and the wheat industry depends almost entirely upon bags, too. The same applies to maize, potatoes and onions; indeed, every primary product, with the exception of butter, requires bags for marketing purposes. The great sugar industry depends on bags, too.

This country possesses the natural conditions enabling us to grow it. The question is: can we, under the present stress of war, develop that industry? On account of manpower difficulties that development may be very doubtful, but there is no doubt that it is an industry to which we should give great consideration. There are thousands of acres of land in North Queensland at present producing nothing but weeds, including china burr, sida retusa, and a species of wild jute. These have been subjected to tests by the Department of Agriculture and Stock and found to be suitable for the purpose of manufacturing jute. That is one direction in which we could very well bend our energies.

Mr. Pie: It has to be spun.

Mr. COLLINS: That is so. There is a good deal of work in it. The jute industry has been very successful in India on account of the very cheap labour available. Jute there is all hand-retted. Up to two or three years ago jute was taken from India to Dundee in Scotland where the manufacture of jute and jute packs was completed.

Mr. Pie: All our woolpacks originally came from Dundee.

Mr. COLLINS: That is so. That reminds me of another interesting fact. Some years ago New Zealand began to manufacture woolpacks from phormium tenax—a textile fibre grown in that country. I have not heard of the progress of that industry in the last few years, but about four years ago I wrote to the Department of Agriculture in that dominion and was informed that a percentage of the woolpacks required in New Zealand were being manufactured for 3s. 9d. each. At that period the cost of woolpacks in Australia was 3s. 6d. each. The price to-day is greatly in excess of that amount. It looks as if a market worth approximately £3,000,000 at pre-war prices were capable of being developed in this country. Large areas of our coastal belt as far north as Cooktown are growing weeds that could be turned into jute. In fact, those weeds have really reached pest proportions. I am not sure if we could obtain either the required labour or necessary machinery for this purpose, but I should like that aspect of the matter inquired into in order to see how far we could go in commercialising these weeds.

Mr. Edwards: When was that report made?

Mr. COLLINS: It was made by the Department of Agriculture and Stock a few months ago. The investigations revealed that some of these weeds in North Queensland gave a considerable quantity of jute. If we cannot commercialise them at the present time, that aspect of the matter should be borne in mind for attention in the post-war period. We should not be unduly alarmed because in the past jute has been imported from a cheap-labour country. Our sugar industry would not have been established had we been unduly alarmed by that factor. Neither would our rice industry have been established if we had been unduly alarmed because cheap rice could be imported from Java and other Eastern countries. Some lands in Australia proved so suitable for the production of rice that with the adaptation of machinery to handle the crop, which cheap-labour countries did not have, we found prior to the war that we could produce rice in excess of the quantity required for our own consumption and at times, strange as it may seem, export some to China.

Mr. Edwards: The same might be said of peanuts.

Mr. COLLINS: That is so. I thank the hon. member for his interjection. These are points that require attention, particularly, as I have pointed out, the fact that the land on which these plants are growing is not being put to any useful purpose. It is unoccupied and could be used to establish an industry for which there is a remunerative market in this country. If we apply our minds to problems of this kind I feel certain that our post-war planning will be robbed of many of the terrors of the previous post-war period. We shall also be relieved of the worry of getting suitable land on which to settle our returned men.

We shall, moreover, be establishing these men in industries for which we have a market right here in our own country, which is a very important thing. We shall not have to depend upon trade agreements with foreign countries such as Argentina.

As I forecast earlier in my speech, I propose to move an amendment to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Fassifern in order to make the motion direct and bring under the notice of the Federal Government the things to which we want them to give particular attention. It is no use moving a motion without stressing the things that are worrying the primary producer, and it is no good asking them to take action when they think fit, because we want action now—not next year or the following year—we want it right now if we are going to maintain our food supplies, which I believe we can do. For that reason, I move—

“That the amendment be amended by omitting all words after ‘That’ and inserting in lieu thereof the words—

‘this resolution be forwarded to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth with a request that, owing to the present urgency for action, the Commonwealth Government give early and particular attention to the problems of agricultural man-power and transport, supplies of fertilising agents, wire and wire netting, farm machinery, spare parts, fuel, &c.; and other means of assistance, including adequate prices, which would enable the primary producer to maintain those necessary supplies.’”

As the Leader of the Opposition set out when he moved his motion—a very desirable motion, too—we do not want this question to be discussed on party lines and the amendment I move is merely for the purpose of assisting to make the motion more real and more effective. I believe the Leader of the Opposition will agree with that view. I sincerely hope he does. I should like to see this motion go through with the unanimous approval of the House to show that we are wholehearted in our desire to help the Federal Government and that we are only looking for co-operation. If we are divided amongst ourselves, I believe we destroy the effectiveness of the motion. I do not think the motion as worded, nor the amendment moved by the hon. member for Fassifern, will have the necessary and immediate effect we want the motion to have. Therefore, coupled with the many things I have outlined—and the things outlined by other hon. members who spoke on the motion—I commend the further amendment to the House; I hope the mover of the motion will see fit to accept it in the spirit in which it is moved, that he will agree to the deletion of a certain part of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Fassifern, and that the motion will go through with the full support of the House.

Mr. THEODORE (Herbert) (11.29 a.m.): I second the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cook. I think the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition is one of

tremendous importance and one that should engage the immediate and earnest attention of every hon. member of this House. I believe that action on the lines proposed by the Leader of the Opposition should receive every consideration when it is submitted to the Commonwealth Government. I think the only way that we may expect the urgent attention that is necessary to give effect to the proposals contained in the motion is to adopt the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cook.

In doing this I contend this Parliament would show that it was willing and ready to comply with the requests made on more than one occasion by the Prime Minister to Parliaments of other States to do all they can to co-operate with the Federal Government.

Extraordinary demands are being made on the primary industries of Queensland and it is our duty to help them in every possible way. There is no limit to the production that could be undertaken by this State. As we are aware the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock has been in consultation with the Commonwealth Government in regard to the tremendous production—problems with which they are vitally concerned—and it is a tribute to the hon. gentleman that the Commonwealth Government have offered him the important position of Commonwealth Controller of Agriculture. It is a great tribute not only to the hon. gentleman, but to the agricultural policy of this Government. On more than one occasion when visiting the South I have heard it said that we are fortunate in having such a man as the Hon. F. W. Bulcock as Secretary for Agriculture and Stock. He has done a splendid job undoubtedly, particularly since the war began. He has been faced with tremendous problems, and almost insurmountable difficulties. These difficulties are accentuated by the demands made on the man-power of the nation and of this State in particular, which have considerably retarded the job of meeting our needs.

In passing, I would say that I sincerely hope that whatever decision the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock takes in regard to the proposal, his services will not be lost entirely to this State.

When we look over the happenings of the past few months, knowing what was required of the producers, and realising what has actually occurred we easily understand the urgent need for better co-ordination and co-operation. It is, I think, for the purpose of arriving at a more satisfactory arrangement between the primary producers, the Governments concerned, and the military authorities that it is thought necessary to appoint one controller. It was realised from the moment Japan entered the war the most urgent and pressing need was for men for the forces. The hon. member for Stanley has painted a woeful picture of the lot of the man on the land. As one who has had many years' experience on the land, I realise what primary producers have to contend with. There are no set conditions that enable a farmer when he plants his crop

to gauge the final result. He has to contend with many difficulties, such as droughts and floods.

Mr. Massey: Pests.

Mr. THEODORE: Pests and numerous other things. I realise it is a very complicated problem that faces any Government who attempt to do something to put the primary producer on the same basis as the man who receives a regular wage. Much depends on the man himself. We all know that no matter how good the intentions of certain men may be when they go on the land, they become discouraged when they see difficulties ahead of them, and before very long they leave the land and look for work on wages.

I can give an instance of what can be done by a man who thoroughly understands his job and has a full appreciation of all the difficulties on the land. To-day this man is cultivating a piece of land not 30 miles from this city, and getting from it an excellent return for himself and his family. I venture the opinion that if I showed any hon. member of this House that forest land, which is no more than a mile from the railway line, and asked him if he thought he could make anything of it, he would not give it a moment's consideration; but this man had had long experience as a banana and citrus-grower and he has struggled hard to rear his 12 children. Nearly all of them are grown up now, but his whole family are still together, although four or five of the boys are married. He started to grow bananas on the hillside on ground on which they had been grown previously by other people, who could never get more than one or two crops from the stools. This man, after examining this land, which is situated on a range 10 miles from the North Coast line, and the nature of the soil he proposed to plant, applied his intelligence and experience to the task, and is now, after six years, getting almost as good a return per acre as he got when he first planted, and he has 40 acres there. He had tried banana-growing on the share system because he did not have enough money to buy land for himself; then he tried dairying, but was unable to make a success of that, even with his large family. Now, through perseverance and determination, and with the help of a family whom he was able to keep together, he is able to provide for himself and his nine boys, four of whom are married, a much better living than it would be possible for them to earn if they were working for wages. He has been able to do this on land on which the inspector of agriculture had advised him not to waste his time and money.

Since then that man has been able to show also what can be done with a large area of land right alongside the railway line that has been lying idle for many years. He assures me that he could settle 20 dairy farmers in that area. Such cases as these are worth mentioning, but I do believe that too often we ask men to go on the land and struggle to

clear it and do the laborious and almost impossible work necessary in the initial stages when the position might have been much easier for him if arrangements had been made to do the heavy clearing and have a certain amount of the land ready for cultivation so that he might get an immediate return when he took it up.

Hundreds of farmers have gone on new land and struggled to clear it with the use of mattocks and picks, trying to grub out and blast out the trees, when the work could be done with modern machinery at a fraction of the cost. I believe that it could be done at one-tenth of the cost that is incurred by the farmer in doing it by hand. The State has carried out a policy of constructing roads into settled areas to help the man on the land, and I see no reason why it should not be extended in the direction of clearing land for new settlers and so giving them a reasonable chance of success from the outset. Of course, I know that it is sometimes difficult to get the right type of man to go on the land and that many failures have occurred through the unsuitability of settlers. However, I also know that many who have been faced with unemployment have turned to the land in desperation but failed although they had an earnest and sincere determination to do their best.

It is gratifying to know that according to the latest information something more is to be done for the dairy farmers, for after all they are as much entitled to consideration as any other section of the people and they are entitled to a better remuneration than they have been receiving. As in the case of most products, it is difficult to fix an economic price, but we should not lose sight of the great hardships incurred by dairy farmers in having to be continually on their job and in having to contend periodically with droughts and similar setbacks that may not affect other primary industries to the same extent. I am sure the dairy farmers would be content to grapple with these conditions if they were assured of a reasonable return for their efforts.

The subject of the motion is one that should engage the close attention of the Commonwealth Government, but it would be entirely futile to allow the matter to rest with the original motion and the amendment moved by the hon. member for Fassifern. I know the Leader of the Opposition believes the subject should be treated on non-party lines, and so I believe he will agree that there are other aspects of the matter that should receive the immediate attention of the Commonwealth Government. We are confronted with some problems that are almost insurmountable because of the existing military situation, but it should be possible to make some better arrangement or come to some understanding if we are to carry out the desires of the Commonwealth Government to have a maximum war effort. That cannot be achieved unless our problems can be solved. Some of them may appear to be beyond solution, but the difficulties could be considerably

reduced if reasonable consideration were given to them. For instance, yesterday I referred to the problems confronting the sugar industry and since then I have received a letter relating to them.

I contend that this matter requires urgent attention. The letter reads—

“Dear Sir,

“I have to advise that the harvesting position of the district mills as at 26 September, 1942, was as follows:—

	Tons of cane crushed to date.	Tons sugar in stock.
Tully ..	138,859	12,000
South Johnstone	132,533	7,500
Mourilyan ..	83,000	4,600
Goondi ..	115,000	7,600

“*Sugar Stocks.*—Tully mill’s position is serious and they are now using the new shed which has been recently built. Goondi mill’s position is also acute as it is doubtful if any sugar will be lifted from Goondi this week on account of low tides. Lighters are loading Mourilyan and South Johnstone sugar at Mourilyan Harbour.

“*Canecutting.*—The canecutting position is not improving. It will be difficult to get some of the poorer cane cut as cutters will probably demand extortionate rates, so as to maintain the high average earnings which they are now receiving. Rain set in last Friday and as it is still raining there does not appear much chance for the gangs to burn. The majority of the gangs are now not keen on cutting green cane. The South Johnstone mill will cease crushing to-day on account of lack of cane supplies due to gangs not cutting as they cannot burn the cane on account of the wet conditions. The other mills are also watching the position and may have to cease crushing.

“*Planting.*—The wet weather will hold up planting operations. It is anticipated that 80-85 per cent. of the usual normal annual acreage will be planted this season.”

That is the position in the sugar areas in my electorate. I realise that the position is bad in other agricultural industries, but at the same time I do want to stress the importance of grappling with these important questions and doing so immediately.

Let us consider the sugar position more fully. A considerable quantity of raw sugar is stored in North Queensland, yet we know sugar is urgently required, not only for our own consumption, but for treatment at the Southern refineries in order that the refined sugar can be shipped to Great Britain. Unless this sugar stored in the North can be shipped South within a very short time, and thus considerably relieve the storage problem in North Queensland, no storage accommodation will be available to store the sugar that remains to be manufactured and much of it will be lost. That is one of the industry’s great problems at the present time. We have others. The shortage of fertiliser has caused part of each farmer’s crop to be of poor

quality, and it will be very difficult indeed to get that cane. The hot weather is approaching and cane-cutters will not cut cane in the heat unless they can first burn it. There is little possibility that the poorer crop will be harvested, except at exorbitant rates, and even then it is remote. These are some matters to which urgent attention must be given. I honestly believe that if we approach the subject in the right perspective and show our willingness to co-operate with the Commonwealth Government, every possible consideration will be given by them.

There are other subjects that are worthy of our immediate attention. For a considerable time the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, in view of the acute shortage of rubber, has been experimenting in certain areas in North Queensland with the planting of rubber trees. The Minister believes, and I, too, am of the opinion, that rubber can be very extensively planted and successfully produced in certain areas in North Queensland. This is one of the most important matters that concern this nation to-day, and I believe it is one of the things that we should include in the list for immediate attention. Then, again, we read to-day that newspapers are being further cut because we are not able to manufacture anything like sufficient newsprint to meet our needs. I have spoken on this matter before, and I still believe that there are great possibilities in North Queensland for the manufacture of paper pulp by the utilisation of timbers growing there, despite the unfavourable report that was made after a cursory investigation. It is necessary to have a certain type of timber for the production of pulp. When they first started experiments in Tasmania they were producing 33 per cent. of chemical pulp in order to produce a satisfactory paper, but they have almost eliminated that by experiments. I think that is one of the things we should consider, and whether we are able to launch out on any immediate scheme for the production of paper-pulp or not we should have a long-range plan under which we shall plant areas of quick-growing trees to mix with the valuable supplies of native timber that exist in North Queensland.

The Commonwealth Government are giving consideration to the extension of their control of electric authorities. They talk of taking entire control of all such authorities, and I believe if that results in a great increase of cheap electric power we can visualise a vast expansion in our secondary industries. I believe the advent of secondary industries, together with increased population and the stabilisation of primary products, will enable us to make great strides in the advancement of this country.

I will not delay the House any longer. I sincerely appeal to the Leader of the Opposition to consider favourably including the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cook in the motion.

Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (11.59 a.m.): I was pleased to hear the hon. members for Cook and Herbert speak as they did about the motion and I agree that its effectiveness

will be determined by the degree of unanimity of the House in carrying it—unless we are unanimous it will not receive full consideration.

In whatever we do we must be unanimous if any resolution passed here in regard to these matters is to carry weight.

I was very pleased to hear the speeches made by the hon. members I refer to and to note that they were in accord with the broad outlook of the motion. In its original form the motion asked that, "in view of the importance of maintaining supplies of various primary products to meet the needs of Australian and Allied armed forces, and of the civilian population, and to provide for adequate exports to Britain." For the moment I stop there. Our difficulty to-day, as I see it, is to provide foodstuffs for the Allied forces and the civilian population and the export of some to Britain. For the life of me I cannot see why it was necessary to have the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cook, inasmuch as it deals mostly with post-war problems, which can be discussed at a later time. Our difficulty to-day is to maintain stocks of the foodstuffs that are dwindling each day. To do that, it will be necessary to seek the co-operation of the Commonwealth Government, and it is certainly our duty to draw attention to what is happening in Queensland. I shall endeavour later, by giving the House a few figures, to show how Queensland is drifting in some of our principal primary products.

Personally, I should like to see the amendment of the hon. member for Cook withdrawn. Let us deal with the immediate pressing problem, the post-war problems to be discussed later. There is no use in sending down a resolution that deals with wire and wire-netting and all sorts of things that are mere incidentals to the larger problem. I agree that those things are necessary, but we should not cloud the issue by an amendment in such a form, especially when we must have unanimity. This is not a party motion. The motion concerns the welfare of Queensland generally. We must maintain our primary production, and if we do not we shall not be able to do what I think is essential. There is an obligation on us to maintain supplies of primary products to Britain in order to feed the British people and to retain those markets in the post-war period. If we do not do this, many of our best markets for primary products will be lost. They will be supplied by foodstuffs grown nearer to them.

To deal now with the dairying industry, which is very important and means a great deal to this State and in which 111,000 people are involved working on farms; and in order to show the House how production and values have decreased, I will quote some figures. We must do something to maintain production. We know there is a great need for man-power in the war effort and we also know that much of that man-power has come from the land; therefore, a decrease in production is to be expected, and it is our job to ascertain what can be done by other means

to make good the loss. The man-power that has gone is doing more good somewhere else in the protection of this country, with all the freedom that we enjoy in it, and, therefore, it must be realised that these other means must needs be adopted.

In the last two years the production of butter in Australia has decreased by 1,706,984 boxes.

Mr. Collins: That would be partly due to seasonal conditions, would it not?

Mr. PLUNKETT: Yes. In value the decrease has been from £27,198,369 to £21,290,169, or a loss to the producers of dairy products of £5,908,000. The price has not altered during that period to any great extent. The prices for primary products obtaining before the war are still maintained, with the exception of those for dairy products, which received an increase of seven-eighths of a penny last March. Our exports alone declined from 77,843 tons to 46,847 tons in one year, a loss of 31,000 tons. Cheese production dropped by 3,549 tons. I quote those figures to show that our production has been going back. In Queensland we have been producing dairy products of every kind and other primary products to such an extent that we have always had an excess, and people have had the idea that there is never likely to be a shortage and that all these commodities should be available at bedrock prices, irrespective of how high the cost of production might be. This has been the attitude for the last 20 or 30 years, and at one time it got so bad that the dairymen were forced to form an organisation not only in Queensland but in the other States in an endeavour to protect themselves, and they had a certain amount of success.

As hon. members know, the dairying industry in Queensland has grown to such an extent that, given normal weather conditions, Queensland is the principal exporter of dairy produce from Australia. But, on the other hand, climatic conditions here have a greater effect upon our production than they do in the other States. In the last three years our production of butter has dropped from 2,775,000 to 1,686,000 boxes, which has meant that £3,355,000 less money has come to Australia. We hear people say that the dairy farmer is never satisfied. Certainly he is not satisfied, and he never will be satisfied so long as he is required to sell at less than the cost of production.

In 1938-39 the average income of each of the 42,000 dairy farmers in Queensland was £394. All hon. members know that, as a general rule, the dairying industry is carried on by a man, his wife, and family.

The Secretary for Public Works: Is that the gross income?

Mr. PLUNKETT: Yes, so far as dairy produce is concerned. The following year the average income was £371, and in 1940-41 it was £311 and the last year it dropped to £254, and that drop is the reason why the farmers are saying they cannot carry on unless they get an increased price for their products.

The figures I have quoted show that the decline is a serious one, and, after investigating the position, we came to the conclusion that there were two reasons for it. One was that man-power has been taken away from the country districts. Of course, we cannot control man-power, but another and a very important reason is that the families who are left—there are virtually no men left on the farms—are not getting enough money for what they are producing. It is only natural that once a man feels that he is not getting a just price for his product he loses interest, he does not care whether he produces or not, and it is for that reason that men have gone out of dairying. The price being paid for beef has encouraged them to turn out their dairy cows and let them rear their calves.

The dairying industry is the only primary industry in which the return to the farmer has not been enhanced in the last few years. The wool-grower, the wheat-grower, the lucerne-grower, the maize-grower, the potato-grower, and the vegetable-grower have all enjoyed increased prices for their products, so much so that people have been encouraged to leave dairying and to engage in producing those commodities.

Pig-raising is a subsidiary industry to the dairying industry. We are asked to produce 200,000 tons of pig meat, whereas last year we produced only 80,000 tons. Let me give some further evidence to show how the dairying industry has been going down, and this subsidiary industry with it. The Norco Company, one serving a very big primary-producing area on the Northern Rivers districts of New South Wales, reports that its supplies dropped to 11,000 pigs from 31,643 in the corresponding period last year. Hon. members can see the position the industry is getting into. No-one likes to say that we are likely to be short of foodstuffs, and that we may not be able to feed our own people. It is my firm conviction that we should endeavour to give Great Britain as much foodstuffs as possible. There is a considerable demand at the moment for primary products. There is a demand, or an outlet, for about 200,000 tons of butter, and there is an unlimited demand for cheese. Great Britain wants 10,000 tons, and would take 40,000 tons if we had it, but she knows we have not got it. We did not produce anything like 200,000 tons of butter last year, and if the position does not improve we may not be able to send any to Great Britain, and, indeed, we may be scratching to feed our own people. We have our own people fighting for our protection, but they cannot fight unless they are well fed. I have always held strongly to the view that people can work better if they are properly fed. That is a sound argument, but it will be a terrible situation if we simply shut our eyes and ignore the facts until our producing organisation breaks down. The matter is of vital concern to Queensland and Queensland producers.

Everyone regards Queensland as the primary-producing State of the Commonwealth, and it is, too. The other day the

Secretary for Agriculture and Stock gave us a broad outline of the primary-production targets for this State. The first on the list is 60,000 tons of butter, which means that we should have to increase butter production by 50 per cent. I cannot see any possibility of reaching that increase in view of the acute shortage of man-power and the price paid for the commodity, even with the very best of seasons. The low price and the shortage of man-power have brought about a decline in production over the past 12 months. The target for wheat is 8,000,000 bushels. There again man-power is a serious matter. I believe that much of the trouble could be overcome by a sound system of organisation, but there is no use in proceeding merrily on our way until the break occurs and then exclaiming that we should have done this, or that we should have done that. Now is the time to act. Cheese is to be increased by 80 per cent. up to 30,500 tons. There again the low price and the shortage of man-power have militated against further production. Peanuts are required in an unlimited quantity, so that we may have essential vegetable oils. Here, again, the low price and the shortage of man-power have operated against increased production. We have been asked to produce an unlimited quantity of cotton, and here again the price-factor is important. We have been asked to produce 600,000 tons of sugar, and that commodity is being rationed. Man-power is short, and fertiliser extremely scarce, and so it may not be possible to produce the required crop, even though the land is available for its production. Tobacco is wanted in an unlimited quantity. It is suggested that we may have to adopt beefless days. The production of all these commodities, butter, wheat, cheese, peanuts, cotton, sugar, tobacco, and beef is of vital concern to the primary producers of Queensland, and it would be a bad day for this State if these industries were to be allowed to decline and to show decreased production merely for the want of encouragement and the payment of a reasonable price.

Unless something is done not only in regard to the prices of these primary products but to give us an improvement in existing conditions, that decreased production will continue to take place and many more producers will go out of existence. I recognise it is my job, just as it is anybody else's, to see what can be done to arrest this drift from the industry.

In addition, the dairying industry is asked to produce 15,000 tons of dried full-cream milk, equal to 27,000,000 gallons; 35,000 tons of condensed milk, equal to 19,000,000 gallons; and 170,000,000 gallons of fresh whole milk. This demand for milk products is going to have a serious effect on the production of butter, cheese, and casein. The whole basis of these products is cows, and we must have someone to milk those cows. The man-power position alone is alarming, and must be faced immediately. Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia are having pretty good seasons. Therefore, bad

seasons cannot be assigned as the reason for the decreased dairy production in those States; it must be the number of producers going out of business.

The acting Commonwealth Statistician, Mr. S. R. Carver, made investigations into the dairying industry after we had drawn attention to the fact that production was going down, and they revealed that in Queensland 11,630 persons left dairy farms in 1941-42, of whom 2,842 enlisted in the fighting services and 2,366 gravitated into other avenues of employment. Why did they go into those other avenues? Because those other avenues paid them better.

Mr. Maher: Hear, hear!

Mr. PLUNKETT: They received better wages and better conditions than they enjoyed on dairy farms. From 41,876 farms in all States 19,596 have left, 11,748 enlisting in the fighting services, and 7,848 being absorbed in other avenues of employment. In many cases these other forms of employment returned them more than twice the money they previously earned. We cannot expect people to work in an industry that is governed more or less by climatic conditions when they can obtain increased wages in others without being subjected to the rigours of varying climatic conditions when working out in the open.

In the early stages of the war the patriotism of the country people was shown in the numbers who enlisted for military service. Farmers' sons were a great proportion of the 11,348, previously mentioned by me, as having left their farms to enter the fighting services.

Not only have I and my colleagues done our best to arrest the drift of primary producers, but the organisations concerned have continually drawn attention to the fact. Last year the Federal Government did the right thing when they appointed a parliamentary committee to investigate the difficulties of primary production. The Government of the day, in a commendable spirit, appointed to that committee members from both sides of the House, particularly men whose interests were centred in primary production. This committee visited all Australian States, and after taking evidence submitted progress reports. It reported that 1,000 dairy farms in New South Wales were then idle or had diverted to other forms of production, such as the growing of lucerne and maize, which are more profitable than dairying and entail less labour. That is why producers are leaving dairy farms. The committee also reported that the excessive drain on man-power in the dairying and pig industries has made it impossible to produce foodstuffs to maintain production. Labour shortage was resulting in deterioration of stock and the reduction of the industry's productive capacity. We recognise that once the usual production arrangements on a farm are upset by a change from one industry to another, not only do herds deteriorate, but the implements depreciate in value and it takes some time to restore the level of production of the original product. The committee was

also unanimously of opinion that a substantial increase in the price of dairy products was essential. Those conclusions were arrived at after a thorough investigation of the industry.

I have a kindly feeling for the Minister for Commerce. He works very hard, and puts himself to a great deal of inconvenience to meet the various dairy organisations and hear their case. He was very much concerned, and if the thing is not remedied it will not be his fault. The Committee of Control, which is a board set up by the Commonwealth Government, with statutory powers, had a deputation to him. The position was so serious that we all thought our duty was to show what was likely to happen in Australia. We placed the figures before the Minister, and he was a bit startled, as I was when I first saw them, because I did not think the position had drifted so much. The Minister appointed a special committee to make a further investigation. This committee visited three of the biggest States, took evidence, and sent in a report a few weeks ago, but no decision has been made yet. I know war conditions exist, and know the hard work done by Ministers of the Crown and officials associated with them, but I often think that we have set up too many committees to deal with these matters, and not one of them seems to be able to make a final decision on anything. It is a case of "You send it to me and I will send it to somebody else," and it goes round in a circle, and nobody can say "Yes" or "No."

The Secretary for Public Lands: Some of them make a terrible mess of it, as a matter of fact.

Mr. PLUNKETT: In this case I do not know whether a mess has been made, because no decision has been given.

Mr. Collins: You know there is a war on.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I appreciate that. I have given the figures to show what is happening in the dairying industry. It does not pay to dairy to-day; it pays one to do anything else than to go on a dairy farm.

What has the dairying industry done to help itself? When the war broke out the dairying industry helped itself and the Government of this country to a greater extent than any other industry I know of. When the British Government told us they did not want butter, but wanted cheese, we set out to get them cheese, and we had to tell the man who is going to sell milk instead of cream that he would be at no loss, because the industry would make it up to him. About £250,000 or £300,000 was spent in building new cheese factories and extending other cheese factories to make them more efficient, and the industry itself is bearing that cost. We went further than that. We have shared with the Commonwealth Government the building of cold stores throughout New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania. We were impressed by the

seriousness of the position, and knew that if shipping was interrupted we must have cold storage for products that needed it. The Commonwealth suggested that this provision should be made—it was looking after all interests, and bore half the cost. It would cost us another £100,000, but I do not worry about that—the industry can afford that. I am showing the House what we have done to help ourselves. We have nearly doubled the cold storage we had in pre-war days, and we can store butter during the peak of the year for three months and make provision for nearly 2,000,000 tons of it.

I do not like to have to mention some of the things I am about to mention, but I want to impress upon hon. members the fact that if something is not done we are not going to maintain our production, and if we wait until it falls further we shall have to start rationing. The rationing of primary products in a country like this would have a bad effect upon the morale of the people, and it should be adopted only as a last resource—after every effort has been made to give the primary producer a price that will cover his costs and enable him to live in reasonable comfort. There is no greater body of patriots than the country people. Their surroundings and their way of life make them patriots. When the war broke out nearly every country town in Queensland and Australia gave vast sums of money interest-free to the Commonwealth Government to help them in the war effort.

They were, of course, helping themselves as well as helping the Government by doing that. They took war-savings certificates out on their supplies every month and have a large amount thus invested. In addition, many of them—in fact, most of them—are giving so much on every ton of butter made. I have shown the House what the industry has done for itself and what the farmers are doing for the industry, but I say emphatically, that this is the only primary industry in Australia that is not getting the cost of production. I say that deliberately, and if any evidence is necessary to verify it, I refer hon. members to the figures. Why are people going out of this industry and into others? Because other avenues of life pay them better. One of the reasons why that position has been brought about is the pernicious system of price-fixing. I dread it, for the reason that it may be a legacy to us in the post-war period. If we ever get to the stage—and there are many people who think we may—at which the farmer or primary producer of the country is expected to produce cheap foodstuffs for the people, irrespective of whether it pays him, a State such as Queensland will be badly affected.

Mr. Collins: Is not a stable price for their material a factor?

Mr. Maher: If it is profitable.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I will give some of those I think not profitable.

Mr. Collins: Give us some that are, too

Mr. PLUNKETT: I say plainly that the principle of fixing maximum prices for primary products and minimum prices for everything else in the community is entirely wrong.

Mr. Collins: Set a maximum as well as a minimum.

Mr. PLUNKETT: Where do they do that?

Mr. Collins: Sugar and wool.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PLUNKETT: First of all I must make the point that if a maximum price for a product is fixed without a minimum price, a great injury is done to the producer, and, consequently, to the State. Let me put it this way: my production is determined more or less by seasonal conditions, inasmuch as there are a peak and a datum, both governed by climatic conditions. If the price could be fixed at an average figure it would be all right, but that cannot be done as the costs of production are continually altering so rapidly that very often an injustice would be done.

I want now to deal with a position that occurred here a few weeks ago. During the war it may be necessary to fix a maximum price, and I have no objection to that, but I have a very great objection to fixing a maximum price without a minimum price. That is very unfair to the producers.

Mr. Collins: What about a guaranteed price? Would that get over it?

Mr. PLUNKETT: A guaranteed price always involves many conditions and very often the conditions are impracticable. The fixing of onion prices last week is the most scandalous and the most tragic thing that has ever happened. The growers who had sent their onions from their homes to the market lost £1,000 by the fixing of the prices overnight, and they were robbed of that £1,000. The next day the onions were still on their way to the market and when they arrived at the market the growers lost another £1,500. Thus, these people were robbed of £1,000 on one day and £1,500 on another day because advantage was taken of the fact that they had already sent their produce to the market not knowing that the axe was going to fall on them and reduce the value of their product from £45 to £55 a ton to £13 a ton. This price-fixing business is all wrong when you have different prices as between one State and another. Is there any justice in that? The Commonwealth Government have said we are all one and should make equal sacrifices, but is there any equality of sacrifice when they fix prices in Queensland lower than those that operate just over the border?

Mr. Collins: Have they done that?

Mr. PLUNKETT: They are doing it to-day, and that is why this motion is very important and it should be carried unanimously. There should be no fooling about with amendments at all. We must show the people of Australia that we are very jealous of our State and that when it comes to a show-down politics do not enter into it.

Mr. Collins: There are no politics in the amendment.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I think the hon. member could well afford to cut out the amendment. It deals with post-war matters and the need as I see it to-day is to maintain production.

Mr. Collins: That is all the amendment deals with.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I do not think any hon. member of this Assembly can justify what was done by the price fixer in Melbourne in connection with onions. The market value was from £45 to £55 a ton, according to quality—and that is the general rule with all primary products—and overnight he comes in and fixes a price of £13 10s. a ton for Queensland, yet in Victoria it is £20 5s. a ton, and the pool price is £19 a ton at Colac. Why should it be £13 10s. in Queensland? The other day I read in the Press that Mr. Beasley, the Minister for Supply and Development, said to Tasmania, "If you can grow me 2,000 tons of onions I will guarantee you a price of £15 a ton." Why should Tasmania get £15 a ton whilst here producers putting onions on a scarce market have to take £13 10s.? This whole system of price fixing will cause a revolution in this country yet. I am told now that in our own city there is a difference even in the price of milk.

Mr. Massey: For one firm only.

Mr. PLUNKETT: It does not matter if it is only half a firm. It is wrong in principle and must have some repercussions.

Take potatoes. A couple of years ago potatoes were selling on the market at £22 a ton. The price fixer came in and fixed the price at £17 5s. The farmers thought they lost from £2 to £3 a ton, and they did, actually, because the market value at that time was £22. They said it was not worth their while continuing to grow potatoes. They lost faith in price fixing and preferred growing anything for a free market, even if the market value was low, to growing something for which someone is going to fix a price that may be £13 10s. to-day and no-one knows what next week. When the price of potatoes was fixed the growers stopped growing them, with the result that there was a general shortage and the Government had to step in and give contracts to anybody who would grow them, and they are giving both a maximum and a minimum price.

(Time, on motion of Mr. Luckins, extended.)

Mr. PLUNKETT: I thank hon. members. Is it not only natural that a shortage should occur under such circumstances? I venture the opinion that if you want to create a shortage of any foodstuff, just fix a price at something below cost of production and you will have it. Once you get that shortage you must step in, as happened in the case of potatoes, and pay the grower a reasonable price, fixing both a maximum and a minimum price. No minimum price is fixed for onions, and a reduction from a market value of £45 or £55

a ton to £13 a ton overnight is far too drastic, and certainly will be the means of driving men out of onion-growing.

Mr. Collins: You would not suggest fixing the price of onions at £55 a ton, though, would you?

Mr. PLUNKETT: No, but I suggest that you see what the prices for the previous year were. On 1 September last year, when the onions started to come in, the price was £29 a ton. On 15 September it was £22, and at the end of the month it had risen to between £36 and £37. On 15 October the price was £33 to £36 a ton, at the end of October £30 10s., in November £38, and then it gradually fell to £20. At that time the supply was running out.

The man who fixed the price of onions at £13 10s. a ton does not know what he is doing. If he was compelled to fix the price, why did he not have some regard to the prices that ruled the year before? For the past two or three years everybody, including Governments, have been asking the farmer to grow more onions and more potatoes and when he does, what happens? In Roma street the other day onions were sold compulsorily at £13 10s. a ton and the farmers lost £1,000 one day and £1,500 the next day. What happens then? No more onions. And there will be no more onions until the trouble is remedied. Who is going to grow onions under those conditions? Not the maddest farmer in the world. I am emphasising to-day that this Parliament and anyone with authority should let the people know what is happening and understand that if they want foodstuffs they should be prepared to pay the cost of production.

Mr. Theodore: Accept the amendment and we will do our best for you.

Mr. PLUNKETT: The amendment does not cover it.

Mr. Collins: It does.

Mr. PLUNKETT: Why did not the Government accept the original motion?

Mr. Collins: There is no use in having supplies if the price is inadequate.

Mr. PLUNKETT: Let us have a look at the motion, and let us also look at the amendment. There is nothing about price in the amendment.

Mr. Collins: No, but it deals with all those things that affect the producer.

Mr. PLUNKETT: The hon. member said that the price for dairy produce could be rectified.

Mr. Collins: I said it should be rectified.

Mr. PLUNKETT: That is poor balm to the unfortunate cocky producing the stuff.

Mr. Collins: What do you suggest?

Mr. PLUNKETT: The farmer is entitled to more than the cost of production. I entirely agree with the hon. member for

Cook that this subject is above party politics, but what is in the amendment? Nothing but party politics. The motion says—

“That in view of the importance of maintaining supplies of various primary products to meet the needs of Australian and Allied armed forces and of the civilian population, and to provide for adequate exports to Britain during the war and to various countries upon its termination, it is essential that further steps by Governments be taken immediately to relieve the industries concerned of their present difficulties.

“That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Commonwealth and State Governments.”

This is the amendment—

“This resolution be forwarded to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth with a request that, owing to the present urgency for action”——

What action?

“the Commonwealth Government give early and particular attention to the problems of agricultural man-power and transport, supplies of fertilising agents”——

Mr. Collins: Do you object to that?

Mr. PLUNKETT: No. Why all these details? All these things must be done. The situation could not be otherwise. That is referred to in the motion. I appeal to the hon. member for Cook to withdraw his amendment and support the motion so that we may be unanimous.

Mr. Collins: Then it would be innocuous and would mean nothing.

Mr. PLUNKETT: There is no need for the amendment. Unless the price of onions is fixed with due regard to the cost of production, there will be no onions. That is only natural. Anyone who takes advantage of the primary producer is doing an injury to the country. The price of onions has been fixed in South Australia at about £25 a ton. In Tasmania the growers have been encouraged to grow 2,000 tons at a guaranteed price of £15 a ton. I agree that Queensland is becoming the Cinderella State of Australia in many ways.

Mr. Collins: We have argued that all along.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I wonder if it is because of the actions of this Government. I do not want to engage in party politics now, but I wonder if it is because the Queensland Government had the audacity to take the Commonwealth to the High Court. Is this a reflex of that action?

The Attorney-General: Do you not think that we should have taken them to the High Court? Do you think we should take them to the High Court in connection with the price of onions?

Mr. PLUNKETT: If they had done that they would have a very good case. We should have a much better case than we had on the last occasion.

We can all take our hats off to the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock. He is an active, hard-working Minister.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. PLUNKETT: There is no doubt about that. He has been given targets in the production arena. No mention has been made of ammunition for him, not even a gun to hit the target. It seems that the target to be hit is the primary producer. Every Government—in fact, every person—says that the dairymen must get a better price. They talk about it, but that is all they do. Sir Earle Page has suggested, according to yesterday's newspapers, that a subsidy should be given to the industry. That is a miserable sort of way of paying farmers for their labour.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. PLUNKETT: The dairy industry, so far as Queensland is concerned, is important enough to be worth paying for.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. PLUNKETT: Not only should that be the opinion of everybody, but it should be implemented by Government action. I admit that in Canada the price of butter is subsidised 3d. a lb. and in America the price is 3s. 0d. a lb. During the last war the consumer here paid 2s. 6d. a lb. for butter without a squeal, yet with more money in the country than ever, and with wages at a level that was never higher, all the dairy farmers are getting for butter to-day is 1s. 2d. a lb. How can they continue under those conditions? I have never seen them so angry in my life. If anyone arose to lead the farmers to-morrow, they would chuck their milk to the pigs without separating it.

Mr. Collins: No, they would not.

Mr. PLUNKETT: If my advice from Atherton is correct, then they would be the first section of the dairy producers to lead the revolt. No-one in his senses wants to get any section of the people, not even the dairymen, so angry as to act contrary to the interests of the country, particularly at this time, but we must give them a greater share of justice than they have received.

We should support the motion as originally framed and turn down the amendment.

Mr. Collins: The amendment makes it more effective.

Mr. PLUNKETT: The motion is sufficiently effective. I can quite imagine the Prime Minister's action on receiving a resolution like this, together with the extraneous matter contained in the amendment as affecting supplies of wire-netting and other necessities. There is no occasion for the amendment.

I do not believe in giving a subsidy on butter. The time has arrived when the price of all primary products must be such as to cover cost of production, otherwise we shall not get any. There is certainly a war on, and consequently every citizen is willing to

make a great sacrifice and work harder and longer hours than hitherto, so long as we can win the war, but for goodness sake, do not ask our primary producers to work for nothing!

I was very pleased to notice in to-day's press that this subject has been ventilated in the Federal Parliament. The position has become so serious that at a long last someone has been seized of its urgency, and has put the position so plainly before that Parliament that on a motion for the adjournment two hours were spent in discussing it. The Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, is reported as saying—

“The Government's action would be actuated by a keen desire to do something for the dairying industry, not only of immediate benefit to farmers but also to ensure that the industry was placed on a sounder basis, particularly to meet post-war vicissitudes.”

What we want to-day is action. That is what the motion seeks. The amendment is beside the question, therefore, and we should forward the motion as it stands to the Federal Government.

Mr. Collins: My amendment asks for expeditious action.

Mr. PLUNKETT: To-day is not the right time to move such an amendment. We must exert ourselves not only to maintain present primary production but to increase it. I see a ray of light ahead for the industry, but I have seen it on so many occasions that I can hardly believe that relief is within our grasp. If the Commonwealth Government would only do something, and do it quickly, to arrest the deterioration that is taking place in the industry in this State, they would be doing something for the good not only of Queensland but of Australia.

At 2.15 p.m.,

In accordance with Sessional Order, the House proceeded with Government business.

SUPPLY.

COMMITTEE—FINANCIAL STATEMENT— RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Brassington, Fortitude Valley, in the chair.)

Debate resumed from 30 September (see p. 412) on Mr. Cooper's motion—

“That there be granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1942-1943 a sum not exceeding £300 to defray the salary of the aide-de-camp to His Excellency the Governor.”

Mr. LUCKINS (Maree) (2.16 p.m.): I congratulate the Premier on his attainment to the very high office of Premier of the State of Queensland. There are difficult days ahead, and I was a little surprised that the former Premier went out of office so quietly without offering some explanation

for handing over in these difficult times the powers entrusted to him under the Premiership of the State. It is regarded as right that every man should stand by his job in this difficult period, and one of the most important jobs in Australia is that of Premier of a State. As no explanation has been offered by the former Premier, we can only speculate as to the reason for his action. None has been publicly given. It may be that he resigned because of a long and difficult term, or it may have been for the purpose of allowing the next in seniority to take control. We do not know. There has been a rearrangement in the administration of the affairs of the State, and like many others I am a little concerned as to the conditions that brought about this change. We are entitled to know from the ex-Premier his reasons for relinquishing his position, and, if possible, some explanation should be given to the citizens of the State.

I am concerned to a degree with the state of Queensland's financial affairs at present. These are very difficult times, and call for the best effort of every citizen to safeguard the things that vitally concern us and mean much to us in the future. A Premier to-day holds a very important job, but I feel sure that under the guidance of the present Premier Queensland will lose nothing in comparison with the past 10 years. I take this opportunity of congratulating the former Premier upon making a very fine record of 10 years' service. It falls to very few men in public life to hold such a responsibility for such a period. We can be proud of the fact that many men who have attained that office in the period since 1859 have given wonderful service to Queensland. My recollection goes back to the time of the Kidston Government. A very fine type of Premier was the late William Kidston. He represented Central Queensland, and that part of the State owes much to his work. I have spoken previously of the development of Queensland from the angle of its Premiers and the electorates they represented in Parliament, and the Premiership having now been entrusted to the hon. member for Bremer, we can look forward to seeing Brisbane and Ipswich come in for their share of the development so much required in Queensland.

A Government Member: That is parochial.

Mr. LUCKINS: It is not at all parochial. I know from recent developments that have occurred in this Parliament that North Queensland has received a very fair share of the revenues of this State, and the district of Brisbane elects 20 of the 62 representatives of the people in this Parliament. The population of that area is one-third of the total population of the State, and where the majority of the population are, there, too, are the majority of the taxpayers, and the taxpayers of this State are entitled to some consideration for the very heavy taxes they have been paying for the past 10 years.

I congratulate you, Mr. Brassington, on your attainment of the very important position of Chairman of Committees. You have been long associated with this Parliament, and it is a fitting reward that you should be elected to that office. During my short experience of your administration I have noticed that you have been impartial, and I hope that you will long enjoy the high office that you hold, for I am confident that you are capable of giving the service desired by both sides of the Committee.

I was a little disappointed to see that the Treasurer is asking for an income of over £23,000,000 this year. When we realise that the total population of Queensland is only 1,000,000 we must agree that it is imposing a heavy burden upon them to ask that they contribute £23,000,000 of their incomes to the State. It is essential that during these times we should forgo much of our development in the interests of the Commonwealth Government's war effort, and it would have been a fine gesture on the part of the Treasurer if he had endeavoured to help the Commonwealth Government to finance this war effort by taking less out of the pockets of the taxpayers for Queensland's purposes. I am not in a position to offer any suggestions as to how the Treasurer could reduce his income, and if I did offer any I feel sure they would fall on deaf ears, but the door is wide open for that to be done, and the Prime Minister certainly would deeply appreciate any efforts on the part of the States to help him finance his war effort.

The State is receiving £5,821,000 from the Commonwealth Government as recompense for the loss of revenue from income tax and State development tax. Queensland's debt is now £131,000,000, almost double what it was in 1932.

The Treasurer: That is not true.

Mr. LUCKINS: The State's income has doubled.

The Treasurer: That is different.

Mr. LUCKINS: Taking such a high amount of taxation from the pockets of the people is not good government. In my opinion good government is giving the best possible service to the community at least possible cost to them. It is easy to map out an extravagant programme and to take unnecessary sums from the pockets of the people. The State development tax, which has been operating for so long in Queensland, has been a terrific and unjust tax, and it has weighed heavily upon the shoulders of the community, and has greatly retarded the progress of secondary industries. Queensland is suffering from 10 years of maladministration, during which that heavy and unjust tax was levied upon the people. I make so bold as to say the Opposition have been fighting for years to rehabilitate secondary industries in Queensland in that we have pointed out time and again that this unjust imposition has retarded the establishment and development of secondary industries here. I am not unmindful of the fact that socialisation has played a prominent

part in the Labour Party's policy, as is shown by the introduction of Government and board control of many industries here, a control that has not been altogether satisfactory.

Secondary industries could employ and maintain a large number of employees in Queensland, and they should be encouraged in every way. It seems to me that the Government have been closing their eyes to the necessity for developing secondary industries hand in hand with primary industries. If secondary industries develop as primary industries develop prosperity is brought to a community and a State. Secondary industries have played a very prominent part in the development of Queensland, but they would have played an even greater part if they had been encouraged and helped by the present Government.

I am amazed to see that part of the Labour Party's platform has been abandoned in the last few years. The Premier and the members of the Cabinet have had their eyes opened and are returning to a moderate tempo of administration.

There is no desire in Queensland to set up a socialistic State here, but hon. members opposite cannot deny that the socialisation of industry is part and parcel of Labour's platform. I counsel the Government to take stock of themselves, to formulate a new policy, and to forget entirely their old policy, which has been so largely responsible for the amassing of the public debt and the heaping up of the heavy burden of taxation, thereby discouraging people from investing in secondary industries here.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Queensland is the only State that did not increase taxation last year.

Mr. LUCKINS: Queensland is the highest taxed State in the Commonwealth.

The Secretary for Public Lands: And has more to show for it, too.

Mr. LUCKINS: With nothing to show for it. Queensland is the most neglected State in Australia from the viewpoint of development. Of course, it will be argued that it covers a vast area, that it has an extensive railway system, it has harbour and river facilities, it has its Sub-Department of Forestry, its Department of Agriculture and Stock, and other departments of State, but in view of the large amounts collected from the taxpayers in revenue, amounting to about £23 a head of the population annually, one would expect to see something. I admit that Queensland is an extensive State, that a certain amount of development has taken place, and that the Government have spent large sums on the building of schools and other public buildings, but they could have done better and obtained better value for the money if they had adopted the system of private enterprise. I make no apology for advocating the co-operation of private enterprise, and I know that to-day it is the policy of the Government to encourage private enterprise, which they damned in the past. I am very pleased

that they have given warm consideration to that fine piece of private enterprise in Brisbane, the City Electric Light Company Limited. On behalf of the citizens I commend them for it and suggest that they should extend a similar consideration and encouragement to other branches of private enterprise. The people of Queensland have contributed very generously to the Queensland Treasury, but I am satisfied that if private enterprise had been encouraged the Government would have been in a position to reduce taxation and at the same time allow the workers to enjoy even better working conditions than they have now.

I make the claim that all is not well with the administration of the Labour Government, and to that I can ascribe two reasons—one, that they have been in power too long; and the other, that there are too many young men in the Government who are trying to get into administrative positions. I admire them for that. It is a matter that is agitating the minds of hon. members opposite to-day. The public are concerned, too. Although there have been changes in the administration, there has not been any change in the system of government over the past 20 to 30 years. The same system operates very largely from one Parliament to another and from one party to another, but I think it is time that the new Premier took stock of himself and considered the possibility of starting virtually a new administration in Queensland. My previous suggestion in this respect fell on very deaf ears. To-day, we have in Queensland 12 Cabinet Ministers, one without portfolio, and that is taking a very heavy toll on the finances of the State.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Your numbers are wrong again; it shows how loose you are with figures.

Mr. LUCKINS: How many are there?

The Secretary for Public Lands: You do not know, and you do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. LUCKINS: Of course, I do not know what happened in caucus last night; the Parliamentary Labour Party may have reduced the number of Cabinet Ministers by one. However, I will make it 11 to be on the safe side. There may be others. The hon. member for Hamilton has suggested that there should be a Minister for Secondary Industries.

Mr. Pie: And so there should.

Mr. LUCKINS: Then that would be another and soon the Cabinet would be so strong in numbers as to equal the British Cabinet. That does not speak well for administration in this State. My suggestion that economy should be practised in the State's finances is worthy of consideration.

There are other avenues in which economy might be practised with benefit to the war effort. We are living in spartan times and should adjust our habits accordingly. That can only be done by practising frugality. It is our duty to help as much as in our

power to finance the war effort. A commendable gesture might be made by the Ministers of the Crown who are now drawing very handsome salaries, and the hon. members also, who are receiving £650 a year plus allowances. I make the suggestion in the interests of the Austerity Loan. We must, at every angle, help the Commonwealth Government in their war effort and I make no apology for saying that, because of John Curtin's heavy responsibility he will have my support wherever possible. State Parliaments could help that effort by their good will, or friendly gestures, financially and in other ways. I would go so far as to advocate the cutting down of our administrative costs.

The Secretary for Public Lands: After the war your party will dwindle into insignificance as regards numbers.

Mr. LUCKINS: Our party will be in power after the war, notwithstanding the ramifications of the Labour Party. I have already told the hon. gentleman that his party have been in power too long, and that they do not appeal to the workers. I have occasion to know that the workers think that the Government are out of step with their ideals, because they have not given them what they promised. I have arrived at that view as a result of the experience of many years.

Let us take the Railway Department. I am sorry that the Minister for Transport is not in his place, because he might have been able to tell us something of the conditions prevailing in his department to-day. It is giving an excellent service—in fact, a wonderful service—but its plant has been so neglected that it will cost thousands and thousands of pounds to put it in proper repair. That is due to past failures to maintain it in first-class order. The Government have not, as has been pointed out from this side of the Chamber repeatedly, provided the amount necessary for renewals and replacements, which should have been set aside in a Trust Fund. That is a statutory obligation, but it has not been honoured. Consequently, the plant and machinery of the department is in such a state of disrepair that one authority has said that if even the Premier cared to board a locomotive he would find defects in it. The rolling stock has also been neglected. It will take time and money to replace them.

The workers in the railways are very much concerned at the neglect of the Government to make provision for those employees who were appointed in a temporary capacity some years ago. It is contended that these men should receive similar benefits to the permanent hands. As hon. members opposite have not replied, I take it that they recognise that silence is golden and that they admit that men who have given years of service in a temporary capacity to the Railway Department have never enjoyed the privileges enjoyed by the permanent staff. We have heard it often stated that a standard of living has been set up in the form of a basic wage to keep a man, his wife, and family, but has the Railway Department given that standard to its gatekeepers or to the attendants of

the smaller stations between Brisbane and Sandgate?

Mr. Healy: They are all paid award rates.

Mr. LUCKINS: They do not receive the basic wage. The Opposition is concerned with their conditions and calls public attention to them.

I think the railwaymen will remember the services they expected from the Labour Government and compare them with what they have received. I have previously called attention to many anomalies in this service and I expect that part at least of the Labour Party's platform will be adhered to. I remind hon. members about it again, because reiteration may impress them with the sense of responsibility for carrying out their obligations.

A Government Member: Your Party sacked 4,500.

Mr. LUCKINS: We sacked nobody. The Labour Party have been in office for 10 years and have given a small return for the high taxes that they have received from the public. The Moore Government had an income of £14 million and hon. members opposite have an income of £23 million, with practically no alternative but to waste the difference between the two sums. I know where the apparent waste has occurred, up to a point. Perhaps the Secretary for Labour and Industry will tell us what happened to the workers on the dole.

A Government Member: If you want a job, change the Government.

Mr. LUCKINS: A change of Government is looming. Coming events cast their shadows before them and one is reminded of the old saying "Get out, quick; there is going to be a catastrophe very soon." The ex-Premier has left the Party to take a remunerative job which I think carries £2,000 a year, and strangely enough he has increased the retiring age from 65 to 70. Is it not easy to get this part of the policy of the Labour Party altered so as to increase the retiring age from 65 to 70 for the benefit of an ex-politician? I should not mind if it were for a man who was in the sugar business and who had served his time in the industry even if he had been well-rewarded for his services rendered during that period. We must be frank and honest. I do not mind what the Government throw at me—it is merely a question of how hard they throw it and how hard I throw it back. I do not want to fall out with any members on the Government side of the Committee. I am sure they are trying to do their duty very sincerely, but that effort does not convey much to the State of Queensland when we examine it from the point of view of pounds, shillings, and pence.

I want to ask, if you will permit me, Mr. Brassington—and the Treasurer must be concerned with this action of his Government, because he was Treasurer at the time it occurred—and I hope we can examine the question without interjections or abuse.

A Government Member: The attitude you are adopting does not help. (Government interjections.)

Mr. LUCKINS: I am adopting the attitude I am prepared to adopt to satisfy my electors.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is indulging in too much argument across the Chamber.

Mr. LUCKINS: I was speaking to the Treasurer and asking that it might be possible for him to answer this question in the interests of the community and the city of Brisbane. Will he tell the Committee why he gave permission to the Labour-controlled Brisbane City Council in 1937 and 1938 to lend to a wealthy shipping company the proceeds of a loan of £90,000 for 40 years at the current rate on borrowed money at that time, and gave an extension of 40 years on top of that to secure the Newstead wharves for the benefit of the shareholders of the shipping company? Will the Treasurer tell this Committee what induced him to sanction the lease of the old Town Hall premises at less than the Council was receiving for it without paying the rates and taxes a freeholder would pay on the £50,000 valuation of the land?

Why did he grant permission to the City Council to give a lease of those premises to H. B. Bonney, who has been controlling a private company in Queensland? Why did he consent to the Brisbane City Council's lending that company £15,000 of the ratepayers' money free of interest for 30 years? It calls for some explanation. I was once concerned with the development of Brisbane from the civic point of view, and now I am much concerned with the development of Brisbane and Queensland from the State's point of view. These facts I have just enumerated came before the council and as an alderman representing a very large body of ratepayers I was astounded that such proposals should have the hallmark of the Government of Queensland. We are entitled to an explanation as to why the money was advanced or why the loan was condoned by a Labour Administration. I have no desire to go into any angle of the administration of the Brisbane City Council. I served on it for a number of years, but now I am representing a very important division in the State Parliament and intend at least to examine every aspect of the Government's proposals. If they are in accordance with the best traditions of Parliament I will subscribe to them, but should I find lax administration of the laws of Queensland I will make my protest in this Chamber.

I desire to help the Premier in his administration, if I can. He has a very difficult job but he has plenty of money with which to carry out the job. As he has set out in his Financial Statement, he has £23,000,000, and I am pleased that he has enumerated many of the proposals on which he proposes to spend the money, but there is one that calls for an explanation from the hon. gentleman. He has allocated approximately £285,000 for

the building of workers' dwellings during the current financial year. I am concerned about workers' dwellings. If it is at all possible, every assistance should be given to those workers who wish to build their homes with Government help, and I am amazed that notwithstanding that the regulations under the National Security Act do not permit the erection of any building without the permission of the Federal Government a large sum of money has been ear-marked for this purpose in the current year. I therefore ask the Treasurer how he proposes to spend on workers' dwellings the sum of £285,000 set out in his Budget.

An Opposition Member: You cannot get a permit.

Mr. LUCKINS: You cannot get material at all. It is to be put to use in our war effort and I am sure we agree with that principle.

The sum of £1,563,000 has been transferred from the control of the Secretary for Labour and Industry to the Treasury to pay certain commitments on loans and exchange, I take it, but no details are given.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: We did some very fine work with it.

Mr. LUCKINS: We should like to know what work the Treasurer intends to do with the £1,500,000 he has taken from the hon. gentleman's department. It is a very large sum of money and we are entitled to ask how it is to be spent. When such a large sum of money was transferred from the Department of Labour and Industry the Minister in charge of that department should have at least asked what was intended to be done with it. Is he satisfied that it will now be spent in the interests of the taxpayers of Queensland?

The Secretary for Labour and Industry: You can rest assured that very fine work will be accomplished.

Mr. LUCKINS: We are entitled to know where every penny will be spent.

The department controlling harbours and rivers is a very important one, but can anyone tell me of a river or harbour that is in a more despicable, disgraceful state than the river approaches of Brisbane? I made an effort, through the Brisbane City Council, to persuade the Government to clean up the old dilapidated wharves right at the front door of the city. Across the river at Kangaroo Point there are relics many years old, rotten wharves in a state of collapse, one of the most unsightly things that a visitor to the city could see, and no action is taken to clean them up. When the Department of Harbours and Marine was approached we were told it was a matter for the Treasury Department to see that those wharves were shifted. Then we were told that the Government had no power to compel shipping companies, who owned the wharves originally, to shift them.

The Secretary for Public Lands: You were boosting private enterprise a while ago.

Mr. LUCKINS: That is not private enterprise.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Of course it is.

Mr. LUCKINS: The removal of dilapidated wharves from the banks of the Brisbane River is part and parcel of the work of the Department of Harbours and Marine.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Who owns the wharves?

Mr. LUCKINS: The hon. gentleman knows that the Government, through the Department of Harbours and Marine, have control of the river banks up to high-water mark.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Who owns the wharves?

Mr. LUCKINS: The Government own them when they are on their land. A permit must be granted for the building of the wharves, but they automatically become the property of the State.

The Secretary for Public Lands: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. LUCKINS: If the Government have no power to compel someone to shift dilapidated wharves, why can they not vote a certain amount of money to the Department of Harbours and Marine for the purpose of cleaning up the river, making it look presentable, and so helping the city to acquire a dignity in conformity with that of other capital cities of the Commonwealth? The Government have been too much concerned about other matters. I remember the time—and I do not apologise for mentioning this—when the old Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board operated under the Theodore Government. The operations of that board were a scandalous thing and constitute a black chapter in the history of Brisbane. Perhaps some hon. members were not acquainted with the conditions prevailing then, when any man who was a member of the A.W.U., whether he was baker, butcher, or candlestick-maker, could, if he had a letter of introduction, get employment under the board on a scheme that cost nearly £8,000,000 or £9,000,000, which has not been completed, and which I am afraid will not be completed for many years to come.

I am revealing these shortcomings of the Government, for I contend that they may rightly be blamed because they controlled the activities of boards and the Brisbane City Council. Whenever the Government desire to bring about an alteration in the administration of the Brisbane City Council, they simply amend the law, and they did that a good many times during my service there, but despite all these alterations they have not yet hit upon the high ideal which will give the city of Brisbane a service that will be satisfactory to both the taxpayers and the council. I hope that wise counsels will prevail in the near future with our Ministers. I have every confidence in the two new Ministers. They are young men who will be acquisitions to the State if they are trained in the right

way. Certainly they have the experience of past years to guide them along the pathway of good administration.

I desire to congratulate the hon. member for South Brisbane upon his promotion to ministerial rank, because he represents a metropolitan area. In the past year, although the metropolitan area returns 20 members to this Chamber, it has had only a very small say in the control of the destinies of the State. I congratulate South Brisbane upon acquiring a new dignity in having its representative elected a Minister of the Crown.

I cannot let this opportunity go by without thanking the Secretary for Public Instruction for what he has done and blaming a former Secretary for Public Instruction for neglecting the State schools in the Maree electorate. In referring to a former Minister I do not speak of the present Secretary for Public Works, but of another Minister who was in office at the time when the former Premier introduced the National Education Co-ordination and the University of Queensland Acts Amendment Bill, when he might have been courteous enough to extend that privilege to the Minister.

In accordance with the maxim, "An injury to one is the concern of all," we should like an explanation. However, I compliment the new Ministers on attaining to their positions and express the hope that they will be able to give good service to their departments.

I am sorry that the Treasurer has left the Chamber because I wanted to refer to the American loan raised in 1921 and which had serious repercussions on the finances of Queensland.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The Treasurer has been called away to attend a meeting.

Mr. LUCKINS: I suppose someone else on the other side of the Chamber can well take his place, because there are a number of Ministers there well versed in finance. Why did ex-Premier Theodore go to America in 1921 for loan money at 7 per cent. when I believe he could have raised it from Australian investors if he had tried?

The Secretary for Public Lands: The Philp-Cowley-Walsh delegation went to London and prevented Mr. Theodore from getting the money.

Mr. LUCKINS: Any Government who allow themselves to become subservient to any financial institution have no right to call themselves a Government. Parliament is the highest authority in the land, and it had power to impose taxes and other conditions without reference to any financial institution. The mere fact that Mr. Theodore went to America is proof positive of the deplorable conditions that prevailed at the time. He refused to face the conditions in Queensland, he brushed them aside, he ignored Australia and England, and went to the American Jews for money at 7 per cent., carrying a high rate of redemption payment. That is not the whole story.

The Secretary for Public Lands: He is giving a good service to Australia to-day.

Mr. LUCKINS: He is a good man, I will admit, one who has played his part in public life. I am only referring to the unfortunate conditions recorded in the history of the State. By his action he inflicted a great hardship upon the ratepayers of Brisbane. They were influenced by the Administration of the day, and in later years, for some unknown reason, they, too, sought £1,000,000 in America at 6 per cent. with the exorbitant redemption payment of 4 per cent., or a total loan charge of 10 per cent. annually. It is a good thing that we are now free of those shackles. I am glad to know that the American loan of £1,600,000 was recently funded by the Commonwealth Bank. We still have financial commitments in America, but I hope they will be cleaned up as soon as possible. I am reminded that the exchange charges of our American loans amounted to £545,000. That is an extraordinarily large sum, and, as a representative of the people, I am unable to understand how the exchange operates and who is responsible for it.

Mr. Moorhouse: The Jews.

Mr. LUCKINS: The combined efforts of the Commonwealth and State Governments, fortified by the Statute of Westminster, should be sufficient to remove those conditions immediately. Unless the exchange conditions have been imposed by the State Government, the Commonwealth Government, or the British Government, there should be no place for them in our community, especially when we are asked to pay such heavy exchange charges on top of interest and redemption payments. The conditions have operated very harshly against our people. The interest and redemption payments have been a very heavy drain on them, and little or nothing was left out of the loan for the purpose contemplated when it was raised. However, I am pleased that the Treasurer was fortunate enough to make arrangements with the Commonwealth Bank to take over the America loan, which was repayable in 1956.

Now, let me outline the commitments of the State for the ensuing financial year.

I was very pleased to see that the Treasurer was able to make some provision for a certain amount of loan money. What does he propose to spend that money on? I take it that the Commonwealth Government are finding all the money required for defence works executed by State Governments, and no avenue will be left in which the State can do developmental work. The sums that have been budgeted for under the various headings, which will probably not be expended this year, may prove useful to the Government in the following financial year, which will be the election year. Will the Treasurer tell this Committee how he proposes to spend the £285,000 that has been allocated for constructing workers' dwellings? Will he tell this Committee also how he proposes to spend the allocations for public works and improvements? I believe it to be impossible for his Government to spend

much money at all this financial year, particularly as man-power is concentrated on war work. In all probability there will be surpluses in many Government departments, particularly the Department of Public Instruction, due to the call-up of man-power.

Mr. Nimmo: That will be kept for expenditure in the election year.

Mr. LUCKINS: The total unexpended expenditure will probably be considerable, and will be reserved for the following financial year for lavish spending in the hope of winning seats.

The Secretary for Public Instruction: That is a nasty suggestion.

Mr. LUCKINS: Unfortunately, it is true. I remember workers were sent into electorates just prior to an election in the hope of giving Labour candidates the requisite majority. That will be very difficult of accomplishment in my district, at any rate, as I am keeping a keen eye on all enrolments there. I have in my pocket a card that will be a valuable asset, not only to this State, but Australia also in time of an election. It is my national identity card. It entitles me as a citizen to certain privileges in this Commonwealth. It states my age, which is probably known to hon. members opposite. I believe they have informed themselves as to my personal history—where and when I was born—and have even gone to the trouble of finding out where I was married.

Mr. Power: You made a botch of your business.

Mr. LUCKINS: I made a loss in business, and hon. members probably know how many times I have been to the Brisbane City Council.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LUCKINS: I expected all these things. I make no endeavour whatsoever to inquire about the antecedents of any hon. member opposite. I take a man at his face value. I admire him for his devotion to duty, or how he lives privately. I always wish my fellows the best that is possible. The identity card I spoke of will play a very important part in the Ithaca by-election. I suggest to the Attorney-General, who administers the law relating to electoral registration, that no person be permitted to exercise the franchise unless he or she produces this identity card. I am sure he will thank me for this suggestion, as it will make for a clean roll. It will afford a wonderful opportunity of identifying each elector when exercising the franchise. It is a method that appeals to me, because in the past we have heard much about roll-stuffing and similar happenings at election time.

The Secretary for Public Lands: They tell me you would have lost your seat last election if that had been done.

Mr. LUCKINS: I should have been elected by a bigger majority. I was told that names were put on the roll for my electorate at the last election in order to try to defeat

me, in the interest of democracy. However, that was not successful. The production of identity cards will give full effect to the principle of one man, one vote, the foundation of democracy. We shall then know whether there are 400 or 500 dud voters in an electorate containing 8,000 or 10,000 voters, and if they played an important part in the results of previous elections.

In conclusion I wish each of the Ministers the best, as the saying is. I know that during the session we shall have an opportunity of debating the departmental estimates. I should like to speak on one or two subjects, particularly the unfortunate people who were imprisoned in the lazaret at Peel Island. Some of these were fortunate enough to come out cured, and I ask the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs whether he would consider granting them a State pension in lieu of what they have lost during their sojourn on Peel Island. Some of them were on the island for a time, and either did not have the disease when they went there or became cured and were discharged for that reason. I commend that suggestion to the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs. It may be possible, in view of their loss and suffering, to grant them a State pension to make conditions a little happier for them.

I shall deal with other matters when the time arrives, and I hope that what I say, which will be in the interests of the community and for the benefit of the taxpayers, will be noted by the Ministers concerned.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (3.11 p.m.): At the outset I want to say that I regret very much that the hon. member for Maree should have made an attack by innuendo on the ex-Premier during his absence. That is the usual type of attack indulged in by hon. members of the Opposition. They wait until the ex-Premier is out of the Chamber to make remarks that are not in accordance with fact. I want to assure the hon. member for Maree that the Labour caucus did not do with the ex-Premier as the Tory Party at Canberra did with Mr. Menzies. We are able to control our own destiny without the support or advice from hon. members of the Opposition.

I regret very much that the ex-Premier saw fit to give up the position of Premier of this State. Even his most bitter opponent must appreciate the fact that he has done wonderful work on behalf, not only of Queensland, but of Australia. It must be well remembered that when he attended a meeting of the Loan Council after he became Premier, the whole of Australia was in the throes of depression, and the result of the amendment he then moved was to change the whole complexion of the Loan Council and alter the views of its members, and consequently money was made available, not only for Queensland but for every State in Australia, and from that day onwards Queensland and Australia have progressed. I think the words of Henry Longfellow could

be appropriately quoted of the hon. gentleman—

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.”

Those words can be used of a man who has done so much for Queensland and Australia in general as the ex-Premier.

I also desire to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for Bremer on his elevation to the Premiership of this State. He has given many years of service to the Labour movement, and has all the qualifications, and is temperamentally fitted for the high and important office to which the members of the Labour Party recently elected him.

To the hon. member for South Brisbane I offer my congratulations on his elevation to the Ministry. The new Secretary for Mines has been a member of the Labour movement for a long time, and has won his spurs in this Chamber. I prophesy that he will go far in the Labour movement, in view of his honesty of purpose and his firm desire to do all he possibly can, not in the interests of any section of the community, but on behalf of the people as a whole. On many occasions the hon. member for South Brisbane ran close to Cabinet rank, but eventually, to use a colloquialism, he landed a vacancy that he well deserves.

To you, Mr. Brassington, I offer my congratulations on your elevation to the Chair. I think you are the only member of the Labour Party who was in opposition in the years 1929 to 1932 who has not attained Cabinet rank. However, you have eventually got out of the rut as a result of your work and ability, and I feel sure that all your decisions as Chairman of Committees will be governed not by the party point of view, but by your sense of fairness and the Standing Orders.

The Treasurer, as the result of careful control of finances, was able to increase the surplus last year and to forecast a surplus for the current year. The Opposition appeared to be somewhat annoyed because the Labour Party has been able to show surpluses for a number of years. As I have said previously, finance is the test of government, and as the finances were mishandled—I use that word deliberately—by hon. members of the Opposition between the years 1929 and 1932, it shows that they were incompetent to control the affairs of this vast State. Each year, as a result of their policy, the position became worse.

Mr. Decker: What about 1932 to 1938?

Mr. POWER: The conditions that existed then were the result of the unholy mess in which the Labour Party found the finances of the State. It took them six years, by a gradual process of elimination, to extricate Queensland from the position in which they found her as a result of the three years of Tory administration.

The Opposition, I repeat, appear to be annoyed because the Labour Party have been able to show a surplus. That surplus has not been brought about by the policy recommended by their opponents who have suggested we should curtail expenditure, and reduce social services. On no occasion have they said in what section of governmental expenditure these savings should be made. They make the bald statement that there should be less spending and less development. Did they really think we would continue the policy adopted by them over a number of years, dismissal of employees, reduction of allowances to widows and orphans, and the throwing out of employment of thousands of men, reduction in the allowances for educational scholarships, and the taxing of washerwomen? Some may accuse me of indulging in tedious repetition, but the public may forget some of the actions of the Opposition. They are not likely to do so whilst I am a member of this Parliament. The younger generation, who then had no vote, should realise the political calibre of the Opposition and understand what they would do if they ever again attained control of the Treasury benches. In their period of office industrial conditions did not exist in Queensland, as industrial awards were cancelled and industrial inspectors were transferred to places in the Never Never in which they could be of no value and a large number were dismissed. If the Opposition have any constructive ideas for the careful control of the finances, I am sure the Treasurer will be willing to accept their recommendations.

An analysis of the Budget discloses that with one or two exceptions amounts have come very close to the estimates of the Treasurer. Certainly there has been an increase in the Railway Department, but there has also been an increased revenue, owing to circumstances over which the Government have no control and which are the result of the war. There was a slight increase in the income-tax collections. That is because there were more people in employment and thus within the ambit of taxation. The Budget has been framed not for the wasteful expenditure of public money, but on a war-time basis. Provision has been made to meet any situation that may arise in connection with the war. A good deal of valuable work has been done by the Minister in Charge of Civil Defence. The Commonwealth Government decided not to accept responsibility for civil defence but to put it on the State Governments.

Let us analyse what has been done by the Minister in charge of this important task. We know that the establishment of A.R.P. organisations in all parts of Queensland and the obtaining of equipment for them has entailed a good deal of expense. This Government have had to make available money to provide the various things required by air-raid wardens and all members of the other sections of the civil-defence organisation. This morning, the hon. member for Wynnum asked a ridiculous question when he inquired when the Government were going to make

available to every A.R.P. warden all the requirements for civil-defence purposes.

At 3.22 p.m.,

Mr. MANN (Brisbane) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member should realise that there is at present a serious shortage of material, but, nevertheless, every effort it is humanly possible to make is being made by the Minister in charge of civil defence to obtain all the things that are essential to the civil-defence organisation. It seems to be the opinion of the hon. member for Wynnum that all one needs to do to establish an effective civil-defence organisation is to put on a helmet, arm bands, and respirator and then walk round blowing a whistle and clearing people off the streets. A great deal more than that is involved. Hospitals have to be provided, and it is interesting to note here that the Opposition have openly condemned the Queensland Government's policy of districting hospitals and raising their standard of efficiency. Almost every session the hon. member for Fassifern raises the hardy annual of the heavy precepts levied upon local authorities for the upkeep of hospitals. The value of the Government's hospital policy will be appreciated in Queensland in that should anything happen here we shall not be caught with no place in which to treat our wounded soldiers and civilians. All necessary hospital facilities have been provided and first-aid posts have been established throughout the length and breadth of the State. This all requires money.

Then, vast sums have been made available to the fire brigades and to local authorities in many parts of Queensland for the purpose of perfecting civil-defence organisations in the country. Our Minister in charge of this work even went so far as to have legislation passed to provide compensation for injury sustained by civil-defence workers as a result of enemy action or whilst going to or from places of training. Of course, that legislation is of no value now, because the Commonwealth Government have stepped in and superseded it by an Act of theirs, but while we were waiting for something to be done by them, our Minister took steps to make some provision for civil-defence workers who might be injured.

Let us deal now with the defence of Queensland. We are engaged in a war that is not of our own making, and every effort must be made, not only by this Government but by every member of the community, to see that the defence of the country is built up in such a way that we shall be able to repel an attack, should it come, and to guard against our being in the same unhappy position as our gallant young men were at Singapore and Malaya. As a result of lack of policy on the part of the Tory Federal Government in Australia in the early stages, at a time when Senator Foll returned from Singapore and Malaya, after having had a holiday, and said, "All is well; Singapore will never fall," the cream of Australia's manhood was lost to us in defending that place and sadness was

brought to many homes not only in Queensland but throughout the Commonwealth.

The defence of Queensland is not the responsibility of the State Government, but we are co-operating with the Commonwealth Government in every possible way for that purpose. Immediately upon the outbreak of war the former Premier, the Hon. W. Forgan Smith, informed the national Government that the whole of the resources of Queensland were available to the Commonwealth Government for the defence of Australia. Experts were sent from the South to Queensland to investigate the facilities that were available to train young men to become artisans so that they could take part in the manufacture of munitions, and after making investigation at public expense, these so-called experts reported to the Commonwealth Government that Queensland could train eight young men as artisans for munition-making. It was a scandalous report, and I believe that those concerned did not go outside Brisbane in their investigations. The Secretary for Public Works, the Hon. H. A. Bruce, who was in charge of the administration of the Apprenticeship Committee in Queensland, had made facilities available at the Technical College for the training of a number of youths, and to-day a large number are being trained and being paid the basic wage during their period of training. Upon completing their training they are sent to the Ipswich railway workshops and to private munitions factories throughout Queensland. That is splendid work. The experts sent from Victoria on behalf of the Commonwealth Government to investigate the facilities here reported that eight could be trained in this State, but the State Government have been able to train hundreds under the benevolent guidance of the Secretary for Public Works.

Let us examine the Budget to see how some of the revenue is to be spent during the year. A sum of £218,300 will be spent on defence work to be carried out by the Queensland Government. Apparently hon. members opposite are of the opinion that only the Commonwealth Government are spending money on defence in Queensland. I have no desire to detract from the splendid record of the present Commonwealth Government in this respect. Jack Curtin and his Government have done a wonderful job in the interests of the defence of Australia. I go so far as to say that had it not been for the action of Jack Curtin and his Government I believe the Japanese would have over-run Australia long ere this. The previous Tory Federal Government had no constructive proposal to offer for the defence of Australia, and under their control Australia was likely to meet the same fate as Singapore. Fortunately, there was a change of Government.

Mr. Nimmo: And if there had not been a change of Government—

Mr. POWER: The sooner the people decide to change the parliamentary representative for the Oxley electorate the better it will be, because he defames the State on every possible occasion.

Let me return to my study of the proposed expenditure of public funds during the ensuing year. An amount of £698,410 is to be spent on strategic roads. Everybody knows what their value will be. We all know that most farming implements and road-making plant have been taken over for defence purposes. I know that the Allied Works Council has taken over most of the road-making plant belonging to the Brisbane City Council, and that it is now being used for roadmaking in various parts of the State. Officers of the Main Roads Commission, an instrumentality under the control of the State Government, have been placed in charge of the work, and this is convincing proof that the Commonwealth Government have confidence in their ability.

In addition to the amount to be spent by the Commonwealth on strategic roads, a further sum of £690,110 is to be spent. An amount of £671,470 is to be spent on railways and rolling stock. I think it was the hon. member for Maree who said that the Queensland rolling stock was in a deplorable condition, and that something should be done about it, but I should like to remind him and his colleagues on the other side of the Chamber that between 1929 and 1932 the Commissioner for Railways presented a certificate to the effect that the railway rolling stock was in a good condition. What was the position when Labour took over at a later date? The railway rolling stock was in a deplorable state and the people can thank God that the Moore Government were not in control of the department when war broke out, because if they had been we should not have been able to move one-twentieth part of the soldiers and foodstuffs that were taken to various parts of Queensland. Much has been done to improve the rolling stock, but much more remains to be done, because of the continuous strain upon it consequent upon the incessant heavy haulages. The Minister for Transport has made arrangements whereby much of the rolling stock that previously went to the Ipswich railway workshops for repair can now be repaired at the Normanby railway yards.

A large amount of repairs has also been undertaken at Mayne Junction. As a result, there has been a general improvement in locomotives, but notwithstanding all this work, we are aware that their condition is not perfect. We also know that this State was able to send locomotives to other parts of Australia to be used advantageously in the interests of defence.

Shipbuilding and port facilities have also been provided. In times of war it is very necessary to have means to repair ships damaged by enemy action. These have been provided as a result of recommendations made by the Government to the Commonwealth Government. It was previously suggested that this work could not be accomplished in Queensland, and it was only as a result of the persistent advocacy by the ex-Premier and the Treasurer at meetings of the Loan Council that it was eventually agreed that this important undertaking could be constructed here. The Government are finding a considerable

amount of the required money, the Commonwealth Government the balance. Such a provision will serve a twofold purpose. It will not only enable repairs to be expeditiously executed when required by units of our navy, but in peace-time it will provide a facility to repair ships in Queensland that did not previously exist. This, to some degree, will relieve unemployment should it ever occur here again.

Cotton is a vital commodity in our war effort. We all know what the Government have done to stimulate the growing of cotton in the Home Hill and Ayr districts in the Bowen electorate and how sugar-growers were induced to change to cotton-growing. The Government expended £169,536 last year to stimulate the cotton industry in this State. That is proof again that the Government are willing to help an industry of any value to become established. They will not give assistance to any wild-cat scheme that will benefit an individual or section of individuals, but any proposal that is proved to be sound and will give a stimulus to industry will be assisted financially by the Government, so long as it is in the interests of the nation, not the individual. The Bureau of Industry was appointed some time ago to investigate any such proposal. Quite a number of investigations were made and as a result financial assistance was given that enabled a number of industries to become established.

The Government also expended £629,500 for air-raid precautions and civil-defence work for the year ending 30 June last. I have already dealt with the effective action the Government took to protect lives and property, and I do not propose to repeat my statements. Suffice it to say that as problems arise in connection with civil defence they will be handled by the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, who is competent to do so. He will see that the civil-defence matters, so far as this State is concerned, are what they should be.

I now wish to deal with another matter that has been raised by Opposition hon. members. I did not think when I spoke some time ago about the price of onions that so much noise would have occurred. I said onions were being sold for £49 a ton or 1s. 4d. a lb. I am glad to know that as a result of my action the Commonwealth Price-fixing Commissioner saw fit to take action. I do not agree with all he has done. There has been discrimination. The price should not be lower in one State than another. I believe also that assistance should be given to the primary industry. I go further and say that the question of distribution of our primary produce should receive attention with a view to eliminating the middleman altogether. If the producer was able to supply direct to the consumer, then he would get not only what he is now receiving for his product but at least one-half of the rake-off that is taken from him by the middleman. It is because of the middleman that the producer is not receiving a just price to-day for his products. The Government cannot be blamed for that. A committee should be appointed to investigate

the matter and make a recommendation on the marketing and distributing of primary products. This would enable hon. members to give consideration to the subject and see to it that the farmer obtains what he is entitled to get for his product, just as the worker is entitled to the full value of his labour.

Mr. Muller: Would you favour a system of co-operative distributors?

Mr. POWER: I should like to see such a proposal before venturing an opinion upon it. I am not going to tumble into any trap of that sort.

Some time ago I referred in the House to the price of tea. I said I had in my possession a docket showing that 1s. 1d. was charged for a quarter of a pound of tea. Mr. Sweetman, of the Retail Grocers' Association, saw fit to rush into print and tackle me on the matter. I challenged Mr. Sweetman to meet me and said I would produce that docket, which I still have in my possession. Mr. Lindsey, the Commissioner of Prices, also "had a go" at me in connection with it. I asked Mr. Lindsey why he did not reply to my complaint, which was made six months ago. He came out with a lot of tripe, and asked why, if people were overcharged, they did not produce their dockets to him. I had already given him the name of the firm and the docket. Can he tell me how many outside storekeepers give a purchaser a docket? Very, very few.

I suggest that there should be a better method of policing price-fixing than there is. The "Queensland Shopkeepers' Journal" has this to say—

"Is Price Control Effective?"

"What a question to ask a storekeeper? Yet Mr. W. Power, M.L.A., must have walked along George street and seen tea advertised at 2s. 9½d. per lb. . . ."

I never discussed the price of tea at 2s. 9d., and I am not in the habit of going into cheap-jack shops at any time—I do not even visit the Cash and Carry. I have dealt with a well-established grocer for 19 years, and when he sold his business I transferred to the other man, and all my commodities are delivered to my door. They are not going to get away with it by trying to mislead the public. The price was 1s. 1d. for a quarter of a pound of tea. I challenge this journal and the editor of it to come forward and give me the opportunity to produce the docket. I have no desire to name the firm concerned—it was a very big firm in Queen street. I maintain there must be a better method of policing it. The proper way to police prices is for the storekeepers to place in a conspicuous place in every store the prices of the various commodities, and then the people can police them themselves. I know it is not possible to have a staff of men going round from shop to shop policing prices. There are many decent storekeepers; I do not suggest all storekeepers are rogues and thieves. This journal would have been better advised if it commended me for exposing what had been done.

We did not see any complaint by the journal against the storekeeper in my electorate who sold cockroaches' eggs and legs in tea and was fined £10 for it. But we did see in it a condemnation of me for exposing the tactics of some of these people. This storekeeper sold some loose tea. A woman went into his shop and bought the loose tea—I forget what price she paid—and when it was analysed it contained cockroaches' bodies, eggs, and legs. When the inspectors went round to the store with the woman who had made the complaint the storekeeper said, "I have no tea." She said, "Oh, yes, you have; it is in that tin up there." When the tea was analysed that was what was found, but there was no word of condemnation of that person; but there was an attempt to belittle me because I took the opportunity of complaining of what was done as a result of price-fixing.

Let me go further. Take the case of milk. This is a glaring instance. The Metropolitan Milk Supply Company is allowed to charge a halfpenny on half a pint and a halfpenny on a pint of pasteurised milk above any other vendor in Queensland. Why the discrimination by Mr. Lindsey? Why did he say to these people, "You can charge a halfpenny more on half a pint and a halfpenny more on a pint of pasteurised milk" and give no increase to others? The argument is that they do not charge it for over a pint. What working man can afford to buy more than a pint? It is only the people who have plenty of money who buy a quart, and they do not pay that extra amount. I want to know on what ground Mr. Lindsey gives preference to one section of the community. Moreover—and this should interest hon. members opposite—the vendor who buys the milk from the Metropolitan Milk Company is not allowed to pass on the price to the consumer. The Metropolitan Milk Company is getting a rake-off of a halfpenny on every half-pint bottle and every pint bottle as against every other milk distributor in Queensland. Why? Now Mr. Lindsey has been asked by the vendors to explain why that increase has been given, yet Mr. Lindsey remains silent.

I ask Mr. Lindsey another question. Why is the price of beef dearer in Esk than in Brisbane?

Mr. Muller: Who appointed him?

Mr. POWER: I did not. I can assure the hon. member of that. I am not guilty.

A large number of cattle come from Esk and a large quantity of the beef sold at the abattoir comes from that district, but the price of beef at Esk is much higher than in Brisbane, despite the transportation cost from Esk to Brisbane. On what does Mr. Lindsey base his figures?

Mr. Nicklin: Is that the actual price at Esk or the fixed price at Esk?

Mr. POWER: The fixed price at Esk is higher than the fixed price in Brisbane. Why is this? There needs to be a proper overhaul of price-fixing. I go even further

and say that there should be a committee to deal with price-fixing, such committee to include a representative of the producer and of the consumer. Price-fixing should not be left in the hands of one man.

Mr. Yeates: Come over here.

Mr. POWER: You come over here. I will convert you. You cannot convert me.

Some time ago I asked a question in this Chamber with regard to methylated spirits—as to why I could buy it in 2-gallon lots from Exton and Company at 2s. 3d. a gallon, whereas I was charged 4s. 3d. for 2-gallon lots at Geo. Gough and Sons. The reply of Mr. Lindsey, through the Secretary for Labour and Industry, was that Exton and Company bought it in large quantities. That is not the point. It is a matter of fixing the correct price. We know that people are being taken down from day to day as a result of price-fixing. Why, even the prices shown in the "Queensland Storekeepers' Journal," which makes an attack on me because I am doing what I think to be right in the interests of the people, are not right. Matches are listed at 1s. a dozen, but I could not buy them at that price from advertisers in this paper. Showing matches at 1s. a dozen is misleading the public.

An Opposition Member: They have risen lately.

Mr. POWER: This issue of the journal is dated 12 September. A committee should be appointed to go into the whole question of price-fixing. A thorough investigation is long overdue. I have no primary producers in my electorate, but I realise that it is important that their interests should be cared for. I also realise that if we lose men from the land the city people will be affected. We want all the foodstuffs we can get to help us in our war effort, and some consideration should be given to the primary producers. I also realise that it is important that we should have secondary industries. The two classes of industry are interwoven; the man in the city cannot live without the man in the country, and vice versa. If something is not done in this matter there will be serious trouble. In conclusion, I invite Mr. Lindsey to reply to my correspondence. I can assure him I am not out to condemn the storekeepers but suggest that he at least compel storekeepers to display a price list in a prominent place in their shops so that the public can police prices themselves.

The State Government Insurance Office has done much very valuable work of paramount importance to the people and, in a number of instances, has been responsible for a reduction of premiums. I want the Minister in charge of the office to take some action in connection with the settlement of claims for worker's compensation. Recently, I had to take up with the Insurance Commissioner the case of a man who was waiting six weeks without finality. Another claimant has been waiting a like period. Certainly, there is a shortage of staff everywhere, but I ask how a man who has to wait six weeks for his

compensation money without any other resources is going to live in that period? I suggest that the Treasurer ask the Insurance Commissioner to put those men who have been selling insurance for a number of years on the job of investigating these claims. A number of men have been selling insurance for this office and we know that at the present time, on account of restricted activities as a result of the war, it is difficult to get new policy-holders, and the inspectors could be used to investigate claims.

Much has been said about man-power and the military authorities. I agree with many of the remarks that have been made. A number of industries are closing down because of the shortage of man-power, but I must be fair to those controlling man-power and the military authorities. I have had a considerable number of dealings with both.

I have always received the utmost courtesy and consideration when I have had to submit any matters to the military authorities. There have been times when I have had to submit a number of matters to them on behalf of the people of my electorate who were seeking extensions of time within which to report to their various units, and those representations have been met with the utmost courtesy at all times. I have received the same treatment at the Man-power Office. We know that certain industries are not essential industries, but I do not think we should close down all of them. At least the key men should be left so that when the war is over there will still be the nucleus of the business upon which it can be re-established. I believe that greater preference has been given to other States than to Queensland under the policy adopted by the man-power authorities, and this has meant the closing down of a number of industries here, whilst similar undertakings in the other States are flourishing. I do want to say, however, that I have received the utmost courtesy and help from those people who control both the activities to which I have referred.

The hon. member for Maree spoke about the Brisbane City Council and what was done by it under Labour administration. Quite recently there was an advertisement in the Press calling tenders for a new lease of a skating rink, the lease of which had expired. An offer of increased rental over that paid by the previous holder of the lease was made, and, in accordance with its policy, the council agreed to accept the offer of the highest tenderer. That is good, sound business, but let me draw the attention of the Committee to the other side of the picture. Quite recently the lessees of the Trocadero applied for the cancellation of their existing lease and the granting of a further lease for a period of three years, and they made certain proposals to the council under which they would pay an increased rental and put down a new floor in the building. The council agreed to the proposal, cancelled the old lease, and issued a new one, but I say that it was not right for them to cancel the existing lease and give preference to the present lessees of the Trocadero. Tenders should have been called, and, having some knowledge

of the number of people who attend the Trocadero, I venture to say that had tenders been called there would have been a much different story to tell to-day and the present lessees would not have been there. The council, which is the trustee of public moneys, did wrong in granting that new lease without calling tenders.

But that is not the first occasion on which the council has done this kind of thing. If one cares to peruse the reports of the Finance Committee from week to week one will find that applications are made by various persons for reductions of rentals, and the Finance Committee has recommended that they be reduced. The point I wish to make is that tenders are called for the leases then higher prices are offered, the then lessees are turned out, and the new people carry on for a short while and then make application for a reduction of rental, which is granted. These are all matters that this Government have a right and responsibility to investigate, and they should veto all such actions.

The Opposition are concerned about conserving money and handing moneys back to the people in order that they might invest it in war loans, but let me draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that the Labour council, under the policy adopted by this Government, was enabled to raise certain moneys, because loan funds were not available, by imposing an emergency rate. The goods for which the money was raised were paid for and the Chandler Administration promised the people that they would reduce the rates, but, because of its failure to honour that promise, that Administration now enjoys extra revenue to the tune of approximately £330,000.

We find, further, that the council has a surplus of £110,000, which equals just about 1d. in the £1. That being so, why did the Chandler Administration not make any reduction in the rates?

The hon. member for Maree complained that the sewerage system has not been completed, but I remind him that the Jones Administration completed more miles of sewerage in 12 months than was constructed during the whole of the period for which anti-Labour Administrations were in control of the Brisbane City Council. Further, the members of the political party to which the hon. member belongs compelled men to work in the sewers for £3 a week, whereas the Labour Administration paid those men £5 1s. a week, giving them award rates and conditions.

Mr. Luckins interjected.

Mr. POWER: I am giving the hon. member his dose of castor oil. He may not like it, but he will have to take it.

I believe that the services of hon. members could be used to a greater extent by serving on committees relating to the war effort, and I suggest that the Government give consideration to the suggestion. There are many ways in which our services could be used. We attend to A.R.P. activities

in our respective districts, but there are other ways in which our services could be used. I hope that Cabinet will give the matter consideration.

The hon. member for Maree complained that when Mr. Theodore was Premier of Queensland he went to America and borrowed money at a high rate of interest, but the hon. member knows as well as anyone else why Mr. Theodore went to America. He knows that at that time the Government proposed to take over the Brisbane tramways, which were being conducted by a private company, and he also knows that the Philp-Cowley-Walsh delegation went to England to persuade the financial institutions in England to decline to lend money to Mr. Theodore for the State of Queensland. They hoped thereby to defeat the purpose of the then Government to take over the Brisbane tramways. They were successful in dissuading their financial friends, the Jews of London, from making the money available to Queensland, but Mr. Theodore went to America and obtained it. It was a dastardly action for Queensland citizens, people who had made so much in Queensland and owed so much to the State, to injure the credit of the State and prevent it from raising the necessary loan funds. Had they not taken that action it would not have been necessary to go to America for the money, and the State would not have been compelled to pay such high redemption and conversion payments.

At 3.59 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

The Secretary for Public Lands: The hon. member for Maree knew that.

Mr. POWER: Of course, he knew it. The hon. member for Aubigny sought to make political capital out of the fact that soldiers were fighting for 6s. a day while men were earning up to £15 a week in munition factories. I am one who believes that there is nothing too good for the soldier, and that nothing is too good for men who are willing to defend this country, but I should like to explain to the hon. member for Aubigny that the men earning the big money in munition factories are working long hours for it, and that they are paid in accordance with industrial awards. Did we hear any suggestion from the Tory Federal Government that the payment to the boys fighting overseas should be increased? Was it not only when a change of Government occurred and the Labour Party were returned to office in the Federal Parliament that their pay and conditions were improved? The hon. member for Aubigny was a member of the Government between 1929 and 1932, who treated returned soldiers shamefully when they were unemployed. When the men applied for rations they were compelled to tramp the country before they got them. The administration was in the hands of a gentleman named Hubert Ebenezer Sizer, Secretary for Labour and Industry in the Moore Government, himself a returned soldier. He compelled single men to walk

28 miles before he would give them 6s. worth of rations. He compelled them to leave their homes to qualify for that assistance. One of his first acts was to sack a brother of Mr. Theodore, who was a returned soldier and an industrial officer. When the wives of the returned soldiers went out to work because the menfolk were unemployed, the Moore Government imposed a paltry tax on their earnings. Let us be decent and honest about these things; why camouflage them? Hon. members opposite would not do anything for the returned soldiers. Later on they went before the jury of the people, they were tried, found guilty, and dismissed from office. They were banished from office, never to return.

The Secretary for Public Lands: For the term of their natural life.

The Treasurer: And for 10 years thereafter. (Laughter.)

Mr. POWER: We did not hear one word from the hon. member for Aubigny that the soldiers' pay should be increased, but he did suggest that the earnings of the men working in the munition factories for long hours should be reduced. When he was asked what was to be done with the profit he replied, "Put it in the war loan." He wants the men engaged in secondary industries to work long hours for low wages so that the extra profit made by the reduction of wages may be left in the hands of the employer. He said that that money could be invested in the war loan, implying that they would receive a further rake-off in the form of interest.

The hon. member for Maree, who has walked out of the Chamber, contended that no provision has been made to place temporary employees of the Railway Department on the permanent staff after serving a prescribed period. In doing so he is deliberately trying to mislead the public. I wish to remind him that every 12 months temporary employees with 12 months' continuity of service are being placed on the permanent staff. I inform him further that consideration is now being given to the matter of placing approximately 300 temporary employees of the service on the permanent staff. The hon. member revels in making wild statements on subjects he knows nothing about.

I wish to conclude by congratulating the Premier upon producing his fourth successive surplus and in forecasting another surplus for the present financial year. I congratulate him on his elevation to the Premiership of this State. The party could have made no wiser choice, and I believe that the people of Queensland will repose the same confidence in him and the members of his Government as the previous Leader of the Government, the hon. member for Mackay, enjoyed.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 4.6 p.m.