

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 1946

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PAPER.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Brassington, Fortitude Valley) took the chair at 11 a.m.

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

Report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year 1945-1946.

QUESTIONS.

LOAN SUBSIDIES, LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Mr. McINTYRE (Cunningham) asked the Treasurer—

“Can he now supply the information asked for in my question on 18 September last relating to Local Authorities and the Loan-Subsidy Scheme?”

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

“The information desired by the hon. member is shown on pages 230 and 231 of ‘The Treasurer’s Annual Statement of the Public Accounts’ incorporated in the Auditor-General’s report for the financial year 1945-1946.”

LACK OF ORDERS FOR COAL.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) asked the Premier—

“In view of the fact that three days’ production was lost at one colliery and one and a-half days at another colliery in the Ipswich-Bundamba district recently, due to lack of orders, what steps, if any, can the Government take to ensure that mine workers will not be unemployed, particularly during a period when the stocks of coal held by the essential services of the State are considered to be low?”

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Mirani—Minister for Transport), for **Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca), replied—

“The coals from the two collieries concerned are stated to have excessively high ash content up to 42 per cent., and the consumer who has been receiving the bulk of the outputs for a considerable time—namely, the City Electric Light Company—has refused to accept further deliveries. Consumers can only be expected to accept supplies from collieries which produce coal in accordance with accepted standards. There is no justification for asking any private undertaking to continue to accept coal with such a high percentage of foreign matter, and in no circumstances would the Railway Department accept coal of such a low standard. The matter of improving the quality of coal available to consumers was one for the coal proprietors concerned and, if collieries continue to supply coal of inferior quality, they must ultimately face the position where they will have to close because of lack of orders. In such circumstances, the miners formerly employed in such mines could be absorbed in other mines producing and supplying coal of accepted standards. It is understood that the owners of the collieries referred to in the hon. member’s question have undertaken to improve the quality of their coal as far as possible.”

MOTION OF WANT OF CONFIDENCE.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) (11.7 a.m.): I think the House will believe me when I say I find the moving of this motion a most disagreeable duty. I have not had any task during my term of public life (Government laughter)——

Mr. WALSH: I submit that the hon. member should move his motion.

Mr. PIE: I move—

“That this House, now being aware that on October 22 last at the home of the Hon. T. A. Foley, Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, at Stephens Street, Camp Hill, excise officers seized a quantity of contraband tobacco, decides that should that member remain in the Ministry without either disproving the allegation that he was in possession of such excisable goods or proving the lawfulness of his possession thereof, then this Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House.”

Mr. WALSH: I rise to a point of order. I take it that you, Mr. Speaker, allowed this motion to be called this morning because the wording of it is such that it does not convey to you that it is in any way connected with cases now pending before the court for determination. I submit that it has been the long-established practice of this Parliament and Parliaments throughout the British Empire generally to recognise that it would be bad taste to discuss matters that have a particular bearing on cases that are before the court. I draw your attention to the fact that the matter referred to in the motion is specifically related to cases that are now before the court, and are to be heard today.

Mr. Wanstall: They pleaded guilty this morning.

Mr. WALSH: This House has no knowledge of that.

I make the further statement that the hon. member for Windsor, being a private member, has no right to move this motion this morning. He seeks to move a vote of want of confidence in this Government because of certain things. Normally it has been accepted in Parliaments throughout the British Empire that that right resides in the Leader of the official Opposition, or in a person who might be authorised by him to move such a motion. There is nothing to indicate that the Leader of the Opposition has in any way authorised the hon. member for Windsor to move the motion.

Consequently I submit that as the House has already determined that Government business shall take precedence over private members’ business the hon. member for Windsor has no rights in this matter this morning.

I want to say however that the Government propose to allow the fullest possible discussion on the motion at the first available opportunity after they have been satisfied that the cases before the Court have been finally determined. The Government are desirous—and the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs concurs in this view—that it should be discussed in the public interests, and I hope that the hon. member for Windsor will be prepared to discuss it when it comes before the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: On the points raised by the Acting Premier in relation to this matter, I must be consistent with my past rulings. I have therefore no alternative but to rule the motion out of order at present, while the matter is before the Court.

Mr. PIE: As the motion is ruled out of order I want to accept the Acting Premier's offer—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: May I, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of the health of hon. members in this Chamber ask you to give consideration to this—that the seat occupied by the hon. member for Windsor be regularly fumigated and disinfected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: It is the most disgusting thing that has ever been brought before this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH ALLOTTED DAYS.
(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1946-1947.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Debate resumed from 5 November (see page 1192) on the question—

“That £74,409 be granted for ‘Department of Public Lands—Chief Office’.”

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers—Secretary for Public Lands) (11.12 a.m.): I desire to reply to a few matters raised by hon. members during the discussion of these Estimates on Tuesday last. The hon. member for Logan dealt very fully with many forestry problems in a speech that I should say was a thoughtful contribution to the debate.

In 1939, prior to the outbreak of war, Queensland was undertaking a vigorous forestry policy and in that year 7,000 men were employed in forestry operations. It is the intention of the department to increase the programme of regeneration and the planting of additional areas of softwoods as soon as possible and thus carry on the policy that had been begun by this Government. However, between the years 1939 and 1946 very little was done in that connection.

One point made by the hon. member for Logan was that the Government returned to the Sub-Department of Forestry only a very small proportion of the revenue received from forestry operations, but I should like to point out that over a period of seven years the total net revenue from forestry operations was £2,994,811 as against which expenditures have been £1,897,207 apportioned as follows:—

	£
Administration	381,767
Reforestation	1,261,466
National parks	44,967
Roads (Expenditure from Revenue and Loan Funds)	156,336
Charcoal production	16,697
Re-acquisition of land	35,693
Miscellaneous	281

This shows a surplus of revenue over expenditure amounting to £1,097,604 for the seven years. I should like to go a little further in this matter. Hon. members will agree that the seven-year period I have mentioned is not altogether a fair basis of comparison because, after all, during the war years there was some difficulty in obtaining sufficient labour for work in the forestry areas. It is well known that they were being worked with skeleton staffs. In fact, that applies to all work associated with forestry; the labour available fell short of that engaged in normal circumstances. As against this there must be taken into consideration an expenditure of £518,600 from the fund allocated to the Public Estate Improvement Branch and Main Roads Commission for the construction and maintenance of roads to give access to forestry areas. That is very important. This expenditure reduces the net surplus to £597,000, of which £522,000 was realised during the three war years from 1942-43 to 1944-45.

The work in the forestry reserves was interrupted by the call-up of man-power for the forces and work associated with the war; labour available then was at a low level. If the department attempted a great expenditure during that period, urgent though the work was, it would have jeopardised the far more urgent and important work of winning the war. This is the point I want to make: in 1939-40, just before the war, when the effect of the war was not felt to any great extent, and again in 1945-46 the expenditure in excess of revenue was £79,052 and £64,845 respectively. These are rather important figures and to some extent answer the contention of the hon. member for Logan. Those two years were normal years and I suggest that in those two years we actually put back into forestry more than our actual revenue. That is one point made by the hon. member for Logan to which I was anxious to make some reference.

Generally speaking, the timber position in Queensland has been very unsatisfactory in the last few years. Many reasons can be given for that position. It has been suggested in this Chamber on more than one occasion that sawmill licences should be issued indiscriminately, because it was thought that this

would bring about greater production of timber. That is not actually so. In March of this year I discussed with Cabinet the question of issuing sawmill licences on a more generous basis, and it was decided that any person who was in a position to obtain private supplies of timber should be granted a sawmill licence. As a result of that decision 64 licences have been issued. Even the issue of those licences has not had any great effect on the position because the people who get those licences in some instances take their labour from some of the existing sawmills. It might interest hon. members to know that for 1945 the licensed capacity per annum was 642,000,000 superficial feet, but the actual cut—that is what matters—was 282,000,000 superficial feet. It will be observed that the actual production was a very small proportion of the total laid down in the licences, which indicates that the mills were not able to cut the quotas granted them by the sub-department. The number of licences issued, therefore, is not the determining factor in timber production. That is recognised by anyone who knows anything about the timber industry.

Mr. Luckins: It was shorter than the previous estimate.

Mr. JONES: The licensed capacity that has been approved by the Sub-Department of Forestry was 642,000,000 super. feet, and the actual cut was 282,000,000 super. feet, which shows that for various reasons, man-power particularly, the mills were not able to cut to capacity. Some people may have applied for sawmill licences but could not obtain the necessary machinery, and there were many other reasons.

Mr. Maher: And the closing down of a lot of mills.

Mr. JONES: Yes. That was brought about by the difficulty in obtaining man-power.

It may be interesting to hon. members to know that the position has improved considerably in the past few months. I have some figures that indicate that in the cypress-pine areas in the Inglewood and western districts the cut in 1945-46 was 6,960,000 super. feet. For the first quarter of that year the cut was 1,390,000 super. feet, and for the first quarter of 1946-47 a total cut of 3,474,000 super. feet was indicated, which is at the rate of nearly 14,000,000 super. feet a year. The cut for the first quarter of this year is 250 per cent. of the cut for the first quarter last year. Those figures are very important and make good reading, particularly at a time such as we are passing through, when timber is an important factor in our building programme.

The hon. member for Logan compared forestry activities in Queensland with those of other States, and rightly said that Queensland compared more than favourably in this respect with any other State in the Commonwealth. I should like to pay a compliment to the Director of Forests, the officer in charge of the Sub-Department of Forestry. Here in Queensland we have an able body

of forestry officers; very capable men. Mr. Kessel, who at one time was Commonwealth Timber Controller during the war years, called on me and expressed his appreciation of the great job done in Queensland by our forestry officers, particularly by the Director, Mr. Grenning, and the present Timber Controller, Mr. Crane. He informed me that every officer had done a great job for the war effort during the war years. He pointed out that Queensland had been called upon to do a big job. We know it was necessary to cut timber indiscriminately. We had to get it—that is all that mattered—and we were not much concerned with whether we were cutting immature timber or not. Millions of feet of immature timber that should have been allowed to stand for many years was cut. The need was urgent, and it is no use crying over spilt milk.

If hon. members think for a moment, they will realise that very little was done in forestry activities up to about 1914-15. If we take the period from 1909 to 1913, we find that the gross revenue of the department was only £255,105, and the expenditure £20,709—virtually nothing—the area planted was nil, and the area treated for natural regeneration was nil. Nothing was done at all. While I do not want to introduce politics, I want to say that the upward trend in forestry activities virtually coincides with the advent of Labour in 1915. For the period from 1914 to 1919 the gross revenue jumped to £381,178, and the expenditure to £72,915; and about 25 acres were planted, which represented the commencement of plantations. For the period from 1919 to 1924 there was a considerable jump. The gross revenue was £1,474,218, the expenditure £930,137, the area planted 662 acres and the area treated for natural regeneration 11,736 acres.

And so we go on. For instance, take 1925 to 1929. In that period the revenue increased to £2,100,443 and the expenditure was £1,318,666. The area planted was 3,454 acres and the area treated for natural regeneration 40,613 acres. So it goes on up to 1939-1940. From that year to 1944-1945 not a great deal was done. Take the period from 1934-1935 to 1938-1939—normal years. We find gross revenue was £3,530,037 and expenditure £2,801,478; area planted 11,431 acres and area treated for natural regeneration 273,968 acres. There is no doubt that the revenue jumped considerably during the war years. We cannot take that as an altogether clear indication of the normal activities of this sub-department.

Mr. Luckins: Previous Governments must have left you a very valuable asset to enable you to get that amount of money.

Mr. JONES: The asset was here when Captain Cook came to Australia—the hon. member must appreciate that—but we made some use of it when given the opportunity.

In 1939, that is, prior to the war, 7,000 men were employed in the sub-department of Forestry. I do not think there is any work in the State that could be said to be more beneficial to the State and the indi-

vidual than reforestation. For one thing, approximately 86 per cent. of the money expended on it is paid for wages. That is a very important factor. But apart from that, in 1939 over 500 mills were engaged on the milling of 300,000,000 super. feet of log timber, which provided £750,000 revenue to the Crown in royalties and railway freights.

I make these points so that hon. members will have some realisation of the fact that until we were interrupted in our programme of work in 1939 Queensland was doing a good job and building up a substantial timber industry. It is our intention now to proceed with that programme where we left off. Hon. members know there is still difficulty in connection with manpower, and it might be interesting for them to know that we have had the sorry experience during the last year of having to entice men into the forestry areas to take up forestry work. On 31 January last 626 people were employed on reforestation and 772 employed altogether. There was a gradual increase until 30 September, when we had 1,051 men employed on reforestation and 1,290 employed altogether.

At 11.28 a.m.,

Mr. DEVRIES (Gregory) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. JONES: The figures of men engaged in and leaving this branch are interesting—

	No. Engaged.	No. Leaving.
July ..	142	106
August ..	152	108
September ..	250	148

Mr. Luckins: Why?

Mr. JONES: There is some difficulty at this time in getting men to leave the city for that class of work. I have had men seeking work and I suggested that we place them on forestry jobs. Many of them said that they did not want at that stage to go into the bush—they thought they would have a look round first. We had similar difficulty in obtaining a gang of men to erect a weir in the electorate of the hon. member for West Moreton some time ago. As a matter of fact, however, virtually every man employed on that job is a returned soldier, and we are gradually building up a gang of workmen. I know the same thing applies generally throughout Queensland. There is a difficulty as regards manpower, and we find that it occurs in the sawmilling industry particularly. Hon. members must agree that this retards timber production in this State.

The hon. member for Isis made pertinent references to irrigation, as did the hon. member for West Moreton. The hon. member for West Moreton hoped that as the Government were about to enter into an agreement with New South Wales in connection with the border streams, they would not forget the rest of Queensland. I assure him that we have no intention of departing from the programme we have set down. The hon. member for West Moreton possibly knows more about this subject than any other hon. member because I suppose there are more weirs in his electorate than in any other electorate in the

State. Provision is made on the Estimates this year for £350,000 for construction, £32,365 for irrigation experiments, and £33,000 for irrigation projects, making a total of £415,365. This money will be expended if we can get the man-power to carry out the work. I have said previously, and I repeat now, that we wish to construct as many stream weirs as possible, because I believe that is the correct approach to the question of irrigation.

Included in the programme for this year are the following works:—

	£
Hilliard's Creek ..	4,500 weir
Lokyer Creek ..	15,068 weir
Warrill Creek ..	6,000 weir
Dumaresq River ..	20,000 weir
Condamine River ..	5,000 weir
Baralaba and above Theodore ..	5,000 weirs
Theodore ..	12,000 pumping and generating plant
Molongle Creek ..	1,500 weirs
Emerald Creek ..	8,143 weir
Walsh River ..	27,000 weirs
Granite Creek ..	10,000 weirs
Monal and Splinter Creeks ..	10,000 weirs
Barambah Creek ..	3,000 weir
Barker Creek ..	3,000 weir
Burnett River ..	10,000 weir at Mundubbera
Burnett River ..	30,000 weir at Gayndah
Balonne River ..	25,000 weir at St. George
Three Moon Creek ..	7,500 weir
Tinaroo Creek ..	5,000 weir
Charley's Creek ..	3,000 weir
Yuleba Creek ..	3,000 weir
Burdekin River ..	12,000 testing and investigation

Mr. Macdonald: None in the Stanley?

Mr. JONES: We have not forgotten the Stanley. We have a big list, and I have not mentioned the full programme. I assure hon. members that the construction of these weirs is not a question of money but one of man-power and materials. We thoroughly appreciate the need for getting as many of these weirs constructed as possible, and once we get under way with sufficient gangs of men I believe we can put down a considerable number of weirs at reasonable prices. After all, the cost of a weir is between £5,000 and £15,000 or £16,000, according to the size of the river, and the Government are desirous of getting ahead with this work.

In Mr. Parkinson, the engineer in charge of the Sub-Department of Irrigation we have a man who has not sat in an office all his life. He is a practical man who has a thorough knowledge of the State and its rivers which is important. Deputations have approached me from time to time advocating irrigation and putting up all sorts of unreasonable schemes. They have the idea that it is only a matter of putting a weir across the river. They forget the need for making tests, soundings, and so on. They choose sites without any thought of suitability and our engineers have found it necessary quite often to select other sites perhaps a mile or so up the river.

During the last two years much valuable work has been done by the Sub-Department of Irrigation in this direction.

It has carried out investigations into numerous streams in the State and has taken advantage of the purchase of tremendous

amounts of material from the Commonwealth Disposals Commission. We have been in a position to do some good buying and we have all the equipment necessary to go ahead with the work. That is important. If we were to attempt to buy these materials through ordinary channels today we should not be able to get them for some time. We have acquired a considerable amount of first-class material which will be a real asset to the sub-department in the years ahead in carrying out this programme.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (11.36 a.m.): I congratulate the Minister and officers of his department on the success they have achieved despite the severe handicaps and trying times through which we have passed. They have indeed earned our very best thanks. The main criticism levelled against the administration of the department has been confined to the Minister's inability to settle a greater number of ex-service men on the land. He must feel pleased to know that in the main the criticism has come from people who are not qualified to speak and that hon. members who come from the land and have made a success on the land have praised his administration.

The hon. member for Sandgate convinced me that he thought more of the interests of property-owners than the future of ex-service men whom the Government were desirous of settling on the land. He seemed to take pleasure in the fact that there was an organised effort by these property-owners to prevent the Government from putting this legislation into effect.

Mr. Brand: He did not say that.

Mr. DONALD: He did. He went on to say that the Government were dilly-dallying with this question and that they should display some action. The action he meant was that the Government should by-pass the Land Court, a special instrument created to determine fair prices and give to the owners of the land the prices they were asking.

Mr. DECKER: I rise to a point of order. I said nothing of the sort. Arbitration would be handy in settling soldiers.

Mr. DONALD: The hon. member said definitely that the Government were dilly-dallying, that they should get on with the job, and they should not take people to the Land Court, further delaying settlement. That was what he said. I say that that action would only put a burden on the returned soldier that he would not be able to remove from his shoulders so long as he lived. It would mean that the returned soldier would have to pay a price for his property far in excess of what it was worth; he would go on it handicapped by an inflated purchase price. I wish the privilege was given to workers of this State to sell their labour power, the only commodity they have to sell, at their own price. If they could sell their commodity on a sellers' market instead of having to go to the Industrial Court and indulge in periodical strikes to get the price they wanted for their labour power what a happy position they

would be in. That is what the hon. member for Sandgate was advocating for the property-owners.

The hon. member for Sandgate and other members of the minor Opposition party suggested that the Government should go on with the settlement of the soldier despite the fact that the State is suffering from a drought, and as compensation for that fact that the Government should generously offer to allow them to go on their properties rent-free.

Anyone with any knowledge of land would know that even if the property was given to the soldier settler free of cost that would not help him to defeat the effects of drought. Would the fact that the land was free of rent enable the soldier settler on land subject to drought conditions to produce any more produce? Would it keep his stock alive? Of course not.

What did the hon. members of the Country Party have to say? They are men who know the land, men who have worked it successfully. The hon. member for Albert made a very worth-while contribution to the debate and his advice to the Government was not to settle the ex-service men on the land while the present adverse climatic conditions prevailed. He argued that it was the duty of the Government to settle the men successfully, that they should go into the subject very thoroughly, that they should hasten slowly, that the job should be well done. That is just what the Government are doing.

When speaking on the New South Wales-Queensland Border Rivers Bill the hon. member for Aubigny made a very interesting contribution to the debate, as hon. members will find in "Hansard" No. 17, page 822. The hon. member said—

"I sympathise with the Secretary for Public Lands in having to put up with this continual barrage of what can be done by irrigation in Western Queensland. As I have said, numbers of people ask why soldiers are not on the land, and why they have not been put on the land. They do not realise the difficulties but I am very pleased that the man who, to me, occupies the most important position in this State, the Secretary for Public Lands, has not been rushed into putting a large number of soldiers on the land and having disastrous results."

That is a complete vindication of Government policy and I, like the members of the Government, including the Secretary for Public Lands, prefer to take the advice and opinions of experts, men from the land, men who represent country districts, than that of men who know nothing of the land, men who come from metropolitan areas.

Mr. Decker: Have you ever been a farmer yourself?

Mr. DONALD: I am a member of the third generation of settlers in Queensland; my grandparents were numbered among the original settlers in Queensland.

Mr. Decker: That is why you know so much about it.

Mr. DONALD: The hon. member has been interested only in getting money from people who had land to sell and from people who are anxious to buy land.

Many hon. members opposite contended during the debate on the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Stock that that department was the most important in the economic life of the State, but I contend with some degree of justification that the Department of Public Lands is just as important as the Department of Agriculture and Stock, if not more important. However, I think we can agree that the two departments together form the basis of the economic strength of the State. Every commodity that is required for the life and well-being of the human race comes from the land, comes from the very soil from which we all have sprung. We all either live on the land or from the land, on the land like the genuine farmer or off the land like the hon. member for Sandgate. I hope that the hon. member will recognise the genuineness of that statement.

All the resources of the State are in the land and the land has given to us in abundance. We have taken far more from the land than we have returned to it. In our national interests we should realise that the land is not inexhaustible, that it must have its life renewed, and that we must be ever on our guard against the twin evils of drought and soil erosion. That was ably dealt with by the hon. members for Bowen, Carnarvon, and Albert in their respective spheres. Personally I do not think that what those hon. members advocated would solve the problem, but if their suggestions were put into operation collectively it would prevent many hundreds of acres from going into a dust-bowl as happened in the U.S.A. Because of this fact, it is essential that we should prevent the land from being exploited for immediate personal gain. It should be recognised that the land is our national inheritance held in trust by us for our children's inheritance. It is not sufficient that we should leave the land in just as good a condition as we receive it. We must leave it in such a condition that it will be able to carry and support the ever-increasing number of people that will come after us. That is particularly so if this State is to grow and prosper as it should.

Mr. Decker: What do they do in Russia?

Mr. DONALD: The Russians can look after themselves. Both the Queensland people and the people of Australia have demonstrated by returning successive Labour Governments that they too can look after themselves.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. DONALD: There has been too great a tendency in the past for our farmers to mine our soil rather than to farm it. The readiness of the land to yield quick returns and its consequent liability to exploitation as a quick method of acquiring wealth is perhaps one of the main causes of its deterioration in places. Fortunately, however, because of the interest taken in the land by past and present Labour Governments and

their beneficial legislation, there has appeared in Queensland a new type of farmer, one who has worked the land on scientific lines. We have now farmers who are working their land in a practical way. In confirmation of this statement, I intend to quote the "Queensland Times," one of the oldest, if not the oldest newspaper in our State, and one that is certainly very highly respected in the whole of the West Moreton district. This is what it said in its issue of 29 June last:—

"Despite the regular frosts and westerly winds, stock are in fairly good condition, and even though no rain has fallen since April, farm produce is being consigned in quantities that would not suggest that the district is experiencing one of its driest and coldest winters on record.

"Even though conditions are unfavourable to heavy production, farmers say results are exceptionally good for this period of the year."

It was my good fortune to accompany the Lieutenant-Governor to the Rosewood show a short time after the Bremer by-election. I was astounded to see such stock and farm produce as we saw exhibited there. The stock were in excellent condition and that paragraph I have read explains the reason why.

A good deal has been said on these Estimates as to the value of water conservation and irrigation. This is how it works out in the Lockyer district—

"In recent weeks the Lockyer Creek areas have come into more and more prominence as drought-resisting areas. A run along the banks of the Lockyer Creek and Brisbane River from Lowood up and downstream shows the remarkable results of irrigation at the time of one of the worst droughts for years in Southern Queensland.

"The irrigated lands along the banks of the waterways are green with flourishing crops, whereas adjoining paddocks, where irrigation has not been used, are parched, bare, and brown, and criss-crossed with large, gaping cracks. The value of irrigation in the Lowood district alone cannot be estimated."

At 11.50 a.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. DONALD:

"Since weirs have been erected in the Lockyer millions of gallons of water have been impounded. The water is now being used, not only for the benefit of the farmer, but also for the State, instead of running away to the Brisbane River, and eventually finding its way to the sea. District farmers are edging their way on to the arable lands, nearer to the conserved water supplies. It is generally agreed that natural rainfall is the best for agricultural growth, but when a drought is experienced the next best thing is irrigation. Although the district has experienced one of the longest, coldest, and driest winters ever remembered in the Lockyer area, the growth of agricultural produce has been remarkable. Throughout the whole period heavy supplies of produce have come forward

for marketing. The farmer who is not close to a water supply, or who has not been fortunate enough to find water on his property, is having a difficult time.

"Farmers need to exercise much care regarding their irrigation licences. All licences expire at the end of December and must be renewed as soon as possible at the beginning of the new year. The initial cost of a licence is £1, and after that the renewal costs no more than a postage stamp. Licensing is required to keep a check on pumping operations. Many hundreds of pumps are used along the Lockyer Creek alone, and the Department requires to know what the water resources are and what number of pumps operate between given points. Each farmer using a pump is liable to a heavy fine if the inspector finds the pump is not licensed. A farmer who has no licence is not permitted to irrigate from creek or river. If a licence is lost a duplicate will be issued by the department."

I met a brilliant young farmer who told me that what he felt was an inconvenience could be easily avoided if the department would give one of the farmers of the locality authority to release the water from each weir so that the farmers below it could get the water instead of having to wait till an officer from the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply in Brisbane went to Lowood and released it. I am not going to say that the suggestion is a better one than that put forward by the department, but I was impressed by the logic of the young fellow's argument. I hope the Minister will give consideration to this request because I think it is a practical one and it certainly came from a practical farmer.

Last Saturday week, in conversation with a number of successful Lowood farmers, I was surprised to hear them say in chorus, "We do not want rain; we do not want rain for several days; it would put us to too much inconvenience." That was said in the middle of the severest drought that we have experienced in five or six decades.

Much is being achieved by irrigation in the Locker Valley. If the hon. member for West Moreton will pardon me for taking the Committee on a tour into his electorate, this is what we find. I quote—

"Revolutionary it may be, but true it is, that rain comes as a mixed blessing to the farmers who are working the rich river flats of the Lockyer Valley. It hinders work in the paddocks, washes out the roads, interferes with the baling of fodder, and, worst of all, its fall can neither be controlled nor anticipated with certainty; but it saves the cost of pumping. That is why the men on the land between O'Reilly's Bridge and the headwaters of Blackfellow's Creek do not look for clouds like the men in the West are doing now."

"In the worst drought in the State for 62 years the Lockyer Creek and its main tributaries, Laidley, Tent Hill, Ma Ma, Flagstone, and Blackfellow's Creek, have

wound their way through wide ribbons of green valleys while the rest of Queensland is parched and brown. Through six months of rainless autumn, winter, and early spring the centres of Gatton, Forest Hill, and Laidley have been trucking green fodder and vegetables at the rate of 140 tons a day at a price averaging £12 a ton.

"In a tour of the irrigated farms in the pocket between Tent Hill and Ma Ma Creeks I saw what are claimed to be the cream of the holdings in the Lockyer Valley, and met some of the men who work them.

"Lucerne paddocks which will take many cuttings stretched dark green to roads edged by the straw dry grass. Potatoes in cultivated rows from an inch to a foot high, and onions by the acre. Here a paddock with pipes 100 yards long spraying artificial rain; there a harvester sweeping wide swathes of lucerne again. Men in long rubber boots shifting their pipes from stand to stand.

"A panorama of concentrated agricultural industry dotted with comfortable houses, emphasising stability, security, and prosperity.

"On the banks of these creeks, in the pockets of their turns and twists, alluvial silt deposited ages ago has been tilled and sown to give regular, certain harvests. There is no gamble about it, insecurity of seasonal rainfall has been replaced by the stability of an inexhaustible and accessible underground water supply.

"Irrigation has changed a fairly prosperous dairying area with big properties at £12 to £14 an acre to agricultural holdings of 50 acres or so now being bought and sold at four times that price.

"What we plant now we harvest,' say these new farmers who have the State's agricultural college and experimental station in their midst and the cheap power of the City Electric Light Company electrification scheme to draw on."

I would emphasise here that that is due to the foresight behind the legislation of the Labour Government. These people now have an electrification scheme and an irrigation scheme, and because of these can plant and harvest with certainty. Instead of waiting for the clouds, they can plan their work and their income. They have security instead of insecurity.

The article proceeds—

"As the farms were different 15 years ago, so is this farmer. He is another type nowadays. He is more scientific, and studies his land. 'The old type is not in the race now,' said one old man. 'He couldn't keep pace with this. The new man's expenses are terrific, but he gets the turnover and he gets it regularly.'

"With the State Agricultural College in the centre of the district and the Department of Agriculture making available all possible information, the Lockyer farmer cannot look back."

That is the secret of the success of the Lockyer farmers.

The extract proceeds—

“His biggest problem, and the Agricultural Department proves that it is not very big, is looking after his land. ‘The soil must get back what it gives out’ is a demand which the educated farmer realises and tries to fulfil. The future of the Lockyer depends on the realisation of this fact.

“Gatton and Forest Hill trucking yards early this week told the story of the conquest of drought in pictures. About 60 tons of produce was loaded at Gatton and nearer 80 at Forest Hill. Green fodder—lucerne—in bales piled high on motor trucks, pumpkins, and chaff, arrived in a steady stream.

“Heaviest day in Gatton this year, and for all time, was when 5-ton trucks queued up the length of the town’s shop frontage to load 3,000 bags of potatoes. Another day 200 tons of pumpkins in one trainload taxed the Railway Department’s available locomotive power.”

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Is the hon. member connecting his remarks with the question of irrigation?

Mr. DONALD: No, I am connecting them with the Department of Public Lands. I am going to prove that in spite of the fact that this is the worst drought these people have experienced in 62 years they have produced more than ever before. That in itself is a commendable effort at any time. It is something to be proud of, and I congratulate those farmers, I give them the thanks and gratitude of the people and of this Government for defeating the effects of the worst drought in 62 years and creating a record of production while doing so. They have every reason to be proud of that achievement and this Government have every reason to be proud of it because they gave them the wherewithal to do it.

(Time expired.)

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.1 p.m.): At the outset I join with other hon. members in making brief comment on the report of the Department of Public Lands on this occasion. It is very comprehensive and very informative, and the officers concerned deserve every commendation and congratulation for their work. It is a report that should be distributed as widely as possible throughout the State because from it people will glean much information not only about the activities of the department but also about their own State.

I should like to refer briefly to soldier settlement and the problems associated therewith. I admit that this question is not a simple one, that its problems are not easy of solution, and I sympathise to a certain extent with the Minister in the many difficulties and obstacles—not of his own making—with which he has had to contend.

There are two parties mainly concerned in this question of soldier settlement on this occasion. They are the soldiers, who are eagerly seeking land and who are entitled to

be put on the land as soon as possible, and the landholders, whose land it is proposed to resume to enable these soldiers to obtain properties. Both these parties are entitled to every consideration, and many problems have to be overcome in reconciling their difficulties.

Let us examine some of the obstacles confronting the Minister and his department. The biggest obstacle that has had to be overcome has been the tardiness and lack of decision of the Federal Government in this very important matter. Then, in this State we have very little if any Crown land that we can use for soldier settlement. Thirdly, we must ensure that the land used for soldier settlement is the best land it is possible to get. Last, but by no means least, we must avoid, as far as it is humanly possible, the mistakes that were made after the last war.

Let us analyse the many obstacles that have been put in the way of successful soldier settlement, not only in this State but throughout the entire Commonwealth, by the Federal Government. In an endeavour to build up their own political reputation for 18 months before the end of the war they flooded military camps and units of soldiers who might be interested in land settlement with all sorts of propaganda telling them that when they returned to civil life there would be available to them the best lands in Australia; they were told that farms would be ready to go onto—farms coming into production—and the boys interested believed those promises. But when they came back they found that they were sadly disillusioned, that no preparation had been made for them. And the States have had to accept a certain amount of responsibility although the fact is that the States were held up until the relevant legislation was passed by the Federal Government enabling them to go ahead.

Mr. Jones: Officers went to the islands and addressed the soldiers.

Mr. NICKLIN: I admit that. As the Minister said, the soldiers were told in the islands what to expect on their return. At the door of the Federal Government must be laid the greater part of the blame for the present position in regard to soldier settlement. That Government’s record of soldier settlement has been one long list of dilly-dallying and promises never carried into effect. They have shown by the way in which they have behaved that they have no real sympathy for the returned soldier. They have shed copious crocodile tears at election time about what they have done, are doing, and are going to do. So far as land settlement is concerned they have done nothing whatever.

Might I, for the information of hon. members, tell them exactly what is happening at this very moment in regard to men who have settled themselves on the land and who to carry on have had to apply for Government help? They have received a meagre re-establishment allowance from the Federal Government. These men are getting no income from their properties and were compelled to apply for this re-establishment allowance. But do

you know, Mr. Mann, what is being done? Each fortnight when they receive this meagre allowance a sum representing taxation is deducted from it. Taxation has been deducted from this re-establishment allowance and, Mr. Mann, any Government that would do such a thing as that deserves every condemnation from the people concerned. Why, Mr. Mann, Ned Kelly was a gentleman compared with them. In their greed to get revenue they have taken from these returned soldiers a deduction for taxation from the meagre re-establishment allowance granted to them. They have taken every penny they could from the men. I think those few words will lead hon. members to recognise that the Federal Government must accept the greatest share of the responsibility for the hold-up of soldier settlement.

This State has been handicapped in putting men quickly on the land because we have very little, if any, Crown lands to use for close-up soldier settlement. The State is doing its bit in regard to grazing selections by giving returned soldiers a justifiable preference in ballots as the selections become available. The State has done also what it could to obtain some of the best lands in this State for eventual soldier settlement but I feel that there have been avoidable delays in making these lands available. The Minister has stated—and rightly so—that he has been handicapped by the lack of staff in his office. That is admitted.

I should have thought that if the Federal Government were willing to give all possible help they could have made available, especially 12 months ago when it was important that the land should be got ready as quickly as possible, the services of the R.A.A.F. for aerial mapping and the Army survey and topographical section to help in the cutting up of the land. I do not know whether the Minister has made application to the Federal Government for this help.

Mr. Jones: The Commonwealth Government did a certain amount of that.

Mr. NICKLIN: They may have done a certain amount, but I feel that they could have done more, and that a great deal more land could have been made available more quickly than it is today. Moreover, I suggest to the Minister that it is not yet too late to employ short-cut methods in getting the land under occupation by soldier settlers—and by short-cut methods I mean that the soldier settler should not have to wait until the surveyor has driven the last peg and run the last line. The land can be designed and the final surveys can take place later. It would not be too late, even now, to call on the Federal Government to give the help of any Army technical unit that they still have capable of doing the work.

Mr. Jones: It is important to remember that we must not push the men on to the land at the present time when they are unable to get stock.

Mr. NICKLIN: I know that drought conditions are holding up settlement, but we must not lose sight of the fact that there

is an urgent need to get the soldier settled on the land as soon as possible. That is why I suggest that we might adopt short-cut methods, that we should not wait until the surveyor has driven the last peg and run the last line. If we adopted that short-cut method we should be able to get these men on the land much more quickly than we are doing it today.

It must be admitted that the returned men who are anxious to go on the land have something to growl about. On the one hand they are encouraged by the Federal Government with their propaganda machine, which points out to the soldier settler what he can expect, and he gets nothing; and now, after he has been hanging about for 12 months or so, there does not appear to be any prospect even yet of his getting on the land in the near future. You, Mr. Mann, can appreciate his attitude to this question, and I am sure it will be appreciated by hon. members too.

Let us look at this matter now from the viewpoint of the landholder whose land is being acquired for soldier-settlement purposes. You cannot take a man off a property where he has spent a lifetime and has done a great deal of work to develop it just to put on another man who may not be as successful as he. You cannot disturb the original owner by taking him from his property without adequately compensating him for the loss of his property, and I say adequately advisedly.

According to the attitude of some hon. members opposite, the Government should rip these men off their land as if it did not matter a tinker's curse what happened to them, and they should fend for themselves, but what is the good of removing one man from a property where he has been successful simply just to put on another who may not be so successful?

Mr. Jones: I did not say that.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. gentleman did not say it. He appreciates the position, but that is the tenor of the remarks of quite a number of hon. members opposite.

I have never listened to such a condemnation of the efforts employed by any Government to control prices as I have heard from hon. members opposite when they have been condemning, as they have done so frankly, their own Federal Government on land values in this State. Hon. members opposite say, "Do you expect us to buy land at the inflated values existing today?" Why are they inflated? The only reason is the rotten control of the Federal Government over land values.

Mr. Duggan: Your members want to inflate them still further.

Mr. NICKLIN: If control of land values was removed tomorrow land would not sell at 1d. piece more than today's values. (Government interjections.) In fact, today's values are over their maximum.

Mr. Duggan: I agree with you.

Mr. NICKLIN: You may get some freak sales, but you would not get many sales over present-day values.

Mr. Jones: Do you know that we had a special lease that previously brought £10 a year put up to auction and a man bid £140 a year for it?

Mr. NICKLIN: There are fools in the community, but all in the community are not fools. Apart from freak sales, the sales would not be any higher than at present. Let us put ourselves in the position of a man who is getting his land resumed today. Hon. members would not like to be in the position of some of those men. They are having their land taken over and, judging by some of the offers that have been made, at a considerably lower price than they could sell that land for on the open market today, and lower than some sales that have recently received the approval of the Sub-Treasury. That in effect means that those prices must be the market value.

Take the position of a man whose land has been resumed and who must buy another piece of land to carry on his business. If he does not receive sufficient from the sale of his property he will be unable to buy a similar property to settle on.

Mr. Davis: Are you still in favour of allowing the inflated values that were operating in the years 1922, 1923 and 1924 to remain in existence?

Mr. NICKLIN: I should not like to see inflated values operating, but today prices are inflated as high as they have ever been in this State. That inflation is bad.

Mention has been made of the fact that the Land Court will hear the cases of the appellants in these land resumption cases and then give judgment according to the merits. I appreciate that. All hon. members do. The Land Court will give a very fair ruling in all cases that will come before it.

Mr. Jones: Hear, hear!

Mr. NICKLIN: Unfortunately we must not forget that the Land Court is a little bit handicapped at present because its discretionary powers have been taken away from it. Those discretionary powers were given to the Land Court some time ago to enable it to avoid legal formalities and come to its decisions as correctly and as quickly as possible. That amendment was made by the late Hon. Mr. P. Pease. It was a common-sense one. As a result of a row between an ex-Secretary for Public Lands and a member of the Land Court this sensible provision was taken out of the law. Recently Mr. Justice Brennan, as a judge of the Land Appeal Court, made a very pertinent remark with respect to taking these powers away from the court. That amendment of the Act will handicap the Land Court in giving quick decisions in these land-resumption cases and will thereby place an additional burden on soldiers going on the land. I wish I had the time to quote the remarks of Mr. Justice Brennan.

We have to remember too that in the soldier-settlement legislation there is provision whereby all soldiers are to get the land at its true economic value, irrespective of the value at which it is acquired by the Crown. Even if the Crown has to pay present-day values and it believes them to be inflated, there is power under the legislation to write the value of that property down before it is conveyed to the soldier, in order to bring its value to an economic value. So, irrespective of the price at which the land is obtained by the Government, the soldier will be in no way handicapped; he is protected by that legislation.

Mr. Jones: We have no difficulty in negotiating with the average reasonable man. It is only during the last two days that we have negotiated for the purchase of a large area of land.

Mr. NICKLIN: I hope those negotiations proceed quickly and that action is taken to get areas of land rapidly so that we can give the soldiers as early an opportunity as possible to get on the land that has been promised them so long.

I hope the Minister will be able to give to this Committee some indication as to when the first lands will be available for soldier settlement, and when the huge areas at present frozen will be unfrozen. If the department does not want that frozen land let it make up its mind quickly and allow normal conditions to operate. It is not fair that those big areas should be frozen for such a length of time, because it is a detriment not only to the owners but to the district in which that land is situated. I hope the Minister will be able to inform the Committee when the land will be available and when it will be possible to unfreeze a lot of the land.

Mr. Jones: You could not have heard my earlier remarks when I said it would be early in the New Year.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. gentleman did not give an indication whether it would be 1 or 50 blocks.

Mr. Jones: I said a commencement would be made.

Mr. NICKLIN: I wish to speak briefly on the question of erosion, which is a real danger to the economic life of this State, in that at the present time it is destroying much of our very valuable land. I am wondering whether we are tackling the problem of erosion as it should be tackled. At the moment there seems to be a measure of divided control, in that the Department of Public Lands has an erosion officer and the Department of Agriculture and Stock has an officer dealing with that matter, too.

Mr. Jones: We have no erosion officer.

Mr. NICKLIN: Who made the report?

Mr. Jones: The Bureau of Investigation.

Mr. NICKLIN: Apparently it comes under the hon. gentleman's department. However, if there is no divided control, I am pleased

to hear it. After all, a problem of such importance cannot be tackled successfully by divided control; it has to be tackled in a unified and vigorous way.

Mention has been made of erosion on the Darling Downs, but the problem there is a small one compared with the erosion damage that has already been suffered in the coast areas, with the lighter soils, heavier rainfall, and steeper slopes. I was very amused to hear some hon. members give us a lecture on how to deal with erosion. As one who has been tackling it for many years I should have liked to have some of those gentlemen tackling some of the problems that come before us in the effort to preserve our soils. It is so easy to read a book about it and say that you must contour-plough and strip-cultivate. You can do all those things and then see the whole of your successful work disappear down the gully after a severe tropical storm.

The problem is difficult, but it must be tackled on the lines of educating the people—using every educational means possible—and strengthening the department to the utmost, so there will be an adequate number of competent officers to demonstrate and supervise the work. I congratulate the Department of Agriculture and Stock on the very instructive display it included in its court at the Royal National Show. It is a pity that this display could not be sent throughout Queensland. The erosion problem is one of such importance and magnitude that there must be a greater and more definite drive than there seems to be at present; in the first place, to bring its importance before the men on the land, and in the second place through every channel possible to encourage them to take practical measures to control it.

Mr. FARRELL (Maryborough) (2.26 p.m.): On this very important vote, which is of so much concern to us all in the development of Queensland, I wish to take most of my time in dealing with the branch of the department that controls forestry and timber, but before doing so I pay tribute to the administration of the department under the Minister for its continuous interest in these important industries. I pay tribute, and generous tribute at that, to the departmental officers, particularly those in my own district, from Mr. Owens to the lowest official, for the splendid contribution they made during the exacting war period through which we had to pass. A tremendous strain was placed on the timber industry in order that it might not only maintain its output but also make its contribution to the war effort, and I doubt whether there is any industry in the State that stood up to its obligations so well as the timber industry.

I was rather concerned at the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition a few moments ago about the settlement of soldiers on the land. I hope that it was not his intention to mislead the Committee into the belief that this Government will make similar mistakes to those made by previous Governments by trying to place these ex-service men on the land very quickly. I agree with the statement made by the president of the Victorian

Returned Soldiers' League concerning soldier settlement—that he was very pleased indeed with the legislation brought down by the Victorian Labour Government, which is on all fours with that brought forward by the Queensland Labour Government in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, and that there has been delay so that there will not be a repetition of the chaotic conditions that prevailed after World War I.

In the Land Administration Board, with its personnel of Mr. McLean as chairman and Messrs. Lucy, Grenning, and Harvey as associate members, we have a board in which every confidence can be placed, not only by the Government but by the returned soldiers; we can feel assured that everything possible will be done to make the way clear and easy for the settlement of soldiers. What I like about the personnel of that board is that not one of the officers named is inaccessible. All are ready and willing to supply to members of Parliament any information they need about the activities of the department. They are not unmindful of the great responsibility that rests on their shoulders, not only to see that Government policy is carried out but to ensure that everything that is done is for the benefit of ex-soldiers who desire to settle on the land.

It is rather interesting to turn back the pages of history and compare what took place in the early days of land administration with what is happening today. One of the best examples of that came under my notice shortly after my election to Parliament, when I was privileged, with others, to accompany the late Percy Pease on a visit to his electorate. There we were able to make a comparison of what happened in the early days with what was being done then. In the early days of land administration only those people who were friends of the Government of the day or who possessed vast amounts of money could procure the land that was being made available, not for the purposes of settlement but merely for the purpose of making profits. That policy had a tremendously detrimental effect on our forests and timber industry in general. These friends of the Government and wealthy people acquired not only the land but everything that went with it, such as the timber, and after they had taken from it everything they wanted they resold it.

Mr. Brand: Where did that happen in the Herbert?

Mr. FARRELL: I intend to make this speech in my own way and to point out to the hon. member for Isis exactly what happened in the early days under Governments with which he was associated.

During that period all our best lands were alienated and our best timbers sold for a mere bagatelle. When a Labour Administration assumed office, they saw to it that all these lands and all this timber that rightly belonged to the Crown came to the Crown. When a new forest was opened up the matter was handled by the Sub-Department of Forestry, which not only sold the timber but constructed access roads so that the people

who obtained timber contracts would have an opportunity of making them pay. Land administration has so changed that before land is thrown open for selection the timber is sold by the Government at a reasonable rate, roads are constructed through the area and every care is taken to see that those roads are linked with the nearest railway station or siding. Who would dare to suggest that anyone other than a Government could do the magnificent job done on the Kirrima Range in constructing that road which opened up magnificent stands of pine to the people? I could go on for hours telling the story of the great job accomplished by this Administration and the officers whom I have mentioned as being entrusted with the carrying out of our policy.

The timber industry is an integral part of the industrial life of Maryborough and it is because of its importance and the position in which I find that industry at the moment that I propose to make suggestions to the Minister as to what I think should be done in order that the timber industry may be carried on there not merely for a given period but in perpetuity.

Let me give hon. members some idea of its importance to that locality. I will only quote figures in relation to Hyne and Sons because I have not got the corresponding information for Wilson and Hart and Company, but it can be taken that the latter's figures would be about the same as those for Hyne and Sons because the mills are of similar capacity. It requires something like 17,000,000 feet of hardwood to maintain the mills in Maryborough alone at their present capacity. That takes no account of the amount of pine we cut. Everybody knows—and it has been stated in the report—that another six years will probably see the end of our pine. When I came to this Chamber in 1938 it was suggested that the life of the pine stands in this State would be in the vicinity of 10 years. However, the sub-department now says it will be within our capacity to supply for another six years. I say definitely that the amount of pine coming forward at the present time represents about one and a-half days' cutting a week for each of the mills. The amount of timber being cut at Maryborough does not represent the amount that could be cut if we had the logs. I realise as well as everybody else that if the industry is to grow and flourish the mills will have to do something for themselves. Whilst I might not agree with everything done by the mills or by the Sub-department of Forestry I have at least the courage to tell them what I think should be done to overcome difficulties, and I have the satisfaction that my suggestions have been at least listened to.

To get back to the importance of the industry to Maryborough, let me repeat that it requires a log capacity of 17,000,000 feet to maintain those mills, provided we go in the same easy manner and work one and a-half days a week on pine. In wages alone this represents £70,000—and I am only speaking of Hyne and Sons. I should expect that

Wilson and Hart would pay out the same amount. In railway freights that firm pays £35,000 a year, and it has 354 employees.

I pay tribute to the administrative officer of the Railway Department, Mr. Wills, for his continued interest in the timber industry. Every stick of timber cut is under contract to be carried over the Queensland railways at a figure arrived at between the department and the industry. There are people who prefer to see mills spring up overnight in every locality, but I do not subscribe to that view. We have mills in Maryborough that have been established for the last 70 or 80 years, and have given employment to hundreds of men throughout those years. Furthermore, those employees are able to enjoy the amenities of city life. Mills have begun operations in the bush country, but as soon as the scrub is cut out away goes the mill to some other locality. We have our established mills. These mills have been established in the interests of the State generally and of the city in particular.

We have been warned from time to time by the Director of Forests, Mr. Grenning, that in a few years the pine will have become exhausted and so the obligation devolved upon the industry to get enough log timber to enable it to continue. Some people are of the opinion that if more mills were established more timber would be cut than is cut today, but quite the opposite would be the result. Only a certain amount of labour is available and if more mills were built it would simply mean that this labour would be dissipated, that it would be transferred from one mill area to another and so no more timber would be cut than is cut today.

It was rather interesting to hear the severe criticism levelled at the Government for having disposed of the steamer "Otter" to Hyne and Sons, but it was the object of the Government to help the sawmilling industry in Maryborough to maintain itself. During the time that we have obtained timber from the forests in the Maryborough district we have also had to supplement it with logs from elsewhere and the only places upon which we could draw were Fraser Island and Tin Can Bay. All that we asked was that we should have the wherewithal to get these logs and so enable the sawmilling industry of Maryborough to be continued under reasonable conditions. I have always subscribed to the view that my duty as the hon. member for Maryborough was to see that the industry was maintained, that it was no part of my duty to interfere with labour conditions. That was entirely a matter for the union concerned, the Australian Workers' Union, and it has never suggested that I should interfere in its domain. Over the years I have endeavoured to persuade the State Advances Corporation and other building organisations interested in home construction that they should educate the people to the value of hardwood for building needs. For many years and especially during the war years we have drawn considerable quantities of blackbutt, satinay, and box from Fraser Island, and we have even gone to the extent of entering into an agreement with the State Hous-

ing Commission to have tests made to ascertain the quality of the timber for building needs. For years I have urged that people should be educated to the high qualities of hardwood for building purposes.

Mr. Pie: Did you not make an experimental building?

Mr. FARRELL: Yes. In particular I suggested that the people should be educated to the value of hardwood instead of pine for partitions, but today we cannot supply enough hardwood even for flooring. I have with me now samples of timber that in former years were rejected as useless for building needs, timber that automatically went into the firebox to be used to generate power, but today we have the machinery that will enable us to use even these timbers in home-construction. These small pieces are cramped together and used for various purposes, even as flooring boards, and in small lengths, and 2 inches in width. Even box timbers, when used in places where they can be protected, are quite good and useful. Satinay is just as good as and perhaps better than most timbers we get in the State.

Some years ago we sent samples of satinay to the U.S.A. in order to determine its marketable value. We were able to get from America samples of that timber scientifically treated to show what can be accomplished with it. Anyone who knows anything about satinay will admit that it is an excellent timber, if we could only peel and dry it. I produced to the Committee samples that have been returned from America. It is beautiful timber. Anyone examining it will admit that it has not warped in any way. I have here, too, samples of this timber that have been dressed by experts in America. Hon. members will admit its beauty. We must use science to help us out of our troubles in marketing these timbers. We can peel satinay beyond question, but it is difficult to dry it without splitting it. Evidently they have been able to do so in America.

Mr. Sparkes: Is that what is called turpentine?

Mr. FARRELL: Yes. We call it satinay. Those are some of the timbers growing on Fraser Island. From time to time both the department and architects have refused to accept these timbers. We built a house of these timbers to demonstrate their value to Mr. Young, the Housing Commissioner. The house has been erected over 12 months. Some day, when we have time, we will make an inspection of it.

I appeal to the Minister to discuss with the Director of Forests the matter of making some provision for reforestation in the Maryborough district, particularly of our soft timbers. Maryborough claims to have a class of land that is not useful for any other purpose than growing timber. I refer to the area just south of Maryborough from Granville to Tin Can Bay. We say it is very similar to the land at Beerwah, where exotic pine is being grown. I should like the Minister, when replying, to give some indication of the Sub-Department's intention as to extending the planting of

exotic pines to the Maryborough district. Mr. Grenning and his officers have made an examination of the soil. If these exotic timbers can be grown on that soil it will be a splendid acquisition to the State. The land is unfit for any other purpose at present. So far we have been able to cut only a certain amount of log timber from that area.

I feel I am voicing the opinions of the men engaged in the timber industry when I say that I appreciate everything that has been done to enable it not only to expand but to remain the great industry it is.

Mr. TAYLOR (Maranoa) (12.50 p.m.): I want to compliment the Minister on his efficient handling of his important department. I wish to pay a tribute also to Mr. McLean, the successor to Mr. Melville, on his appointment to his present position. I am sure the Government and the department are fortunate in having at the head of affairs a man with such a thorough grasp and knowledge of land and land administration.

I wish to deal principally with water supply and irrigation. I believe that the inland areas of this State cannot prosper unless we have an extensive programme of water conservation and irrigation. I am pleased that an irrigation scheme is going ahead down on the border of New South Wales and Queensland. I have already had a good deal of correspondence from people in that area, who expressed pleasure that this scheme was being put into effect. We have a scheme at Dirranbandi that is in the course of being carried out. It is only half completed but the town has already begun to prosper. I understand some buildings are already going up and there is a good demand for land, which is definite evidence of the value of irrigation.

I want to bring under the notice of the Minister the scheme that we intend to ask to be pushed ahead immediately, that is, the water and irrigation scheme at St. George. As I said before, I believe that that is the only way by which inland areas will prosper. If we go ahead with this scheme it will make St. George one of the most important towns in that area. We have everything there that is suitable for irrigation. The land for many miles on each side of the river is quite suitable for the growing of lucerne and other crops.

Mr. Jones: We made provision in this year's Estimates for that job—£30,000.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am pleased to hear the Minister say that provision has been made to go ahead with that job. I am sure the scheme will be successful. I often think I am fortunate in that I represent probably one of the most fertile areas among the inland areas of Queensland.

Mr. Sparkes: You are not like the hon. member for Bremer, who went to Lockyer.

Mr. TAYLOR: Every time I get up to speak the hon. member for Aubigny wants to help me make my speech. I tell the hon. member that I want to make my speech in my own way. What the hon. member for Toowoomba told the hon. member for Aubigny

in regard to the rain I do not know, but there is a better rainfall in the Aubigny area than we have. At the present time we are experiencing a drought that is probably the worst in the history of Queensland. As I said the other day, old hands have told me it is the worst they have experienced since 1880. That drought may not have been as bad as this. As showing the fertility of the soil of the Maranoa district, I might instance that it produces some of the best wool and beef cattle in the State. That will not be disputed and it certainly produces the best wheat. It is well recognised that some of the best fruit grown in the State comes from that area—I do not think any person is stupid enough to say that the best grapes, for instance, are not grown there.

But although Maranoa is a very fertile area, much more could be done if water conservation and irrigation schemes were pushed ahead there. Our rivers lend themselves to the erection of weirs, and the soil is such that when water is stored it will remain so stored. If these schemes are proceeded with there is no reason why the Maranoa should not become one of the garden districts of the State. There are a number of matters that I have from time to time brought to the notice of the Minister and, as I have already stated, I have always received a sympathetic hearing from the hon. gentleman. The Minister realises the importance of that part of the State. Within the short time that has elapsed since the water scheme at Dirranbandi has been progressing one can observe progress in the district and the demand for land there has increased considerably.

On these facts can be founded a logical argument that water-conservation and irrigation schemes for inland areas should be put into operation.

Mr. PIE (Windsor) (2.15 p.m.): Undoubtedly, one of Queensland's major problems that has been stressed by other hon. members and must be faced by Governments in the years ahead is the conservation and efficient use of our natural water supply. I had the opportunity recently of going north through almost the whole of the drought-stricken areas, the coast areas in particular, and I saw the State in the throes of one of our most appalling droughts. I was astounded at the enormous amount of water that was running to waste into the sea. I feel that this Government, or any other Government who are in power, must face up to the problem of water conservation and irrigation. This loss of our water would be of little moment if Queensland enjoyed a regular copious rainfall. As you know, our rainfall usually comes in the summer months, and as a general rule it comes in the shape of tropical downpours, and unless we can conserve that water at the time when it falls in those areas this State will always be in great difficulties. The present waste is tragic, and the opportunities of conserving water in the future are immense, but future plans must be such that the whole of Queensland will share in this irrigation wherever possible. I agree that it is difficult for the city-dweller to comprehend the enormity of suffering that

drought has brought to this country over the recent six or nine months. I was in the Isis area opening the Isis show with the hon. member for Isis, and I saw what the drought had meant to the people on the land there. I was appalled at what had happened. Even the sugar mill had very little water with which to carry on.

It has been said that this is the worst drought since 1901, and the Government have done a good deal of talking about irrigation. This is usually heard when drought is with us or when an election is approaching, but this time the announcement concerning proposed works came not from the State Government but from Canberra. On 15 July, 1946, we saw an announcement of what the State was going to do. That announcement was not made by the Secretary for Public Lands, but by the Rt. Hon. Frank Forde himself. In that statement complete details of the whole of the scheme for Queensland were given to us, and our Minister quite rightly said that these schemes were in the course of consideration. Despite that, we find from this report that they are actually going to be put into operation within the next two years.

I should like to know from the Minister whether he has started on the weir on Emerald Creek, the Emeraweir, costing about £10,000; whether he is now putting in the scheme on the Fitzroy River, Rockhampton, costing £25,000, to provide irrigation for the dairying people there; whether he is now constructing the one in the Dawson Valley worth £5,000; whether he has started on Callide Creek, in the Callide Valley, with the construction of a weir for cotton-growing at a cost of £30,000; whether he is going to put one at Woorabinda costing £6,000; whether he is going to construct a weir costing £50,000 on the Belyando, or on the Burnett River, at Munduberra, costing £10,000.

Furthermore, there is the Three Moon Creek weir and weirs on Monal and Splinter Creeks, to provide irrigation for general farming at a cost of £6,000, £6,000, and £8,000 respectively. There is also the Barcoo River scheme to cost £25,000. Those are the plans to be carried out in the next two years. There are 32 other projects running into a total of £655,000.

Mr. Jones: What is wrong with that?

Mr. PIE: I should like to know when these jobs are going to be started.

Mr. Jones: That statement was made two months ago.

Mr. PIE: This statement was made on 15 July, 1946, and we are now in November. I am asking the Minister whether the projects as outlined by Mr. Forde, in Canberra, are to be carried out by this Government, and when. Can we rely on this statement made from Canberra? Can we rely on the Minister's word that they are only in the course of consideration? It is no use for this Government merely to make promises indefinitely. We want practical plans. If the Minister can tell us whether he is going to start on these projects in the course of the next

couple of years we shall have something to work on. Do not let the position be indefinite, as it is today.

A Government Member: You were not here this morning.

Mr. PIE: I was here until 10 minutes to 1. Do not let us wait for Canberra to tell us in Queensland what we are going to do in this State. The Government may have some excuses for not starting on these things. The delay may be due to shortage of men and materials.

Mr. Jones: Never make excuses.

Mr. PIE: They are all right if there is a genuine background. Let the Minister tell us why these projects have not been started. Men are becoming more and more plentiful, and so is material.

Despite 30 years of Labour government nothing very big has been achieved in this State. Let us take the question of irrigation in the Dawson Valley. Do you know, Mr. Mann, what was spent at Theodore? The Government started an irrigation scheme in 1922 and the story told at that time by this Government was that it was adding a new province to the State of Queensland. I am informed that a picture was brought here showing the streams, and areas of green crops and depicting fat and contented livestock, but that glorious vision of the Theodore scheme was not realised. Ten years later we find that the capital cost of the Dawson irrigation scheme so far as Theodore was concerned amounted to £1,043,057 and the average cost in relation to each settler £8,492. Those are facts. Obviously the financial aspect of that scheme has to be examined very thoroughly and quite a lot of money written off in regard to it. The community has still to pay £2,000 a year in relation to the scheme.

Mr. Jones: Victoria had to write off a great deal of money.

Mr. PIE: And the Minister will have to write off, too. That scheme cost over £1,000,000 and over £8,000 to settle each farmer.

I understand that there was another scheme in the Inkerman irrigation area that was estimated to cost originally £130,935. But the scheme was carried out by day labour, and up to 30th June, 1932, it had cost £603,555. When the despised Moore Government handed it over to the growers in May, 1932, the capitalisation of the scheme was written down to £200,000, and the department waived another £15,000, representing accrued interest.

I quote those figures to make it clear that costs are a very important phase of big-scale irrigation schemes, and that the three important factors that must not be overlooked are capital cost, suitability of soil and water, and the livestock and crops that may be profitably produced under irrigation.

And here I want to make a point that cotton can be grown under irrigation in Queensland. This matter was forcibly brought to my notice a few weeks ago, when I had conversations

with one of the greatest cotton specialists in the world, whose company of £5,000,000 capital in Great Britain is wanting to invest £1,000,000 in this country. It wants to come to Australia, and what is more important still, is contemplating coming to Queensland. I want publicly to thank Mr. Cochran, chairman of the Secondary Industries Commission, for the interviews he has given this director from Great Britain, and I thank the Acting Premier, too, for the interviews he has given him. However, these people are not prepared to start in this country until they can be assured of an adequate supply of cotton. But if that assurance can be given there is no reason whatsoever why the company will not put £1,000,000 into Queensland to build an industry round those natural resources.

Mr. Jones: If you have water available it does not follow that people will grow cotton.

Mr. PIE: I believe cotton can be grown profitably under irrigation.

Mr. Jones: In conjunction with other crops.

Mr. PIE: Yes, in conjunction with other crops. I believe that the border scheme, between New South Wales and Queensland, which Parliament discussed a few days ago, will make available immediately 80,000 acres in New South Wales and Queensland suitable for irrigation, and I am reliably informed—and I know that it is right—that it will be entirely suitable for cotton-growing.

Mr. Aikens: Giving how many tons or how many pounds per acre?

Mr. PIE: I will tell the hon. member in a few moments. Queensland must do something immediately in the matter of irrigating this and other lands for the growing of cotton, otherwise we have no chance. We have heard about the scheme at Lake Eyre in South Australia, but from information I have it is just a stupid scheme. There is only one solid place where we can grow cotton, and that is here in Queensland and in New South Wales, but we shall have to do it under irrigation. We have no proper conception of the markets that are available if adequate labour is provided and irrigation is available.

Mr. Macdonald: There is no limit.

Mr. PIE: There is no limit. Cotton-spinning mills in Australia can to-day absorb at least 120,000 bales per annum of 500 lb. each, and it is expected that the expansion that will take place by 1957, that is, 10 years hence, will be able to absorb at least 200,000 bales of Queensland-grown cotton.

That would be worth approximately £10,000,000 in Australian currency to Queensland and Australia. If Australia bought that cotton from America or other parts of the world credit would have to be established before it could be brought to this country. Here in Queensland we can build a cotton-growing industry under irrigation that would be worth to this State alone £10,000,000. The cotton-growing areas at present lie within

the 25-30-inch rainfall belt. It is most unfavourable for growing cotton without irrigation. It is essential to have supplementary irrigation in growing cotton and its great advantages would be that the grower could use it at the correct time each year, which is the latter part of September or October, and with few exceptions would be able to grow a profitable crop. Information that is readily obtainable shows that you can get an average of 1,000 lb. to 1,500 lb. an acre of cotton under these conditions, as against 300 to 600 lb. with dry farming. That is a very important difference. The Biloela research farm, in the Callide Valley, provides interesting figures for the last three years. They disclose, for instance, that in 1942-43 under irrigation the cotton seed production per acre was 1,159 lb. as against approximately 508 lb. under dry farming. That gives an idea of what we can do under supplementary irrigation.

Mr. Jones: They tried to grow cotton on a station in the Texas district about 40 years ago.

Mr. PIE: But they did not have supplementary irrigation.

Mr. Jones: Yes, they had irrigation.

Mr. PIE: The Minister admitted in this Chamber that those areas should be suitable for growing cotton. Under irrigation the conditions would be ideal. Egypt, which grows the finest cotton in the world, grows it under irrigation. That is why the crop is of uniform growth throughout the year, that is to say, no part of the cotton grows faster than the other. That is how you get your fine cotton. The border stream holds great possibilities for this State and I commend the Government for undertaking irrigation works there. I hope there will be no delay in implementing that scheme. As I suggested when the Bill went through, if New South Wales is not prepared to go on with the work Queensland should do so and if necessary do the whole job, sending a debit note to New South Wales when the work is completed. Let us get on with the job.

I tell the Committee definitely that within two years we shall not have any cotton in Australia. The world will be starving for cotton. Yet here we can grow enough cotton to satisfy Australia's needs. If we went ahead with a 60,000-acre scheme we could grow cotton on one-third of that area, while the remaining 40,000 acres would be available for growing fodder and other suitable crops. In addition to the cotton surplus cotton seed would go to the oil mill, which would produce great quantities of cotton seed oil, which is desperately required in Australia today. If we base the yield on 1,500 lb. of seed cotton to the acre, which is possible under irrigation in that area, we should, on that 20,000 acres alone, produce 20,000 bales of raw cotton, each weighing 500 lb. That would be sufficient to establish a cotton-spinning and-weaving mill in that area on an economic basis. We should have a chance to decentralise; we could build the industry round the natural resources if we could get a minimum of

21,000 bales, which is about the minimum on which an economic cotton-spinning plant can operate.

The CHAIRMAN: That comes under the votes for the Department of Agriculture and Stock. The hon. member had better get back to the department under discussion.

Mr. PIE: I am. I am talking of growing cotton under irrigation. Is that not under the vote?

The CHAIRMAN: Irrigation is.

Mr. PIE: This State has no chance of achieving the objective unless we grow cotton with supplementary irrigation. It is no use going on in the way we have been going on in the past. Too much money has been sunk in the job and it has not been done properly. As the Minister knows, there is a guaranteed price for this commodity for five years ahead. It is useless to say that under irrigation we cannot grow at the same cost as the other countries of the world because it has been proved that under supplementary irrigation our costs up to picking stage are slightly less than American costs.

Mr. Jones: The farmers will grow the most economic crop.

Mr. PIE: The guaranteed price is 15d. for five years. That is sufficient to give him a good return, and that is the minimum. I say that up to the picking stage we can grow cotton under irrigation as well as any country.

Mr. Jones: If they could get a mechanical picker their position would be different.

Mr. PIE: As I have pointed out again and again, the International Harvester Company now has in production in America—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That has nothing to do with this vote.

Mr. PIE: It is irrigation I am talking about. I am answering the Minister, who said something about the mechanical cotton picker.

The CHAIRMAN: It is out of order.

Mr. PIE: The Minister is out of order too, is he?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. PIE: As long as the Minister is out of order I am prepared to be out of order. You cannot let him be out of order and not me.

I do feel that the answer to the cotton problem as I know it is irrigation. If this scheme that was so proudly promised on 15 July last from Canberra can be put into operation by the Minister—not necessarily in the particular areas outlined by Mr. Forde but in areas that will be suitable for cotton—we can build up a tremendous industry that will be of great value to Queensland.

I am particularly interested in the new border irrigation scheme. I believe that there we have possibilities of looking ahead

to the building of a great industry, because Australia will desperately need this product in the years ahead.

I had the opportunity of going to Maryborough, and through the courtesy of the hon. member for that electorate I was able to see over those great mills up there. I want to pay a tribute to the efficiency of them both. The way they handled the industry was an eye-opener to me. I can say that they are two of the most efficient firms in the whole of Queensland.

Mr. Jones: Equal to anything in Australia.

Mr. PIE: Equal to anything I have seen in industry. I congratulate those two firms on the way in which they are running their business.

I feel that reforestation needs to be considered on a very big scale here. The Minister knows how desperate the softwood position is. I saw reforestation in Germany last year. I saw forest after forest in all stages coming on; even during the war the reforestation had been going on to the extent of acres and acres and miles and miles. Then again, all over Canada you see continual reforestation everywhere; fir trees in different stages of growth right through. Something must be done in Queensland on those lines.

I believe that South Australia is making great strides, especially in the growing of softwoods. I know the Minister really believes some desperate action must be taken quickly in Queensland, and in doing that he will have the support of this side of the Chamber.

I now wish to speak of the condition of the workers within the Sub-Department of Forestry. There were very grave complaints, as the Minister knows, from the union about them, but the hon. gentleman assured me that those conditions have been altered and will be further altered as soon as practicable.

Mr. Jones: The conditions they were getting were contained in their award.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DAVIS (Barcoo) (2.41 p.m.): I submit, Mr. Mann, that no hon. member in this Committee, except the hon. member for Gregory, has a better knowledge of the qualifications of the Secretary for Public Lands, whom I have known for many years, than I have. I know he has a very wide knowledge of the ramifications of the agricultural and pastoral industries of this and other countries. His knowledge is not confined to the Darling Downs, nor to the pastoral areas in the west of the State. He has a wide knowledge of the ramifications and workings of the agricultural and pastoral industries of many other countries in the world. He has had the advantage of seeing how farming is carried on in Canada, how ranching is carried on in America and how farming is carried on throughout virtually the whole of Europe. Thus it is that I can say that we have been very fortunate in this State of Queensland in acquiring as Secretary for Public Lands a gentleman with

a knowledge of the Minister who has the destiny of this important department in his hands. Much water has gone under the bridges since I first met the Minister, and unfortunately much of that water has been blended with the blood and tears of the innocents of the world. In aspiring to grab the lands that the Minister administers in our State, they unfortunately aspired also to grab other lands and that was the tragic cause of the world upheavals in the last two wars.

I listened with some interest to the remarks of the members of the Queensland People's Party. I have listened to their criticism of the administration of this department, but when I measure their knowledge against the Minister's, I realise, as must every other hon. member in this Chamber, that the knowledge of the Queensland People's Party can be reckoned in perches, whereas the knowledge of the Minister can be reckoned not in perches as in a city but in untold millions of acres, which are the natural heritage of the people of this State.

I quite understand the outlook of the Queensland People's Party. I can quite understand their interest in production, especially that of their leader. He is concerned with seeing that the maws of his machines are fed from the products of the land so that from the maws of those machines can come the percentage profits he enjoys.

I admit I am rather disappointed at the fact that in this report some greater measure of attention has not been given to other areas of the State than the coastal belt. We must agree that whatever measure of wealth it may be possible to produce we must protect the wealth that is now with us. Let us not experiment with something that may be of benefit to the State without realising the fact that this is not the only country that can produce it. For instance, we have ample proof that almost throughout the whole of the world there are areas on which cotton can be produced at such a price that we in Australia cannot afford to produce if we are to retain our present standard of living. And we cannot afford to let our standards of living drop to the level of those of other cotton-producing countries. Cotton may be a source of wealth, but let us look at the great cotton fields of America, Egypt, and elsewhere.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not wish to stifle the hon. member, but if he gets on to a discussion of cotton he will find that he is out of order. We are dealing with the administration of the Department of Public Lands.

Mr. DAVIS: Cotton is produced from the land.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not covered by this vote.

Mr. DAVIS: Cotton is a product of the land. I am speaking of the products of the land and I believe that the Department of Public Lands, as set out in these Estimates, deals with every measure of production from the land. However, I accept your ruling.

We must establish within this State and within the Commonwealth a measure of security for an established industry that has proved conclusively throughout the ages to be Australia's primary source of wealth production. Let us give a measure of reconstruction to the western parts of the State. Let us obtain from our experts, engineers and other technical officers of State and Commonwealth, full information concerning the possibilities of irrigation in that section of our State and of our Commonwealth which produces the real wealth of this nation. If we were to take into consideration the fact that the colossal and tragic losses that occur each year in our pastoral areas are not only a national loss but a national tragedy, I believe that not only the Government of this State but also the Government of the Commonwealth must recognise that it is essential that we at least bring some measure of protection to the great natural wealth of Australia.

I hope, Mr. Mann, you will permit me to drift a little so that I may give some illustration of the position of the cotton industry about which the leader of the Queensland People's Party spoke.

What hope has cotton in the future to maintain within the industry the standard of living we have acquired and hope to hold? What hope has cotton in the future of upholding that standard unless it is subsidised from the pockets of the people of this Commonwealth? It has no chance of competing against the world's cotton with the standard of living we hold and hope to hold in the future in this land of ours.

Mr. Brand: It is possibly worth subsidising.

Mr. DAVIS: I agree with the hon. member—after we have established security in our primary industries. If we are compelled to spend untold millions in the establishment of an industry along the coast belt, whether it is a primary or a secondary one, and still willing to permit the factors that are operating now and have operated during the years to continue, I ask, "What the devil is going to happen in the future?" Most of the wealth to be drawn in subsidies for the establishment of this industry along the coast belt will be drawn from the pastoral sections of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Brand: Through direct taxes.

Mr. DAVIS: And other taxation. Those subsidies come from our wealth sources. Any industry established along the coast belt will be compelled, through circumstances, to draw from the pockets of the people certain subsidies so that that industry may become successful. Where are the subsidies drawn from? They must, in the natural course of events, be drawn from the successful industries. No-one can gainsay the fact that during the years the pastoral sections of industry have stood on their own feet, in spite of drought, floods, and fire. To-day the pastoral industry is experiencing

possibly the greatest drought in the history of the white man's occupation of the western part of the State.

Mr. Brand: The dairying industry is drawing.

Mr. DAVIS: The dairying industry, the sugar industry, and all those other industries are established along the coast. I know that the leader of the Queensland People's Party has no knowledge of the western part of this State, nor has he any care for it. If he comes to my electorate and has the impudence to ask somebody to oppose me in the Barcoo I will give him an illustration of how little he knows.

I listened with some interest to the statement made by the hon. member for Logan on the subject of forestry. He complained that today the Government had no progressive programme of reforestation and he warned the Chamber that our forests were likely to be depleted in a few short years. One remarkable phase of the criticism that emanates from Opposition benches is that hon. members opposite fail to take into consideration all the ramifications of the industry—all the waste that has occurred over the war years. I failed to hear the hon. member for Logan say that tens of thousands of superficial feet of timber had been wasted, ruthlessly wasted, over the war years. Prior to 1939 we had an abundance of timber in the forests and timber was actually rotting in the timber yards of the State but what administrative officer, what forestry officer, could have foreseen the position that has occurred in 1946? Why does not the hon. member for Logan quote the facts and why does he not explain the reasons for the present deplorable position in connection with forestry in this State?

Mr. Brand: He made a great speech on forestry.

Mr. DAVIS: He criticised the Government because of the position that obtains today but he failed to give the reasons for it. I and other hon. members here know the reasons. We know why our forests have been depleted to the extent that they have and we know too that tens of thousands of superficial feet of timber were ruthlessly wasted during the occupation of this State by the American armed forces. Hon members cannot deny that fact.

Mr. Brand: We are all to blame because we did little about it before the war.

Mr. DAVIS: No-one was to blame before the war. Our forests carried excellent stands of timber then and timber was actually rotting in the timber yards of the State.

Mr. Brand: No.

Mr. DAVIS: Yes, timber was rotting in the timber yards of the State. Mills were closed down and there was not enough work for sawmill employees. We had a glut of timber.

Much has been said too about the settlement of soldiers on the land but whatever the settlement position may be today we have been able to carry out our desires in the matter

of soldier settlement and the position now is ever so much better than was the settlement of returned soldiers on the land after the 1914-18 war. The Department of Public Lands is endeavouring to place ex-Service men on the land with some measure of security so that we shall not repeat the tragic events of soldier settlement that followed World War No. 1.

At 3 p.m.,

Mr. DEVRIES (Gregory) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland—Secretary for Public Works) (3 p.m.): Much has been said during this debate on the depletion of our timber stocks. Apart altogether from the timber that was required directly for war purposes we found that during that period many buildings constructed for Army purposes, even on the Atherton Tableland, for which second-class timber would have sufficed, were constructed with our finest cabinet timbers such as maple, silky oak and walnut mixed with secondary timbers. It was apparent that the military authorities had no experts to guide them.

Mr. Brand: The Government could have done so.

Mr. BRUCE: The Government had nothing to do with it. The armed forces constructed their own buildings. The Allied Works Council had one of our best timber authorities in the North to advise on such matters, but despite his recommendations the Army authorities proceeded to erect these temporary buildings, ignoring the quality and class of timber. Again, the United States Army landed large quantities of machinery in Queensland uncased. Any sapling timber or second-class timber could have been employed for making cases for that machinery. As a matter of fact, all that the cases were used for was to prevent the machinery from being crushed or damaged in the boats' slings when it was being unloaded. Apparently this machinery was handled by cranes in the first instance in America. The machinery consisted of all classes. One-inch machined pine was used for casing it.

Mr. Macdonald: First-class pine, too.

Mr. BRUCE: The best pine obtainable was used. I saw this work going on. It appeared to me rather extraordinary that some people in the American Army were deliberately using this first-class machined timber, and the only inference was that it was done with the object of selling us timber at a later date to replace it.

Mr. Pie: America is short of timber, too.

Mr. BRUCE: One timber merchant told me at that time that over 1,000,000 feet of one-inch machined first-class pine had been used up till then for casing this machinery.

That was right in the middle of the war, three years ago. The practice was continuing when this merchant spoke to me.

Mr. Pie: Were not timber controls exercised then?

Mr. BRUCE: This State Government had no control over it.

Mr. Pie: They delegated their power.

Mr. BRUCE: We were at war. Hon. members opposite still forget that we were at war and many things had to be done that were not done in normal times. I am only making a plain statement of fact on matters that come under my notice and giving them as one reason for the depletion of our timber stocks. We know that the timber position is desperate, but the present position cannot be compared with what it was before the Labour Government succeeded the Tory Government on the Treasury benches. The then Tory Government threw open thousands of acres of land on the Atherton Tableland at 2s. 6d. an acre.

In many cases the people sold the timber and then walked off the farms. Tens of millions of feet of timber were ruthlessly destroyed. Not all of it was marketed; a great deal of it was burnt. Virgin forests that would have been producing to-day were destroyed through lack of care and attention by the Tory Government before Labour came in in 1915.

Mr. Brand: Forty years ago the timber was valueless on the timber land.

Mr. BRUCE: I am talking about the time before the Labour Party got into power. We got in in 1915, and long before—years before—millions of feet of timber were deliberately destroyed. It was first sent to the market, and if there was no market they ruthlessly burnt virgin forests and started the killing of the magnificent stands of timber with which Queensland was blessed.

Mr. Macdonald: What would you have done?

Mr. BRUCE: Had the Labour Party been in power they would have had a policy, as they have to-day, and they would have used all the timber that could be marketed and they would have developed the country in a sound and orderly way.

I heard the hon. member for Windsor talk about the scheme that "we" are putting into operation at Stanthorpe. The Labour Party is entirely responsible for putting that scheme into operation. The Labour Party made the necessary negotiations with the Government of New South Wales and decided to put that scheme into operation. When we hear them talk about the other scheme at Lockyer one would imagine that it too was their baby. Any stranger who came in and listened to them would think that they did the whole job. Their people benefited financially, but the Labour Party put those locks in and conserved the water.

Mr. Plunkett: When?

Mr. BRUCE: I am not giving the date. If the hon. member does not know, then he has not been about the country. He either does not know or he is deliberately trying to mislead the Committee. Any man who has been in this Parliament for any length of time knows that the first dam was put in close to Gatton College a number of years ago, and the work has been continued since. The Labour Government are carrying out an excellent policy of irrigation. Lockyer is virtually in the suburbs of Brisbane and can be seen by everybody. Much work has been done and much more will be done by the Government.

I congratulate the Minister and the department for the excellent work they have done. I think the Department of Public Lands, when we come down to tin-tacks, is the most valuable department of the whole of the departments, because it deals with the land; and it is from the land that we reap all that we wear and eat. I congratulate the previous Minister and the present Minister on the excellent work they have done. In common with many other hon. members, I believe the really essential thing is irrigation.

People speak of spending millions of pounds on a uniform-gauge railway but I would put that aside and use those millions on irrigation. I know this State, I suppose, as well as any hon. member in this Committee and I know that its most essential need today is irrigation. There are people who visit Queensland, spend a week or so here and then talk of Queensland as being able to take a few more million people, but with irrigation I contend that Queensland could take 50,000,000 people without any trouble at all.

An Opposition Member: 50,000,000?

Mr. BRUCE: I make a conservative estimate. There are tens of thousands of acres of land in Queensland that are not producing anything but with irrigation could produce most of the varied needs of human beings. The world has just passed through approximately five or six years of war and production has been interrupted, and we have been no exception. It must be admitted that after this interruption one cannot get immediately into one's stride. Schemes cannot be put into operation straightaway. To do a job of this sort requires first of all surveyors, and later engineers and other technical staff. These are not available at the present time. I know that every effort was made by the former and is now being made by the present Minister to obtain technical advisers and other technical men necessary to carry out the numerous schemes discussed in this Chamber from time to time.

As to irrigation, we begin at the southern border and as we go northward we find the Lockyer Creek scheme. Then there is the Burdekin River scheme. That is not in my electorate but in my opinion this will be one of the most valuable in this State. I know the watersheds and can conceive the amount of water that can be conserved for the purposes of irrigation. Much land that is barren today will with water from that scheme grow

produce worth many millions of pounds. Probably we shall have the rice that we hear talked about grown there and the cotton of which the hon. member for Windsor spoke this afternoon. There are various classes of land that would be served by the water from this scheme. These lands can be tested for their various qualities and the nature of the products it is best to grow on them. This afternoon I speak only of those places I know very well. Of course, I would not attempt to deal with the whole of the huge State of Queensland. Before I rose no doubt many other hon. members discussed various parts of the State.

Mr. Luckins: We have been right to Cape York and round the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Mr. BRUCE: I believe the hon. member got into Cape York and I understand some hon. members even went from sunny Queensland over the border.

Having touched the Burdekin district, I will now travel to the hinterland of Cairns. Investigations have been and are being made as to an irrigation scheme to water the lands in the vicinity of Mareeba and Dimbulah. Today we in Australia are in the ridiculous position of having tobacco rationed. Hon. members know the difficulties they have to face in trying to get a smoke. Had that area been developed earlier we probably should have had a supply of cigarette tobacco to meet the present Australian requirements. I know a number of people who were investing their money in that land but J. Lyons, the then Tory Prime Minister, lowered the import duty on imported tobacco and placed an excise duty on locally-grown tobacco.

There are farmers who have invested their money in irrigation from the Walsh River and who are now producing up to £2,000 worth of tobacco a year. Given irrigation, hundreds of men could be settled on that land. With irrigation only a comparatively small area is required for the growing of tobacco. These people could also grow nearly every other commodity they require. Many of them grow 60 per cent. of their own food-stuffs and send away tobacco, tomatoes and peanuts as well. All they need is water. I know that investigations have been made, and the report sent to the Department of Public Lands, and I am looking forward to the development of this and other irrigation schemes.

I think every hon. member is an intelligent man. I think they all realise that there are tens of thousands of square miles that are unproductive today because they lack water, but when we consider the fact that we have been at war, that there has been a shortage of men, and a shortage of materials to some extent, we must realise that the Department of Public Lands has done a wonderful job in developing its irrigation schemes in the way it has done.

I know the enormous amount of work the present Minister has done for soldier settlement. The outstanding fact in that matter is that although many men on the land whom I know are not opposed to the freezing of

land for these soldiers, hon. members opposite oppose it. One hon. member on the Opposition benches went so far as to say, "Send the soldiers out bush, don't put them on our land." Actually, the real pioneers of the land have not only done much towards settling soldiers but are co-operating with the Government. Men whose fathers pioneered this country are getting on in years, and they are quite happy to see settled on the land the returned soldier who saved this country for the people of Queensland. If there is some delay it is justified. We are not going to have a repetition of the conditions under which soldiers were settled previously, when things were done hastily without proper thought or consideration. I am sure those who are accustomed to the land, and the soldiers themselves, will agree that even a little more delay is justified if they are settled on a sound footing.

Soldiers in the sugar areas are anxious to get on the land immediately. When I was up there a few months ago I had numerous deputations. After attending a social gathering at which 200 returned soldiers were present, I was met by committees who wanted me to use my influence as a Minister to get the lads on the land as soon as it could possibly be done. Commissions have been appointed to see that things are done correctly. You cannot just take any sort of land and grow sugar-cane on it. You have got to go into the whole thing properly, and I do hope that these boys in the sugar areas will be placed on the land before the next season so that they will be able to plant immediately, settle on their land, and get a crop within approximately 12 months. They then will have a real asset giving them some return.

I have mentioned several times that many are unsettled because of their war experiences but on the other hand many are fit and well and keen and anxious to get down to work and get settled and will rehabilitate themselves if given the opportunity when this land is available.

Within the area I represent two great factors arise in the settlement of our returned men on the land, first the opening of the sugar blocks and the ability to plant cane for the next season, and second the application of water to the Dimbulah and Mareeba areas where they can carry out irrigation schemes and establish a population. The land is virtually level and no clearing would be required. As a matter of fact, they have asked us not to cut any more timber because they want it left for the curing of tobacco. Water is the problem that faces that area and I say that given water we can establish a town that will carry a happy body of Queenslanders, most of whom will be returned soldiers—men who helped in the defence of Australia when it faced the most tragic time in its history.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (3.22 p.m.): I should be failing in my duty if I did not congratulate the officers of the Department of Public Lands on the splendid report submitted to Parliament. In my opinion it is the best of its kind I have ever looked at.

I feel it my duty, and I think it is the duty of every hon. member of this Chamber, to help in this important work as far as it is within his power to do so.

We have heard a great deal of discussion about the fertility of our soil and what might be done to preserve it. I have been somewhat amazed at all this talk about soil erosion because after having spent practically all my life on the land I have no solution to the problem to offer. However, I compliment the officers of the department on making an honest attempt to help us. I have heard many elaborate speeches made about this problem during the last few days and I have heard it said that soil erosion is caused by bad farming methods. Let me say first of all that we have to appreciate the fact that people engaged in agriculture have to make a living out of it and it is not a question of how you can set aside a piece of land to conserve soil. I remember that an officer of the Government, when travelling through part of the Rosewood district not many years ago, on seeing the hilly country round Tallegalla, said, "Is it not a pity to see that land as it is?" I said, "What is wrong with it?" and he said, "In my opinion it should not be cultivated." I said, "That is all right, but you have to remember that it is held in small areas and the people have to cultivate it or get off." This talk about contour-ploughing and ploughing in different directions to prevent wash is talk. Let anybody try and see how difficult it is to put the theory into practice and make a living. I believe that you can do a great deal to conserve your soil and people should be urged to plant crops to hold the soil together.

Mr. Jones: They do not seem to have difficulty in the European countries.

Mr. MULLER: But with intense cultivation it is virtually impossible. I appreciate the work of the officers of the department because after all our slopes and hillsides are deteriorating and are not now nearly as fertile as they were some years ago. If we go on as we are, in 50 years our slopes and hillside country will not grow anything. We have to do everything possible to preserve our soils.

It is all very well for hon. members to walk into the Chamber and suggest an easy way to solve the problem. My reply to them is that they do not know what they are talking about and that if they were asked to make a living from the land they might tell quite another story. Candidly, I do not know enough about soil erosion even to suggest a solution for it.

There are one or two matters in the report that I should like to discuss at length, notably those dealing with timber supplies and with irrigation. I am a little perturbed about the past policy of the Government in connection with timber supplies. It is true that 30 to 40 years back valuable timbers were destroyed, but why were they destroyed? It was not because of any lack of foresight on the part of the Government of the day, but there is the stark truth that in those times the people did not believe that the

day would come when there would be a shortage of timber. When I was a boy the timber was burnt and I suppose that the people of to-day, looking back to those days, would say that the people who burnt the timber were stupid, but the fact remains that in order to make a living from agriculture, dairying, or other agricultural pursuits it was necessary to clear the land and if no-one could be found to buy the timber it had to be burnt. Even to-day when you fly over the country you can see trees covering the ground with perhaps a little clearing here and there and you would imagine that there was enough timber for the next 200 years, but on coming nearer the ground and making a closer inspection one readily realises that 99 per cent. of it is only rubbish.

The question now is: what is to be done to build up our timber supply? On reading the report of the Auditor-General on the Public Accounts and the valuable report by the Land Administration Board, one cannot help concluding that the policy of the Government in the past in relation to reforestation has been rather casual. It is true, as the Secretary for Public Works said a moment ago, that this country was subjected to the dislocation of war for seven years and it was not possible to do very much in connection with reforestation during that time, but go a little further back, say another seven years, and it will be found that not very much was done even then in the matter of reforestation.

Mr. Walsh: There was record expenditure on reforestation in that period.

Mr. MULLER: It necessarily would be because it is only during the last 15 or 20 years that the subject has been tackled with any seriousness at all. Till a few years ago, say 20 years ago, nothing was done. However, the fact remains that not very much has been done even yet, and when one has regard to the revenue derived from sales of timber one cannot help coming to the conclusion that it was the duty of the Government to put back more of that money into reforestation than they have.

Mr. Jones: I showed today that we put back more money than we took out.

Mr. MULLER: I am aware of what the Minister said, but I am drawing attention to the fact that having regard to the amount of revenue derived from the sales of timber over the last 15 years the amount put back in reforestation has been very small. According to the report of the Land Administration Board the amount obtained from timber sales for the year 1944-45 was £1,155,425 and for last year, that is, 1945-46, the amount was £914,733, but only £35,450 was spent on reforestation in 1944-45 and only £52,869 in 1945-46. Of that £52,869 an amount of £9,000 was spent on roads and £18,968 on resumptions.

Mr. Jones: You are not presenting the picture correctly.

Mr. MULLER: I admit that it is necessary to make some deductions because the figures are set out in different places in the report, but if you examine the report fully I think you will find that my figures are accurate. In other words, the net returns after all expenses were paid were £484,669 in 1944-45 and £349,281 in 1945-46. It is quite safe to say that for the last 10 years the Government have received a net revenue of £250,000 each year from the sales of timber above the amount set aside for reforestation work.

Mr. Jones: No; I gave you the figures this morning.

Mr. MULLER: If you deduct your logging and all other expenses, including the cost of sending those logs to the mill, you will find that my figures are not very far out.

We should in addition take into consideration the amount of timber obtained from private lands. It would amount to a good deal. Those sales have been going on and on and virtually no regard has been given to the question of how to replace the trees. I am a little disappointed—and in saying this I have no reason to withdraw my expressions of opinion on the fine report the Land Administration Board has given us—to see that it suggests no remedy. I realise it is not for paid officials to suggest a remedy; it is a matter of Government policy. The Government have to find the money for the work to replenish our forests. That is why no suggestion is made in the report for the replenishing of our timber supplies. We see the effect on softwoods of this policy today. The poor coast country should not have been utilised for replanting our softwoods. I have been impressed by the stands of pine that have grown in some of our scrub country. That suggests that if a sufficient quantity was planted in that type of country it would provide the next generation alone with ample supplies of softwoods. As we have taken this large amount of money from our forests, surely it is our duty to rebuild those forests, or at least some of them?

I have been pained to see—and I have mentioned this matter before—the amount of hardwood that has been wantonly destroyed. That could be remedied if Cabinet made a close examination of the position. Those of us who have any hardwood on our grazing country ringbark it in order to grow more grass. It would not pay us to allow that hardwood to mature as the price paid to us for it is not sufficient. Twenty-five years ago I got more money from royalties than I did for some timber I sold this year, notwithstanding that the value of sawn timber has increased considerably. In 1925 I got 5s. per 100 superficial feet for ironbark and spotted gum on the stump. I did not have to fell the trees. I sold some timber to a mill in January and February this year—you all know how short timber is to-day—and the best price I could get for that timber was 2s. 6d. Seeing that sawn timber is very much dearer than it was 25 years ago, that fact is hard to

explain. That supplies a reason why so much timber is ringbarked to-day. When seedlings come up in hardwood country it would be very much better if a number of them were allowed to grow, but because of the facts I have quoted it is being wantonly destroyed. We are all guilty of doing it. I am guilty of it, and I admit that open confession is good for the soul. I am confessing to doing this, but it is going on in thousands of other instances.

What is the remedy? I have suggested a remedy before, but the Government did not take any notice of it. The Government must guarantee the landholder a price for this timber that would make it economic for him to grow it. It is a matter of simple economics. If one is encouraged to do so, many of these trees can be allowed to grow to maturity, but one cannot expect to do so and sell them at half a crown a hundred superficial feet.

If it is the policy of the Government to keep down building costs, perhaps there may be some argument in that—I do not condemn it right out myself—but if you expect the tree to be protected the person who protects the tree will have to be compensated; and if he is not he dispenses with it and grows grass.

Mr. Jones: Do you suggest that the price of timber should be increased?

Mr. MULLER: I suggest that the royalties, on private lands at any rate, should be higher. People are not complaining so much about the price of timber, but because they cannot get it. I do not know what we can use as a substitute. We shall want timber for a long time to come. Substitutes may fill the need to some extent but we require some timber. Men capable of expressing an opinion told me that our ironbark is one of the finest hardwoods in the world; but you see a white collar put round those trees in any district almost every ringbarking season. That should not be. After all, we do not go to any expense in planting the trees, but after 10, 15 or 20 years we just destroy them; and we do so because it is uneconomic to keep them. The Government should examine that proposal and if it is a question of keeping down royalties, money should be provided by way of subsidy to enable the landholder to grow the tree till it becomes a useful log. I dislike subsidies but we have to remember that after all this is a national problem and if it is in the interests of the nation money has to be provided from some source to make it profitable to allow the tree to grow. At Slaek's Creek on the Southport road a little school under the control of Percy Wilkes started a small forestry plot, and they have about five or six acres of hardwood adjacent to it. They destroyed all the rubbish in that paddock a few years ago in order to preserve the trees, and it is amazing to see the growth those trees have made even in that poor country. What I have seen there has convinced me that this could be done extensively. I believe some of the poorer country would be more useful if it was set aside to grow trees than cleared for grazing.

I wish to deal briefly with the need for irrigation. I was very interested and amused, when listening to the Secretary for Public Works, to hear him contend that what had been done on the Lockyer was due to the efforts of the Government. I am not going to condemn the efforts of the department in connection with irrigation, but his statement is not only slightly exaggerated, it is grossly exaggerated. The Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply has not done a thing in my district—only take levels here and there where irrigation is carried on extensively. I offer my congratulations to the Chief Engineer of that sub-department and his officers for what they have done. They have convinced me that their policy of weiring our rivers is sound. Years ago I thought irrigation should be approached from the other end, that is, the larger schemes might be more beneficial, but after these men have demonstrated to me what can be done by erecting weirs on fresh-water streams, the only complaint I have is that there are not enough of them. In my district we have one in Warrill Creek but none on Reynolds Creek. Every farmer on Reynolds Creek has an irrigation plant and is doing well with it. Our complaint is that while there is plenty of machinery and the will to irrigate there is no water. They are having a tremendous effect on those streams. Besides the fact that you conserve water, a weir has a steady effect on the flow of water on the flats adjacent to the creeks. You can put down wells and I have been amazed to see the amount of water that wells on those flats carry. I believe we can do quite a lot, and we can do it without any great cost.

On the first page of the Brisbane "Courier-Mail" of this morning I noticed that the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works is recommending the expenditure of £18,000,000 on post-war works, and going through the list of those works I notice that he is suggesting £383,000 might be spent on irrigation. Just imagine that—£383,000! But the Government have not yet approved of even this. No money may be expended on this work at all, which should be priority No. 1. We are going through a period of drought at present, and if we do not do something to conserve our water supplies and feed I should not like to tell this Committee this afternoon what might happen to Queensland at some future day.

Again, this morning's paper reports the remark of the general-manager of the Port Curtis Dairying Association, that the drought conditions in that district are so severe that although last month they bought £24,000 worth of fodder for the dairy farmers in that area, it is not expected that the return will exceed £20,000. Moreover, one must appreciate the fact that probably another £25,000 has been expended in that district by people who made their own financial arrangements.

I was in that district a few months ago and found the conditions appalling, but not for a moment do I say that the problem is insurmountable. I was there on an altogether different mission from that of investigating

the possibilities of irrigation, but going about the country I found that although conditions were bad there were still some supplies of water in some of the creeks. If weirs were erected there I am satisfied that lucerne could be grown on much of the country. As a matter of fact, even with the limited supplies of water, in some places they had beautiful stands of lucerne. If money was provided to weir these creeks and the producers were educated in the benefits of irrigation I am satisfied the problem would be solved. It is not a solution of the problem to carry feed from Victoria to Rockhampton, or take milk from Brisbane to Rockhampton. There should be sufficient feed in a district such as that to feed sufficient cows to produce milk and butter for these people.

Then, again, we read the remarks of some of our medical men on the outback, for example Charleville, and are told it is impossible to carry milk to Charleville. Is that not a reflection on this Parliament? I do not say the Government. Could sufficient water not be provided in the West to feed at least a few milking cows, a sufficient number to provide milk for such districts? Hon. members know that in the western country, particularly in your electorate, Mr. Devries, if water was provided sufficient milk and feed could be produced to meet the requirements of the people.

Mr. Jones: I doubt whether you could irrigate black-soil plains.

Mr. MULLER: It may not be possible to irrigate sufficiently to carry beef cattle, but I suggest that irrigation sufficient to produce enough to tide such districts over difficult periods could be put into operation. What are the Government spending this year to provide irrigation? I have studied my Estimates carefully and find it is the intention to provide £56,000 from consolidated revenue—last year £46,000 was spent—and £150,000 from Loan Fund. I take it that will be towards the building of additional weirs.

Mr. Jones: Oh no, your figures are wrong.

Mr. MULLER: The Minister will find that £150,000 is to be expended from Loan Fund. After all, that is not a very large amount, and when I see niggardly amounts of money provided by the Government for this purpose I cannot expect officers of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply to do all that might be desirable. I hope the Minister in his reply will tell me that my figures are not correct, but I am quoting from his Estimates.

Mr. Jones: I am telling you now.

Mr. MULLER: He sets down £150,000 from Loan Funds, and the other amount comes from consolidated revenue. It is certainly a very small amount, and this sub-department is not being expanded at the rate I think it should.

I repeat that post-war project No. 1 should be water conservation. It is certainly overdue in this State. We have been a long time

waking up to the fact that the present drought conditions are not abnormal, that they are just part of Queensland's normal climatic conditions. We must realise this truth sooner or later and appreciate the need for water conservation.

I have had a good deal to do with irrigation and I know that it is not economical in a great many places. A number of people will tell you that you should do certain things to make a living out of irrigation, but you have only to try for yourself to see how expensive it often is. Even in my own district, where we have reasonable supplies of water, some of my neighbours are watering lucerne that they intend to use for feed for dairy cows and I am doubtful whether they will break even. I felt that it was not economical for me to do that. My opinion is that if you devote your time to the growing of the more profitable crops, such as potatoes, pumpkins, marrows, and cucumbers, irrigation may be successful. The market may be risky, but these things are valuable for food and they do prove profitable. Of course, if you irrigate lucerne and are able to sell it at a big price it may be profitable, but if you irrigate lucerne under existing conditions and feed it to dairy cows you will not make any profit. Governments must consider the economic side of this question.

In conclusion I should like to urge the Government to erect more weirs. Of course, I realise that the Minister may be embarrassed this afternoon in view of the fact that as there is an important Bill ahead of him he may not be able to tell us all that he would like to tell us about the subject.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DUNSTAN (Gympie) (3.48 p.m.): The hon. member for Cooroora and I can claim to be particularly privileged to speak on the important question of afforestation and reforestation, and this for two reasons. One is that we have in the Mary Valley district of Gympie two of the best hoop-pine forests in Australia and perhaps in the world. The massive and centuries-old pine logs that have been hewn in and hauled from those forests are, in my opinion, unequalled anywhere. There is another distinction that the hon. member for Cooroora and I can both claim, and that is that when the Australian Forestry Conference of delegates, representative of all States of Australia and Canberra, was held in Queensland in 1922 a large party of delegates, representative of public men, paid a visit to the State forest at Imbil, and to mark that occasion each visitor planted a named and numbered pine tree. Now, 24 years later, Mr. Walker's tree has reached a height of over 88 feet while mine is 86 feet, with proportionate girth measurement in each case. As father of the House the hon. member for Cooroora naturally has the higher tree. And as the hon. member after a record period of service in this Chamber is about to retire from active political life, I am sure everyone wishes that he may live long to see his tree at Imbil grow higher still.

The Empire Forestry Conference, representative of overseas forestry organisations, along with forestry officers of this State, was held in Brisbane in 1927 and at that time there was an organised, persistent and rather rabid agitation for the opening of State forests and timber reserves into farming settlements. There was even the fantastic proposal that the millable timber in the Imbil and Brooloo State Forests should be cut out in one year preparatory to opening those areas for farm selection. For many years during my term as hon. member for Gympie and also whilst I was Secretary for Lands and in charge of forestry operations I had to combat and withstand a persistent campaign, in other words a crusade against reforestation and for the whittling away of our forestry reserves. There was then in the possession of the Sub-Department of Forestry what was called the black map, showing how the State forests and reserves were being continually whittled away by demands for the utilisation of areas for settlement instead of for the growing of hardwood and pine. That whittling away was largely helped by the attitude and propaganda of hon. members opposite, including the party then known as the United Australia Party, the political progenitors of the Queensland People's Party in this Chamber today. I welcome the change of attitude on the part of hon. members opposite in this question and the almost universal belief prevailing now for greater reforestation and regeneration of our forests and the extension of our timber supplies by the reserving of areas for the future planting of trees. That is a worthy, commendable and essential object to be prosecuted to the utmost of our endeavours in this Chamber and elsewhere. Every credit must be given to the Sub-Department for the work carried on over a long period of years in the reforestation of our timber areas and the regeneration of our forests.

As the annual report of the Director of Forests for the year ended 30 June, 1946, states—

“Until the late twenties the softwood milling industry of the State was mainly dependent on hoop and bunya pine obtained from private lands. This pine had been alienated by the Crown for an insignificant return. Had the logging and milling practices of those days been continued the entire accessible hoop and bunya pine resources would have long since been cut out.”

During recent years, of course, the familiar slogan, “Woodman, spare that tree” has gone with the winds of war.

The annual limit of timber-cutting from our reserves was lifted, figuratively, to the sky. The demand was an extreme demand and had to be met. It was responsible for the loss of the largest volume of our best timber, timber that has been applied to temporary war-time uses, not for the construction of permanent improvements. The total

milling logs cut during the war period, 1939-40 to 1944-45, was made up of the following—

	sup. ft.
Hoop and Bunya Pine ..	764,000,000
Hardwood	675,000,000
Cypress Pine	85,000,000
Kauri Pine	63,000,000
Cabinet Woods	115,000,000
Miscellaneous Species ..	153,000,000
	<hr/>
	1,855,000,000

That indicates, in my opinion, how great and valuable a resource for the needs of war and the requirements of peace our State forest reserves have been.

The hon. member for Windsor referred to his visit to Maryborough and to the progress of the up-to-date sawmills in that city. His statement has every foundation in fact, but there is the additional fact that the progress and development of these mills were largely dependent upon the forestry policies of this Government, and the proprietors of those mills have made public statements, which have been repeated in this Chamber, praising the present Labour Government for what they did to help the sawmilling industry and saying what a great adjunct our forestry operations have been in the matter of construction works throughout the State.

The present urgent need of timber for post-war reconstruction will afford our forests no respite. The Director of Forests says that the end of the natural-grown hoop-pine and bunya-pine reserves is within sight. The latest estimates by the Department are that the volume of timber remaining in these stands will not, at the rate of operation during 1945-46, provide more than a further six years of cutting. That is a very serious prospect indeed. These figures envisage the need for reforestation more than any words can do.

In recent years the Government have adopted a forestry-redemption policy whereby considerable areas of good forest land have been acquired as State forests. The work of developing exotic pine-planting projects on poor coast types of forest land is being continued. An outstanding experiment in this direction, on lands not suitable for agricultural purposes, is at Beerwah. From that area useful boards for case-making and other purposes are being produced. The experiments in this direction require a great deal of exacting research, for soil conditions for growing imported pines vary in these areas within the space of half a mile. Some low-lying land may be very good and give excellent results, whereas in other spots near them the soil is not suitable because the clay is near the surface and the soil is too wet or contains too much acid.

A significant and informative paragraph in the department's annual report states that almost none of the privately-owned forests is being managed on sound forestry principles. Already large quantities of small, immature hardwood trees of pole size from private lands are being milled before their maximum

rate of growth in terms of timber volume has been realised and these small trees yield to the mill low recoveries of inferior timber.

Indiscriminate ringbarking also has destroyed many prospective hardwood logs on private lands. I saw an example of this recently while travelling from Gympie to Brisbane. A selection adjacent to the North Coast line had been cleared for grazing purposes and had become well covered with grass. On it, however, there remained a considerable number of tall, straight trees of good girth suitable for poles, all too high and straight to have any restrictive effect on the growth of the pasture. Yet every one of those trees had recently been ringbarked so that they would die, dry, and rot away for no useful purpose. It would seem to me that even on cultivable lands or mixed scrub and forest lands the holders, in their clearing operations, would have found it payable over a period of years to preserve and promote the growth, on sound forestry principles, of millable types of trees along the boundaries of their holdings, or wherever they could be protected from clearing fires or grow without detriment to cultivation or grazing requirements. Such a policy and practice, in many cases, would provide a developing asset that in due time would give a better return than the uncontrolled and sweeping use of the fire stick.

In conclusion, I say, with all sincerity, that this Committee and the public generally are indebted to the officers of the Sub-Department of Forestry for the work they have done over a long period of years against a considerable body of opposition, and for their intensive and expert methods under which they have developed the growth on modern lines of the timber throughout the State forests and timber reserves. I trust that with the new attitude of hon. members and the public the process of reforestation, under the capable officers of this sub-department, will go on, to the greater progress of our State.

Mr. WALKER (Cooroorra) (4.4 p.m.): I fully appreciate the value of the words spoken by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. I have realised from my study of agriculture over the years and from my mining experience in the early days that we have latterly had to pay a great deal of attention to what our various types of land will grow in the form of timber. I appreciate, too, his remarks concerning my retirement, as well as his statement that in the demonstration forestry plots my trees at Imbil are predominant.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WALKER: The Minister should consider taking up a party of hon. members from city constituencies to view not only the demonstration plots planted on the North Coast a few years ago but many other interesting factors concerning forestry work there. It would give them a better idea of the value of reforestation.

It is some years since reforestation was taken up in earnest. It does not matter what Government took it up in earnest or initiated the idea. It has been followed ever since by all supporters of fair business methods in connection with forestry. Over the years our stocks of timber are declining, because in the early days Queensland was so poor that we had to sell timber for whatever we could get to keep the country going, because at that time you could not borrow money. I remember on one or two occasions in my early life Queensland nearly went broke. The first was at the time of the discovery of Gympie. If it had not been for the discovery of that field, when gold was £3 17s. 6d. an ounce, the country might have gone broke.

I am pleased to be able to support the remarks made by members on both sides in reference to the various officials connected with the Sub-Department of Forestry and the Department of Public Lands. It is one of those departments where you get 100-per cent. efficiency. It does not matter when you go, whether the time is inconvenient or not—and we are a bit of a pest because we usually go at the wrong time because of our business in connection with the House—you receive a courteous answer and the information is given to you. There is no evasion and we and our friends who have written for information are satisfied. The same thing can be said of the Minister, who readily receives deputations.

At 4.8 p.m.,

The **CHAIRMAN** resumed the chair.

Mr. WALKER: After listening to the hon. member for Maryborough—and he must have been attending to his duties—one would honestly think the only place where we had sawmills was in Maryborough. Maryborough has always had a big square cut. They have not only used an enormous quantity of hardwood, running up to Degilbo and the Nanango lines, but they got the greater part of the pine in those areas and they exploited the country fully. Geographically they are situated in a beautiful position to monopolise the timber on Fraser Island and at Double Island Point. I assure the hon. member that he has nothing to fear in regard to the geographical position of timber, as far as Maryborough is concerned. He spoke about 350 employees in those various mills. One would think they were the only men employed. I am a great believer in small sawmills all over the place, because they can cut it and deliver it more economically. Freight is saved by cutting the timber in the district where it is going to be used.

A few years ago the Sub-Department of Forestry planted big areas of pine on Double Island Point, and it has grown splendidly. I think if the Minister could only put on men to cut a part of the scrub—not all of it—the timber would soon grow into big trees. This sub-department has repurchased many small estates between Cooroy and Cooran. That was one of the finest strokes of business you could possibly do. You are taking away valueless land from an agricultural point of

view, but there is a big area of small trees on that land that will be well developed in 20 or 30 years, and developed to a greater extent than if you had to plant now. If those trees are thinned out or cultivated—if I may use that term—you would see a wonderful improvement in their growth.

We hear the hon. member for Maryborough and others continually speaking of the waste of the early days, not only of land but of timber. That is not fair criticism. These timbers had to be felled because forests were almost unsalable. The men who did it were our pioneers and they had to clear the lands speedily to get in their crops. Without them we should not have those splendid settlements that we speak of with pride from time to time.

I have heard hon. members speak of large areas of land and of timber thrown open a few years ago. I am prepared to say that none has been thrown open since I have been in the House. Some may have been in the early days when the Government could not find a better use for the land or the timber. For instance, before gold was discovered at Gympie one station on occupation licence ran from Conondale to Gympie. The only use made of it was to run cattle and the cattle were more or less wild, but now look at the settlement that is there! There today can be seen one of the most splendid settlements that can be seen anywhere. The settlement took place speedily. In the days of the Kidston Government not only the Brisbane and Mary Valleys were settled but the Kin Kin district and those groups of settlements that can now be seen between Caboolture and Gympie. Where could one find better settlements? In those days my electorate covered the greater part of the Wide Bay area running north to within 16 miles of Maryborough and with approximately only 4,000 voters. This area is now divided into four or five large electorates. Is not that a credit to the various Governments that have been in power? That is the class of settlement we want to see being embarked on today but on a larger scale.

I know the troubles the Minister faces with regard to land settlement. He has not sufficient land to form groups of fruit-growers, butter-producers and so on, near the coast. He has to go farther out into the outback, and there the land must be irrigated. An irrigation system there should be not on a small but on a large scale, I should like to see that sort of irrigation begun and an opportunity given to the men who have returned from the war of taking up good land. I take this opportunity of contradicting the statement that members of the Opposition want ex-Service men to go away out West. God bless my soul, every one of us has had some kiddies in the war and we want to see them getting the best. We on this side do not want to gain a political advantage by putting the blame on somebody. It is not fair and it is not British. I should like to see some of these station properties that are falling in being sub-divided much more speedily. At present the method adopted is

slow. I know that in the early days of the rehabilitation of our soldiers one read statements advising a "hasten slowly" policy and today the result is that nothing much is being done. If we can only give these men some idea of the lands that are suitable for closer settlement and will be subject to irrigation we shall be achieving something and at least be carrying out the promises made to these men in the years that have passed.

Reverting to pioneer timber-getters, I might mention that in the early days it was the practice to raft single logs down the Mary River 70 or 80 miles to Gympie and then another 70 or 80 miles to Maryborough.

The men who did that were responsible for keeping the country going and creating a certain amount of wealth. Ultimately they became the landowners of the Mary and Brisbane Valleys.

We have also heard much about ringbarking, which is the biggest curse of the country today. Although the ringbarked trees may not make good log timber they are good millable timber and could be used for many purposes. If Brisbane wants a telegraph pole today it has to be brought from Guralda, or from the Brisbane Valley, or from away up on the watershed of the Mary River. In Tewantin we are using electric light poles that are brought from Maryborough and we should be able to do something about it. In the past those grey ironbark posts have been used for milling purposes, and that is to be regretted. We could not prevent these things from happening in a new country like Queensland. In the early days money was scarce. If the Government wanted to borrow £1,000,000 for development work the people would cry out that taxation would be so heavy that they would not be able to live. Circumstances have changed today with our increased population and closer settlement. It is no use talking in the strain in which the Secretary for Public Works spoke about the men on the Atherton Tableland and their destruction of timber 40 years ago. The fact was that it had to be destroyed if these men were to survive. The timber was not destroyed wilfully, as larrikins would break up furniture in a hall. It was essential to take it out.

My opinion is that the South is getting too big a cut of Queensland's timber today. This can be proved by working out the percentage going south from the Atherton district and the amount of sawn pine being sent south. They are getting a bigger cut than Queensland.

Mr. Jones: They are almost all private timbers going south.

Mr. WALKER: A good deal of Government timber is going down there.

Mr. Jones: No.

Mr. WALKER: Yes.

Mr. Nicklin: The joinery is all made out of Government timber.

Mr. Farrell: We have to send them some of our pine in order to get back other materials for house-building.

Mr. WALKER: I honestly think they are getting a bigger cut than they should. I know that we are getting wheat from the South and I realise that there must be amicable trade relations between the States, but I think the balance is unfair at present.

I do not propose to refer to royalties because they are not so heavy and the Minister's explanation has satisfied me, but I do not want it thought that the pioneers made a lot of money in the early days from royalties. In those days they would get 6d. 100 sup. ft. for pine whereas the Government get from 18s. to 19s. now.

My honest belief is that we can be proud of the pioneering work done in our timber industry and land settlement, and that in normal times this State compares more than favourably in this respect with any other country in the world.

Mr. J. F. BARNES (Bundaberg) (4.20 p.m.): If you are an independent member you can look at things through independent glasses. I hear hon. members blaming one another for the mistakes of the past. Let us assume that each is right, that both sides have made mistakes in the past. The point is that you are all making mistakes now.

The Secretary for Public Works said that the Tory Government in 1929-32—three years out of the period from 1915 until today—have been doing this and doing that. He blamed Tory Governments for divers things. He never said that had his Government done the right thing from 1915 to 1929 a Tory Government could not have made this mistake, because he would have protected the people for whom he is today weeping buckets of blood. I don't give a tinker's damn who was to blame for what happened in the past. Thousands of acres of country in North Queensland were growing timbers fit for veneers that were cut to grow our common grass. That was a colossal mistake. I know that the roots of some of those trees 20 and 30 years ago were sold for £20 apiece. The fact remains that this happened, and it is no use sitting here and blaming one another for what has happened. We have to look at the future and that is where I come in. For the last six years I have been pointing to the future of Queensland. I am not interested in what mistakes the Moore Government made or what mistakes a Labour Government made. I am interested only in future production.

Quite a simple way of producing hardwood throughout Queensland would be to speak to various farmers who have hardwood country. They should have been encouraged to grow hardwoods. No, they were not encouraged, and today we are shockingly short of hardwood as we are with pine. Suppose a progressive Government 20 years ago had said, "We will give you a royalty of 5s., 10s. or £10 if it is a fair price to produce hardwood timber." If that had been done, we should have had plenty of hardwood in Queensland today. Governments did not do that 40 years ago, and today we have to look forward to doing it.

The Minister has boasted of what the Government have done in regard to irrigation. They have done a lot here and a lot there; they have put weirs in this creek and that creek. They have done this and that in the Lockyer district. They have done something in my district. But what is the use of it? It is like getting a garden hose and sprinkling it on the street. Now is the time to do things; let us take advantage of our mistakes in the past. There has been a suggestion from various quarters to spend £220,000,000 to unify the railways. I say it is necessary, but not until irrigation has been brought in and reforestation begun. In the last war the Government created about £800,000,000 of bank credit, and are charging this nation interest on it. Ask this Government to go to the Commonwealth Bank and get it to create national credit to the extent of £50,000,000 for reforestation and £100,000,000 for irrigation; they would not do it.

What is the use of locking or weiring the Lockyer and the Burnett and various other creeks? In the last six years we have verbally weired not only every river in Queensland but every creek. I said once that competition was becoming so hot that to be in the competition I had to include Splitter's Creek in the Bundaberg district, which is 6 inches deep and 18 inches wide. It is all verbal hooey. It has been going on for years. All we hear now is that they would like to do these things, but they have not got the money, and that is where the Government are at fault. The Government should approach the authorities to get the money. Suppose they locked the Burnett River at Mundubbera or Gayndah? The Gibsons have weired the Burnett at Bingera. What is the good of the Gibsons' doing that if somebody else starts at a higher level? They would all be taking water out of it, and there would be no water left for the Gibsons to use. If you put a weir at Mundubbera there would be no water in the river at dry times to come down to the Gibsons' weir and others should be put in.

Therefore we have to put in dams in all these parts and to do these things we need money, real money. At the present time we speak in terms of £10,000 or £5,000. We go to the Lockyer and we put in a weir costing £5,000 and we go to the Burnett and put in another weir at Bingera costing £10,000. But every time you put in a new weir you cut down the water supply and so you are forced to think in terms of dams, and when you think in terms of dams you think in terms of millions of pounds. I am not quite sure how old the Murray irrigation scheme is but I think it is 15 to 20 years to my knowledge. Before that scheme was established the land in the vicinity was not worth £1 an acre but today it is sold for the growing of citrus fruit at £500 an acre because some guy down there had sufficient foresight to put in proper irrigation. Remember that the Murray scheme depends upon a water source that extends from Stanthorpe in Queensland down to South Australia. We have not got that

quantity of water here but we must irrigate and the only way we can do it is to build mighty dams.

The only thing that stops us from building mighty dams is the lack of money. The Federal Government were able to find £800,000,000 of bank credit for war, so why not find that amount for peace purposes? The answer is that the Government have not got the courage to fight the banking system. That applies not only to irrigation schemes but to all sorts of public jobs in all walks of life. Where will that get us? We can never do anything in that way; we shall finish up in the ditch. We hear complaints about soil erosion, local soil erosion, which is nothing compared to what is happening in Central Australia. The great and mighty Bradfield suggested a scheme to cost £70,000,000 to eliminate soil erosion in Central Australia but again we have not got the money. It cost Great Britain and our Allies £70,000,000,000 for war. It is possible to find £70,000,000,000 for war but you cannot find £70,000,000 for irrigation, which amounts to only £10 per head of population. In the days of Julius Caesar it cost only 4s 6d. to kill a man in war but it cost £12,500 to kill a man during the last war. We could by spending £10 a man put in irrigation to eliminate soil erosion but the Government will not do it because they are spineless and will not face the fact, that fact being that the international bankers have an arrangement with these "Yes" men who are to be found on both sides of the Chamber.

It is true that hon. members opposite are in Government and the greater duty devolves upon them to fight the international bankers because they are the Government. Recent events have proved that what I am saying is correct. When the Moore Government were in power perhaps they did not understand what finance meant. The present Government do understand but they have not got the guts to fight for the rights of the people and today thousands of people are homeless because you have not got the material to house them. You have not got this material or that material to house them. Hon. members opposite have not got the spunk to stand up for their own platform, and their own platform includes the use of the Commonwealth Bank which was inaugurated by that grand old man, King O'Malley. The present situation cannot continue. You can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time but you cannot fool all the people all the time. The people will wake up to you.

Mr. Turner: They are awake to you now.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: You will know all about that later.

As a kid, I remember when the Mary Valley reforestation scheme was started. Half-matured timber was thinned out from the Mary Valley and it alone paid for the whole plot. I am not asking the Government to approach the Federal Government to make national credit available to

develop our forestry areas, but I am asking them to adopt a common-sense business point of view. We have not had enough sense to use available spaces for reforestation. Much land can still be used for that purpose. Lots of people are going in for it privately, but in the wrong way.

The greatest trouble confronting reforestation is fire. The only possible way to avert damage from fire is to fell all your timber, to clear the land properly and then grow scrub timber. If you grow a tree here and there amongst dead timber, fire will go through it and remove all the trees; the other way there is far less damage from fire. Many people today are going in for reforestation, but as they have not adopted the proper methods their work will be menaced by bush fires. Before the war Norwegian timber companies could land timber here for 10s. 100 superficial feet, as against our price of 50s. As the Norwegians could land timber here for 10s. 100 sup. ft. they were therefore five times better men than we were. That is a fact. The Norwegians know how. If you fell a tree in Norway you are forced to plant two in its place. Not so in this country.

Mr. Aikens: Three in its place.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: I am subject to correction there, as it is a long time since I read of it, but when it comes to finance I can always be accurate.

I told this Chamber six years ago a simple way to get hardwood timber. That was by encouraging the man who has forest land on which there is hardwood timber to break off the small limbs. As a result he would get a good log that perhaps would return him 3,500 superficial feet of timber, whereas if he allowed the tree to grow without pruning it he would get only 1,000 feet of timber from it. He would lose 2,500 feet of timber because he did not get some guy to go along and cut off the tiny branches. I have advocated that method for six years. Now that the timber position is known to members of Parliament, they will do what I suggested, I hope. I was ridiculed at the time, just as my suggestions on legislation in this House were at first ridiculed and then embraced in subsequent amending legislation. Perhaps I will bring those Bills in myself, as the Government have not the foresight to do so. I might have the foresight to take the Government over. If I take the Government over these things will happen.

Mr. Turner: Will you call it the Mandrake Government?

Mr. J. F. BARNES: No, you would call it a Common-sense Government.

The Government can see what is happening throughout the world. There is only one issue at stake, and that is the monetary issue. When we correct our monetary troubles our troubles concerning land values and timber will automatically correct themselves, as common sense will lead the way from then on. It has been suggested in this debate that our shortage of timber is due to the fact that much of it was used for war purposes. The main factor contributing to our present timber shortage was the lack of trucks and

man-power to get the timber. All mills without exception have since the war increased their staffs out of sight. Every hon. member probably approached the necessary authorities to have timber men released from the Army, who by the way were doing nothing. At the time the front pages of our newspapers were blazoning forth the statement that there was a timber shortage.

I approached the necessary authorities to get two men out of the army so that they could go to one of the sawmills. The owner of the sawmill had been at them for nine months to get the men released and had not succeeded. After three months, during which I proved that the war effort of those two men was to go from Southport up to Caloundra and back to Southport, they were released. That was their effort for five years; in other words, they were doing nothing. Finally I got them out of the Army. The point is that I should not be a glorified messenger. I should be here to pass common-sense legislation so that we may be better off, but I have to waste my valuable time convincing dills that those two guys should not be going from Caloundra to Southport for five years, but should be producing something. That was not accidental. Oh, no! It is not. As it is laid down in the Protocols, they will hamstring every type of industry; and of the land particularly they will say, "We will so put a burden on the man on the land that we will tax him out of existence and he will be willing to give his land to us." They have done everything possible to the man on the land. I travelled from Kalgoorlie to Perth with a big wheat-grower and he said to me, "The income tax will be 18s. 6d. in the £1, but we are at war and I decided I would be patriotic and grow 50,000 bushels."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will connect that matter with the vote before the Committee.

Mr. J. F. BARNES: I am going to do so. The result was that this man, instead of planting 50 acres or 500 acres, planted half his land. The following year he used half his land because the previous year after paying the 18s. 6d. in the £1 he could not get nails and tyres and petrol and boots and he could not get tobacco and a pot of beer when he went to town; so he used only half his land and on the last bag of wheat he produced he paid 18s. 6d. in the £1, and the Government lost all that production—25,000 bushels or whatever it was. The Government lost half the production from that land because of the income tax. Exactly the same thing applies in all lines. Say I am a sawmiller and I cut 10,000,000 feet of timber a year and in doing that I pay up to 18s. 6d. on the second 5,000,000 feet. The result is that I cannot get nails and tyres and the wife cannot buy any materials for clothes and she cannot buy rice and we both get dissatisfied and we stop producing once we get up to 5,000,000 feet; and the country has lost 5,000,000 feet of timber. We have lost production because of income tax, which is designed to sabotage production.

That applies in every type of production. What are we going to do about it? We are going to do exactly the same as they did in Europe. Those men said in Yugoslavia, in Austria, in Rumania, in Esthonia, and in Latvia, "It can't happen here; it can't happen here." We said the same thing. It is going to happen here because we have not got the guts to fight the real issue. We have not got the guts to produce the money and produce the goods and stop our people from starving. I told hon. members six years ago about the world famine that would come and they laughed at me. At that time millions of bushels went into the sea and people thought therefore it was impossible for my prophecy to be correct. They dropped it back into the sea because everybody had to be so sabotaged that the world had to be full of hungry bellies in order to bring about the design of the master race—to bring about Communism. And we in this Chamber repeatedly stand here and defend our side and members opposite stand up and bring an argument to knock this side down, but none of them attack the real facts. None of them have the spunk to attack the real facts. The real facts are that production has gone.

The problem must be attacked properly and it is not attacking it properly to put in a weir here, another one farther up the watercourse, and lock this watercourse and the other one so that there is no water below. To do it properly will require the spending of millions of pounds of money, which the people cannot afford to pay for, and consequently this Government are forced to approach the Federal authorities to issue the necessary Commonwealth national credit—not bank credit—interest-free. At least the work should be subsidised up to 50 per cent. of the cost. Unless these things are done this country will cease to be yours, Mr. Mann, it will cease to be the Labour Party's, the Country Party's, the Queensland People's Party's, or the Frank Barnes Labour Party's—it will be Communist country. That is what is occurring.

Mr. DEVRIES (Gregory) (4.41 p.m.): Reading the report of the Land Administration Board, I was somewhat impressed with the acknowledgment paid to a public servant who for the last 47 years gave service to this great State of Queensland. I refer to that very estimable officer, Mr. Melville. As I have previously said, a Government, irrespective of their political colour, are dependent on the capabilities of their administrative officers. On them rests the success of any Government. This splendid officer has now laid down his pen and is enjoying peace and tranquillity. Whatever criticism may be levelled against administrative officers, I think every member in this Parliament will agree that Mr. Melville did much to increase the wealth of this State. It is frequently said that the wealth of a nation comes from the soil. Queensland has an area of approximately 500,000,000 acres, 90 per cent. of which is vested in the Government, the other 10 per cent. being held as freehold or controlled by private indivi-

duals. Observing the service measured by this public servant, I think we shall all agree that we must pay homage to Mr. Melville wherever he may be. I wish him every happiness in his remaining years on this planet.

Succeeding Mr. Melville we have Mr. McLean. I have known him by repute for many years and know of the services that he has rendered to the pastoral industry and producers generally throughout the State and I feel that his term of office will be just as valuable to the State as that of Mr. Melville.

For the last few days argument has centred on irrigation and water supply. Today I listened to the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern. He said that whatever may have been the faults of the past—and I suppose we are all due for some criticism—the fact remains that we must look to the future.

We all agree that country without water is of no value whatsoever, but when we speak of irrigation and water supply we must consider whether the schemes proposed can be established economically. I agree with all that hon. members opposite have said about irrigation in the fertile coast belts, and I believe also that the bulk of the money to be expended should be spent in the areas that have the greatest productive capacity. No-one would be foolish enough to suggest expending it on the Bradfield scheme. Dr. Bradfield was one of the greatest engineers this country has produced, but what is called the Bradfield scheme was only a suggestion. No-one would suggest that the Bradfield scheme could be introduced in the pastoral areas of Queensland.

In those pastoral areas the water supply is derived from artesian bores—and I am only sorry that the greater part of the information about them contained in this report cannot fill the pages of "Hansard" in preference to the tripe and piffle uttered by the hon. member for Bundaberg this afternoon, because it is of extreme value to both grazier and producer—and the artesian basin of Australia covers 550,000 square miles, of which 350,000 square miles are in Queensland. For years now the pastoral industry has been suffering from water difficulties. It is a gigantic matter for the man on the land to be thrown entirely on his own financial resources for the provision of water. When we realise that to bore for artesian or sub-artesian water costs anything from £2 to £2 10s. a foot and that the average depth of the artesian waters is about 1,200 feet, we appreciate the fact that the man who is thrown on his own resources to provide water must undertake tremendous financial liability. Our best watering facilities in the pastoral industry are derived from artesian and sub-artesian bores, and I notice that the report says—

"Were the water distributing by piping the total flow required would be very much reduced and diminution of pressure and consequently flow would also be very much reduced. However, except in a few localities the cost of pipe-lines would be out of proportion to the earning capacity of the land."

At 4.50 p.m.,

Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. DEVRIES: That water is distributed over the greater part of the pastoral areas by means of bore drains. I have had it on very good authority that a sheep requires at least one gallon of water a day, and cattle 10 gallons a head a day. Ninety per cent. of the water distributed in bore drains is lost by evaporation or soakage. In other words, only 10 per cent. of the water is available for stock. When we speak of irrigation I realise that we in the outback parts of Queensland cannot expect to have irrigation projects of the kind mentioned as suitable to the fertile coast belt. It would be uneconomical to irrigate grass land for the pasturing of sheep. Supposing a man had a flock of 8,000 sheep on 40,000 acres of land, who would suggest that he could irrigate that land for the growing of wool? You, Mr. Macdonald, know as well as I do that in those areas where the rainfall is low there is only one security against drought and adversity and it is large areas. We know that many years ago the Government introduced a policy of closer settlement. Unfortunately that Government, with all their good intentions, brought about disaster in the pastoral industry the like of which I hope I shall never live to see again. We have made mistakes in the past and I venture to say we shall make mistakes in the future, but experience should teach us not to make the same mistakes a second time.

Men on small areas who did not have capital to obtain the water necessary to make a success of their venture united to put down trust bores. This report of the department deals with that question and my experience of the pastoral industry over many years is that men depending on trust bores for their water would quarrel among themselves. One would say that another was getting more water than he, and as a consequence these trust bores dropped out of the picture and today only a few exist.

I am pleased that the Government have made every effort to increase the living areas of men who do not possess living areas. The Government have made a considerable area of country available for this purpose. In other words, the Government have apportioned land that fell due to the Crown as additional areas of existing settlers.

Speaking generally, the average selector enjoys a greater measure of security today than ever before but in the far-western part of Queensland several big holdings were cut up and the apportionment of the additional areas was carried out in a somewhat peculiar way. I say this kindly, and without trying to pass any strictures on the authority responsible for surveying the country, but I have seen portions allotted to selectors although they carried no water at all—they were always fenced off from the river frontages. That seems a rather remarkable thing. I recall one case in which 40,000 acres had been granted and there was no

water on it at all. Even though the holder was anxious to provide his own water, obstacles were placed in the way of his sinking an artesian well because of the diminution in the artesian flow.

The authorities very rightly say that they must have regard to the total quantity of water in the artesian basin. Today there are over 2,000 artesian bores providing water in pastoral areas. Some of them, as you well know, Mr. Macdonald, throw off about 2,000,000 gallons every 24 hours. I have in mind one bore in particular, that at Bedourie, perhaps one of the greatest flowing bores to be found anywhere in the world. It throws off 2,000,000 gallons every 24 hours, and believe me, most of it is flowing away into the Mulligan Desert while people in other parts of the State famish because of the lack of water. This water, as I say, flows into the Mulligan Desert, perhaps to help to keep the dingoes alive.

I agree that there should be regulations governing the use of artesian waters, but I think also that they are too severe upon the ordinary selector. It is true that a selector may be given the right to sink an artesian bore, but he is put on what is termed a restricted flow, and that restricted flow is carefully considered before it is given to him. When we have regard to the atmospheric conditions in the torrid West, where bore water has to flow through bore drains for seven, eight, nine and 10 miles, where there is heavy seepage and extremely high evaporation, it can be well understood that 90 per cent. of the water going through the bore drains is lost and that only 10 per cent. of it reaches the stock. The report of the Land Administration Board is a glorious one, one that should be read by everybody, and it points out that the only way to avoid this loss and conserve the water is to reticulate it over the properties in pipe-lines. We know that that was impossible during the years of war, and I venture to say that it will be impossible for the average selector, even in the years to come, to incur the expenditure that that would require. But after all, these lands are the property of the people, and if we are to have a happy and contented people on the land, what is there wrong in the Government's making the water available in this way? Why should the selector, when he first goes on his land, have to go cap in hand to some financial institution for the money, say £3,000 or £4,000, and start off with a millstone of debt round his neck?

The Minister might consider providing these watering facilities, the cost to be spread over a number of years, even if it means an increase in the selector's rental. If we are going to ask the man on the land to produce, we should make it possible for him to do so. We should not expect him to place himself heavily in debt to get his property in a wealth-producing position, in other words, in working order.

In the means of providing water to the inland areas a very good field of investigation awaits our investigational officers. Water can be conserved by means of earth tanks, for instance. The very heavy

mechanical appliances used during the war years, such as bulldozers, can be employed in making them. Much of our artesian water is running to waste on many western properties while a next-door neighbour may be perishing for water. I have placed certain cases before the Minister but because of difficulties those persons have not yet received water despite the fact that it is flowing to waste on the other side of the fence. It is running through drains into watercourses and is subject to both evaporation and seepage.

I desire to pay a compliment to the Artesian Investigation Committee. No matter where I travelled in the far-western parts of Queensland the names of Mr. Parkinson and Mr. Ogilvie appeared to be household words. When I was in Birdsville recently I was surprised to know that these two officers, particularly Mr. Ogilvie, were so well known. According to the annual report of the department, Mr. Ogilvie had up to the time of its compilation travelled no less than 7,000 miles in Western Queensland. We owe much to these officers. Much has been spoken of water and irrigation facilities. Therein lies the future success of Queensland. I know that hon. members opposite are all prone to criticise, but the hon. member for Fassifern wisely said that although he criticised he could not offer a suggestion and he did not expect the departmental officers to make suggestions, because that was a matter of Government policy. I entirely agree with him. The main concern of the Government should be to provide water to those areas, which produce a vast volume of national wealth. In the western areas the main production is wool. When we see that that area produces at least £12,000,000 a year of real wealth then the supplying of water—and not only supplying it but supplying it cheaply—to those areas in such a way that the average man on the land will not have such a burden of debt as to discourage him in time of adversity is a matter for the Government. We will never escape adversity but we can insure ourselves against it and the only insurance we can get is water, "tons of water."

Mr. HAYES (Nundah) (5.5 p.m.): These Estimates are particularly important. We have heard much criticism, both from hon. members opposite and in the Press, on several important subjects that come under them. The sub-department that holds chief interest for me is that which deals with forestry. I am pleased to learn from the Estimates that there has been an increase in staff from 157 to 200. In the Sub-Department of Forestry and in the district offices there has been an increase in staff of 21. That is a step in the right direction and it is an indication that when it is possible for the department to get the labour to push forward with timber production, from the logging to the milling, it will be done. At one period during the war years the number of departmental officers who were in the various forces were approximately 40 per cent. of the total strength of the department; and I am quite sure that in the Sub-Department of Forestry, many of the

employees of which attend to the nurseries, the planting of seedlings, the building of fire-breaks and work associated with silviculture, we shall find that the percentage was higher. I sympathise with the Minister and Mr. Grenning in the disabilities they suffered owing to the lack of staff during the war years.

The late Percy Pease stated on one occasion that bunya and hoop pine was being used in Queensland at the rate of 100,000,000 feet a year, and I think it was about 1938 when he stated that our pine would last only about 12 years. According to our latest report it would appear that our millable softwoods will be cut out in about six years. There is no need to offer any apology for the lack of reforestation during the war. The report sets out the position. The Sub-Department of Forestry employ about 1,800-odd at the present time. To carry out the Government's programme of reforestation I am sure that if it could get double that number of men they would be employed.

At 5.10 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. HAYES: During the debate on the Financial Statement members of the Opposition attacked the Government on sawmill licences, and the basis of the argument appeared to be that if more licences were granted it would mean greater production of sawn timber. I would point out that that would in no way create greater production, and I am in the position of being able to supply the Committee with figures. The present mills are not cutting to the full licence capacity. The figures for 1945 are: the licensed capacity per annum, based on 250 days' cutting, 642,000,000 super feet; actual cutting 282,000,000 super feet. It will thus be seen that licensing is not a limiting factor. There are other reasons, and they might be specified as shortage of man-power, plant and log supplies. Man-power shortage has been mentioned very frequently. Shortage of plant is still experienced. There is very great difficulty in obtaining sawmilling plant, saws and axes. Since the end of the war loggers and other workers engaged in the industry have been able to obtain surplus war material and machinery such as trucks, but it is hoped that in the near future, as all fighting services are disbanded, there will be sufficient man-power to meet the needs of reforestation and other operations of this Sub-Department.

Since March last 67 applications for sawmill licences have been approved, 38 for general timbers, and 29 for case timbers. These represent an additional capacity of over 120,000 super feet of logs per day. Before leaving the licensing of sawmills I would point out that the Act was introduced in 1936. At that time it was not a matter of looking for further production of sawn timber, but, if members will recall it, many people were operating mills that were very uneconomic. At that time, in the depression years, the licensing of sawmills was under-

taken in the interests of the millers themselves and their financial stability, and that full employment might be given to the people instead of the Government's having to give hand-outs.

Another matter raised during the debate on the Financial Statement was the export of pine to other States. I think it was the hon. member for Sandgate who complained that figures were not being supplied relating to the export of pine to the other States and the reciprocal trade therefrom. The report tells us that the cuts of hoop, bunya, and kauri pine were 140,000,000 superficial feet. In pre-war years Queensland was the only State producing an exportable surplus of softwoods, and this was an important feature of the State's economy. In 1938-39 the exports of sawn hoop and bunya pine interstate amounted to 181,000,000 superficial feet and plywood of the same species, amounting to about 36,000,000 square feet of three-sixteenth-inch thickness, was also sent interstate. It is a known fact, however, that the cut of hoop and bunya pine throughout the State has decreased appreciably, and with the decreased cut smaller quantities were available for export. As against 36,000,000 square feet of three-sixteenth-inch three-ply exported South in 1938-39, only about 27,000,000 square feet was exported in 1945-46. Although figures are not available for pine timber cut in 1945-46, about 5,700,000 superficial feet was exported as against 18,000,000 superficial feet in 1938-39.

Mr. Maher: What is all the stonewalling for?

Mr. HAYES: The reason for the decreased cut is obvious. Log supplies are becoming scarcer and harder to get out. Private supplies have virtually vanished and Crown forests have had to take a terrific hammering. We make no apology for any timber shortages. It has to be admitted that there was no shortage of timber for essential building purposes, and if any apology should be offered it should be coming from the hon. member for West Moreton, and others who were members of that notorious Government who could not appreciate the wisdom of reforestation. During the whole of the time when the political party to which the hon. member belongs were in power, nothing was done to safeguard our forests. If he wants more figures I can give statistics relating to finance and silviculture for the period from 1904 to 1943. If he would listen for a while he might learn something. If his mouth remains open his ears will not catch what I am about to give him.

Let us take the period 1904-08, and we find that the gross revenue was £87,793 and the expenditure £6,561, the area planted (acres) nil, the area treated for natural regeneration (acres) nil. Coming to the next four-yearly period, we find that the gross revenue was £255,105, the expenditure £20,709, area planted (acres) nil, area treated for natural regeneration (acres) nil. Going a step further and coming to the period 1914-1919, we

find that the gross revenue was £381,178, expenditure £72,915, and not an acre planted or an acre treated for natural regeneration.

Mr. Maher: This is waste of time.

Mr. HAYES: It is waste of time for the hon. member to listen because I am telling him something of the way in which the natural resources of this State were treated. The minds of hon. members opposite date back to Julius Caesar—prehistoric.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to return to the matter before the Committee.

Mr. HAYES: The figures I have quoted show lack of initiative, vision and foresight, but I now come to the period when Labour was elected to Government. From 1 July, 1919 to 31 December, 1924—a 5½-year-period—what a vast change has come over the scene! The gross revenue for that period was £1,474,218, the expenditure £930,137; 662 acres were planted and 11,736 acres were treated for natural regeneration. Compare that area with the nil acreages since 1904. Furthermore, from 1 January, 1925, to 30 June, 1929—a 4½-year period—revenue rose to £2,100,443, expenditure £1,318,666; 3,454 acres were planted and 40,613 acres treated for natural regeneration.

And so the figures go on until we come to the period 1939-1940—1943-1944, and we find that the gross revenue was £4,825,802, expenditure £4,034,193; 10,733 acres were planted and 204,333 acres treated for natural regeneration.

That is a job of work and is an answer to the interruption coming from the hon. member for Fassifern. Those figures point to progress. Labour Governments have looked ahead. It has been stated again and again that Labour's legislative enactments have been a beacon light not only to the other States but to the civilised world. Vision and foresight have been practised by Labour from 1915 to the present time. We have not dawdled with the work of reforestation and I want to see it progress still more.

We have every reason to feel proud of the officers guiding the destinies of this sub-department. The Director of Forests and his staff—the silviculturists and all the foresters—throughout the length and breadth of the State are due for much credit indeed for their splendid work and I am certain that the other States of Australia would like to be able to boast of the measure of progress that has taken place in Queensland. I congratulate the Minister on the grand job he is doing and I am sure that he is satisfied that with his capable staff everything augurs well for the future of the State.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (5.26 p.m.): This vote covers some very important aspects of public life and Government administration and none perhaps is as important as the provision of land for various undertakings and industries, and in order that new industries may be established. I was very pleased to hear to-day the Leader

of the Queensland People's Party, the hon. member for Windsor, following faithfully in my footsteps in advocating the establishment of the cotton industry in Queensland. Naturally, the hon. member for Windsor is interested in the establishment of the cotton industry only in the southern part of the State and I have no doubt that his interest in having it established there is actuated by a desire to profit financially from its establishment.

It is an obvious fact that if we are to make this State what it should be in the industrial set-up of the Commonwealth we must set aside certain lands that at present are not profitably employed in order to make them available to people who are prepared to establish other industries on them, industries that will be profitable not only to the citizens of the State but to the State as well. The development of the cotton industry and the setting aside of certain land in Queensland so as to allow the development of that industry are of paramount importance because many of the great cotton-producing countries of the world have already reached saturation point in that type of production.

I said in my speech on the Financial Statement that Egypt produced the finest cotton staple in the world and that that country could produce no more cotton than it does today. All the cotton produced in Egypt is produced on the Nile delta. The area of the Nile delta is strictly limited and if any other land is to be made available for cotton production in Egypt it can be made available only at the expense of the food production of that country. So much of that country is required to be put under food crops and no more of it can be spared to increase the cotton crop.

Exactly the same position obtains in Japan, not only in respect of cotton—because Japan is a very small producer of cotton—but in respect of basic food crops and other crops. Japan also must avail herself at least of most of the available land for production of food crops in order to feed her own people. Consequently Japan, which prior to the war was a great industrial competitor with this and other countries throughout the world, is not able to set aside any additional land in order to produce cotton or any other basic crop. As a matter of fact, as I pointed out in one of my previous speeches, Japan cannot find enough land to produce her basic food crops. Consequently she is endeavouring to establish secondary industries again so that she can become a secondary-industry country manufacturing goods from our raw materials and shipping them back to us in a manufactured state, and buying from us basic foods to feed her own people. I hope that state of affairs will never come about. I sincerely hope that Japan will never become a highly industrialised country and will never be able to compete on the markets of the world with her secondary products, particularly with this country and with those countries that were allied with us during the war. I repeat again that it will not cause

me the loss of one tear if every Japanese died of starvation within a year. It would at least cleanse the country.

India is in exactly the same position as Egypt and Japan. So teeming is the population of India, and so concentrated is her population in a small area, that she needs every available square inch of ground to produce her basic foods. Only recently in Calcutta thousands of people died because they could not produce the necessary food in their own country, and they could not buy it from other countries.

The position of many countries in Europe is entirely similar to the conditions that exist in Egypt, Japan, and India. Already they must set aside from their arable lands sufficient to produce food and the vital necessities of life for their people. Consequently, in those four great countries and continents—Egypt, Japan, India, and Europe—first consideration must be given to apportioning as much land as possible to produce basic food crops. There are also the people in the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines.

Mr. Dunstan: They are mostly cheap-labour countries.

Mr. AIKENS: Although some of them undoubtedly are cheap-labour countries, all of them are not. I am not going to develop that particular line of argument. I am dealing only with the land itself, not with the economic forces that control its exploitation or development. But in certain countries and States of Europe we find that the people value the land to such an extent that they contend that every pound of soil wasted, every pound of soil that is blown away by the wind, and every pound of soil washed away by rain is a pound of soil lost to the State. It is contended that the loss of that soil amounts almost to a criminal offence. So while we have in this country millions of acres of arable fertile land going to waste we find that in other countries of the world land on the hillsides is terraced and worked. In France they grow the finest crops of grapes to produce the finest wines. In order to do so they carry the soil from the bottom of the ridges or hillsides up their slopes and make terraces round the hillsides. That soil is carried laboriously by hand.

Mr. Luckins: They are glad to get it.

Mr. AIKENS: As an hon. member intelligently interjects, they are particularly glad to get it. People who come to Australia from countries where land is valuable are amazed at our lack of appreciation of the natural wealth we possess in this country in the form of vast areas of arable and fertile land.

So I believe that a great future dawns for this country, not only in the production of primary products but in the production of secondary products, but as secondary industries do not come within the ambit of this vote I intend to confine my remarks to primary production. I do not intend to exhaust the full time allowed me unless it is impossible to do otherwise.

I contend that we should devote all our energies and time and endeavours to setting aside as much land as we possibly can for profitable production. And I do not think that in setting aside huge areas of land throughout the State for the purpose of raising cattle, sheep and pigs is, in every instance, profitable production. I know, for instance, that on the Lower Burdekin and along the banks of the Burdekin there are hundreds and thousands of fertile acres which have been used for the last 60 or 70 years simply for pastoral purposes—the running of one or two cows to the square mile or half a dozen pigs to the square mile—whereas that land could be profitably brought into production for the growing of mixed basic food crops that could be profitably used for the purpose of establishing new primary industries in this State and particularly in the northern part of it. Already I have had occasion to make representations to the Minister in respect of certain lands held by the Cunningham family in Woodhouse Station. The Cunninghams have played their part perhaps in the development of North Queensland by the establishment and maintenance of various pastoral properties; but the time has come—as a matter of fact, it has come and gone—when we must no longer consider the individual. The State and the needs of the State and the development of the State must come first.

Mr. Maher: Did not the late Mr. Cunningham make available one of his properties in trust for the benefit of returned soldiers?

Mr. AIKENS: I want to say to the hon. member for West Moreton that anything I say here with regard to cutting up the pastoral properties has no personal significance or personal application. I know the late Mr. Cunningham to have been a man of sterling worth.

Mr. Maher: Hear, hear!

Mr. AIKENS: I know he was a citizen of which North Queensland was justifiably proud.

Mr. Maher: Hear, hear!

Mr. AIKENS: I know he did at great expense and trouble to himself establish the Scartwater Station in North Queensland in order to rehabilitate returned soldiers from the last war. I know that station has been a tremendous success; the money it brings into the returned soldiers' organisation in North Queensland has been of inestimable value to the returned soldiers. His action in doing that was highly commendable, and in doing it he set a standard that might well have been followed by many other prominent men throughout the State and Commonwealth. I have the highest respect for the late Mr. Cunningham and for every member of the Cunningham family. He was one of nature's gentlemen, and every citizen in the North deeply regretted his passing.

I mention those things to make my attitude towards not only the late Mr. Cunningham but to all the big squatters abundantly clear. I have no personal animus

against any of them. They went into the northern lands when the northern lands were vacant. There was no possible chance of their establishing mixed farms on their properties; there was no possible chance of their planting basic crops such as cotton, or soy bean, or tomatoes, or potatoes, or pumpkins, or what you will. Consequently when the land was made available to them they did the best they could and used it to establish the pastoral industry; and they made a remarkable success of it.

But it must be remembered that the land is the heritage of the people. It does not belong in perpetuity to the Cunninghams or any other big pastoral holders wherever they may have holdings in this State. That land is the heritage of the people of Queensland and it should be used in the interests of the people of Queensland. While we pay a tribute to the Cunninghams and the Macintyres and the people who went out to the back country and fought drought and fire and flood and pestilence while they established their big runs there, and while they added to the wealth and prosperity of this country, I say again that we have reached the stage when, in the interests of the people as a whole, we must realise that their part has been played.

A new era must dawn for North Queensland in particular and Queensland in general. If it is necessary, in resuming their land, to give them some compensation then I say quite fairly and unequivocally that these men are entitled to just compensation for the lifetime of work they have put into their land.

But it is economic suicide for this country to continue on the lines that it is following at present and allow great areas of its most fertile land to be tied up in pastoral pursuits. That land must be taken from the graziers and, if necessary, graziers must be given compensation for it. That land must be made available to the small farmer and the working farmer who will bring it into profitable production in the growing of basic food and other crops in order to add not only to the wealth of the individual but to the general wealth and prosperity of the State as a whole. We are in this Parliament not to consider individuals but the interests of the State, therefore I have made representation without any compunction whatever to the Secretary for Public Lands to excise from Strathmore, which borders the Burdekin, certain large areas of land now used wholly for pastoral pursuits in order to have them thrown open to experienced farmers who are willing to use the land in the growing of basic food and other crops, and for mixed farming in general.

Mr. Maher: How far are they removed from the railroad?

Mr. AIKENS: It will never be so far from the rail that the farmers themselves, who know every aspect of their own job, make a mistake when they assure me that they can economically work their farms, generally speaking, whatever distance it might be from the railroad. It may not be any distance as distances go in these days

of modern transport. In the olden days, if one was 25 miles from the railway line, that meant it would take a day or a day and a-half in a dray, wagon, or buckboard to get there, but in these days of fast motor transport and probably in the very near future of aerial transport, 25 miles is, to use a colloquialism, merely a hop, step, and a jump.

Though I may fall foul of the opinions of some people, I press for the lands of this State to be used to the best benefit that they can bring to the State as a whole. The interests of the individual must be submerged in the interests of this State. That may sound like anarchism, nihilism, Bolshevism, nudism, or some other 'ism to the hon. member for West Moreton, nevertheless it is my theory and, like St. Peter, on that rock I stand. I exhort the Secretary for Public Lands and the members of the Government to give consideration to making available more and still more areas of pastoral land so that they can be brought into full primary production.

I mentioned earlier that some of the lands in the Burdekin area are held by farmers now, but these farmers are unable to exploit all these lands profitably, first of all because only part of the land carries sugar assignments. The farmer has been tied down to the mill to such an extent that he has not been able to raise the necessary finance on his full crop of sugar to bring his other land into profitable production in other products. In some instances it has been done but I believe that if markets can be established and the farmers can be assured of a fair price for their products and if they can be removed from the grip of the big fertiliser and machinery combines and if some form of State socialism or, if I may be allowed to coin a word, of State co-operativism, can be introduced I believe thousands of acres of land now held on the Lower Burdekin by small farmers will also be brought into profitable production.

With the hon. member for Mackay, I regret that the decision of the commission appointed by the Government to inquire into the establishment of returned soldiers on sugar lands did not go further and make more provision for their establishment on those lands. Nevertheless, I feel that within the limits of its terms of reference it did a particularly good job. I am pleased also that the members of the commission did not commit what to me would have been the folly of deciding to open up new lands and establish a new mill. I know I could have got odds of anything up to 5 to 1 that a new sugar-mill was going to be established and virgin land was going to be thrown open in the Herbert area in order to establish a new mill and a brand-new sugar centre. But as I said in this Chamber some years ago, there are sufficient lands in the vicinity of established mills not producing sugar at the present time that could, by increases of assignment, be brought into production and double the supply to existing mills without imposing very great strain on those mills.

With the humility that is characteristic of me, I did not claim at that time, and I do not claim now, to be an expert in sugar production, so that before I expressed my views on the expansion of the sugar industry—and I made the same suggestions as the commission subsequently adopted—I made certain that first of all I went into my electorate and had conversations with the various farmers and their organisations. I found that in the Lower Burdekin area the farmers to a man and their organisations were of one mind with me, that before new areas were thrown open and a new mill established every endeavour should be made to utilise every acre round present mills that was not producing to the maximum extent. I am particularly pleased to see that that argument was the basis of the report adopted by the commission and submitted to the Government.

My only regret is that the commission did not see fit to expand the sugar industry still further and make provision for the absorption of more returned soldiers in those areas where it is established already. I know there was some disappointment at what was thought to be the small number of returned soldiers allocated to the Lower Burdekin and the Invieta mill area, but the farmers there realise that within its terms of reference the commission was as fair as it was able to be; they think that having regard to all the other factors and to the number of returned soldiers who were to be established in other sugar areas throughout the State they got as fair a go, on the whole, as other areas. They did not get as fair a go as they expected in their own area, but compared with other areas they think they got a reasonably square go.

I wish to deal particularly now with flood prevention, irrigation and the erosion of river banks, because all these things are tied together. Again I want to sound the clarion call for the North, again I want to stand here as what the hon. member for West Moreton once described me as privately—the Northern Thunderer.

Mr. Maher: The Northern Thunderbolt.

Mr. AIKENS: That is better still.

I want to stress the discrimination practised by this Government in dealing with northern problems. In my speech on the Address in Reply I said that if one-thousandth of the damage that had been done on the banks of the Ross, Burdekin and Don Rivers in the floods last March had been done on the banks of the beloved Brisbane River the whole of the financial and engineering resources of the State would have been regimented in order to solve the resultant problems. Because that extensive flooding and erosion occurred on the banks of northern rivers, all that the Government did was send up two engineers to inspect and make a report.

I do not in any way pass judgment upon the engineers and I do not want anybody to construe my remarks as being derogatory of them. I have no doubt they will do the best they are able to do and in due course submit a report to the Government in connection

with the erosion and flooding of these northern rivers, a report that will be pigeon-holed as promptly as every other report in connection with the North has been pigeon-holed by this or any previous Government. Those are hard words and consequently I feel that the Government are justified by their silence—and mark the almost unearthly silence of Government members when I laid that charge—in asking me to substantiate the charge. I intend to do so and I will quote from page 870 of "Hansard" for 1944-45 when I asked the Treasurer the following question—

"In view of the fact that the construction of the Somerset Dam was undertaken partly as a source of water supply for the city of Brisbane, what proportion of the expenditure to date has been borne by the Brisbane City Council?"

The Hon. E. M. Hanlon replied—

"The expenditure by the State on the Somerset Dam to 31 December, 1942, was £1,640,000, and this amount has been apportioned as follows:—State, £656,000 . . ."

Mark that—£656,000 spent by the State of Queensland on one dam for a trickle of mud called the Brisbane River.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HEALY (Warwick) (5.52 p.m.): I do not desire to delay unduly the passage of this important vote but I think the Minister and his officers must feel gratified at the tenor of the speeches delivered on it. Most of them have been commendatory but in one or two instances hon. members opposite have made allegations of shortcomings on the part of the department during the last 12 months. Instead of searching through the report presented to Parliament for a reason for some of these alleged shortcomings—I do not admit them—they gave vent to their criticism in this Chamber.

One of the most striking sentences in the report reads—

"At one period the number of departmental officers with the forces represented approximately 40 per cent. of the total strength"

Therefore, at one period of the war every 60 men in the department were attempting to carry out duties previously undertaken by 100. I think, having that in mind, one must admit that the department and sub-departments have done an excellent job indeed.

Some criticism has been offered by hon. members opposite of the delay in the settlement of soldiers on the land and it has been said that this delay has brought about a reduction in production. If there is anything in the argument that delay has caused reduced primary production, then obviously if the Government had gone into soldier settlement two or three years earlier there would have been a considerable decrease in production. Can any hon. member honestly say this would have happened? He cannot. There is therefore obviously nothing in the argument that the delay caused reduction in production.

I am of course not admitting there has been any reduction in primary production because of the freezing of land for soldier settlement.

There is this important reason for any delay that has occurred—that no-one could tell that the war would end as early as it did. In addition, a great deal of preliminary work had to be undertaken to determine the suitability of the land for returned soldier settlement. During the debate hon. members have referred to the mistakes that were made in soldier settlement following World War No. 1 and no hon. member in the Government party and I should say no hon. member on the other side of the Chamber wishes to see those mistakes repeated on this occasion.

Another part of the report that makes an immense appeal to me and should make an appeal to every hon. member is that which points out what has been done for Crown tenants who enlisted in the different services. Some people are only too ready to criticise the Government's treatment of returned soldiers but the report furnishes tangible evidence of the generous treatment meted out to Crown tenants who were members of the armed forces by one public department at least, the Department of Public Lands, and I have no doubt that when the other Estimates come up for consideration later in the day we shall be able to show that other public departments have extended a similar measure of generous treatment to returned soldiers.

The report says—

“The total number of Crown tenants who have been recorded as eligible for concessions to date is 1,775.”

The report goes on to say that the total amount granted to these tenants by way of remissions and concessions, that is, to those Crown tenants who have served in the fighting services, amounts to £76,678. There we have some evidence of Labour's attitude towards the returned soldier.

Many speakers have referred to the subject of soil erosion and while I do not propose to go over that ground again I want to suggest that a liaison should be established between the Department of Public Lands and the Department of Public Instruction so that the people may be educated on the subject of soil erosion and the damage that it causes. In our country schools we have project clubs, and education on the subject of soil erosion should be in the forefront of tuition in these clubs. I earnestly commend the suggestion to both the Secretary for Public Lands and the Secretary for Public Instruction.

I suppose that before I was born surveys were made of the Condamine River and various sites were determined as being suitable for the erection of weirs but over the last 40 to 50 years nothing has been done, at least in the Warwick electorate, although during the last few days I received information to the effect that a weir site had been selected on the Condamine River near Cecil Plains and that the work was about to begin. I suggest to the officers of the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply that it is desirable to construct weirs on the Condamine

River from its head down to Pratten and Leyburn, where some of the finest lucerne-growing flats to be found in the Commonwealth could be served with water and successful growing of lucerne could be ensured by the construction of weirs on sites determined as suitable by the sub-department.

Mr. TURNER (Kelvin Grove) (7.15 p.m.): I wish to associate myself with the congratulations that have been tendered the Minister and officers of this department for the fine work they have done and are doing in the interests of the State. As I am more concerned with the subject of water conservation than irrigation, I feel that the experience I had during the last few months has more than justified that opinion. In July last I was privileged to go out as far as Normanton. Throughout that long trip, particularly between Forsayth and Normanton, we passed through some of the finest country in the State. The soil along the Gilbert River is up to 17 feet in depth. The only difficulty that the people there have is the lack of water. The Gilbert River is quite a wide one, having plenty of depth, but strange to say not a spot of water was found anywhere in it. I observed throughout the journey that there were plenty of holes, seemingly sunk in the river bed. On making inquiries, the coach-driver assured me that they had been made by animals in their search for water, particularly kangaroos, which are there in abundance. The animals scratch in the gravel in the bed of the river until the water percolates through. At one homestead we visited, a station called Prestwood, the driver took us down to the river after lunch. To my amazement I saw where the homestead secured its water supply. A hole was sunk to a depth of 8 feet below the bed of the river, and in this a tank was placed. A pipe with a sieve at one end was then placed in the tank which was covered up. By this method, the homestead got all the water it required.

That area, as well as the whole of the far-northern portion of Queensland, is suffering from the effects of the drought, no rain having fallen since March last, when there was an abundance of it. The country was very dry. I noted with pleasure the care the people exercised in preserving the dry grass. We passed through miles and miles of dry grass, some of it three feet high, but as dry as a bone. When anyone struck a match to light his pipe or cigarette, care was shown not only in blowing out the match but in putting it back into the pocket. No-one threw even a dead match out of the car. By this means every care was taken to see that the country with all this dry grass was not ravaged by bush fires. Had a lighted match been thrown into the grass, hundreds of miles of country would have been burnt out, and there would have been no feed for the cattle to subsist on. That emphasised the opinion I have had for many years, that the Government through their Departments of Agriculture and Stock and Public Lands should legislate to preserve our natural grasses compulsorily. No matter how abundantly grasses grow in good seasons, no thought is given to their preservation. The people merely trust

to providence. When the grass dries off, it is fired before the monsoonal season and after a few weeks new grasses quickly appear.

When we are struck with a terrible drought such as the one we are experiencing—I understand it is the worst for over 60 years—nothing can be produced to save the stock from starvation. In good seasons if the grass was cut and preserved it would provide a real insurance against drought in the future. Even if it was never used, it would be regarded in the nature of an insurance payment such as that paid by the people in the towns who insure their homes against fire. Although they hope they will never be attacked by fire, they are happy to pay an insurance premium in case the worst happens. I think there should be legislation compelling the people I speak of to conserve the grasses when they are in abundance because they would be an insurance against the dry periods such as the one we are passing through.

As to irrigation we have to be careful that we do not find ourselves in the position we were in after the last war. At that time I remember reading in the daily papers that in America, because of over-production due to modern methods—particularly irrigation—instructions were issued to the cotton-growers to plough in one row in every three in order to maintain the price of cotton and overcome the glut. One farmer refused to obey the instruction and the department concerned sent out officers who ploughed in one row in every three on his farm, and he was so disgusted that he walked out behind his barn and blew his brains out. That is a very serious thing and it shows that we should hasten slowly in this irrigation policy in order to ensure that we do not bring about over-production of any commodity.

At the period I spoke of there was a picture in the Brisbane "Courier" of lighters that were sent out into the ocean with coffee beans. There was an over-production of coffee in South America and they could not consume sufficient in the railway engines and in the furnaces of the big industries, so a considerable amount was sent out to the ocean in lighters and men were paid to shovel it into the sea in order to preserve prices.

Mr. Jones: They did the same with wheat in the depression years—millions of bushels of wheat.

Mr. TURNER: Yes. I believe this drought has been sent to warn us that we have to be more careful in the future. While irrigation is essential in many industries the most important purpose in my opinion is that of providing foodstuffs for the animal life of our country. Within the last fortnight I visited Gordonvale and I was horrified to see the number of carcasses lying between Rockhampton and Gordonvale. Most of these were lying in places where the cattle used to go to get water. I have no hesitation in saying that a number of cattle equal to the number of carcasses I saw would feed the whole of Brisbane for weeks. I think it is tragic that in times of drought these animals, who depend entirely on nature for

their food, just wander about and there is not a blade of grass to eat or a drop of water to drink.

If we were to prevent that sort of thing first and foremost we should be doing a great service to the State, Australia and the world generally. If that was done at the present time we could supply Britain and Europe with a greater quantity of beef and mutton than we are.

I have taken some particulars from Victorian reports. Victoria is considered to be the leading State in the development of irrigation and pastures and in 1942-43 that State had no less than 412,000 acres of irrigated native and sown pastures. As a major influence on the dairying industry it is instructive to examine the effect of irrigation on the production from cows per head in Queensland and in Victoria. The yield for the five-year period 1935-40 is—

		Victoria. Queensland.	
		Gallons.	Gallons.
1935-36	432	287
1936-37	457	227
1937-38	441	304
1938-39	425	361
1939-40	533	322

The application of irrigation to pastures has increased the carrying capacity of the country manyfold. Country that was under drought conditions carrying one poor sheep to every 10 acres carries under irrigation pasture 5 to 7 sheep per acre. These figures are authentic. They are obtained from the report of a commission that investigated the question and officials visited the districts to confirm the information for themselves.

Cattle were carried in prime condition at the rate of as high as three beasts to every two acres, and beef cattle were marketed in prime condition weighing 750 lb. per head at three years of age. That is the period in the life of a beast when its flesh is at its prime. We have baby beef sold in our butchers' shops from time to time. This is a little better than veal, but the only thing one can say about it is that it is tender. It is absolutely tasteless. I do not think anything is more tasty than a cut from a three-year-old ox. At the Werribee Stud Experimental Farm, with pastures fertilised and irrigated, 14 breeding ewes were carried to the acre. That may seem an exaggeration. It is very difficult to believe it, particularly when in parts of the State they are able to carry under drought conditions only one poor sheep to 10 acres. The correct use of water and fertiliser, as well as the use of pastures by rotational grazing, are important, and it is found on some of the properties that water and fertiliser cost 12s. per acre per annum. This cost is well repaid by the return obtained for sheep and cattle.

Pastures may be divided into three classes—native, improved annual, and introduced perennial. The improved annual pasture, which grows from March to November, comprises Wimmera, rye, subterranean and various other annual clovers. Introduced

perennial pasture comprises such grasses as clover, perennial rye, paspalum, crow's foot, white and strawberry clover.

The weakest link we have in producing well-conditioned and high-grade mutton and beef for markets is the lack of continually available conveniently situated fattening and topping areas. We have many areas suitable for this work, but owing to the absence of rainfall and water conservation it has not been attempted in this State. I am one of those who believe that instead of encouraging ex-servicemen to go in for agriculture and wool-growing or beef-cattle raising we should encourage our ex-servicemen to embark on fat-lamb-raising. There are some areas in the State eminently suitable for this project if water could be made available to ensure good pastures. When one realises that these fat lambs, which are the product of a cross between the Merino or South Down ewe and the Border Leicester ram, reach as much as 35 lb. in 12 to 14 weeks, I feel sure it must be admitted that it would be a successful venture for any young man, any ex-service man in particular. I am confident the Minister and his officers will be only too willing to give any advice or help that is necessary to any one desiring to undertake this calling.

These fat lambs return the producer an average of 26s. a head and to me this appears better than the risk of rearing sheep for their wool. Fat lambs are required not only by Australia but also overseas and I do not think there is anything more delicious than a piece of fat lamb. If we could get our boys engaged in this industry we should be starting a new industry and taking advantage of a ready market overseas. Not only Britain, but also Europe, offers a great market for this product. New Zealand is already shipping vast numbers of fat lambs overseas, but I understand is unable to supply all Britain's requirements.

The hon. member for Maranoa spoke of irrigation in the Roma area and the experience I have gained of the Gilbert River district makes me confident that if we irrigated that area as well as conserved water there the commodities produced would be a revelation to the Commonwealth. On Prestwood station I had citrus fruit, oranges and mandarins in particular, of a quality and flavour that I did not think could be produced anywhere in the world. I never imagined that mandarins could be grown to such enormous size as they were at that place. And the most amazing feature was the absence of disease. The foliage was a glossy green and you could not see better fruit in any agricultural show. One could not believe that such beautiful and delightful-looking fruit could be grown anywhere. What I saw looked more artificial than real. I brought some fruit home and took it to people I knew who would be interested. Those people were amazed that such beautiful fruit could be grown in any part of Queensland. I saw papaws averaging in weight 11 to 12 lb. each and the seed cavity within them was no more than 1½ inches across. They

had an abundance of flesh upon them and in comparison the papaws we grow down here are a miserable-looking lot.

Mr. Brand: Where were they grown?

Mr. TURNER: At a place called Prestwood, 35 miles the other side of Georgetown. I saw some wonderful tomatoes at Croydon. I remarked to people there that I could not really understand why they were remaining in such a place. I was assured, however, that in the boom days there were 12,700 residents in Croydon and district, but there are now only 152 men, women, and children. The people assured me most emphatically that Croydon had the best climate of any part of Queensland and that for eight months of the year they could grow anything they required on what they familiarly described as the Gilbert. The lady I met took me into her kitchen and there I saw 12 lb. of tomatoes. One weighed 2 lb. ¼ oz. and I had never seen such beautiful fruit or vegetables before. The amazing part about them was that they were a solid mass of flesh and contained very little seed.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will connect his remarks with the vote before the Committee.

Mr. TURNER: I was going to say irrigation would be an advantage in that part of the State. We are striving to bring immigrants to this State and I know of no better or more suitable place for the settlement of farming immigrants than that area, between Forsyth and Croydon. The residents there are very keen and contented and happy to stay there; the lack of water is their only trouble.

At Normanton I was taken into the school yard and shown a patch of tomatoes, cabbages, and lettuce that were growing luxuriantly. They were the finest vegetables that I had seen for a long time, and it was amazing to see the tomato plants tied up to the veranda railings. Then I went to the policeman's residence, where his wife had her own little irrigation plant and her own plot of superb tomatoes.

(Time expired.)

Mr. SMITH (Carpentaria) (7.41 p.m.): I desire to deal with this very important vote. The Leader of the Opposition is smiling, I suppose because he knows that the people must now buy the pineapple tops that he grows. He has criticised the Government, and I should just like to remind him that the people who live in the outback have to buy the pineapple tops he grows.

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

Mr. SMITH: I desire to pay a high compliment to the chairman of the Land Administration Board, Mr. McLean. He is eminently fitted for the position. He is a man of wide experience, having travelled extensively not only in Northern Queensland, but throughout the Northern Territory. He has a particularly broad outlook concerning

the requirements of the people in those districts, and he knows the advantages to be derived from the land now lying idle there. The Minister or whoever was responsible for the selection of Mr. McLean for the post he occupies is to be commended on his good judgment, because his appointment will be of considerable benefit to the State. Hon. members opposite have made sarcastic comments on speeches delivered by hon. members on this side about land matters in distant parts of the State, but I have no doubt that most of them have not been farther afield from Brisbane than perhaps Sandgate, Albion, Windsor, or Maree, and indeed they look forward with anxious excitement to the completion of the tramline extension that the hon. member for Hamilton is building for the hon. member for Windsor into the Lutwyche area, so that hon. members opposite may be able to travel still farther afield into country areas and get a glimpse of the green belt of Brisbane.

Hon. members opposite have castigated the Government for not expediting the settlement of returned soldiers on the land, but I have no doubt that they think that the settlement of returned soldiers merely means the dividing of a large property of, say, 150,000 to 200,000 acres into four squares by driving a peg here and a peg there. That is not all that is involved. Even to-day in my electorate one of the biggest sheep stations in Queensland, Eddington Downs, is being subdivided for closer settlement. This property has carried the greatest number of sheep of any property in the State, and has given handsome returns to its owners in sheep, wool, and cattle. When this station is subdivided for closer settlement, some of the settlers, even with blocks of 30,000 to 40,000 acres, will not be able to feed 2,000 to 3,000 sheep.

At 7.45 p.m.,

Mr. DEVRIES (Gregory) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. SMITH: It is merely the fact that these lessees have such huge tracts of country that enables them to take on agistment sheep or cattle from drought-affected areas. When these huge areas are settled under the Government's closer-settlement scheme a different atmosphere will arise in those districts. I commend the Minister for taking all the necessary precautions to see that returned soldiers are not settled on country that is not suitable for closer settlement.

I intend to strike a new note. There are great tracts of land lying idle in the Northern Territory Peninsula and in the Gulf country. I am not concerned with what Government may be in power. As our soldiers played a prominent part in preserving this country from the Japanese our Commonwealth Government, in conjunction with the Governments of South Australia, Western Australia, and this State, should make available to them freehold land in those areas free of cost. This would enable them to start new industries. During the war we had one of the largest individual farms in the Commonwealth established at Pine Creek in the Northern Territory. It was run by the Army. It may

be news to many people to know that that farm fed virtually the whole of the Australian and American Armies in the northern part of Australia. Today it is deserted, the machinery is being sold by the Commonwealth Disposals Commission, and the country is being overrun. It is a catastrophe to see it neglected and returning to the wilderness it was previously. I dare say that in a few years' time Vestey's cattle will be running over it. Much good land for settlement purposes is to be found on the Barkly Tableland and in the Gulf country. It would have been a good move had the Commonwealth Government surveyed this land and made it available to the soldiers free.

Mr. Kerr: It is not too late now.

Mr. SMITH: That is so. Many of the young soldiers who were stationed in the Northern Territory and Gulf country came from the farming districts of Victoria and South Australia. They saw the possibilities there. Only the other week in Normanton I saw a young soldier with his young wife and child arrive from Melbourne on their way to Vanook station to take up a position as a married couple. He evidently saw more opportunity for advancement by getting on to the land in Queensland than in any other calling. All the worth-while available land in Victoria has been selected. Young soldiers from Victoria and South Australia have also returned to work in the Mt. Isa mines and on stations in the Cloncurry and Camooweal districts. They, too, foresee the great opportunities open to settlers in those parts. We have in the Gulf of Carpentaria the only all-the-year-round running rivers in the State. Hon. members might be inclined to contradict me, but that is a fact. Some of those rivers can be harnessed. For instance, at Lawn Hill Gorge, at Cartridge Creek, in the Gregory River area, there is a flow of over 100,000,000 gallons of water a day.

Mr. F. J. Calvert, engineering surveyor, reported on the water resources and irrigation possibilities of the Burke district to the Royal Commission on Public Works in 1919. He is an eminent man and one who knew his job. I think that if hon. members read the report of Mr. Calvert they would be convinced that to have that country lying idle is a calamity, not only for the State but for the Commonwealth. We hear much about the conditions there during the summer. I cannot see any difference whatsoever between those at Urandangie or Camooweal and those at Brisbane. One a dry heat and the other very humid. The man on the land does not suffer the extreme humidity that prevails here.

Mr. Brand: You need transport facilities.

Mr. SMITH: They can have the transport facilities. If it takes a war to build a highway like the North-West Road and the East-West Road, surely to God we can make money available to open up the national asset that we have in the Northern Territory, the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Cape York Peninsula.

Mr. Brand: Did you say the Gulf is better than the Territory?

Mr. SMITH: I should say that the Gulf is undoubtedly better than the Territory. As Mr. Calvert says, from Tennant's Creek across to Alice Springs is mineral-bearing country and it is not suitable for closer settlement, whereas the whole of the country, including Barkly Tableland, from Dajarra right out to the South Australian border, and from Dajarra up to Cloncurry and back to the Saxby, Flinders and Norman Rivers, and up to the Mitchell River and the Gilbert River is suitable for closer settlement. I say without fear of contradiction that in that area we could absorb a million people, and we should not know where they had gone.

Mr. Muller interjected.

Mr. SMITH: My old friend the hon. member for Fassifern is concerned about the buffalo fly, but if his people have the heart and courage of the people where I come from they will soon overcome the ravages of the buffalo fly.

Mr. Muller: How did you overcome the ravages of the fly?

Mr. SMITH: I kept away from them; I do not let the grass grow under my feet, and I do not let my hair grow down over my eyes. I am not an expert in cane-growing, but in 1919 it was stated that on the Gregory River it could be grown without irrigation to produce 2 to 2½ tons an acre. That was away back in 1919-20, and, as in every other industry, science has improved the production since. Tobacco can be grown quite well too, but at that time they did not know how to cure the leaf. Let me read this extract from the report by Mr. Calvert; I am sure it will be of interest to the Committee.

“The Cultivable Areas.

“Best gardens met with, namely—

“Mrs. Barrett, at the Gregory Downs Hotel, 80 miles from Burketown, and that of Mr. G. A. Freestone, at the Burketown-Camooweal road junction, on the O'Shanassy River.

“Mrs. Barrett's orchard and gardens: the soil is chiefly friable, sandy loam, easily worked and fairly porous. The cultivation comprises oranges, lemons, peaches, custard apples, bananas, guavas, dates, and grapes, also the usual vegetables—namely, cabbage, lettuce, cauliflower, rhubarb, English and sweet potatoes, tomatoes, beetroot, French beans, &c.

“Mr. Freestone's garden—Mr. Freestone is a most enthusiastic gardener and has grown cotton successfully. He is now trying date palms and has tried tobacco but does not understand the curing of the leaf.

“Nature farming—Although, as may be inferred from my remarks, agriculture in the usual form that is dependent upon human agency and effort is at a very low ebb in the Burke district, there are few equal areas in the State where, as I have already shown, such splendid crops are grown by natural means without any effort of man.

“Here surely is a basis of agrarian settlement of no mean order and value. Nature, which seldom trusts all her eggs in one basket, has given to the Cinderella amongst the many fine districts of Queensland the gift of free fodder unexcelled in quality and almost unlimited in quantity, only awaiting the agency of man to gather and store her bounty.

“There is no part of this State so well watered by means of perennial streams as that to the South-West of Burketown. In fact, I do not know any equal area in Queensland that is in this respect at all comparable with the country on the banks of the Gregory River and its numerous tributaries.

“Cultivation of sugar-cane: The most profitable crop that could be grown is sugar-cane. The climate and the soil are favourable, whilst as I have shown plenty of water for irrigating fully 50,000 acres is available.

“Allowing 1½ tons of sugar to the acre, it will be seen that this fine district could produce 75,000 tons of sugar annually without any risk of failure of crop owing to drought.

“The district described in the report is equal to the 22nd part of Queensland and comprises not only extensive pastoral and mineral areas of great potential value but also the best irrigable area in the State both as regards the supply of water and the land. What nature in this respect has given to the Burke district as a free gift could only be provided elsewhere by artificial means at an expenditure which would prove a perpetual burden upon the occupiers of the improved lands.”

This report was written in 1919-20.

Mr. Luckins: Nothing has been done since.

Mr. SMITH: I have been in this Parliament six years. The hon. member for Isis was a member of a commission that went through that district but I have not heard him advocating anything but something for the Isis district.

They had an opportunity to do these things between 1929 and 1932, but all they did for the workers in the western part of Queensland was to increase the hours by four to 48 a week and reduce their basic wage. The report continues—

“In conclusion I may say that the setting up of this committee for the installation of this experimental farm will give the Gulf district the full credit for wealth production to which it is entitled.”

I have been a member of this Assembly for six years, and I have advocated the development of this area from the day I made my maiden speech on the Address in Reply. I entered this Parliament only a few months before Japan declared war, and within 12 months after the end of the war in the Pacific I had induced the Government to set up the experimental farm suggested by this man. I have studied his reports extensively. I travel

through this country twice a year and I am in a position to quote facts. Between the Gregory and Leichhardt Rivers, bounded on the north by Cartridge Creek, extends a belt of plain country of an area of 1,000,000 acres. This country is generally well grassed but it is absolutely devoid of permanent water except on the river frontages.

Mr. Macdonald: What are the grasses?

Mr. SMITH: Mitchell and Flinders farther down and marine couch and rice grass farther north near the ocean frontages.

About a month ago I made a tour through this Gulf country and men such as Mr. Keyes, who have been there for the last 50 years, tell me that after seven months without rain this country and the cattle, sheep, and horses in it have never been in better condition. This was after good rainfall in the wet season earlier in the year. I repeat that after seven months without rain this country, the cattle, sheep, and horses in it had never been in better condition in the last 40 years.

Mr. Macdonald: It must be sour country with normal rainfall.

Mr. SMITH: It is not sour country under normal conditions. Sour country is boggy and is always moist. The water runs off this country into the artesian basin and into the Gulf. If I had read from the report of Mr. W. H. Corbould and from the report of Mr. Dunstan, who was Chief Government Geologist at the time, the hon. member would have understood why the country is not sour. Further on the report says—

“It has large areas of good soil suitable for agriculture and seems to lend itself admirably to a simple scheme of irrigation.”

(Time expired.)

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Mirani—Minister for Transport) (8.5 p.m.): This is an important vote that attracts a good deal of attention when the Estimates are being discussed in Committee from time to time, and rightly so. After all, the department that controls in some way or other 92 per cent. of the area of Queensland has an important function to perform and is important to the welfare of the community.

I might say that the functions of the Department of Public Lands are reflected more in our economy than those of any other department of the State. The land is the source of our wealth production. Seeing that the department has the control of such important sub-departments as those controlling irrigation, forestry and other things associated with land development, it is brought before the eyes not only of the people on the land, but those engaged in business activities in the State.

During the course of the debate much has been said of irrigation and I do not propose to go over it all again—we might need a life-belt to get out of this Chamber if I did—but I should like to say a few words about soldier settlement. Certain members of the Opposition appear to have paid a good deal of attention to this question and it is right that it should have some attention paid to it

by all members of this Committee, but I was amazed to listen to the remarks of two prominent members of the Country Party, the hon. members for West Moreton and Aubigny. I am sorry they are not present this evening. They expressed the opinion that it would be wise for the Department of Public Lands to get out of the Dalby district so far as soldier settlement was concerned. Anybody who has travelled the State must be struck by the fact that some of the best land lying west of the Main Range is in the Dalby district. It is an area that shows and has shown over a period of years that it is the coming granary of the State. I am wondering what the attitude of the hon. members for Aubigny and West Moreton will be at the next State elections. I wonder whether they will tell the people in the Dalby district that that area is not good for soldier settlement. I am wondering whether that view is supported by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Fassifern. We have to look for motives in these things.

Mr. Muller interjected.

Mr. WALSH: I do not propose to allow the hon. member for Fassifern to draw me off the track and engage in a discussion he might wish me to embark on that is not relevant to the vote under discussion. I think there is greater scope for exploitation of Crown leaseholds in the Dalby district and the surrounding area than there is in any other part of the State. And I am wondering whether the desire of certain members of the Country Party to keep the Government out of the Dalby district altogether is explained by the fact that they are deeply interested in transactions in that area themselves.

Mr. Muller: They will get them out.

Mr. WALSH: The evidence is there. People engaged in farming in the Dalby area since the prickly-pear was eliminated have demonstrated to the rest of Queensland that substantial areas of land there lend themselves to closer settlement. I shall watch with a great deal of interest the attitude of the Country Party at the next State elections on this question. It is true that there are difficulties in the way of successful settlement in the Wandean and Taroom districts and areas adjacent thereto but the idea that none of the Dalby country can be subdivided into areas of less than 5,000 acres is exploded when you see there successful farmers who have applied their labour to much smaller areas and are making a great success of their properties. Might I direct the attention of those hon. members who seem so keen on getting the Government out of the Dalby district to the activities of Mr. Woodside, a man who in the past, with his area overrun by pear, found himself year after year with a substantial overdraft at the bank.

Since the pear has been eliminated through the activities of the Labour Government in introducing the pest that destroyed it, Mr. Woodside has been able to demonstrate to those around him that a very substantial living can be made on smaller areas in the district and it is interesting to note that on the smaller area that he is now working,

cultivating and growing crops, he is able to go to neighbouring farmers and buy up their poddy calves, which he has been doing—and in the course of three years he has been able to send them to the abattoirs with those of other settlers in the area who have their own organisation and so enter into private killing arrangements with the abattoirs. That is being done in the area lying between Miles and Wandoan. In the brigalow area in that district too, since the destruction of the pear, thousands of acres have been brought into the cultivation of wheat. I challenge any hon. member of the Country Party to say that this district is not suitable for closer settlement.

As I said before, there are difficulties and water is one of them. Throughout the entire belt some attention will have to be given to the provision of a suitable water supply so as to enable a reserve to be available at all times against drought. I was prompted to make these remarks because I felt that hon. members who had spoken against the activities of the Department of Public Lands in endeavouring to bring about soldier settlement there had some other motive in mind than successful soldier settlement.

There is one other question that I should like to discuss, that is, soil erosion. Like the fire menace, I do not think that too much can be said about it. We find this question approached from an angle that suggests that a little more consideration might be given to it by some hon. members before they discuss it. We have on the one hand the contention that the farmers themselves are responsible for the bulk of the erosion that is taking place on our farming areas and on the other we have hon. members such as the hon. member for Fassifern who want to apologise and say that the farmer is not responsible at all. Both these points of view are entirely wrong. Anyone who has studied the development of our agricultural areas east of the Range must admit that since thousands of acres have been brought into cultivation serious erosion has developed year by year.

Mr. Muller: What would you suggest?

Mr. WALSH: I suggest that the hon. member be a little patient and listen to a little logic. There is no more serious threat to the future productivity of our lands east of the Range than stream erosion. Out in the western areas wind or sheet erosion, as the case may be, is associated very often with over-stocking; and no-one is going to deny that and no-one is going to deny also that some selectors do over-stock their holdings. My experience during my four years in charge of the Department of Public Lands showed me that the selectors did over-stock because when they came to the department with their problems and discussed them with me the first question I put to them was, "What stock are you carrying?" They would give me the figure and in my opinion it was just about double the carrying capacity that the Department of Public Lands had laid down as being the safe carrying capacity of the land, on which their rents were assessed. I

have no desire to go extensively into the situation in our western areas because I think the more serious threat to our economy is the destruction of the agricultural areas along the coast belt.

You will find a different problem associated with each stream whether you go to the Johnstone River, the Don River, the Herbert River, or the Burdekin River. Each has its own peculiarities and its own problems. This Government realise that erosion must be tackled seriously. Despite what may have been done in the past, and despite any failure to do things in the past it was recognised in 1940 that some start had to be made to control erosion in the rivers along our coast. The passing of the Burdekin River Trust Act enabled local trusts to be set up and funds to be provided, with assistance from the Government. Anyone who has had the opportunity of inspecting the work done along the Burdekin River and Herbert River, and in other localities, will realise that substantial progress has been made in combating stream erosion in those particular areas. I take the view that to deal effectively with stream erosion in our coast belt will be entirely beyond the capacity of the individual landholder and beyond the local-government authority within the area. It is also beyond the capacity of this Government to do everything that is required to check the menace of stream erosion on the coast. I take the view that eventually it will become a national problem because if the productive capacity of our now fertile areas along the coast is destroyed, not only Queensland but the whole of Australia will suffer.

Mr. Maher: Has the matter ever been taken up with the Federal Government?

Mr. WALSH: It has been taken up by the Premier with the Commonwealth Government with a view to having investigations made to see how it can be checked. It is an enormous problem. I have made a personal inspection of every one of those rivers I named. I took that opportunity two years ago, and I then realised for the first time how serious the position is. In July this year I took the opportunity to go to Bowen. I inspected the damage that was done there by the floods in that area. I do not want to be pessimistic in the matter, but I should say that in a very short space of time all the good agricultural land in the Bowen area will be seriously threatened if something is not done to check the huge sand deposits in the Don River. They threaten to destroy the whole of that area. You can now stand on the banks of the Don River and attempt to look across to the other side, which you cannot see because of the huge sand deposits. You find that as that sand is deposited the stream is narrowed in such a way that its capacity to take even a normal rainfall is so reduced that all the surrounding land must be seriously threatened. That is the position in all similar areas. For example, if you stand on the bank of the Herbert River and notice how the land recedes from it you can

envisage that if some break occurs in that river a vast territory of sugar land will be virtually destroyed.

Mr. Macdonald: What of the Herbert River?

Mr. WALSH: It is the Herbert River I am talking about, but the Halifax area I am referring to. If you come down to Proserpine you will find an entirely different problem, but here you find that some responsibility of the individual arises. It is all very well to say that the landowner has no responsibility. He has some responsibility. Any practical man on the Country Party side—I do not know that there are very many of them; we of course can eliminate the Queensland People's Party as its members are ignorant of land matters—must realise that unless a man takes some control over his land he must at some time or another, if he is situated on one of these hillside areas or adjacent to a river, be threatened by erosion.

At 8.20 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. WALSH: In the Proserpine area you may have 12 inches of rain in the one day. The time when there was no settlement at all in that district the capacity of the river may have been sufficient to carry off the water without any serious threat to the surrounding area; but as the settlers came in and felled the timber into the watercourses and thus impeded the flow of those streams, eventually a tremendous amount of silt built up and further impeded the flow of the water and piled up more silt as a result of lesser rainfalls. Then you find the farmer setting about protecting his land at a point where the river overflows by building huge banks, only to divert the menace threatening him to somebody else's property.

All those things have gone on without any control, and the time has come for the Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply under the Department of Public Lands to see that the individual is not allowed the same freedom to interfere with vegetation along our rivers and watercourses. I want to emphasise that we do no good by trying to pass the responsibility on to the man on the land or, on the other hand, by trying to absolve him from his responsibility. There are areas of land that have been brought into cultivation on which, owing to their peculiar situation, it does not matter what the farmer does with them heavy rainfall may be responsible for substantial erosion. The land may not be threatened with stream erosion or by water coming off the hills, but owing to the peculiar formation of the paddocks themselves when the soil is tilled and heavy rain falls a substantial part of the soil is washed away, leaving the paddocks in a barren state and not fit for cultivation.

One of the things that save the northern land is that, generally speaking, about October when the lands are ploughed ready for the planting of sugar-cane the following year they are covered with a green crop such as cow pea or Mauritius bean, and that protects the soil from heavy rainfalls that unquestion-

ably have the effect of moving a great deal of land if it has been disturbed by ploughs and tractors.

It has been said that there is no erosion on the Downs area. I remember having an interesting discussion with a property officer from the Bank of New South Wales some years ago. His responsibility was to report to the bank on the securities it held, and advise the bank from time to time as to their condition. During this conversation he pointed out to me that his inspections of the agricultural area on the Downs showed that it was suffering to a greater extent from erosion than any other part of the State that the bank was interested in.

Mr. Wanstall: They published a book.

Mr. WALSH: That happened to be at the point when he was only able to make his inspections by car or by horse. Since he published a map indicating that the Downs area showed a greater extent of soil erosion than any other agricultural area, he had the opportunity of flying over that area, and he indicated to me that he would have to correct that map substantially because he had been able to see from the air that there was more extensive erosion on the Downs than he realised. That is the way we should be talking to the farmers in the Downs area. The fact that the farmer puts his plough in and ploughs haphazardly, irrespective of the contour of the land, must be a factor contributing to erosion.

I know there are limitations if a man has a small area but one can still see the farmers running their machines up and down the hill slopes, so that when the rains come it is no time before the small furrow becomes a gully running down through the paddock. One can see the farcical position of motor-cars bogged on a bitumen road because tons of black soil have been washed onto the road. That cannot continue.

We have found that in the sugar areas particularly, where they have to meet this danger because of the high rainfall in those districts, they use drains, headlands, and so on, to divert the water altogether from their paddocks. I have not seen very much of that, I must say, being done about the Darling Downs. Despite the fact that they have the implements—tractors and so forth—one can still see huge piles of soil banked on the ends of the paddocks from the headlands, which prevents proper drainage.

Mr. Muller: What an awful speech coming from a Minister!

Mr. WALSH: We must face realities and if the hon. member is afraid of disappointing somebody in his electorate, I am not. After all, I think the people respect you if you give them a lead. It is our duty to stand in this Chamber and give a lead. It is all very well for the hon. member for Fassifern to talk as he does. His property is situated in an area where erosion does not threaten. In the valleys about Boonah and similar places the farmer gets the advantage of the wash from the other man's farm. The

hon. member does not need to protect his property. It happens that I know the location of it.

Mr. Muller: I was looking for a lead from you.

Mr. WALSH: What I am suggesting is that any member of this Committee should be big enough to stand in this Chamber and tell the farmer that he is doing the wrong thing, that if in fact he is—give him a lead and convince him that he must right his agricultural practice. We are not doing the right thing by the farming community or the community as a whole by saying that the farmer has no responsibilities. On the other hand, we are not doing the right thing by saying that the farmer has all the responsibility. The Government must face this problem as a national one and unless it is seriously tackled by the Commonwealth Government, associated with local authorities and the State Government, we stand to lose the bulk of our fertile areas of the eastern slopes of the coast ranges.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (8.28 p.m.): It is indeed a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak on this important Estimate, realising as I do that all wealth comes from the land, whether by agricultural or mineral production. A State or a nation depends on the production from the land, co-ordinated with efficient administration of the department controlling public lands, in this case the Department of Lands under the Minister, supported by a very efficient staff. I appreciate the efficiency of that department, particularly knowing the Minister as I know him. He is a man who has been educated by the experiences in the hard rows of life. Experience teaches us as we go through life; I suppose in fact that experience bears the hall mark of the best form of teaching. The Minister is able to appreciate that fact.

He has been associated with primary industry as a field worker, a shearer, a wool-presser, and general agricultural worker, and he has been connected with the mining industry. He has had a grounding that makes him more fitted for his present position than any academic qualifications could make him. He has been through the school of hard knocks and experience has taught him the value of primary production; and we can appreciate the worth and ability of any hon. member who, on this grounding, is elevated to the position of Secretary for Public Lands. Under his guidance, can anyone say we have not an efficient Department of Public Lands? No-one can cavil at the amount being appropriated for it, and despite any criticism levelled against it, results have proved conclusively that it is efficient, for it has done much good despite almost seven years of war, and despite the recent disastrous drought, which has been the worst in our history.

Mr. Muller: You are not blaming me for that, are you?

Mr. KEYATTA: The hon. member is one of the greatest critics in the Opposition. Of course, one of the great principles of

democracy is that one has the right to one's own opinion, that one has the right to criticise. It is from sound criticism that we learn. It is from experience that we profit, but credit must be given to the Labour Government for the sound and progressive policy put into effect by this department.

I repeat that all wealth emanates from the soil. The foundation of any great country is its natural resources, developed by the ingenuity of man, aided by efficient qualified officers in such departments as the one under discussion.

Mr. Maher: Are there any fresh-water streams north of Townsville that could be weired for irrigation purposes?

Mr. KEYATTA: I thank the hon. member for prompting me. There are many. There is the Herbert River; indeed, there are 82 rivers and streams between Ingham and Townsville. We have the Ross River. It has been proved that water can produce from the poorest of soil. Has the hon. member not read of the miracles worked by water? Has he not read "White Coal"? I am sure he must have, because he is a successful farmer himself. In the North, too, we have the Burdekin Delta, the greatest of its kind in the Commonwealth.

There is no tropical product that cannot be grown within that area. The report submitted by the Department of Public Lands suggests that if irrigation can be applied to it its production will be doubled or trebled. Soil is important, irrigation is perhaps more important.

For instance, it can grow the best tobacco with the minimum of irrigation. No-one will deny that. It grows the greatest leaf grown in Australia today, notwithstanding the limitation with regard to marketing. The greatest leaf is grown on the Mareeba lands, on coarse poor soil not suitable for other production and, as I said, with a minimum application of water. The tobacco grown there compares favourably with Virginian lemon-coloured leaf and that fact cannot be denied. We are looking forward to the time when the Commonwealth Government will give greater encouragement to the farmers to produce tobacco leaf and give them full protection for their crops.

There is no doubt as to the capacity of Queensland to produce crops. There are far more people in Sydney and Melbourne than in the whole of Queensland and pro rata we are the greatest producing State of the Commonwealth. In that the Department of Public Lands plays an important part. We are proud of that fact and proud that other States have asked for reports concerning our land-settlement schemes. We grow as fine beef as any other State or country in the world, the lucerne-fed Argentine prime beef included, which is sold at two and three years as against our cattle sold at four and five years. If we could apply more science to the industry we should produce probably a better beef than Argentina.

The time will come when this department will be able to intensify its activities in

the damming of our rivers for the purpose of providing the natural element needed to grow suitable feed. We profit by the experience of other countries and we realise that this country has its peculiarities. We must apply science to the industries of the country and we shall then be just as well off as any other country in the world.

All the matters that I have mentioned call for very careful investigation by the department, but I am confident that they will receive the utmost attention at the hands of its qualified officers. The Department of Public Lands has achieved much for the State, and, as I said before, the production of Queensland exceeds that of the other States per head of the population.

The subject of irrigation is very important indeed. We have the Burdekin River and the surrounding districts and the Herbert River with its surrounding districts, which offer splendid facilities for natural irrigation. I propose to concentrate upon the Burdekin River, one of the biggest in the State and one of the seven biggest rivers in the Commonwealth. Now let us consider what can be achieved in the Burdekin Delta by the magic of water used for irrigation. I know that what I am about to say will have the endorsement of the hon. member for Isis and the hon. member for Stanley. The hon. member for Stanley worked in the sugar industry in the Lower Burdekin and was actually one of the pioneers in that district. It is generally recognised that the efficiency of production of sugar-cane throughout Queensland is falling to an alarming figure, yet Messrs. G. and C. Vass, of Home Hill, on the southern bank of the Burdekin River, by the intelligent use of their land, have been able gradually to increase their production during the last decade and the results this year show that they have a block of E.K. cane returning 70 tons to the acre with a c.c.s. between 15 and 16. In addition, they have improved the general fertility of their soil. This has been accomplished in the face of the greatest drought not only throughout Queensland but in this area, which has experienced the lowest rainfalls since 1882. That will prove conclusively that the Department of Public Lands is working along the right lines in the matter of irrigation. In the Burdekin area water can be tapped at a depth varying from 5 feet to 20 feet. I have consistently advocated the settlement of ex-servicemen in the Burdekin district. Not only can they grow sugar-cane—

Mr. Macdonald: Compared with the Brisbane River the Burdekin River is just a little trickle.

Mr. KEYATTA: Oh no; the reverse is true—compared with the Burdekin River the Brisbane River is just a trickle. The Burdekin River district lends itself to natural irrigation, whereas the Brisbane River does not. The Burdekin area is of a different type. It has a good supply of subterranean water and the top soil is reasonably porous; therefore, it is suitable for irrigation. Let me tell the hon.

member for Stanley that when he was on the Burdekin he was a champion of that area, but since he migrated to the banks of the Brisbane River his perspective has changed. My point of view and perspective are as good as his. Records will prove my claim that the productivity of the Burdekin River area is far greater than that of the Brisbane River district. I am proud of the fact and my only desire is to impress on others the value and merits of the land in the Burdekin Delta.

Had it not been for the policy of the Minister's department, together with the broad administrative outlook of the Minister and Labour's policy, North Queensland would probably have been forgotten. It is my intention actively and persistently to press the settlement claims of this part of North Queensland. It must come into its own as there is every tropical product which can be grown on its land, and of a quality far superior to that of the so-called tropical products of Southern Queensland. Under our Pure Foods Act the manufacturer of any commodity must give a guarantee that it is of a certain standard. That should give one food for thought. Why not apply the same principle to our tropical fruits not only in Southern Queensland and New South Wales, but in Northern Queensland? There is no comparison between their so-called tropical fruits and those grown in North Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not discussing the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Stock; he is now discussing the Estimates of the Chief Office of the Department of Public Lands.

Mr. KEYATTA: A further proof of the productiveness of the Burdekin Delta area is furnished by another settler named Jim Blyth. With the help of advice received from departmental officers and the application of irrigation he has been able to produce potatoes of a quality second to none.

There is another matter I desire to place before the Committee. Whether land is freehold or leasehold, it is more or less the property of the State. When a cane assignment is given to either tenure the product more or less becomes the property of the community. It is regulated in the first place by our statutes and then by the market price. The real point I want to emphasise is that the sugar producer and farmer generally should be protected in some respect. He spends much time and labour and incurs much outlay to produce cane under his assignment, but he is subject to the vagaries of the season and some form of insurance should be devised to protect him against any loss caused by seasonal fluctuations.

I have a letter written to me by a practical farmer, Mr. W. W. Mason, of Cape Tribulation, via Cairns, in which he gives proof that rice can be grown up there under natural irrigation; it is watered by the rainfall only. I have a sample of the product here that

hon. members can see. There is nothing wrong with land that can grow a product of that type. This is what Mr. Mason writes—

“I read with interest in the ‘Cairns Post’ of your serving tropical fruit salad during an agricultural debate, and your remarks appertaining thereto. I quite agree (and I suppose there are hundreds of the same mind) with your remarks that the North is being robbed of its legitimate rights, but of course population as you say would be a solution in the long run. I maintain that a subsidised air transportation of these delicious tropical fruits to the populated centres of Australia would assist greatly until such times as a denser population of the North become a reality.

“I once sent two cases of granadillas to Melbourne, but of course they had to be picked on the green side to stand transportation, and the agent informed me they were very nice, and if I was prepared to spend £1,000 in advertising I could get them on the market. To show you how impossible it is to send such things as granadillas in a perfect condition to the Southern markets, I recently, when in Brisbane, promised to send one each to some friends of mine. This I did some months ago by air freight and it cost me 12s. 1d. for each granadilla.

“While on the subject of neglected possibilities for the North (in agriculture) I have been growing rice in this locality for a number of years, and I am posting you by separate cover a sample of same. Now this grows to perfection without irrigation in the wet season. Our rainfall averages 150 inches per annum, and I have harvested from 80 to 120 bushels of paddy per acre, all used for fowl feed on account of not being allowed to dispose of it.

“Many years ago in the Cairns district there were to my knowledge three rice mills doing a good business until such time I understand the duty was taken from rice, allowing it to be brought in from the Near East. This settled the industry. When it was discovered that rice could be grown in New South Wales the duty or an embargo was again placed on rice. Of course by this time it was a New South Wales industry and no encouragement was given to grow rice anywhere else.

“I am pleased that you are battling for the North, and keep on with the good work.”
(Time expired.)

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers—Secretary for Public Lands) (8.53 p.m.): As to be expected, a big proportion of the time taken up in discussing the Chief Office vote was taken up discussing the subject of returned-soldier settlement. That is to be expected, because after all it is an important subject and one that is of great interest at the present moment. I want to make a few observations on some of the points raised by hon. members during the debate.

The Leader of the Opposition, in making reference to control of the lands in areas set aside for soldier settlement, stated that he

believed it would not matter if the controls were lifted. I cannot agree with him. Many transactions have taken place over the last few months that show a tendency to inflation of land values. We know that is happening in every part of the State. I gave an instance of what was happening in regard to building allotments, and showed that it was necessary to bring down legislation to control it. I am satisfied that if the control were lifted entirely, as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, it would lead to chaos.

I am satisfied that an enormous price would be paid in the Dalby area, for instance, which has been mentioned frequently in this debate. Land in the Dalby area worth round about £4 an acre in 1941-42 would probably bring to-day as high as £8 to £9 an acre. I do not think there is any doubt about that. I mentioned previously an instance in which a certain land-owner in that district was prepared to dispose of property at £2 15s. an acre in 1943 but when I was in Dalby recently he approached me regarding the refusal to transfer that land at £5 15s. an acre. The land was held on perpetual lease. That shows the tendency to inflation in that area.

Mr. Maher: Good wheat land in New South Wales 30 years ago was worth £8 an acre.

Mr. JONES: I admit that. But the point I make is that there is no reason why land values should increase 100 per cent. in three years, purely because of the greater demand. There is no reason why the returned soldier should be asked to pay the increase.

Furthermore, and as I have frequently stressed, if the price offered by the Department of Public Lands in negotiations is not sufficient in the opinion of the vendor he has the right to go to the Land Court. I think that is the only way out. Virtually every member in this Chamber who has had dealings with the Land Court will admit that it always gives a fair deal. The members understand what they are doing. They are practical men who understand land values, and in nearly every instance I think they give satisfaction. It is the right of every person to go to the Land Court if they find the department will not pay what they think is a fair market value. Only today we have been able to negotiate successfully with a man in that area for approximately 8,000 acres. He apparently thinks the price offered him was satisfactory. Generally speaking, when people speak about 1942 values, it is just a figure of speech, because it is very difficult for any man to tell what the true values are. When a valuation issue comes before the Land Court the judge decides after hearing the evidence. He is in a position to obtain much information by calling witnesses as to transactions in the area over a given period.

There could not be any suggestion on the part of any hon. member that the Government were likely to do something unfair in resuming land. The Land Court gives

protection and that is as it should be. I think there has been much useless discussion on this point. After all, there is need for some control and some protection of the Crown just as there is need for protection of the vendor.

Mr. Maher: But that Dalby is turning from a pastoral country to an agricultural country and pastoral values have gone up to agricultural values.

Mr. JONES: The point I would make in answer to that is the suppositious case of a man holding 20,000 acres of pastoral land in the Dalby area and holding it for the last 20 to 25 years. The fact that Dalby is now an approved first-class farming area for wheat and other crops is no reason why that man should be able to "cash in" on other people's industry and activity in proving the land suitable for wheat-growing.

Mr. Maher: I am still sufficiently old-fashioned to think that he is entitled to get the market value.

Mr. JONES: It is very difficult to arrive at a fair market value, and that is the purpose of the Land Court. I do not think there is any other way in which it can be amicably and reasonably determined.

The Leader of the Opposition made reference to frozen areas and the need to take action to have the land not likely to be used for settlement purposes unfrozen as expeditiously as possible. I assure the hon. gentleman and the Committee that we do attempt to expedite the release of this land. An area of approximately 4,251,281 acres has been frozen and investigated, and 2,014,000 acres have been released. Something like 2,000,000 acres is frozen at the moment, but hon. members who have some knowledge of the land will realise that the inspection and classification of 4,000,000 acres cannot be done in five minutes.

We do not want to embarrass anyone by keeping the land frozen any longer than is necessary, but in the Wandoan area there is some doubt as to the availability of water. It is known that there is water at 800 feet, but it is brackish. It may be suitable for stock but it is unsuitable for domestic purposes. Some little while ago the Wandoan Shire Council entered into an arrangement with a contractor whereby he was to bore for water on the understanding that if he did not strike it he would receive no pay. He went down 800 feet but no suitable water was found. Any water that he found was totally unsuitable and this led to a stalemate. The Sub-Department of Irrigation and Water Supply decided to go down another 700, 800 or 900 feet—to whatever depth was necessary to find water. There is an idea that at 1,600 or 1,700 feet we may get good water. We were prepared to carry on with the experiment, the Government to bear the cost, because we thought it would be of local interest if we could give some guide as to the depth at which they are likely to strike water. We have had difficulty in obtaining a suitable borer and the shortage of 4-inch piping is holding us up, but we are anxious

to go ahead with the experiment because it should to some extent govern our attitude to the acquisition of land in that area. I thought I should tell hon. members of this, because a fairly large area is still frozen in the Wandoan district and that is one reason why we have not been able to move as quickly as we should have liked. There is some doubt about the area; if it is too dry we do not want to acquire it for soldier settlement.

Mr. Macdonald: No settler could afford to go down to 1,600 feet for water.

Mr. JONES: I appreciate that, but we may be able to evolve some scheme under which one bore might serve two or three settlers. That remains to be seen, but I appreciate the point raised by the hon. member.

I do not want to say much about soil erosion; the Deputy Premier dealt fully with it, but I am surprised that some hon. member has not referred to the indiscriminate pushing over of mulga in the south-western part of the State in particular. Some time ago I issued a statement in the Press in which I referred to the rather indiscriminate destruction of mulga, and hon. members would be astounded if they knew the number of letters I have received from practical graziers in that area on this matter. I can show hon. members a letter from a very big grazier who points out that it is a definite menace and that something will have to be done about it. He is not complaining so much about the actual destruction of the mulga.

He points out that immediately the trees are pushed over the roots bring up a certain amount of soil that is washed and blown away, and this will have the effect of creating a first-class erosion problem unless something is done about it.

Mr. Maher: The trees still live although pushed over.

Mr. JONES: They do not.

Mr. Maher: They are only pushed over at an angle.

Mr. JONES: There are two types of mulga. As a matter of fact, I am trying to help a grazier in that area to get an implement made to his design by one of the Government workshops in Brisbane. It is a framework 8 feet high, with a serrated knife round the front and sides, which it is proposed to pull through the mulga so that it will cut it at a height of 8 feet. He said that if you cut mulga lower than 8 feet it dies off and he seems to know what he is talking about. We are pleased to be able to help him in his experiment, and I am ascertaining whether it is possible to have this implement made so that tests may be carried out.

In the past, according to reports I have received, the graziers have often worked with two tractors abreast, with a wire rope between the two, and they pull the whole of the mulga up holus-bolus, and it means that thousands of acres of good mulga are being pushed over and destroyed. I know the difficulties these graziers are having in the matter of obtain-

ing axemen to lop the mulga, but we shall probably have another drought some day; and the question is: shall we have the mulga? I am pleased to say that many of the big graziers are just as keen as I am or even keener, because of their practical experience. I am happy to know of their attitude. This is a real problem, and one that is giving the department some concern. I know that the grazier must keep his stock alive if possible, and in some cases it is virtually impossible to obtain axemen to fell the scrub. They have therefore had to devise a method of pushing the mulga over.

Mr. Macdonald: At Comongin they are doing it successfully.

Mr. JONES: I did not quite catch what the hon. member said.

The hon. member for Windsor dealt fully this afternoon with the growing of cotton under irrigation. I listened attentively to his remarks. He obviously had a case prepared for him in connection with the matter. The point I make is that if we are able next year to make available 500,000 acres of irrigable land for the growing of crops, farmers will grow cotton only if it is an economical crop. As I told Mr. Young of the Cotton Board the other day, I want to do everything I can to help the cotton industry. I appreciate, as hon. members do, that there is no more staple crop than cotton—one that we can dispose of to better advantage than the cotton crop.

But until we get a perfect cotton-picking machine we cannot hope to make any great advance in cotton production in this country. I do not profess to know a great deal about cotton production but Mr. Young told me that they are experimenting with a machine in the United States of America but they have not yet been able to evolve a machine to pick boll cotton cleanly.

Mr. Macdonald: They have one now.

Mr. JONES: I hope they have. If we had an efficient cotton-picking machine it would overcome one of our big difficulties because the main cost in cotton-growing is the picking of the crop.

Mr. Macdonald: It represents one-third of the cost.

Mr. Nicklin: And you have to grow the type of cotton to suit the machine.

Mr. JONES: Yes. It is a complex question and I do not profess to know very much about it. I should like to think that a perfect cotton-picking machine had been invented.

Mr. Morris: I can get you some information about it.

Mr. JONES: I shall be pleased to have it.

The hon. member for Maryborough said he hoped that the department would give consideration to the planting of softwoods in the Maryborough district. I later had a talk with the Director of Forests, Mr. Grenning, who told me that they had carried out certain experiments on poor land south-east of Mary-

borough with a number of small experiment plots of pines and they are thoroughly satisfied that the area is quite suitable for the growing of softwoods. It is the intention of the sub-department to establish a nursery in the area and planting will take place some time in the coming year. The hon. member has taken a very keen interest in the matter, having approached me on several occasions previously in regard to it.

The hon. member for Mundingburra made reference to soil erosion in the Ross River and went on to make a facetious remark in connection with a comparison with what had been done in Brisbane and what had been done in North Queensland. I think his remarks were very unfair. I do not think anyone would suggest that North Queensland has been neglected in this connection. So far as my department is concerned at any rate that cannot be said. We have made provision for investigations and experiments on the Burdekin River this year involving a total cost of £12,000, possibly more than we have provided for experimental and investigational work on any other stream in Queensland. That shows that we are at least serious about doing something on the Burdekin River. I believe that the Burdekin River has greater possibilities than any other river in Queensland from the viewpoint of irrigation. I cannot understand how any hon. member can say that we are doing nothing for the North when at the moment we have men on the job ready to begin the construction of the Burdekin River Bridge. In the matter of main roads, too, North Queensland has had a very good spin. In making a comparison between Brisbane and North Queensland it is unfair to suggest that the Government are doing everything for Brisbane and nothing for North Queensland. Such remarks do not make sense, at least to anybody with a knowledge of the facts.

The hon. member for Kelvin Grove made some very interesting comments, particularly in connection with fodder conservation. I do not intend to deal with the subject at length as it has already been discussed by hon. members but I have always said that the average grazier is rather lackadaisical about the manner in which he carries on his business.

Two years ago I was in Longreach with the hon. member for Gregory and I became acquainted with two American officers who happened to be passing through that town. I was very much struck by what they told me. They were talking about periodical droughts. One, who claimed to be a rancher, said he could not understand our psychology. He said, "I have been talking to one of your ranchers," evidently referring to one of our squatters, "and he told me that in a bad drought he would not attempt to feed his stock, that he would allow them to die." He made a very sound point when he said, "You people can call it a drought if you like, or you can call it anything else, but this fact remains: in New Zealand, America, every country in Europe, and most countries of the world, with the exception of South

Africa, India, and Australia, you have to put up with four, five, or six months of snow or frost, during which time you must feed your stock. We have to make provision for that six months; you do not. If you get four or five months' dry weather you begin to squeal and rush to your Governments, whereas we, every year, have to do something to meet that position ourselves." I have often said previously that the average Australian grazier is too lackadaisical. I can well remember the case of Rodney Downs, outside Ilfracombe, in the 1926 drought. The hon. members for Barcoo and Gregory can confirm my statement. When that drought occurred that station had 20 stacks of bush hay with which it was able to keep its sheep alive without losing any or buying any additional feed. On the other hand, Strathdarr, a big stud property outside Longreach, expended £20,000 on feed to keep its stud stock alive in the same drought. It made no provision for fodder conservation.

One can discuss the subject of fodder conservation all night. No-one can convince me that a property of 40,000 acres or more cannot set aside 400 or 500 acres from which the natural grasses can be saved and stacked in good seasons to provide for bad seasons. I have given some consideration to the matter and I feel that Governments will eventually have to give some consideration to it, too.

At 9.19 p.m.,

Mr. DEVRIES (Gregory) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. JONES: The hon. member for Carpentaria made reference to the possibilities of settlement on the Gregory River. I know that river very well and I know that it possesses great possibilities. I know, too, that it can grow all the crops he mentioned. I have stayed at the Gregory Downs Hotel, between Burketown and Camooweal, and I have seen at that hotel some of the finest vegetables growing on the banks of the Gregory River. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of flat land on both sides of the river. Of course, the main difficulty is access and transport. This land is over 100 miles from Cloncurry and a considerable distance from Burketown. I drew attention to it in this Chamber in 1929, but until we have proper transport and better access we cannot expect to do very much about it. A man from Narrandera, New South Wales, on one occasion told me he considered that the flats on the Gregory River could grow rice for two or three months in the year in the wet season, which usually begins about the first week in February.

He pointed out to me that it might be ideally suited for growing rice and there is possibly something in what he says. I believe that when hon. members see the report of the committee set up by the Government to investigate the possibilities of the Gulf they will see glowing accounts of what can be done on the Gregory. It is possible the time will come when the finest produce grown in Queensland will be grown in that area. It certainly has wonderful possibilities.

VOTES PASSED UNDER STANDING ORDER 307 AND SESSIONAL ORDERS.

At 9.21 p.m.,

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: As I believe an arrangement has been made I shall now, under Standing Order No. 307 and Sessional Orders, put the questions.

The following votes were put by the Temporary Chairman and agreed to:—

	£	s.	d.
Department of Public Lands—			
Chief Office	74,409	0	0
Balance of Vote	275,415	0	0
Department of Health and Home Affairs	2,623,525	0	0
Department of Public Works	288,102	0	0
Department of Labour and Employment	150,190	0	0
Department of The Treasurer	1,534,319	0	0
Department of Public Instruction	2,710,129	0	0
Department of Mines	192,659	0	0
Department of Railways	9,566,500	0	0
Department of the Auditor-General	37,612	0	0
Trust and Special Funds	19,249,084	0	0
Loan Fund Account	6,397,000	0	0
Supplementary Estimates, 1945-46 (Con. Revenue)	519,710	5	7
Supplementary Trust and Special Funds, 1945-46	1,277,536	15	6
Supplementary Loan Fund Account, 1945-46	827,938	19	3
Vote on Account, 1947-48	7,800,000	0	0

Resolutions reported, and ordered to be received on Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at 9.29 p.m.