

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 1947

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

QUESTIONS.

EMPLOYEES ENTERING AND LEAVING
RAILWAY SERVICE.

Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley), for **Mr. LOW** (Cooroola), asked the Minister for Transport—

“What was the total number of employees who (a) entered, and (b) left the service of the Railway Department in 1946-47?”

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) replied—

“The public value of this information would not be commensurate with the expenditure which would be involved in its compilation.”

PROJECTORS FOR STATE SCHOOLS.

Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

“1. In respect of visual education what provision has been made in the Estimates of the Education Department in respect of the costs of 16 mm. projectors for State schools?”

“2. If provision has been made, what is the basis of subsidy, and has any decision been made in regard to the standardisation of this equipment?”

“3. If not, when will it be made?”

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland) replied—

“1. An amount of £6,000 has been placed on the 1947-48 Estimates of the department for the purchase of projection equipment for State schools.

“2. Subsidy is paid on the basis of £1 for £1; yes.

“3. See No. 2.”

Mr. KERR (Oxley) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

“1. Is there any truth in the statement appearing in the ‘Courier Mail’ of 14th instant that an Australian-made projector has been selected as a standard equipment for State schools?”

“2. Is he certain that the projector selected does not contain a considerable number of imported parts, and therefore is not of purely Australian manufacture?”

"3. Is he aware that a purely Australian manufactured projector has been available for some time, and also that it is the least expensive machine now being marketed?"

"4. In any case, why were tenders not publicly called instead of the method adopted?"

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland) replied—

"1. This department has selected the Pyrox-Victor sound projector for use in State schools.

"2. This projector does include some imported parts; every projector made in Australia uses at least three imported parts.

"3. The projectors offered to this department were quoted at the following prices, for supply of 50 machines in one order:—Cinevox—Offered by Viz-Ed Equipment Pty. Ltd. (c/o Wright and Kerr, Exton House, Brisbane), £180; Kinray—Offered by S. & W. Enterprises, Brisbane, £185; Pyrox-Victor—Offered by Music Masters Radio Co., Brisbane, £193 10s.; Harmour and Heath—Offered by Harringtons, Brisbane, £200; Bell and Howell—Offered by National Theatre Supplies, Brisbane, £240, plus freight from Sydney. Of these machines the department considers that only the Pyrox-Victor and the Bell and Howell projectors meet the requirements of the schools—having consideration for both standard of performance and suitability for classroom operation. The price of the Bell and Howell machine is much higher than that of the other projectors, and it is felt that supplies from England cannot be assured. The other machines are all made in Australia. The Department has decided that it will serve the schools best by adopting the Pyrox-Victor as its standard sound projector.

"4. As indicated in Question 3, firm quotations were obtained from each of the local agents for the various projectors."

CONDITIONS ON RESUMED GRAZING SELECTIONS.

Mr. RUSSELL (Dalby) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

"In reference to the proposed opening of about 5,000,000 acres of sheep pastoral holdings to grazing selection—(1) Will he endeavour to ensure that existing lessees shall remain in possession of their holdings until the incoming selectors obtain their licences to occupy? (2) In the event of an existing lessee being deprived of the use of his holding before the incoming selector takes possession, will he be compensated for payments of rent, rates, and cost of upkeep necessary for the protection of his improvements against damage or deterioration?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Normanby) replied—

"1. It is the invariable practice of the department to grant to the former lessees of expired pastoral holdings an occupation license over the land, which occupation license holds good until the issue of a license to occupy to the selector of any

block on the expired holding. Upon the issue of such license to occupy the occupation license is determined in respect of the area thus selected.

"2. See answer to No. 1."

RAIL CONCESSION RATES, NORTH COAST.

Mr. RUSSELL (Dalby) asked the Minister for Transport—

"In reference to his statement on 24th instant that, despite the effect of port rates, his department had been able to enter into agreements with a number of people on the North Coast whereby, if they agreed to consign the whole of their goods by rail, they would receive a special contract rate—

"1. Are the concession rates in question included in the list of special rates which appear annually in the Commissioner's report?"

"2. Are such concession contract rates granted to traders and manufacturers only, or are they generally available to anyone?"

"3. Do they apply to people of the North Coast only, or are they applicable to any person living on the coast, including Brisbane?"

"4. As the full freight in such cases is usually shown on invoices, has the Government taken steps to ensure that the advantage of the concession rates is passed on to the consumer?"

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) replied—

"1. Contract rates showing the places between which they are quoted are included in Table 22 of the Commissioner's Annual Report when the rates are first approved of. They are not again inserted when the periods of contract are extended, or when the rates are extended to additional consignors or consignees.

"2. When a contract rate is quoted, it is available to other persons under the same conditions.

"3. Contracts may be made either with firms or persons at the destination or sending stations and are not necessarily confined to stations located on the coastal route.

"4. The concession rates are for the purpose of securing traffic to the railways, and it is assumed that firms or persons enjoying them would take full advantage of them in securing custom against their competitors."

REPORT ON IPSWICH RAILWAY WORKSHOPS.

Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera), for **Mr. HILEY** (Logan), asked the Minister for Transport—

"Has he received the report by Mr. Harrison on Ipswich railway workshops? If so, will he lay a copy on the table of the House for the information of hon. members?"

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) replied—

"Yes. The report is a departmental document regarding future workshop development and matters allied therewith. It is

now being examined by the Commissioner and departmental officers, and the question of publishing the recommendations and any other reports arising therefrom will be considered at a later date."

DISSECTION OF HOUSING STATISTICS.

Mr. CHALK (East Toowoomba) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

"1. Is he aware that the bulletins on housing progress issued by the Government Statistician throughout 1946 provided a table on page 2, giving numbers of dwellings built in various districts of the State, but excluding those built directly by the Government, and that this table has now been made an all-embracing one, covering all buildings?"

"2. Will he issue instructions to revert to the former procedure, so that from the tables one can find the number of houses built directly by the Government, and not only the number sponsored by the Government, which, of course, includes all those built for the Government by private contractors?"

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton—Treasurer), for **Hon. V. C. GAIR** (South Brisbane), replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Consideration will be extended to this suggestion when the next bulletins are being compiled by the Government Statistician."

ARREARS OF FIRE NOTICES, S.G.I.O.

Mr. WANSTALL (Toowong), for **Mr. DECKER** (Sandgate), asked the Treasurer—

"1. Is the State Insurance Office in arrears with the issue of renewal notices to property-owners whose houses are insured with that office?"

"2. If so, what arrangements are operating to cover the insured pending the issue of renewal notices?"

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

"1. No.

"2. See answer to No. 1."

COMMONWEALTH GRANT FOR RURAL ROADS.

Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley): I desire to ask the Treasurer whether he has an answer to the following question which I addressed to him on 29 October:—

"In reference to the grant of £191,000 mentioned in the Budget as having been made available by the Commonwealth for expenditure this year on road construction in sparsely populated areas and timber and rural areas, will he kindly give the details of the areas in which this amount is to be spent; also, an indication of the kinds of roads which will be included under this heading of expenditure?"

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

"The areas will include, particularly, South-Western Queensland, Central-Western Queensland, North-Western Queensland, and other parts of far Northern Queensland. Specific information concerning the areas will be announced in due course. Information as to the nature of the roads also will be supplied later."

STRIKE BY MEMBERS OF A.R.U.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) without notice, asked the Minister for Transport—

"Has the normal working of A.R.U. running men or other railway employees on today's trains been altered in order that employees who are not members of the A.R.U. might be able to do work which would have been performed today by members of the A.R.U., if there had been no strike by that union?"

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) replied—

"The first duty of the railways administration is service to the public and the rostering of trainmen and others has been carried out with due regard to that responsibility, but with the least possible diversion of men from normal workings. As a result of the tireless efforts of administrative and other officials a minimum degree of public inconvenience has been suffered. The majority of the long-distance trains are being run to their respective destinations and a reasonably good suburban service has been provided. In the South-western Division only one train was not manned.

"It is to be regretted that for the first time in history instructions were issued by a union for trainmen to leave their trains at the nearest staff station in the vicinity of midnight, one important train with nearly 200 passengers aboard being so sidetracked between Gympie and Maryborough, necessitating passengers being transhipped to another train in the middle of the night, while arrangements had to be made for a wagon of fish on the same train to be supplied with ice by lorry from Maryborough and a large quantity of frozen beef on this train had to be transferred to Gympie by lorry.

"That the members of the Australian Railways Union were by no means unanimous in connection with this strike is illustrated by the fact that of 521 members of that union employed in the Ipswich workshops only 111 or 21 per cent. absented themselves without leave, while all over the State a certain number of members of the same union reported for work."

PAPERS.

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

Report of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations for the year 1946-1947.

Report of the Commissioner of Prices under the Profiteering Prevention Acts, 1920 to 1938, for the year 1946-1947.

Report of the Queensland Housing Commission for the year, 1946-1947.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Notice of Road Closure under the Labour and Industry Act of 1946 and the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, 1938 to 1940.

Regulations under the Fish Supply Management Acts, 1935 to 1946 (October 30).

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT AID ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Larcombe, read a third time.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

(Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1947-1948.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Debate resumed from 13 November (see page 1391) on Mr. Power's motion—

“That £50,081 be granted for ‘Department of Public Works, Chief Office.’”

Mr. McINTYRE (Cunningham) (11.16 a.m.): I desire to speak on the vote for this very important department but before doing so I should like to congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank. My experience of him since I have been in this Chamber suggests to me that he will bring to his work the enthusiasm that will enable him to bring the department to a high standard of efficiency. I certainly trust that events will prove that to be so. This is a very important vote, because it is the medium whereby the lag in public buildings during the war years may now be overcome. The department has played a very important part in the public-works building programme of the State.

Much has been said of the neglect that has occurred in the building of schools in rural areas and I concur with much of it. However, I should like to add that this neglect existed even prior to the war and generally the conditions in this respect have been very unsatisfactory indeed. Strenuous efforts should now be made to overcome this lag and in this connection some discretion might be extended to the various school committees. A school committee generally decides what repairs are required and then an inspection is made by an officer of the department who may recommend that certain things be done, but generally the result is nil. Then it is found necessary to enlist the services of the political representative for the district. That

procedure is entirely wrong. There should be the utmost collaboration between the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Instruction to maintain a high standard of efficiency, a standard that we can reasonably expect to obtain so that adequate school buildings are provided throughout the State. One reason why that standard of efficiency does not obtain is that there is a lack of co-ordination between them in the matter of effecting essential repairs, and that is why a little push is needed by the political representative for the district to see that the standard of efficiency is achieved. There is also a lack of co-ordination between the central organisation in Brisbane and the branches in rural areas. While the inspectors attached to some of the sub-departments are most anxious to have the work done there is a lack of co-ordination between them and the head office in the city.

Mr. Power: What grounds have you got for making that statement? Give us a case in point so that we can investigate.

Mr. McINTYRE: My grounds for making that statement is this: we can have a local inspector who may be quite happy and enthusiastic in getting work done, but nothing happens. There must be a reason for that. I am of opinion—and I hope the Minister will investigate it—that there is lack of co-ordination between the outside representatives of the department and the central authority. It is essential that we should have decentralisation of authority. Too many decisions must be made in Brisbane where there is complete lack of knowledge of the requirements of rural areas. In my electorate, in the middle of the year, a school was burnt down. A committee got busy and established the school in a private residence, which also was burnt down.

Mr. Power: It looks as if there were a fire-bug out there.

Mr. McINTYRE: That is beside the point. The committee then organised a working bee and out of the iron of the buildings destroyed in the fire built a little building 15 x 20, with a low roof. Throughout the winter the teacher taught the children in that makeshift building. We are now in the month of November, yet nothing has been done to re-establish that school. Representations have been made by the committee, and it has been promised that a school will be removed from another centre. We are now facing the hot weather. It is disgraceful that a school should be conducted in such a makeshift building, not only throughout the winter but the summer also. Had those conditions obtained in Brisbane action would have been taken long ago to remedy them.

I hope that the Minister in his enthusiasm will aim at reorganising the whole of his department and bringing about a more practical expression of the desire of the people, so that effect will be given to the essential demands made on the department from time to time. Many minor repairs should be effected without any delay, if a policy of decentralised authority was established. Today

it is possible to spend £5 in a centre without departmental approval. That amount should be increased to £15 or £20, to allow of many minor works to be effected. I recall an occasion when the roof of a school was blown off. The department sent out and replaced the roof, but the workmen did not fix up the stove, and so the children had to shiver throughout the winter, because no tradesman was available for that purpose. That is just plain foolishness. Authority should be vested in someone to carry out such work promptly. The department should even at this stage launch a progressive school-building programme for the future, particularly as it affects the rural areas. It will be said that the trouble today is shortage of material, but we must plan ahead and be ready for the time when those shortages will be overtaken.

I have an excerpt from the daily Press that suggests what New South Wales is doing in this respect. I hope that the Minister will consider seriously taking similar action. The Press report states—

“School Building, New South Wales Plan.

“A record school building programme which has been launched by the New South Wales Government will benefit country children.”

All the emphasis should be on the word “country.”

“Every new school will incorporate the latest architecture techniques and colour schemes to produce psychological effect.

“Among the features are buildings planned to admit the maximum of light, folding walls or glass windows which slide out of the way to open on to sun terraces, heating equipment in classrooms, drying rooms where children caught in bad weather can hang their clothes, mural decorations, lunch rooms, and accommodation for voluntary workers to make Oslo lunches.

“Planting of trees for beautification has become a factor in all modern school planning, it was stated.”

I think the Minister should endeavour to work out some progressive scheme that might be put into effect to bring our school buildings and surroundings up to the standard that is necessary. There is a very distressing set of circumstances in our rural schools. Not only the schools themselves but the teachers' buildings also are far below the standard of comfort that obtains generally. That has a tendency to create discontent and dissatisfaction amongst the school-teachers; and it is a reflection on the Department of Public Works that it has not advanced with the times. Not only school buildings but teachers' residences, court houses, police stations and other Government buildings and hospitals come within the scope of that criticism and I believe that under the present organisation the Department of Public Works cannot cope with the work; therefore I believe there is unlimited scope for the newly-appointed Minister to demonstrate his capacity to bring something more progressive and acceptable to the community into this department.

I should like to say a few words about the Local Government Department. We find throughout the whole of our local authorities there is much consternation and dissatisfaction because of the lack of co-operation between the various departments, which is having the effect of not only delaying the execution of their programme but making it more expensive. I will tell you about one of the complaints. We find that the shire clerk, when dealing with various activities in connection with local authorities, must enter into correspondence with various departments—the Co-ordinator-General's Department, the Main Roads Commission, the Local Government Department, the Treasury and the Department of Public Works. He spends a great deal of time in correspondence with various departments in connection with the approval of certain work. I believe that the local authority should be able to get results by dealing with one department only. I believe that it is the responsibility of the various departments to work harmoniously with one another. Under the present system files are being built up, certainly, but no progress is being made. The departments are demanding that our shire clerks fill in more and more forms for statistical purposes; so the work of the offices is increasing. A local authority, for instance, must return a balance sheet showing the whole of the year's activities. It is very regrettable that the shire clerk should be put to this extra trouble and expense of making out statistical forms and returns; it is overloading the office.

Again, I think that some modification should be made in regard to permission to buy essential equipment required by the local authorities. Today tenders must be called for everything in excess of £100. I think that is wrong. There should be an increase in the amount they can spend without calling tenders. That requirement may have been all right at one time, but because of the increase in all values and the enormous increase in the price of equipment required by local authorities I think the figure of £100 is ridiculous; it should be doubled or trebled. It should be competent for the local authority to suspend that loan procedure in the purchasing of trucks and other essential equipment and plant. I believe it is practicable. Earlier in the debate a good deal was said about the right of a local authority to build up a reserve fund that would be readily available for the purchase of essential requirements. As one who has had a good deal of experience in local-authority work, I think that a reserve fund should be built up from the general fund. Always there are odds and ends of moneys that could be readily used for this purpose.

Much has been said about the financial difficulties of shire councils. The Premier the other day made a statement to the effect that the credit of local authorities was on a very high level and I agree that that is so, but it is due not to the stability or strength of their financial set-up but rather to the efficient management of the local body by the men who have been charged with it. I think today local authorities generally have arrived

at the stage where it is financially impossible for them to discharge effectively the responsibilities that are theirs under the charter given to them. The time has long passed when the whole of their revenue should be obtained from the landholders. Every section of the community should be called on to subscribe to the facilities made available for road transport.

The other day the Minister made a statement that the shires are not embarrassed because of a shortage of unskilled labour. I suggest that he was misinformed. During the last few weeks I hired three men in this city to go out to the wheat-growing areas, where labour is badly needed, but when these men went to the Labour Bureau to obtain railway passes the passes were refused and they were told that 70 unskilled labourers were required for Brisbane City Council work. It is regrettable that when men are eager to go out to rural areas to work in the great wheat industry they should not be permitted to do so.

Mr. Power: They were not prevented.

Mr. McINTYRE: They were not granted rail passes.

Mr. Power: There is no direction of labour.

Mr. McINTYRE: As the result of representations made the irregularity was corrected but I point to this incident to suggest that there must be a shortage of unskilled labour when the Brisbane City Council is short of that number of men.

As we know, the Valuer-General's Department was set up to bring about uniform valuations throughout the shires in Queensland. I believe that is very desirable but the work is proceeding too slowly. The shires generally are in favour of uniform valuations, which is very desirable from many angles, as men with experience in local-authority work realise, but the work is proceeding too slowly and this is causing much concern among local bodies. If a valuation is made in only one area it should be declared immediately.

Mr. Power: That is the position. An amendment of the Act was put through this session.

Mr. McINTYRE: Shires are grouped into valuation areas and up to the moment no valuation is being released until the valuation of that group has been completed.

Mr. Power: That is not the position now; the Act has been amended.

Mr. McINTYRE: I am glad to hear it is not so and I hope effect will be given to that improvement in the Valuer-General's Act. Many shires will be compelled to wait years before a declaration is made and this will be sure to cause congestion in the appeal courts when the valuation is declared.

I was disappointed to hear the Minister say that he had never heard mentioned in this Chamber the matter of giving the right of appeal to a local authority against a valuation. I would remind the hon. gentleman that on 1 November, 1944, an amendment

whose object was to give that right was moved on a clause in the original Act in this Chamber, but defeated.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is getting away from the matter before the Committee.

Mr. McINTYRE: I was replying to the statement by the Minister that the matter was never raised in this Chamber. However, if you, Mr. Mann, rule that I am out of order I shall have to pass on, but I would suggest that if we are to have uniform valuations that right should be given.

The recent action taken to appoint additional health inspectors was unjustified, because an analysis of the position will disclose that the general health of the community has improved so much under the present set-up that the imposition of extra expense on the shires is unwarranted. I trust that before local authorities are burdened with the extra expense of additional health inspectors, some consideration will be given to the improved standard of health in our local authorities.

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) (11.36 a.m.): At the outset I join with other hon. members in congratulating the Minister upon his elevation to his present high office. I feel that he will follow closely the good work that was done by his predecessor.

I believe that we can look forward to a progressive and active programme of public works in the years ahead. There is no doubt that a public-works programme is a definite and essential part of government. This has been illustrated by what the Department of Public Works did during the depression years and is doing even now when times are returning to normal. The public-works programme and policy pursued by a Government have a definite effect upon the economy of the State in that they are the means of giving work to many tradesmen and other workers. We are looking forward to new buildings and additions to existing buildings in the years to come, and it is the Department of Public Works that will be entrusted with the responsibility of achieving this desirable end.

During the debate hon. members opposite have offered a good deal of criticism of the Department of Public Works. In my view such criticism was unwarranted and unfair, because I feel that no-one could find fault with its activities in pre-war years. This work was important to the community in that such necessary buildings as schools and hospitals were being erected. The war effort, of course, curtailed this work to a great extent, but since the war has finished the department has been vigorously carrying on where it left off.

The scope for public works is unlimited. Our public buildings are already a credit to the State and they compare more than favourably with those of other States, but we should not rest on our laurels because there is much still to be done. All the maintenance work that was neglected during the war years has to be carried out now, and this is naturally restricting the erection of new buildings.

I wish to thank the department for the work done in my electorate. Despite the fact that the housing programme has taken up much of the available material and manpower, the Department of Public Works has been able to complete additions to three schools in my electorate. This good work is not peculiar to the Mackay electorate, as a perusal of the report of the department will disclose.

I believe therefore that the criticism of this department by Opposition members was unjust. I quote for instance the remarks made by the hon. member for Coorooora a few days ago in which he took the department to task. He had made a tour of his electorate and he mentioned in this Chamber every school, police court and public building and more or less criticised the Department of Public Works for the condition of those buildings. When the Minister replied he showed the hon. member for Coorooora that the works he had complained of had been approved. That reply by the Minister demonstrated one of two things; either that the hon. member's predecessor had not been on the job of attending to the wants of his electorate or that the hon. member for Coorooora was unfair and unjust in his criticism. No-one is more conversant with the requirements of electorates than the Minister; the department will see to it that the necessary work is undertaken as far as is humanly possible.

I wish to make one or two suggestions in regard to this department because I believe the time is opportune for its reorganisation. I have no wish to steal the Minister's thunder in this regard; he is big enough to accept in the spirit in which it is offered what I have to say in the way of constructive criticism. The present set-up has done a good job; it is capable of doing a good job but by a reorganisation it would be capable of doing better work. Let us take for instance the matter of decentralisation. At the present time the whole of the programme of the Department of Public Works is arranged and decided in Brisbane. I believe that with the growth of Queensland and the development of the northern parts there should be a Department of Public Works in the North with authority to undertake work in that section of the State. If part of the set-up in Brisbane was transferred to the North we should get better results, because instead of having to rely on the Brisbane office to provide plans and specifications, that work could be done in the North. By so doing we should get quicker and better results.

Quite recently in the construction of schools in Mackay considerable delay was experienced over a rather minor matter—the putting in of a couple of pairs of casements. The district supervisor was agreeable that the work should be done but because it was not in the plan he did not have authority to alter the plan. I do not think that the matter is yet finalised and I believe that if district supervisors had greater authority—and they are capable builders—they could make these minor alterations without the necessity of referring everything to Brisbane. If a change in plan was

wanted here or there, such as the putting up of a partition to suit local requirements, the district supervisor should be allowed to go ahead with the job. At present any such matter has to be referred to Brisbane and delay is occasioned.

I think that the Department of Public Works should go ahead and establish in the North—and I do not say that it should be established in Mackay, Rockhampton or Townsville—its own factory. At the present time the department has to rely on the factory in Brisbane to get casements, doors and other building requisites, whereas a factory in the North could provide the whole of the requirements for building operations in the North.

According to the departmental report, the Brisbane factory is capable of producing building requirements at prices lower than those charged by private establishments, and I suggest that if a sub-department like the State Stores Board was set up in the North it would meet the requirements not only of the Department of Public Works but also of private traders. Its trading activities should not be restricted to Government departments, but should be available to the people generally. The State Housing Commission draws plans and specifications for private homes but this service is not available to the general public who have homes built by private contractors. The department has its own staff of architects and I believe that these, too, should be made available to the general public where homes are not built by the State Housing Commission. At the present time home-builders who have to employ private contractors, are called upon to pay an enormous amount for plans and specifications prepared by private architects, and I suggest that the architectural service of the Department of Public Works should be made available to them. It should be one of the functions of Government to do it. If the Government established a joinery factory in the North to meet the requirements of all home-builders, and made the services of its Architectural Branch available to them, a splendid service would be available to the working-class people that is not always available to them today.

With the growth that has taken place in the North, the need for new schools and improvements and additions to existing ones is very acute. More consideration will have to be given to the suitability of the type of building than hitherto. I do not say that the existing school buildings are entirely unsuitable, but much more consideration will have to be given to the climatic conditions in the building of schools. More attention will have to be given to ventilation and natural lighting. Many existing buildings were constructed years ago without a proper regard to the placing of windows to give the maximum of natural light. A number of schools are facing in the wrong direction, which means that at certain times of the day, the sun beats down on an aspect of the building in a way that is not to the benefit of the children. Teachers have had to take the children under such schools to escape the humid conditions that obtain inside them at these times. The

department will have to give greater attention to these matters, because the mere drawing of a plan of a school building for, say, Mackay or Charters Towers, is not enough. Proper regard will have to be had to adequate ventilation and proper lighting.

The position of a district supervisor, Department of Public Works, is a very important one. We have a very capable man in Mackay, but I think that the department in Brisbane has not always been as sympathetic with these men as it might have been.

At 11.50 a.m.,

Mr. HILTON (Carnarvan) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. GRAHAM: I quote the case of our previous district supervisor, who resigned from the department because of the bad deal he got from it. I am not quoting this case in criticism of the department, because this gentleman is now out of the department.

Mr. Power: When did he resign?

Mr. GRAHAM: About 12 or 18 months ago. If greater consideration was given to these district supervisors in the problems they have to deal with, and particularly greater sympathy at the Brisbane end, the department would be able to retain these officers. Mr. Binnington was a very capable man but because he could not get a proper deal from the Brisbane office—this was during the war when it was difficult to get materials and man-power—and he was harassed by the department he remarked, "My place is out of the department; I cannot do the right thing by it, so I will get out." The department should aim at trying to retain men possessing the ability of the former district supervisor at Mackay. Quite a number of good men occupy similar positions in the department and they should be encouraged to get the best service for the department. The department can expect to get that service only by its sympathetic encouragement and permitting these officers to go ahead and do the job. A district supervisor has a big responsibility. He has to overcome problems concerning man-power and materials, which have to be got ready on the job. If district supervisors are going to be pushed and "stood over" simply because they are not able to get through the work through no fault of their own, the department must eventually get into trouble.

The new district supervisor at Mackay, Mr. King, is an excellent man and is doing a great job. I have no complaints from him but he does run up against little bits of trouble. His instructions must come from the South and while awaiting those instructions he is pushed by the people concerned in his centre. Conditions are improving and are a little better than they were. If my suggestion to set up a section of the Department of Public Works in districts like Mackay was adopted, with labour on the spot, and authority had not to be obtained from Brisbane for all works as at present, the district supervisor would be able to do a better job than at

present. I am not suggesting that the department is not doing a good job at present in the district. It is.

One has only to look at the expenditure of the Department of Public Works from 1944 up to the present to visualise its vast ramifications. We expect to see in 1948 and the following years greater expenditure on public works. That is necessary and desirable. It will increase work for many artisans such as carpenters and plumbers and is a desirable object of the Government. I sincerely hope that the works programme will be carried out, that the Minister will put his head down, as it were, and the department will be brought up to that position we all desire.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (11.55 a.m.): The hon. member for Mundingburra in his speech implied that the hands of local authorities were tied by the Government.

That statement is not correct. The local authorities have their own local autonomy and there is a charter under which they work. There are, of course, certain matters that must be referred to the Government for approval. If the local authority desires to obtain a loan approval must come from the Government. There is a very sound reason for that—the Government are guarantors of all loans raised by local authorities. Never have I known a local authority not to be allowed to borrow money for an undertaking, so I do not think the local authorities are suffering any hardship for having to refer those matters to the Government for approval.

Mr. Maher: The real question is: have you ever vetoed the purpose for which the local authority required the money?

Mr. POWER: I have no knowledge of its having been done. All these matters are closely investigated. Such a thing would not be done without very close investigation at least. If a local authority desires to do a certain work the ratepayers have specific rights. They have the right to demand a poll and if the majority of them decide against the proposed work, I think the Government are justified in not allowing the local authority to proceed with it. I am sure the hon. member for West Moreton would agree that the majority must rule.

Then by-laws are made by local authorities—within the city of Brisbane we call them ordinances. On being passed by the local authority such a by-law is forwarded to the Governor in Council for approval. It is first submitted to the Crown Law Office to ascertain whether it is in conflict with any other law and to ensure that it is put into proper legal form and then submitted through my department to the Executive Council. In every case that has occurred during my brief period the local authority's by-law has been approved.

In regard to the question of a benefited area, the local authority declares the area and the decision is submitted to the Minister for his approval. I have had no reason to reject any such proposal. The Director of Local Government works in an advisory capacity, and he has been very helpful indeed to the local

authorities throughout the length and breadth of Queensland; and they have appreciated his work.

Mr. Sparkes: No man has a wider knowledge.

Mr. POWER: The question of subdivision by local authorities came up during the debate. The local authority imposes certain conditions in regard to the sub-division of land, and sometimes these operate far too harshly on the owner of the property. I have known of instances in which the local authority has demanded water channelling and bitumen roads before it would approve of the sub-division, whereas in the adjoining area it provided only an earth channel and an earth road. I know of a case in which the person concerned exercised his right of appeal against the decision of the local authority and I appointed an officer to investigate the matter; and the decision was given against the local authority because it was asking the person to expend money out of all proportion to the value of the asset. That is a protection to the owner of the property, and is only fair and reasonable; and I do not think the local authorities should have any complaint in that respect.

The hon. member for Maree raised the question of buildings for State services. I have dealt with that subject in an earlier speech. I am not going to erect buildings for State services while people are looking for homes. The policy of my department and the policy of the Government are that homes must be provided for the people in preference to new buildings for public servants. At the same time, we are doing all we can to relieve the situation. There is a shortage of accommodation, and the Government, despite the fact that they own a number of buildings, are paying rent to private owners to house public servants. In addition, we are from time to time looking for accommodation, but while we are waiting for homes for the people I am not willing to agree to the erection of any building that can be done without. Homes come first, as I am sure hon. members will agree.

Mr. Brand: That is our policy.

Mr. POWER: I did not know the hon. member's party had a policy. I am very glad to know that the hon. member is again trying to steal the policy of this side. From time to time we have succeeded in converting the Opposition to our way of life, our views, and our policy, and there is not the slightest doubt that when the next election comes round the hon. member will go out and advocate the things this party has been advocating for a number of years, but he will be advocating them with his tongue in his cheek.

The hon. member for Maree made the suggestion that officers of the department should be stationed throughout Queensland. It was an excellent suggestion but, like Rip Van Winkle, the hon. member has been asleep for years. For years we have had officers at Cairns, Townsville, Charters Towers,

Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough and Toowoomba, and the hon. member is advocating the introduction of something that has been an accomplished fact for a number of years. This goes to show that despite the fact that the hon. member has been in Parliament for a number of years he has not taken the trouble to study the reports submitted by the Department of Public Works.

As a matter of fact, it would be impossible for the whole of the works to be carried out from Brisbane. This brings me to the suggestion made by another hon. member that we should allow school committees to do certain things with regard to repairs to school buildings and his criticism that at present it was left to Brisbane to decide whether they should be put into effect or not. As a matter of fact a school committee does not decide these matters at all. If there is anything wrong with a school building—perhaps it requires repairs—and the head teacher does not bring the matter under the notice of his departmental head, he is not doing his duty. When the Department of Public Instruction receives the complaint it is referred to my department, and Mr. Lyons then sends it on to the supervisor in the part of Queensland from which the complaint originated. The matter is then investigated, a recommendation is submitted to my department, and the necessary approval given.

There is a good deal of merit in the suggestion made by the hon. member for Cunningham that an inspector should have authority to spend a greater sum of money than he is allowed to spend at present, and I can assure the hon. member that I will give it serious consideration.

I think it was the hon. member for Maree who referred to Thursday Island. I would inform the Committee that I gave instructions for the Valuer-General to make a valuation of Thursday Island with a view to restoring local government there and the matter is being investigated at the present time. The Department of Local Government now administers Thursday Island and we provide money on the Estimates for that purpose, but I believe that a number of people have returned to the island and taken up their occupations there. The valuation will be made and when it is submitted to the Director of Local Government the restoration of local government to Thursday Island will receive serious consideration. I believe we should restore local government at Thursday Island as soon as possible.

The giving of the right of appeal to a local authority against a valuation also was mentioned by the hon. member for Maree. As a matter of fact, there was some doubt as to whether the right of appeal did lie in the amending legislation introduced by my predecessor during the last session of Parliament. One magistrate said the right of appeal did not lie, another said it did, and the opinion of the Crown Law Office was that it did. To clarify the matter and put it beyond all doubt, during my absence from the House owing to illness an amending Bill was put through that cleared the matter up.

The question of valuations by the Valuer-General's Department is a contentious one and I know it is exercising the minds of many hon. members opposite and a number of local authorities. The position is that there has been great difficulty in obtaining valuers. We have not enough valuers to make valuations of the whole of the State, and for that reason amending legislation was introduced last session giving the local authority the right to amend its valuation or to make a fresh one. The hands of nobody are tied and I do not know why we have had so many complaints about the fact that the Valuer-General is not carrying out the work.

Mr. Brand: You have not got the point.

Mr. POWER: There is no doubt about what the point is. The hon. member for Sandgate let the cat out of the bag the other day when he said, "The reason why I want the valuation to be made by the Valuer-General is that I do not want the local authority to be blamed for putting up the valuation." Those words are recorded in "Hansard," and there is no denying the fact that there have been many increases in valuations. There is nothing to prevent local authorities from amending their valuations or making fresh ones if they so desire. They can carry out a valuation and when the Valuer-General has the required staff the whole of the work will be undertaken by him. His staff is working in some parts of the State at present.

Amending legislation was put through Parliament this session to deal with the matter raised by the hon. member for Cunningham. Under the original Act it was provided that before a valuation could be declared the whole of the valuation district had to be valued. That seemed to be satisfactory at the time of the passing of the Act, but I agree with the hon. member for Cunningham that if the amendment had not been put through there would have been a considerable amount of congestion in the appeal courts in the hearing of appeals against valuations. The hon. member for Mundingburra has told us that in Townsville alone there were 1,500 appeals against the local authority's valuation. I assure the hon. member for Cunningham that in the future, as the Valuer-General's Department completes the valuation of any local-authority area, the valuation will be declared.

Mr. McIntyre: It is not being done.

Mr. POWER: The Act makes provision for it to be done and as valuations are completed I will see that the provisions of the Act are carried out.

The hon. member for Cunningham spoke of lack of co-operation between the local inspector and the head office. I do not know whether he referred to the local inspector from the Department of Public Instruction or the building supervisor.

Mr. McIntyre: The Department of Public Works officer.

Mr. POWER: There is no lack of co-operation there. Whenever a complaint is received by the supervisor of public works an investigation is made. As a matter of fact, sometimes a complaint is made by an hon. member here. It is then referred to the supervisor of the district who reports on what should be done. His report comes to Brisbane for approval. The difficulty today is to obtain man-power to do the work. I dealt with that matter very effectively last Thursday. We are having extreme difficulty in getting men to go out and do jobs in many parts of the State. When we have been unable to get the members of our own staff to go out and do the work, the supervisor has been empowered to obtain quotes for the work and have it carried out under his supervision. We have even taken the matter up with school-teachers in some districts to see whether they can get anybody to do the work for us.

There is no desire on the part of my department or the Government to hold up important public works, but, as I have said before, it has been difficult to get suitable labour.

The hon. member made reference to the replacement of the Felton South State school, but I should like to inform the Committee that this matter was brought under the notice of the Department of Public Instruction and was submitted to the Department of Public Works. The hon. member for Cunningham must know what action has been taken to replace the school, because he was to be informed by letter on 21 August as follows:—

"With reference to his personal representations in the matter of providing a school building to replace the building recently destroyed by fire and inform him that the report on the removal of the closed school building from Beauraba to Felton South has been received from the Works Department."

Mr. McIntyre: It has not happened.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member was representing to this Committee, whether wilfully or not—and I do not think he would do it wilfully—that no action had been taken. The matter was put in hand, and the hon. member was informed. I want to tell him that you cannot, simply by a wave of the hand, have public works carried out. Authority has been given for the work to be carried out, and I will inform the hon. member before the closing of the debate whether a contract has been let for the removal of the Beauraba building. In the meantime, I can assure him that there has been no delay on the part of the department, but once more I must say it is a question of getting suitable labour to do the job, and no fault lies at the door of the department. The matter is in hand and he should have known this, because there was an instruction given to advise the hon. member for Cunningham of the position. It is hoped that the work will be completed before the school re-opens in the New Year.

I think it was the hon. member for Cunningham who made reference to the securing of land for the building of future schools in rural areas. This is an important matter,

and I agree that the children in rural areas are entitled to whatever consideration this Government can give them.

Mr. Brand: Hear, hear!

Mr. Russell: Did you take that out of our policy?

Mr. POWER: In reply to the hon. member for Dalby, let me say I do not think it would take me very long to take a lot out of him.

We provide all the amenities we can. I have visited, during the time I have been a member of Parliament, many of our rural areas from time to time, and I know something of the conditions there. I want to assure the hon. member that the policy of the Government has been to make provision for the future, and that land has been obtained in many parts for the building of future schools. We have been held up by the lack of man-power and materials, and by the need for providing homes for the people before we set out on an extensive policy of building new schools throughout the State.

I think the hon. member for Cunningham referred to the remodelling of school buildings. We are remodelling school buildings in many districts as repairs are required. We have not lost sight of the fact that many of our old schools were erected years ago when this State was governed by an anti-Labour Government who had no consideration for the workers of the State, who placed scholarships upon the competitive basis, and were not concerned about amenities for the children. Buildings today are being constructed on highly technical lines.

Complaints have been made with regard to new school residences. Plans for school teachers' residences are submitted to the Department of Public Instruction for approval and are then put under way. We are not building any teachers' residences that are not required. Those that are built, although not elaborate, are very comfortable and provide the amenities needed in the district in which they are put. I cannot agree with the hon. member that they are being built without any regard to modern design.

The hon. member complained also that local authorities had to take certain action before certain things could be done and in particular that local authorities had to write to a number of Government departments in respect of many aspects of local-authority work. What is wrong with that? Does he suggest that we should set up a special department for the benefit of all the local authorities in Queensland so that they may write to one man and ask him to do their work for them? Why, I should need a staff of 200 to do that. If a local authority desires the Department of Public Lands to do something for it, then it should write to that department direct and if the local authority is not sure what department deals with a specific phase of its work it need only write to Mr. Chuter, the Director of Local Government, and he will advise it. I am not going to set up a special staff in Brisbane to do the work of the local authori-

ties. They have complete autonomy to carry out their own work. We are willing to cooperate with them as much as possible and to advise them, but we are not prepared to do their work for them. If a local authority writes to the Local Government Department seeking advice it will be advised promptly as to what procedure it should take. If I interpret the remarks of the hon. member for Cunningham correctly, he suggests that my department should do this work for the local authorities when in fact it should be actually carried out by them. I cannot agree to his suggestion.

The hon. member referred also to the practice of calling tenders for materials and machinery and goods generally by local authorities. The Act provides that where the expenditure exceeds £100 tenders shall be called. He suggested that the amount should be increased to £200 but I will not agree to that either. I do not think that it would be in the best interests of the local authorities themselves. The present provision gives protection to the ratepayers, the town clerk, local-authority engineer, and every member of the local authority. Tenders should be called where the amount exceeds £100 and we should be very unwise indeed if we increased the amount to £200. I strongly urge local authorities to call tenders for all supplies so as to obviate any suggestion that may be made at any time that any alderman or councillor is getting an advantage if his council fails to call tenders.

The hon. member suggested also that every person in a local-authority area, not only landholders, should contribute to local-authority revenue. I contend that that is the practice today. A person living in a rented house pays the cost of the rates in the rent that he has to pay. Every landholder takes the rates into account in fixing the rent of his building. He makes a calculation of the capital cost of the building, the cost of rates, and other expenditure, and fixes the rent accordingly.

I maintain therefore that in many cases the owner contributes nothing towards local-authority revenue. It is the tenant who makes the contribution. No consideration should be given to the suggestion raised by the hon. member, because I contend that the factor he mentions has already received attention.

The hon. member raised also the question of restriction on unskilled labour. He made the statement that the other day he wanted some unskilled labour for a rural district from the Labour Bureau, and that he found out that 75 or 80 men were required by the Brisbane City Council, in consequence of which he was unable to get labour to go into that rural area because of some sort of restriction. There is no restriction on any labour whatsoever to prevent it from going into any part of a district it desires to enter. The war is now over and restriction on man-power has been abolished. Any man is entitled to work on a wheat farm or on any property or in any district that he chooses. The point is that no restriction is now placed on labour; it can go wherever it will. Anyone

who wants to go into the country areas to work will be assisted in every possible way by the Government.

The hon. member again raised objection to the increased expenditure that has been placed on local authorities through being compelled to appoint health inspectors. I am sorry that the hon. member struck that note because it is very unwise for any hon. member to raise objection to anything that tends to preserve the health of the people. It is very important that we should have in local-authority areas a great many more health inspectors than there are at present. The health of the people is a No. 1 asset. Therefore a local authority is taking a niggardly attitude if it does not want to appoint a health inspector because it will cost it more money. Expenditure on the health of the people is worth while and is in the interests of the nation.

I thank the hon. member for Mackay for his kindly congratulations on my appointment and his tribute to the good work done by my department. He referred to certain delays that have taken place from time to time in carrying out public works. Probably there have been delays, and I suppose there will be more delays in the future; but I do not think the suggestion made by him that a staff should be set up in every town to prepare plans, specifications and estimates can be given effect to. The system operating today is that all requests from country areas for schools or public buildings are first investigated and reported on by the district supervisor. If the report is favourable plans are drawn and estimates taken out. I am not willing to let any officer of the department go ahead and carry out any public works unless an estimate is first prepared. If that precaution is discarded we shall find ourselves facing a good deal of trouble.

Mr. Morris: It depends on the size of the job.

Mr. POWER: That is so. The question of cost enters very largely into those matters. I should like here to pay a tribute to the Assistant Under Secretary and Chief Architect, Mr. A. B. Leven. During the war years and in the post-war period he has experienced a very difficult time in getting plans prepared for the various public works. Any delay that has occurred has not been due to any fault of Mr. Leven, as he has not had the staff to do the work. We have not sufficient architects. I wish to compliment Mr. Leven on the quantity of work he got out during the war period and since, despite his many disabilities through shortage of architects and staff. These plans must be prepared in Brisbane. In addition, estimates must be made and approval obtained for the work before it can be carried out. If we set up another organisation with complete authority in another part of the State a duplication of staff would result; the present set-up in Brisbane meets the situation. If it were not for the fact that eight of our architects were transferred from the department to the State Housing Commission during the period my

predecessor held office we should not be in the position we are today of not having sufficient architects to draw plans.

The position has now improved slightly as a result of the arrival of a number of architects from the Old Country. Unfortunately we lost one but we expect another out in the near future. We will take as many more as we can get so that our works programme can go ahead.

The hon. member for Mackay made reference to the proposed alteration of the plan of a school—I think it was one of the schools at Mackay. The hon. member has discussed that matter with the Under Secretary for Public Works, and approval was given for certain alterations. The hon. member again rang the under secretary yesterday, and the matter is being investigated to see whether the wishes of the school committee and the head teacher—who require the closing of the veranda for the purposes of a library—can be met. The matter is under consideration.

In regard to joinery for the various jobs throughout Queensland, we do not buy all we need in Brisbane. As a matter of fact, it would be impossible to get it all in Brisbane. Recently I placed an order for joinery from Cairns for £8,000, and it will be used in many parts of North Queensland. Wherever possible, if the joinery and timber can be obtained where a job is being done, they are bought there. If we adopted the policy of sending all the material up from Brisbane, the cost would be greatly increased and I am very keen on seeing that costs are cut down.

I have already dealt with the question of erecting new public buildings. They are being built as required wherever possible. At the same time, I must repeat that I am not going to deviate from the policy the Government have laid down—homes for the people first. After the people have been supplied with homes the other requirements will come next.

The planning of school buildings and provision of amenities have received a good deal of consideration from the department. I agree that different districts require different types of plans. That is recognised by the architects. Natural lighting, for instance, is of major importance. The provision of amenities to meet the requirements of a particular district is the department's policy today.

The hon. member for Mackay said that supervisors in country areas were not getting a fair deal. I had no knowledge of that. I believe the time is ripe for a general transfer of all our supervisors from one town to another, in order to give them more varied experience. Some of them have been stationed in one town for a number of years. I think it is time they had a change of scenery, air and conditions. I think you can be too long in the one place—although that does not apply to the Opposition. (Laughter.) I think the time is ripe for a general review and the transfer of men from town to town so that they can get a general knowledge of the

overall picture of the requirements of Queensland in regard to public works. I intend to take that matter up with the Under Secretary to see what can be done to meet that situation.

The hon. member for Mackay mentioned the case of the gentleman who resigned in his district because he allegedly did not receive a fair deal from the department. I am informed that a few days prior to the retirement of that gentleman the Under Secretary was in the district. He had previously made no complaint about his treatment. He had not stated that there was anything wrong; and when the Under Secretary was present he made no complaint to him about anything being wrong. I do know that the gentleman referred to resigned and went into business at Sarina shortly after he left the department. If the supervisor concerned had any complaint to make about his treatment I think the honest and decent thing for him to have done would have been to bring the matter before the Under Secretary.

Nobody can say that Mr. Lyons will not investigate any complaint referred to him by a member of his staff. Furthermore, if this man had any complaint about his conditions and he was a good Labour man and a good unionist he would take the matter up through his union with the departmental head and if he was still dissatisfied have the matter placed before the Minister. I find no action was taken by that man. No complaint was made to the department with regard to his conditions. He left the department and the only reason given for his resignation was that he was going into private business. I have no objection to his doing that. Any man is entitled, if he so desires, to leave the employment of the department if he thinks he will better himself. I am sorry he made that statement to the hon. member for Mackay, because he made no complaint to any official of the department.

Mr. CHALK (East Toowoomba) (12.31 p.m.): I am very pleased that the Minister has replied so fully to certain of the matters raised by the hon. member for Cunningham, because I had intended to touch on them.

During the debate last week the Minister made some rather bold statements relative to the general overhaul of the Department of Public Works and in his desire to effect an improvement I am certain he has the backing of both sides of the Committee. As members move through their own electorates, they become very conscious of the considerable amount of repair and maintenance work that is urgently necessary for the preservation of State buildings, particularly schools and police stations. The hon. member for Mackay said that any criticism of the Department of Public Works was unfair and unwarranted but last week the Minister himself said that he was dissatisfied. I believe that he is in a position to know the exact position of his department but I should like the hon. gentleman to be more explicit before this debate terminates as to how he proposes to effect the overhaul of which he has spoken. Already a number of public servants employed in his

department have spoken to me and put forward sound arguments to show that the responsibility for the alleged inefficiency is far removed from their door.

Mr. Power: I suppose those who went to you were the most inefficient in the department.

Mr. CHALK: I shall come to that. I am pointing out that these people are concerned as to how this reorganisation is to be carried out by the Minister. I am aware that he has stated that he proposes to bring into his department the best brains he can procure from outside, and I am quite in accord with him, but when he states that he intends to change a number of his departmental heads, is he, as Minister, going to take it upon his own shoulders to decide this issue?

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member has stated I made a statement that I did not make. The hon. member has said that I stated I was going to change a number of departmental heads. I said that, if necessary, I would change the departmental heads.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I would ask the hon. member for East Toowoomba to accept the Minister's denial on that point.

Mr. CHALK: I will accept the Minister's denial and will say that the Minister said that if necessary he would change a number of departmental heads. I want to know just how he proposes to conduct his inquiry. Does he intend to give these public servants who contend that the faults for which they are being blamed are not of their making the opportunity to state their case? Does he intend to give them the right of appeal or is there going to be victimisation of these men because of something for which they are not responsible?

Mr. Moore: Do you not think their unions would look after their interests?

Mr. CHALK: These men feel that they are likely to be victimised. I make that statement not from any desire to criticise, but because I believe that these men are entitled to fair consideration if they feel that there are circumstances that are preventing them from giving of their best.

The Minister also said that he would not be responsible for any mistakes that may have been made by his department prior to his appointment. I remind him that he followed another Minister, and that stepping into his predecessor's shoes he was merely bringing about a change of administration, not of Government; consequently if any errors have been made by previous Ministers he must accept responsibility for them and see that they are rectified for the benefit of the public.

Mr. Power: I was not admitting that any mistakes were made by Ministers.

Mr. CHALK: Almost every hon. member who has spoken has referred to the bad state of repair of State schools, and I am sorry to

say that my electorate is no exception. Of course, that is no reflection on the Department of Public Works, because I realise that during the war years and since there has been an acute shortage of materials and men. The Minister confirmed that this morning when he told us that man-power is his greatest difficulty. Although the schools in my area are in need of urgent attention, I do not lay the blame for it at the door of the Department of Public Works. Over the past few months I have been pleased to receive from the Minister notification of approval for the enlarging and painting of the State school at Helidon, for the painting of the police station at Helidon, and recently for the painting of the Harlaxton State School, which is certainly in a bad state of repair. Unfortunately, the Department of Public Works has told me that this work cannot proceed immediately owing to lack of materials. There are other schools and police stations in the area that I should like to bring before the Minister's notice, but when we read the report of the Under Secretary we find little encouragement for bringing these matters forward because that report says that the pool of deferred maintenance work is extensive and it may be several years before all arrears are overtaken. I suggest that a desperate drive must be made to overtake that lag and my personal view is that if outside branches of the department were given a little more authority, and not required to refer minor matters to Brisbane for approval, there would be a speeding-up of work in country areas.

Mr. Power: A number of jobs have been approved in many areas for months, and they have not been started yet.

Mr. CHALK: I appreciate that, but I suggest that if country branches were given more power to obtain materials they would often be able to get materials that are sometimes available in country areas.

Mr. Power: They have been given every authority to do that. As a matter of fact, they have been given authority to let contracts to private people to do the job, and they still cannot get it done.

Mr. CHALK: I am pleased to have the Minister's assurance, as I believe it will help in country areas. If we have responsible men in the country it is my contention that we must delegate power to them, and if we give them power to get jobs done they will feel a greater incentive to go ahead with their work. Since I was elected a member of this Assembly I have had a number of dealings with the Toowoomba branch of the Department of Public Works and I pay my tribute to the officers there because they have always been very obliging to me and have given me whatever help I asked for. I think that it must be very disappointing to those men to have to say in answer to the inquiries of school committees and other persons that they cannot proceed with certain jobs because quite a lot of materials have to come from Brisbane and in many cases they are still awaiting the approval of the Brisbane office. Those conditions do not encourage men to give of their best and I believe

that if there is a loosening up of many of the conditions as they apply between departments we shall be able to get a better basis and achieve more than we are. We must get away from centralised control and I think that if the Minister will inquire into the routine administration of the Department of Public Works, particularly between outside branches, unnecessary departmental check-ups, with a view to eliminating many of the bottlenecks that I believe exist, the people in his department, particularly in the country, will respond and give much better service to the department.

Mr. Power: Some of them have been too long in the one place and we could do with a bit of changing around.

Mr. CHALK: I agree. That is true of private enterprise and must be true of Government business also. I am not opposing the Minister's suggestion that a change round of some of his departmental officers would be in the best interests of the State.

I have noted very carefully the figures the hon. gentleman gave in this Chamber of the materials required by his department and also by the State generally, including such items as galvanised iron, butt-welded piping and reinforcing steel and cement for building. My knowledge of these industries tells me that the estimates he gave as to the minimum quantities are very conservative, but I am pleased to have his assurance that he will endeavour at all times to speed up the work of his department and that he will not depart from the Co-ordinator-General's declared policy of allocation of Government and general materials. I urge upon the Minister to do all he can to increase the supplies of galvanised-iron, piping and all building lines to Queensland and impress upon the shipping authorities that there must be regular shipments of building lines between Newcastle, Port Kembla and Brisbane, because they are vital to this State. I can assure him that if he will do that he will have the fullest co-operation of all the merchants in all those classes of business in Queensland.

I regret that it has been ruled that on this vote we cannot discuss housing, although it comes within the Minister's province, and all I can do is to reserve any comments I have in regard to the Housing Commission to the appropriate time.

Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera) (12.44 p.m.): After listening last week to the universal hymn of praise that seemed to emanate from the Government benches of the Public Curator's Department, it is rather refreshing to see hon. members on the other side of the Chamber with the courage to get up and criticise this department. It shows that there is room for much criticism and it supports the view expressed by honourable members on this side of the Chamber during the past two or three years that at least some vital driving force was missing from the department. However, I hope that the Minister is going to infuse new life into it and that these urgent and necessary repairs to school buildings will be carried out.

It has been said from both sides of the Chamber that great difficulty is experienced in carrying out desirable and even necessary improvements and I suggest to the Minister that he would be well advised to formulate a policy in regard to repairs to school buildings and construction of new ones, providing for certain priorities of construction. I believe that the most important work in the repair of school buildings and school surroundings should be work that will tend to provide for the safety of the children. That should have first priority. The second priority should be given to those buildings that are undoubtedly deteriorating and the third priority, still a very important one but of less importance than the other two, should be in respect of the undoubted overcrowding that takes place in a great number of the schools and certainly in many of those in the metropolitan area that I have seen. It applies to the country also.

At 12.47 p.m.,

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

Mr. MORRIS: It has been said that because of the effects of war these repairs cannot be carried out but many of the repairs were urgently required long before war broke out and so I express the view that the excuse of war has been very much overdone in this Chamber, particularly during the past few months. It is all very well to blame the war for all these things but I know and so do other honourable members that even before the war there was a very serious lag in construction of new school buildings and the repair of existing ones. Had the work been brought up to date before the outbreak of war the school buildings would not be in the state they are in today, so what nonsense it is to talk about overcrowding being due purely to the effects of war! It is ridiculous nonsense and one has only to study the figures relating to the attendances at the various schools before the war to see that there actually was overcrowding before then, although the position has been accentuated because of the difficulties of war.

I return now to my first priority—work in the interests of the safety of the children. I have in mind the Wilston State School and I know the Minister will say that I am now working the parish pump but this is a case that is familiar to me. At that school there are a number of drinking taps under the building and there is also a galvanised drain, which takes away the waste water to the main drainage system. For two years now that galvanised drainage system has been rusted away and the result is that the water flows over a great area of concrete floor under the building. That is obviously dangerous. The children run about under the school building and what more likely source of danger could there be than a wet concrete floor where children may fall and break their legs or suffer other serious accidents? For two years now the school committee and the teacher have brought the matter under the notice of the department urging that the drain be repaired.

For over two years the appeal apparently fell on deaf ears because nothing was done to overcome the position. I maintain that war conditions, shortage of materials, or any other factor is not sufficient excuse for letting such work drift and not have it attended to. The gutterings, too, have rusted in many parts.

Mr. Power: It is almost impossible to get galvanised iron.

Mr. MORRIS: I agree with the Minister that it is very difficult to obtain.

Let me refer again to the drain. The Committee suggested to the department that until the galvanised-iron drain could be provided earthenware pipes should be used to overcome the wet conditions of the concrete floor. Even that has not been done. It is tragic that that type of repair is not done. The condition of the guttering round the school is very bad and certain types of guttering are obtainable. Unless the present corroded guttering is replaced further deterioration will rapidly ensue.

Mr. Power: The same conditions exist in a number of schools. You cannot do a limited number and neglect other schools.

Mr. MORRIS: I realise that as this material is obtainable it must be used on buildings that are deteriorating through the fact that formerly it was lacking. I realise too that precedence must be given to other work.

There is another school in my electorate, namely, the Mitchelton school, that is somewhat similarly placed. It has been tragically overcrowded for a considerable time. I am grateful to the department for the steps it took to increase the accommodation for the school-children, but I do not think that the action it has taken is either suitable or satisfactory. It has built two rooms underneath the school but they lack ventilation and light. It is utterly impossible to read except on a bright day. I could not read ordinary print on a dull day in those rooms, notwithstanding the ventilation facilities. They have been constructed for months, and application has been made to have them reasonably lit, without result. During the winter months those children were forced to do their school work in those rooms because there was no other place for them and the strain on their eyes, one of their most valuable assets, was very great. Shortage of materials or any other excuse for allowing such conditions to continue cannot be accepted. We are grateful that the rooms have been put there, but it is no use giving us rooms if it is virtually impossible to use them. The difficulty should have been overcome long ago. Decent ventilation and lighting should have been provided when the rooms were erected. The department has bought an army hut and is adding it to the school to give further accommodation. Unfortunately, the position chosen for it is within 25 or 30 feet of the lavatories. The Mitchelton school is not fortunate enough to have either the septic or sewerage system and the lavatory there is of the ordinary earth type. Just imagine erecting a new school room within 25 or 30 feet of earth

lavatories. That is just the height of absurdity. I am astounded that any officer of the department would allow such a room to be erected in these modern days under those conditions. I appeal to the Minister to rectify these evils in these two schools and give the children something better.

There is another thing I want to mention when speaking about the building of new schools, because I feel it is a grave responsibility on the Government and one that up to the present has not been faced. I refer to the erection of buildings for kindergartens. I think it is the responsibility of this Government to shoulder the responsibility of building kindergartens throughout the areas where they are needed because they are serving a very useful purpose. It is admitted universally that kindergarten training is very important, and I maintain that it is the responsibility of this Government to see that those buildings are erected, instead of having the parents shoulder the responsibility, as so often happens. I realise that perhaps I am going outside the vote, but I did want to mention that because I believe the Government should take some responsibility in that regard.

I hope the Minister will do as he has indicated to this Committee, and bring a new enthusiasm into the department and see that this undoubted carelessness in certain respects is overcome.

Mr. ROBERTS (Nundah) (12.56 p.m.): Like other hon. members, I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister upon his elevation to his present position. I do not propose to break any secrets and tell him whether or not I voted for him, but I have no hesitation in saying that if he continues to do his job in the way he has done it up to the present—and I am sure we all feel that he will—then he will have the whole-hearted support and co-operation not only of every member on this side of the Committee but also of all the hon. members who sit opposite.

I think in discussing this Estimate we should place on record our appreciation of the great work that is being done by school committees and parents' associations generally in connection with our schools all over Queensland. These people accept the responsibility, I feel every parent ought to accept, of doing whatever possibly can be done to improve the amenities and facilities in and around our schools that the department cannot do itself. Unfortunately in most schools it falls to the same half dozen or seven individuals who give up their nights and week-ends to this very necessary and essential work. It is gratifying, however, to know that whenever the school committee or the parents' associations make an appeal for finance to help them in their work the public generally come good. I know that in one instance in my electorate a few weeks ago they had a fete for the purpose of collecting money, and the Deputy Premier came out and opened it. Those who attended the fete put their hands in their pockets and the school committee made a net profit of something like £230.

With the pound-for-pound Government subsidy, the committee has a very handy sum of money with which to carry on essential work at the school. We should place on record our appreciation of the work being done by the various school committees.

I do not propose to deal with the housing position, but unfortunately we have a rather vicious circle operating at the present time, inasmuch as in many localities—particularly in the metropolitan districts—we have housing projects, and the result of these housing projects is to bring large populations into districts that were previously sparsely populated.

At 2.15 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. ROBERTS: In many instances therefore, the Queensland Housing Commission has been responsible for the development of districts that were previously sparsely populated into comparatively densely populated districts. In most of these districts there were schools that were previously sufficient to meet their requirements, but with the increased population many of them are too small to accommodate the number of young children residing in such localities. Consequently, as I say, we have more or less a vicious circle.

Where we have this increased number of homes and increased population and increased number of children, we must make some provision for increased accommodation in the schools. The question arises: what can be done? It is very easy for members on the Opposition benches to criticise the Government and say, with respect to the housing programme that we should go further than we have and then criticise the programme of State works throughout Queensland. The difficulty that confronts the Government is to do what is best with the materials and labour available, while meeting the urgent demand for houses, and wherever the houses are built of increasing the needed accommodation in our schools.

Of course we are all in favour of giving a first priority to homes, and I should say that we are all in favour of giving the second priority, as it were, to schools, in view of the fact that we have probably sufficient hospital accommodation to meet our immediate needs. The number of people with young children who are living in State rented houses in these new localities or in houses built by private enterprise as a result of the encouragement given to the industry by the Government, are crying out for more school accommodation. I have no hesitation in saying that if I, with my young family, was living in one of these houses I should be just as loud in my requests for better school accommodation for my children as are many of these people. The Government are attending to these requirements as quickly as I think any Government could possibly do. This morning I was rather surprised, although one should not be surprised at anything stated in this Chamber by way of criticism by hon. members opposite, to hear an hon. member

fail to commend the Government for proceeding with the erection of a new school in his electorate. A new school is in course of erection in the Stafford district.

Like all other hon. members opposite, the hon. member for Enoggera criticised the Government for what they had failed to do. He pointed out anomalies in some of the schools in his electorate. I do not wish to say that he should not bring these matters forward, but I do say that even hon members opposite, while they are entitled to criticise the Government, ought to give credit where credit is due. The hon. member for Enoggera referred to two or three schools in his electorate that required some very minor attention, but he did not see fit to commend this Government for building a modern school in his electorate.

Mr. Morris: The present Stafford school is not in my electorate.

Mr. ROBERTS: What I said was that the new school is being built in the hon member's electorate.

Mr. Morris: I am talking about the present Stafford school.

Mr. ROBERTS: I am talking about the new school, and I do not think any hon. member is in doubt about the school to which I am referring. The necessity for that school has arisen in a large measure as a result of the development of the Stafford area by the Queensland Housing Commission. The school that is at present there, and which, for the benefit of the hon. member for Enoggera, I point out, is in the Nundah electorate, is not big enough. Nobody would suggest that it is big enough to meet the requirements of the district. The other day the hon. member for Windsor referred to the Fortitude Valley State School. By way of comparison, I have no hesitation in saying that the existing school at Stafford is more deplorable than the Fortitude Valley State School, but we are getting a new school in the district and it will be a great asset. Although it is in the electorate of the hon. member for Enoggera, it will meet the requirements of many of the people residing in the Nundah electorate. Even though the hon. member for Enoggera did not see fit this morning at least to express his appreciation to this Labour Government for building a new modern school in his electorate, I, on behalf of the residents of the locality, on behalf of the school committee and the progress association, here and now express the appreciation that they feel for the action of the Government in going ahead with this new school. The interest these people are taking in the school is indeed a credit to them.

That was the main point I wanted to make, and I should like to close on the note that we are all in accord with the policy the Minister has outlined of rejuvenating the Department of Public Works, and we sincerely hope that as a result of that policy the department will be able to meet the requirements of Queensland. While expressing that hope, we are not unmindful of the great work that has been

done in the past and up till now by the present officers of the department, from the labourer to the Under Secretary.

Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (2.25 p.m.): At the outset I congratulate the Minister upon his promotion and in particular upon his restoration to health. I feel that in him we have a man who will be an active Minister, a man who will get things done. I think all Government departments now talk too much and too long before taking action. What we want today is a Minister who will make up his mind to do something and see that it is done and I say that from that point of view the new Minister will attend to jobs quickly.

It is essential that we have such a Minister in charge of the Department of Public Works because we all know that that department carries out the work of other departments, whether in connection with hospitals or schools or other public buildings. My experience is that if the Department of Public Instruction decides to improve schools or build new ones, when we inquire as to why a hold-up has occurred we are invariably informed that the delay is with the Department of Public Works. I feel sure that the present Minister will invigorate the department and ensure that immediate action is taken in matters coming before his department. There must be complete co-operation between the various departments and in this direction I think we have failed in the past because one department has been unwilling to help another.

I wish to say something about the schools in my electorate and I have been inspired to do so by the remarks of the hon. member for Nundah, who said that the Government were attending to the building of schools as quickly as possible. I do not wish to criticise anybody in that connection; no doubt I have different ideas from most people as to the building, the enlargement, and the improvement of schools, and I do not agree that the housing question must receive first priority in everything.

Mr. Roberts: You must be comfortably housed.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I do not agree with the hon. member when he says that the Government have done everything because I say the Government have not done everything they should have done to improve the buildings for hundreds of our children. Although housing is important and we all agree that it should receive a good priority, I think it should not have a priority to the exclusion of the building of schools. We must take into consideration the fact that schooling is available to our children for only a limited time. If they miss it then what will happen? Therefore I say that we cannot neglect to provide schooling for our children during this short period just because housing is to have first priority. I admit that housing deserves a high priority but I think there should be some provision whereby our schools share in that priority. Looking at the matter from that point of view I am sure we cannot exclude schools altogether until the housing programme is finished. It is going to be many years before we can provide

sufficient housing for the people in need of it; we must not submerge the need for schooling just because housing has first priority.

I think it is nearly time the Government developed a new policy in the education of our children just as a new policy in connection with the care of the sick should be developed. We cannot under present circumstances build schools where they are needed.

It is important that the people should be encouraged to remain in the country, but they will not do so if they cannot get schooling for their children there, and no-one can blame them for that. I know of a number of families who have left the country to come to the city to get schooling for their children. Therefore, I suggest a new policy in the matter of education, providing for the centralising of schools and the bringing of children from the surrounding districts to them. This should be somewhat easy of accomplishment today with our improved roads and better system of transport compared with some years ago. So let us concentrate upon the building of schools in centrally situated localities, thereby providing modern and well-equipped schools with every facility for the children in the surrounding districts. The one-teacher school standing in splendid isolation may be all very well in its way, but frequently the attendance does not come up to the required standard prescribed by the department as necessary to warrant keeping the school open, and so again I stress the importance of building schools in centrally located situations, in more or less populated areas to which the children can be brought to and from school over the present splendid roads by modern means of transport.

The same argument could be used in connection with hospitals. Hospitals cannot be built at the present time in all places where they are needed, and so here again I suggest that up-to-date and well-equipped hospitals should be built at various points to provide medical and hospital treatment for people in the surrounding districts. They could be staffed with an adequate number of doctors and with the most modern scientific and medical equipment. Indeed, patients could be brought to the hospitals by aerial ambulance. It requires a good deal of money to equip a hospital and bring it up to modern standards, even after the building has been erected, and it would be foolish to build a modern hospital and not equip it to meet modern requirements. Every person in the community is entitled to the best medical and hospital treatment that science can provide. My suggestion is worthy of the utmost consideration and I hope that it will be so treated by the Government.

I turn now to what may be regarded as a local matter, and I refer specifically to the Southport State School, which has been a disgrace to the State for a number of years. I am proud of everything associated with Southport except the State school. Southport is a centre of learning. There are a number of schools there, modern and well-conducted schools, but the State school is a long way the worst of them all. Let me give hon.

members an idea of how bad it really is, and of how long it has been so bad. Back in 1935 or 1936 the then Secretary for Public Instruction, Mr. Cooper, said that it would be necessary to build a new brick State school in Southport and he promised that it would be done, but it was not done. There was no shortage of materials and men then. It was only short-sightedness on the part of the Government that prevented the building of that school. A few years later there was a new Secretary for Public Instruction and he too promised a new brick State school for Southport.

Then the consideration of the new school was interrupted by the outbreak of war. In the meantime, Mr. T. L. Williams was selected to take charge of the department. He visited Southport and said, "Yes, a new school should have been built years ago, and I will do what I can to see that one is built." What has happened? Nothing. The school was originally built to accommodate 500 children but for several years past over 700 children have attended the school. After many deputations and much criticism by the school committee the Government, even under war-time conditions, when there was a shortage of materials, considered it desirable to provide temporary accommodation to accommodate the excess 200 children.

Everyone will admit that the average rate of development in Queensland is greater in the South Coast than elsewhere today. Population there is growing and that means more children must be catered for in the schools there. The Minister apparently is unaware of the difficulties being experienced there. I give him credit for the fact that once he makes up his mind that a new school must be built at Southport he will see to it that it is built. We have been too lackadaisical in these matters. In fact, we have not given sufficient serious consideration to what education means to the people, and what education means to our boys and girls, particularly in the country. We can get up and talk long and loudly about what a success the Correspondence system has achieved in imparting our educational facilities to the children of the country. In many cases that success has been achieved because many of the parents have been school teachers, who have been a great help in the success of this system. That does not prevent the Government from taking a greater interest in our children's education.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. PLUNKETT: We have heard a great deal about repairs to our hospitals and schools. So far as I am concerned we do not want minor improvements. What we want when a school building has outlived its usefulness is its replacement by a modern building. I am not going to argue how that can be achieved.

As everyone knows, in all our educational establishments due attention should be paid to ventilation. That aspect of the matter was discussed this morning. If we take notice of our schools and churches in Queensland, we are struck by the remarkable fact

that they have been patterned on overseas designs, particularly buildings in colder climates.

Mr. Aikens: We must build buildings to suit the climate.

Mr. PLUNKETT: I quite agree with the hon. member. I extend a hearty invitation to the Minister to visit Southport and inspect the Southport school for himself.

Mr. Power: I shall be down there at Christmas. (Laughter.)

Mr. PLUNKETT: We shall be pleased to see the Minister at any time, for we believe that after having made an inspection of the present school he will approve of the immediate construction of a new building.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (2.40 p.m.): I wish to reply to some matters raised by hon. members, particularly to one raised by the hon. member for East Toowoomba. He endeavoured to draw from me a statement as to how I proposed to reorganise the department and which officers I propose to sack.

As a matter of fact, the hon. member for East Toowoomba is in his political napkins, but he has not had them on very long, and from the way he is trying to get information it is apparent that he is going to dirty them before very long. The hon. member is not going to get any information from me in advance as to what will be done in the reorganisation of the Department of Public Works.

The hon. member stated that he has been interviewed by a number of employees of the Department of Public Works. No employee of the department or of the Government generally who is doing his job need have any worries. Those who interviewed the hon. member evidently have been loafing on the job and they have run to him for protection. It is amusing to me to think that any public servant would go to the hon. member for East Toowoomba for protection or advice because the hon. member, at a convention of the Queensland People's Party, advocated the abolition of preference to unionists. He advocated the abolition of preference to unionists, yet he talks about victimisation by me and the Government. The hon. member knows as well as you do, Mr. Mann—and you have had some experience in the industrial wing of the Labour movement—of the necessity for industrial unionism for the purpose of protecting the members of unions against victimisation; yet the hon. member for East Toowoomba, who has advocated the abolition of preference to unionists, which would permit any employer to victimise an employee if he wished to do so, tells this Committee that employees in the Public Works Department have gone to him for protection. I stated when I took over the department what my intentions were. I called my officers in and I told them I required efficiency, and I required it at the top. I have already taken certain steps in the reorganisation of the

department. I have a Public Service inspector going through the department, finding out what each section of the employees are doing, and whether they are suited for the various jobs they are holding. Many of these men may be very good employees of the department, but it may be better if they were transferred from their present jobs and put into jobs to which they are more suited. A thorough investigation is taking place. I have had the matter in hand since the day I took over the department.

I made this statement to the officers of the department: "When an investigator from the Public Service Commissioner's Department interviews you and asks you what you think of so-and-so, do not make any statement about the efficiency of a man behind his back that you are not prepared to stand up to." Any statement made about any employee of the Department of Public Works by any departmental head will be subjected to very close scrutiny. When I receive a report as to the efficiency or inefficiency of any employee, that employee is going to be heard, and he is going to be heard in the presence of those who say he is inefficient; therefore, there is going to be no victimisation by me or any officer of the department. I can assure the employees of the department—and I have had several of them in my office—if they want to have an interview with me about their employment, I shall be happy to give it to them. I do not believe that there has been any interview by any member of the Public Service with the hon. member for East Toowoomba, who has got up and blown his cheeks out for the purpose of having something to say.

Mr. Chalk: You have had a big talk about it.

Mr. POWER: I have certainly put the hon. member in his place.

The hon. member goes on further and says that I have admitted that the previous Minister has made mistakes. I have not made any admission whatever. The previous Minister had his own way of running his department. I give him full marks for the way he ran it. If I desire to have a change in the method of running a department, that is my own business. I have no complaint to make about the way the hon. member for The Tableland ran his department. While he was in charge the work it performed was very important. As a matter of fact, the hon. member for East Toowoomba was complaining about the work done in regard to schools. I think 56 schools were attended to in many parts of Queensland, and 24 of them were in electorates represented by members of the Opposition. It cannot be said that the former Secretary for Public Works did not pay attention to the requirements of the people so far as the schools in Queensland were concerned. The hon. member for East Toowoomba, like a few other hon. members opposite, would like to see the Secretary for Public Instruction and myself at each other's throats. They are endeavouring to bring that about but we members of this party have

the right to express our own view in connection with the administration of a department. The administration of the department is a matter entirely for the departmental heads. The policy of the department is one for the Minister in charge of the department and the policy of the Department of Public Works will be carried out in its entirety during the time I am Minister in charge in accordance with the policy I lay down on behalf of the Government.

The hon. member complains also that work is not being done in many parts of Queensland. I agree that works have not been carried out in many parts of the State and I am tired of labouring the question and telling the Committee why they were not carried out. The hon. member must know that the nation was engaged in war for six years and all our technical staff were carrying out work for the Commonwealth departments for the successful defence of the nation and the prosecution of the war. He must realise that during that time few or no State works were carried out and in consequence there has been a lag in maintenance for which no Minister and no official of the department has been responsible. This has been brought about by a set of circumstances over which the Government and the department have had no control. Today we are not short of money; it is not a question whether money is available to do this work. When the Moore Government and the other anti-Labour Governments ruled in Queensland, when any request was made for any work or improvements, the question was asked, "Is there any money available to do the work?" That factor does not operate today. Money is available but man-power and materials are not available. That is what is holding up works that should have been completed months ago.

On behalf of my department I repeat that if there is any district in any part of Queensland represented by any hon. member on either side of this Chamber in which work has been held up after being approved by the Government, if they can get a contractor or a carpenter to do that work, we will undertake to put the work in hand straightaway. I think I have very effectively replied to the hon. member for East Toowoomba.

The hon. member has stated also that material is short in Queensland but available in other States and that we should do something about it. Does not he know that we have liaison officers in New South Wales and in Victoria endeavouring to have goods that are short in Queensland transported to this State but if ships or trucks are not available to convey the goods to Queensland what can we do about it? Special permits have been issued by the department in charge of transport to enable vehicles to proceed south to transport by road to Queensland certain goods and materials required by the Department of Public Works and Housing. Everything humanly possible has been done. The Premier has taken up on more than one occasion with the Premiers of other States the matter of supplies available for transport to this State. It is all very well for the hon.

member to endeavour to castigate the Government but I have given an effective reply to his criticism. I repeat that the supply of man-power and materials is our trouble and if any hon. member can obtain men and materials to do the work needed in their electorate and that has been approved, I, as Minister in charge of the department, will approve of that work being carried out immediately.

I now come to the remarks made by the hon. member for Enoggera who complained about repairs to schools and the sufferings to school children in his electorate as a result of failure to effect repairs. I have no knowledge of that and neither has anyone in the department any knowledge that there is any school in this State where a child is likely to be injured because work has not been carried out for the protection of the children. However, that matter is being looked into by the Under Secretary.

The hon. member complained about the Wilston State School. I have had the records of the department searched and find no complaint has been received by the department from anybody in connection with that school.

If no complaints are received, how can the department deal with the matter? If the head-teacher thought there was some necessity to give attention to the drain he should have notified the department and the matter would have been attended to. Now that the hon. member has raised the matter, officers of the department will deal with it immediately.

Then the hon. member complained about bad lighting in one State school. The lighting is bad, but I point out that the accommodation he refers to is temporary accommodation that was provided by making rooms under the school. I agree that it is not all that it should be, but I repeat that it is only temporary, and in an endeavour to improve the position it is proposed to seal the school and paint it with light colours.

Then the hon. member complained that the addition at the Mitchelton school has been erected only 25 to 30 feet away from the lavatories. That is not true. The hon. member should make sure of his facts before making statements here. I caused an officer to go out and take measurements after the hon. member complained this morning and he assures me that the distance is 40 feet. Again I point out that this is only temporary accommodation and the site was chosen by the head-teacher in consultation with the Department of Public Works. The grounds are small and that was the most suitable site available. Because of the increasing number of children attending the school it was necessary to provide extra accommodation.

The hon. member for Nundah mentioned school committees. Although this matter does not come under the Department of Public Works, I join with him in saying that the school committees have done an excellent job. It is true that it has been necessary to provide more school accommodation in certain districts because of the erection of a number of homes in Brisbane. It

is for that reason that we are now building a new school at Stafford, and I might say that I am pleased with the progress of that work. I have watched it closely because I am very much concerned about the cost of building schools, and the man in charge of that job is doing it very well. His costs are much lower than those of similar jobs in other parts, and so long as he continues in that way he will be a very valuable officer to the department.

The hon. member for Enoggera complained also about the guttering at the State school, and he said that the building was deteriorating because of its condition. That is not peculiar to Enoggera; it applies at many other State schools and homes, too. In an endeavour to improve matters and overcome the guttering shortage, the Department of Public Works has been ironing out corrugated iron and using it to make guttering.

The hon. member for Albert spoke of the need for a new school at Southport. The need for this school is well-known to the officers of the department, and I can assure the hon. member that as soon as we can make a man available to prepare plans for a new school at Southport that work will be done.

Again I draw attention to the fact that we are short of draftsmen. I might point out that despite all this criticism of buildings and talk of overcrowding not one school has been closed by this department even though we are short of both teachers and buildings. While there is a little overcrowding, I have yet to be informed that any child in Queensland has been deprived of education because of the shortage of school buildings. The Government are doing all they can in the matter.

Mr. Aikens: Some were closed because of the shortage of teachers.

Mr. POWER: That does not come within the ambit of this department, but I can tell the hon. member that quite a number of the teaching staff of the Department of Public Instruction joined the fighting forces and unfortunately many of them have not returned, having made the supreme sacrifice.

The hon. member for Albert referred to the department as being responsible for holding up works asked for by the Department of Public Instruction. I repeat what I said the other day—that the Department of Public Instruction has, on more than one occasion, asked the Department of Public Works to prepare plans and carry out certain undertakings. Those plans were prepared by the skeleton staff of my department, but after they were prepared we were told that alterations had to be made. I said that that state of affairs cannot go on: there is a shortage of skilled men and the Department of Public Instruction must decide in the first place what it wants in its plans. We are prepared to put the work in hand and there will be no delay by my department. The Department of Public Works will not accept responsibility for delays caused by other departments in the State.

I think I have effectively replied to the criticism levelled at my department, and I again repeat that the reason for the delay in carrying out work is not with the Department of Public Works but occurs because there has been a shortage of man-power and materials.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (2.57 p.m.): I should like to compliment the Minister on his selection by his party for Cabinet rank and I say also that I am pleased to see him in his place in this Chamber after a serious illness.

I should be wanting in my duty if I did not back the Minister up to the limit in the pursuit of efficiency in his department. He has given a very good lead to his officers to see that the State gets full value for the reward it gives to those who serve under it.

I should like very briefly this afternoon to say that I have travelled about this State a good deal and that I have always an observant eye for things about me, and I have noticed, not only in the post-war period and during the man-power shortage but during the period of war and prior to 1939, that there has been a painful neglect in the painting and the general maintenance of many of our public buildings not only in the rural districts but also in the metropolitan district itself. There has been a neglect to paint public buildings within a reasonable time. Many of them were allowed over the years prior to 1939 to fall into a state of disrepair. Of course, the position was accentuated during the war, and I am not putting any blame on the Department of Public Works for what happened in those years. Nor has there been proper breathing time since the war ended for the department to apply itself fully to the remedying of this condition, which was very apparent for all to see in 1939. There is a big leeway to make up. There is evidence everywhere that school buildings, court houses, police stations and all kinds of public buildings throughout the State are in need of paint and general repair and other forms of maintenance, and I say to the Minister that this matter is of first importance.

If a determined attempt is not made to overtake that leeway within a reasonable period the deterioration of course will proceed very rapidly and these buildings, which are a very great asset to the State today, will suffer considerably. I suggest that the Minister look into that phase of the matter to see how he may redeem and put back into good repair and condition existing public buildings that need his attention so badly just now.

Mr. Power: Have you read the report of the Under Secretary? You can see what has been done.

Mr. MAHER: I grant the Minister all that. I know that there has been a step-up in approvals for school repairs in particular since he took control of the department. I am pleased to see it and I wish him well and I hope that he will continue that campaign. However, I want to underline and emphasise it so that there will be no mistake about it

because in the general pressure for new buildings we are a little bit apt to overlook the necessity for maintaining the good buildings we have today, buildings that could not at the present cost of construction be replaced at other than a very high figure indeed. I want to emphasise that point with the Minister and to wish him well in the big task that lies ahead of him.

There is another feature of the administration of the department that I should like to bring under his notice and I have drawn attention to it before when the Estimates of the department have been under consideration in other years. Of course, the system may have been altered since then and I hope that it has. I know that in other days it was the practice for State school committees, either directly through the Director-General of Education or indirectly through the member for the district, to bring under the notice of the department the fact that certain repairs and improvements were required to a school or to other public buildings, and I have noticed that in respect to school buildings in particular it has been the custom for the department to send an inspector on a special visit to the school concerned to make a report on its condition and generally into the complaint that was made. In 99 cases out of 100 he merely endorses all that the school committee or the teacher concerned had reported and recommended that the work be done.

I thought in those days that there was no co-ordinated system whereby that same inspector could continue on his round and make an inspection of all the public buildings in that zone in order to report on the condition of all of them. The result was that when a complaint was made about schools he was running here and running there, crossing over his tracks, burning up petrol and incurring heavy expenditure in what I consider a haphazard adventure rather than a businesslike method of approaching his task. A public works inspector's job should be to visit all the public buildings in a particular area and make a report on them all with the necessary recommendations, instead of having to rush out here and rush out there, sometimes in respect of a job the cost of which did not exceed more than £10 or £15. It may be that the criticism that has been offered by me and other hon. members in the past has influenced the department to alter the system. I hope so. If it has not then it is something that the Minister should apply himself to.

Another feature of the administration of the department that I should like to mention relates to the planning of new buildings. The Minister, the Under Secretary, and the architect who is doing the job should have an eye on the future instead of on the present.

So far as I can see, too many buildings that are approved are built for the day, not for the future. Plans are drawn up by the architects, approved by the Under Secretary, approved by the Minister, but the buildings, although they cost a great deal of money and are possibly ornate, do not take into account the fact that our population is

expanding gradually with our wealth production and that therefore the emphasis should be on the future. I remember that when I was a lad in New South Wales 40 years ago a hue and cry was raised against the Minister for Railways of the day, Mr. E. W. O'Sullivan, who approved of the plan for the present Sydney railway station. Mr. O'Sullivan was roundly criticised. The Sydney "Bulletin" referred to him as the "Owe Sullivan" for having approved the expenditure of what critics of the day suggested was an outrageous sum of money for the construction of a railway station 100 years ahead of its time. But that fine railway station was built, and within 10 years it was not big enough to meet the needs of the people in the progressive State of New South Wales. It stands today as a tribute to his vision. That is the idea I wish to inculcate into the mind of the Minister and particularly the architects who have the job of preparing plans for public buildings. For another example, look at the Roma Street railway station. That is a pleasing building to the eye but the architect who planned that building and the Minister who approved of it did not take into account future needs. Here, even today, when the war is past, we frequently find a railway porter placed on the door of the dining-room to prevent more than a given number of passengers from entering the building.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MAHER: I am showing, in passing, that our architects who plan our public works are not making provision for buildings of the right type, and for enough space and room for the needs of the population of tomorrow. Indeed, they are fastened down to the actual needs of today.

Generally speaking, there has been a gradual deterioration in the past 50 years in our Public Works architecture. Take a walk along George and Queen Streets and make a survey of this noble Parliament House and the Treasury Building, which are architectural gems, the Executive Building, the Department of Public Lands, and the Custom House. These are products of men who knew their job and were worthy of this great State. What do we find today? Look at the barnlike building down William Street that houses the Department of Health and Home Affairs, and the extension of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. They are thoroughly unworthy of this great State. Fancy using fibro-cement in a public building! The thing is monstrous. We are deteriorating in our outlook. The men leading the country today have not the stature or vision of the men who laid the foundations of this State. If those men had had the same vision as the men of today this Parliament House would not be here today. I notice a tremendous deterioration over the years in our architectural standards.

Mr. Aikens: Our work would be just as good if we did it in a corrugated iron shed without all this architectural ostentation.

Mr. MAHER: Some people have no taste. If the hon. member wants to work in a blackfellow's gunyah, he is entitled to work in it, but there are people who have refinement and a cultural outlook.

When we look back over the Grecian and Roman periods of architecture they give us understanding of the magnificent type of men who erected the buildings, some of which in many instances still stand today. There is room for improvement in the architectural methods of the department. I note from the report of the department that a number of architects have been brought out from Great Britain.

I hope those men will be able to infuse new ideas into the architecture of the Department of Public Works. Necessarily we do not want the standards of architecture that are suitable in snowy countries. You see that manifested here sometimes, where there are buildings with high-pointed roofs, which are the usual thing in countries where there are heavy snow falls in order to break the weight of snow on the roof. That type of building is totally out of place in a sub-tropical or tropical country. There is room for our Department of Public Works and its architects to study thoroughly the architecture of sub-tropical and tropical countries. The Commonwealth Bank is a great offender in building the very severe buildings without awnings or verandas that are quite suitable in Victoria but thoroughly unsuitable to the tropics. Many of our public buildings today in Townsville, Cairns and western towns and cities are not actually suited to the needs of sub-tropical and tropical climates. The department and the architects should concentrate in planning for buildings suitable for a State such as this.

The Minister has emphasised the difficulties of meeting the demands of members who have criticised the policy of the department on this vote. He has referred to the shortages of material and labour, which of course are all too apparent. But I feel that the occasion is opportune to remind the hon. gentleman that he must agree with me when I say there is something rotten in the State of Denmark when such things apply after the war has terminated for two years or more; and there must be cause for the continuous shortages of materials that are hamstringing the Minister in his efforts to embark on a progressive policy of repairs, maintenance and the construction of new buildings. There is something very wrong, and the Minister knows it. It is up to him and those associated with him to remove this cause and accelerate the flow of building materials and labour that will enable all those progressive ideas of his to be incorporated into action.

Mr. INGRAM (Keppel) (3.13 p.m.): I, like other hon. members, wish sincerely to congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank, a position I am sure he will fill with credit to himself and benefit to the whole of the people of the State. I am pleased to see that he has been restored to good health and that he is able to participate in this debate and carry out the duties of his important office.

I want to say at the outset that I have received nothing but courtesy from the officers of the Department of Public Works. Most of my requests have been granted.

Much has been said about the various schools throughout Queensland. In my electorate new schools and new teachers' residences have been built, and many additions to other schools in that part of Queensland have been made. Only the other day I had the pleasure of officially opening a school at North Rockhampton, which is in the electorate of the hon. member for Rockhampton. I heard members of the Opposition criticise the old-fashioned schools, but I am satisfied they have not seen the new schools built by the department because if they had they would not describe them as old-fashioned. The school I opened on Saturday afternoon was a three-roomed school 24 feet by 23 feet 6 inches with windows right round it. If it does not satisfy the teachers and children, well, nothing will. There is plenty of ventilation, and the schoolmaster told me that he never saw a better school.

The same applies at Emu Park in my electorate, where a new school has been erected that people there remark to me stands as a monument. It is an absolutely beautiful building and the Government will carry out that policy throughout the State.

Mr. Hilton: How did you get it?

Mr. INGRAM: Because I am a labour representative of the electorate looking after the interests of the people of the electorate. Prior to my coming to Parliament as the representative of that electorate, the schools in my electorate were in a shocking disgrace because the district was represented by a Country Party member who never went to his electorate from one year's end to the other. He did not care a dash about the school children. That is the difference between him and me.

Mr. Sparkes: That is a reflection on your own Government.

Mr. INGRAM: It is not. If a representative of the Labour or any other party in this Parliament goes to any Minister with any request and presses the request it will be granted.

Mr. Sparkes: He should not have to do it.

Mr. INGRAM: The Parliamentary representative should go round his electorate and see what is required for the benefit of the people in that area but most honourable members on the Opposition benches sit in their own homes and do not trouble about their electorates. Members of the Opposition have said that this Government do nothing for the country and that everything is done for Brisbane but let them study the report of this department and see the number of country schools and teacher's residences that have been erected. They will find therein that thousands of pounds have been spent on sites for primary and post-primary schools. Notwithstanding this they say that the Government are doing nothing for the people

in the country and everything for the people in the city. This Government are doing everything for the people in the country but Tory Governments did not do so.

Much has been said about the magnificent work that local authorities have done throughout this State. Why were they able to do this? Because of the munificent subsidies granted by a Labour Government which were never granted by Tory Governments.

Mr. Sparkes: Where do they get the money?

Mr. INGRAM: They get it from the Labour Government.

Mr. Sparkes: They get it from the people.

Mr. INGRAM: They never got this money from the Tory Governments. The other day the honourable member for Warwick stated that too much delay occurred between Government departments and local authorities, but in most instances the blame must fall on the local authorities. Remember that the hon. member for Aubigny is not the only one who has been on a local authority. I was connected with local authorities for a number of years and other members on this side have been connected with local authorities much longer than has the hon. member for Aubigny.

I will prove the reason for the delay. For instance, take the water-supply scheme for Yeppoon that will be begun in a very short time. That work should have been done years ago.

Mr. Sparkes: Whose fault is that?

Mr. INGRAM: The fault of the consulting engineers in the Livingstone Shire Council because they did not have the plans prepared. In spite of this the council blames the Government departments. That is absolutely ridiculous. As it was, the consulting engineers were at fault. But for the fact that representatives of the council asked Mr. Chuter the real cause of the delay, we should have thought that the Government were to blame. Mr. Chuter proved conclusively that the consulting engineers did not have the plans properly prepared. They are now prepared and within a short space of time the Yeppoon water-supply scheme will be commenced.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. INGRAM: The hon. member talks about local authorities. Why did not local authorities take advantage of the nine million pounds, six million pounds loan and three million pounds subsidy, set aside to provide water to cities and towns? Of 140-odd local authorities only 70-odd, I think, took the opportunity to get that money to provide water supplies. It was an absolute disgrace that any local authority should turn down such an offer because everybody must agree that if a town wants to progress it must have a water supply.

The other day the hon. member for Logan was astounded at the fact that £125,000 was to be spent on building homes for the

aged at Rockhampton. Does he want these old people to be living in bark huts, as they were under a Tory Government? The Labour Government are a humane Government and that is why we are building these homes. I remind the hon. member, too, that in addition to providing these homes, that £125,000 will be used to pay for hospital wards, administrative blocks, and a septic system, and it reflects great credit on this Government.

Again I congratulate the Minister on the magnificent job he is doing, and I am sure he will continue to do a good job and I wish him every success in the future.

Mr. FARRELL (Maryborough) (3.21 p.m.): I wish to draw the attention of the Minister to an aspect of local authority affairs that is giving the Maryborough City Council some concern. When the Maryborough town clerk was in Brisbane, we investigated the possibility of dealing with our loan funds in the same way as the Brisbane City Council deals with its loan money. We wish to place all loan borrowings to one general loan account, and to make payments on the various works out of that one fund. The Treasury raised no objection, the Auditor-General raised no objection, but the department for which the present Minister is responsible pointed out that there was no provision in the Act to give the Maryborough council the same right as that enjoyed by the Brisbane City Council.

At 3.22 p.m.,

Mr. HILTON (Carnarvon) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. FARRELL: The City of Brisbane Acts lays down definitely how these loan funds shall be treated. It provides that in its funds shall be incorporated loan funds and trust funds. It is the loan fund with which I wish to deal in referring to a problem besetting the Maryborough City Council. The Act provides that the loan funds of the Brisbane City Council shall consist of all moneys borrowed by that Council. The loans made to the council under that or any other Act must be applied to the purpose for which the money is obtained, and that is exactly what we want to do in Maryborough. At the present time, local authorities are required to submit to the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works details of all works it is proposed to carry out by the use of loan funds. These works are peculiar to local authorities, such as sewerage, drainage, water supply, concrete footpaths, concrete channelling and so on. Section 23 of the Local Government Act provides that the local authority shall keep separate the loan money in respect of each of the works and it is the practice of the Treasury to issue an Order in Council for each class of work that the local authority proposes to carry out. If the law could be amended to allow a local authority to keep one loan fund so that all its borrowings could be bulked in any year and operated upon if desired, it would save the local authority a considerable amount in legal expenses and other costs associated with the preparation and issue of debenture shares. We desire

that the Minister give consideration to amending the Act to provide that the privilege enjoyed by the Brisbane City Council may be exercised by other local authorities throughout the State.

The keeping of one loan fund by a local authority would simplify accountancy and obviate a considerable amount of clerical work that is now required to be done by any local authority because the law says that separate accounts shall be kept in respect of each loan. In these days, when materials are in short supply, it would permit a local authority to carry out one section of work for which it can obtain materials and close down another section if it is held up for the supply of materials.

Local authorities are finding it extremely difficult to carry out a planned works programme because of the difficulty in getting materials and labour required. To quote a case in point the Maryborough City Council made application to the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works and the State Treasurer for permission to borrow £110,470 made up as follows:—

	£
“Preparation of working plans and estimates	6,000
Bus undertaking	30,000
Parking area	10,000
Concrete footpaths	8,000
Motor mowers	1,400
Drainage	12,318
Sewerage extensions	12,752
Flats for old-age pensioners	5,000
Sewerage extensions to Pocket Area, including house connections	25,000
	<hr/>
	£110,470”

In accordance with the present practice the Treasury will authorise the council to borrow the nine separate amounts required. That will mean that the council will be required to pay a considerable sum in legal costs for the preparation and issue of debentures, whereas if the law was amended only one issue of debentures would be required. I should like the Minister to consider that point when he has time to discuss it with his officers and see if it is possible for the Act to be amended to enable local authorities outside the city of Brisbane to receive the same benefits in regard to their loan programme of works as are applicable to the Brisbane City Council. Only the other day I had a talk with our city manager in relation to certain works. We find in actual practice that owing to a shortage of materials we are unable to expend the amount of money allotted to certain works whereas there are other works we could carry out if we could bulk our loan funds as is permitted by the Brisbane City Council.

I think some consideration might be given to my suggestions. It might be possible to amend the Act and permit the privileges extended to the Brisbane City Council to be extended to local authorities in areas outside of Brisbane. I feel sure that if the Act was amended in such a way it would meet with the approval of every local authority outside

this area. Difficulty is being experienced in finding the men and materials, and that could be overcome, whilst a considerable saving could be effected by the issue of one set of debentures.

Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera) (3.29 p.m.): I listened with interest to the speech made by the hon. member for Nundah in which he chided me for not thanking the Minister and the Department of Public Works for acceding to the constant representations I made for three years to have a new school built at Stafford.

Mr. Power: I did not see one letter from you on the file.

Mr. MORRIS: Evidently the new Secretary for Public Works does not know the history of the actual work that went on before the beginning of the construction of that school, and I can see that I had better give it to him. Over three years ago it was proposed to build a new school at Stafford, and it was to be erected on a site entirely unsuitable for a school and school grounds. The residents of the area were very upset at the idea that the school should be erected in that place, which was in the Nundah electorate. The school committee got in touch with me and asked me if I could do anything to prevent its erection at that unsuitable place. I in turn got in touch with the Director-General of Education, and the Minister arranged that one of the inspectors who was in charge of that aspect of the work was to go to Stafford to meet me and the parents of the children attending the old Stafford school. With the parents and the inspector we made an inspection of the ground that had been chosen for the school, as well as an inspection of the site on which the new school is now being built. I made strong personal representations to the Director-General and also to the Minister that the school be built on what was considered a much more suitable area, and the Director-General said to the school committee, “Get a petition of the parents.” The Minister can check what I say, because it is all contained in the minutes of the meetings of the Stafford school committee. I got the petition and presented it to the department, with the result that the efforts of the committee, extending over about three years, were successful, and the school is now being built on a suitable site.

I am very happy indeed to thank the department publicly for having acceded to my request in this regard, and I have no hesitation whatever in making a public acknowledgment of what it did. Prior to the time when the hon. member for Nundah spoke in this debate I had chatted with the Minister in one of the passageways in this building, and I said to him that I had overlooked making reference to the new school building at Stafford, but that I would do so later on in the debate. Along comes the hon. member for Nundah and tries to accuse me of being unfair in not making that acknowledgment. I believe there is a good deal of merit in the building of this new school, but that does not preclude me from criticising any other aspect

of departmental administration, and I feel that I should be perfectly justified in doing so when necessary.

The Minister said that no complaint had been made about the leaking trough—not a drain—at the Wilston State School, but complaints about it have been made over a considerable period of time. I have actually seen copies of letters from the school committee complaining about the leaking guttering or trough, over a considerable period of time. I know that they have made complaints over about two years, although I am not going to say that it is exactly two years—it may have been only 21 months. However, there have been complaints about this leaking drain for upwards of two years. The water runs over a concrete floor and it is a source of danger to the children there. Whether the Minister has those complaints on the file I do not know—I am not responsible for that—but I know that there have been repeated complaints about it. However, I am pleased to have his assurance that it will now be attended to.

Mr. THEODORE (Herbert) (3.34 p.m.): There has been a very full and thorough discussion on these important Estimates. Many hon. members, on the Opposition side at any rate, seem to think that they have not had the consideration to which they were entitled and did not get the credit for something that had been done in the way of public buildings and schools in their electorates.

I am sure that neither the Minister nor his department will do anything that will prevent a fair and equal distribution of public buildings and hospitals throughout the State, no matter what electorate needs them. That is important. The children in every electorate are entitled to the fullest possible consideration in the matter of school buildings and educational facilities.

I want to point out in the short time at my disposal the great difficulty people in the wet coastal areas experience as compared with those in the drier areas or towns. One of the greatest problems confronting the department is the enormous cost of upkeep of wooden buildings in the wet areas. Repeated representations have been made to me as to attention required to school buildings, particularly as a result of the war. That is no more than one would expect. In the future public buildings, particularly in the coastal areas, should be constructed of brick or concrete. It is too costly to construct public buildings in the wet area with timber. They cannot withstand the ravages of white ants or borers and the effect of the weather. These factors cause great deterioration and entail considerable maintenance costs.

It would be a pity to see any great expenditure on small school buildings, in view of the announced policy to build area schools. In the long run these centralised schools will be less costly. The buildings will be permanent, substantial structures, and the cost of upkeep will be less than at present. Parents who require small schools, of which I have quite a number in my electorate, have many difficulties to surmount. Often only the required

number of children attend them. All these difficulties of course would be overcome if we had area schools, but proper provision for transport will be necessary to enable children at present attending these small schools to be transported to the area school. That fact must be considered in assessing future educational requirements. Every consideration should be given to the matter of providing buildings that will meet future requirements. As pointed out by the honourable member for West Moreton, we should look ahead and avoid unnecessary expense caused by lack of foresight.

At present we have a position in Innisfail High School that has obtained for a long time—the need for improvements that could not be attended to owing to the war. The school committee has made representations to the Department of Public Instruction and I am surprised that the health authorities allow the drainage at that school to continue as it is. These conditions are caused by a very low depression in part of the school grounds, which it has been impossible to fill in. The shire engineer at his own expense drew plans for the improvement of the school grounds and submitted them to the department. They provided for the expansion of the school grounds and the building of tennis courts and general improvements.

At 3.41 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. THEODORE: It is only now that the department has been able to get the necessary materials and labour. I think we can look forward to a general improvement throughout the State in the near future in all these matters.

I listened to the hon. member for Cooroora telling us about falling through the floor of a public building. If he was behaving as he was when delivering his speech, I am not surprised that he fell through the floor. But the position described by the hon. member is not peculiar to his electorate. It applies just as much to my electorate and other electorates, and for the same reason—the department was unable to get the galvanised iron and other material and men to do these jobs. I never go to my electorate without having representations made to me about something that needs attention at the school. The last time I was in Tully the sergeant's wife asked me to go round to the back of the house and look at the back steps.

(Time expired.)

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (3.44 p.m.): I promised the hon. member for Cunningham that I would give him information as to the school at Felton South. It was arranged with a contractor named Kelly, of Herries Street, Toowoomba, on 2 October, to remove the school to take the place of the one at Felton South and I understand the work is under way.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition remarked about neglect in attending to the preservation of our public buildings.

Nobody is more concerned about that than the officials of the department. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lyons has had the matter in hand and has mentioned it to me on numerous occasions. The most urgent jobs are carried out first. There has been a good deal of deferred maintenance—to which I referred previously—but the jobs are being inspected and what is considered most important and most urgent for the preservation of the asset is put in hand straightaway. Of course there is always a certain amount of minor repairs that must be done before painting is begun. I want to assure members that there is a great shortage of paint but we are doing the best we can in circumstances that are not of our making. As paint becomes available in larger quantities and painters are to be got we will push ahead with the preservation of the assets of the department.

I cannot agree with the suggestion of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the inspector of works in a district should make an inspection of every building in the district. It is the duty of the people occupying the building to report. It would not be asking too much of them, when they see signs of deterioration, to report to the district supervisor. To have an inspector going to every building would mean the inspecting of buildings that required no attention whatever. I think it would be quite sufficient and save much of the time of the supervisors if the officers occupying the building made a complaint to him that certain work was required, the supervisor then to make the necessary inspection and, if necessary, go ahead with repairs to the extent of £5. As I said, I propose to increase that amount, but major repairs must be referred to head office. I will not agree to allowing any supervisor expending money without some control over him.

I do not propose to set myself up as an architect, but I think I know a little about the beauty of a building, and as to the architectural work of the department I would refer hon. members to the report, at the back of which they will see photographs of additions to the Brisbane Women's Hospital, the fourth unit of the Brisbane Anzac Square Building, the Ashgrove State School additions—all brick buildings—and the wooden building in the additions to the State schools at Camp Hill, Holland Park and Moorooka. There is a picture of the Ironsides State School addition, the Newmarket State School addition, and the new court house at Charleville—brick buildings. I cannot see that anyone could complain about the architectural beauty of these buildings. In addition, we must not forget that serious consideration must be given to the utility value of the building.

Mr. Maher: That is all wrapped in it.

Mr. POWER: We should not have buildings like some of the modern bungalows erected today, very nice outside but with rooms in some of which you could not swing a cat.

Mr. Maher: Architecture covers all phases.

Mr. POWER: I agree with that, but I do not think there can be any complaint about our buildings, bearing in mind the use to which they must be put.

As to the need for carrying out certain works, I repeat, as I have reiterated all through this debate, that the shortages of materials have not been brought about by the Government. As a matter of fact, the shortage of bricks is the responsibility of private enterprise.

Mr. Maher: Oh no.

Mr. POWER: Oh yes. We do not manufacture bricks. Does the hon. member suggest that we should establish a brickworks? As a matter of fact, because we are not able to obtain the bricks required, I am giving serious consideration to asking that another brickworks be established here.

I agree with the hon. member for Herbert that buildings should be constructed of brick wherever possible, but I point out that the delays referred to are due again to shortage of man-power.

Again, there is no doubt that there is a black market in labour today and the Government will not be a party to it.

Mr. Evans: In the building trade?

Mr. POWER: Yes. A number of our employees have left to work for private enterprise at black-market rates. I know also of a private firm whose employees are leaving because it will not be associated with the black-market in labour. In the majority of these cases, where contractors are doing work with black-market labour, the work performed is the erection of homes and while the persons receiving black-market rates of wages might be happy about those higher rates, when it is all boiled down the worker who has to pay or rent the home is the one who pays the black-market price. The builder does not pay it. Whatever he pays out in wages he gets back plus 10 per cent, sometimes 20 or 25 per cent.

I am glad to be able to say that at last in this debate I have discovered one hon. member who is satisfied. It was quite a change to hear the hon. member for Keppel say that everything in the garden was lovely. He said he was happy with the work done by the department in his electorate and that he had no complaints to make. I am very pleased indeed to know that we have one satisfied hon. member, and, needless to say, we find him on this side of the Chamber.

The hon. member for Maryborough raised an important matter when he suggested an amendment of the Local Government Act to enable local authorities to have one loan fund, as the Brisbane City Council has. At present separate loan funds must be kept for each undertaking upon which a local authority embarks. There is a good deal of merit in the hon. member's suggestion and I do not know the reason for the difference between the City of Brisbane Act and the Local Government Act so far as loan funds are concerned.

Mr. Evans: It would save a lot of book-keeping.

Mr. POWER: It certainly would. I intend to discuss the matter with the hon. member for Maryborough and I shall discuss it with the Director of Local Government to see what can be done. Anything that we can do to ease the burden on local authorities should be done.

The hon. member for Enoggera came into the picture again and tried to take credit for the erection of a new school at Stafford. For his information, let me say that long before he represented Enoggera, Mr. Taylor, who then represented the electorate, and Mr. Hayes, who then represented Nundah, brought the matter before the Government and asked that something be done. The war intervened and it was impossible to meet their wishes. Mr. Hayes was persistent in his efforts and approaches to the department and I can assure the hon. member for Enoggera that while I do not want to take credit from him, the project was well in hand before ever he adorned the benches of this Chamber.

The hon. member for Enoggera also referred to leaky drains at the Mitchelton school. I informed him that no complaint had ever been received by the department. He then said that a complaint was made 18 months ago. I checked the matter up again with my department and I find that no complaint has ever been received about leaky drains at that school. Three weeks ago a plumber visited the school to attend to three leaky taps.

At that time no complaint was made, nor did the plumber who was repairing the leaking taps notice any hole whatever in the galvanised pipe referred to by the hon. member. Three weeks ago there was no leaking, and as a matter of fact after the matter was raised, it was discovered today that there was a small hole in the drainage. I do not think the hon. member has been quite fair. No complaint was made to the department and the records do not show that any letters of complaint were received. The hon. member said that complaints were made, and I say again that an inspector went out three weeks ago and saw nothing wrong with the place, and it was only today that he discovered a small leak. The matter has been attended to.

The hon. member for Herbert referred to one or two matters in the Innisfail district. He suggested that in future all buildings should be in brick and mortar or brick and concrete, and I can assure him that with the shortage of timber in this State today wherever possible we are using bricks to conserve our timber supplies.

The hon. member for Herbert and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the need for planning for the future. In the past and in the future the design of our buildings will be considered from the aspect of future development. We know that many of our buildings were erected years ago, and that the city of Brisbane was planned in the belief that Brisbane would never develop. What do we find today? We find that resumptions

have been made to widen Adelaide Street and resumptions will take place to widen George Street. Buildings erected in the future will be capable of extension to meet any increase in population.

Plans in connection with the Innisfail State School grounds require a good deal of attention; it is a reclamation job. The matter has been under consideration by the department for some time, but it is a question of getting suitable soil for the reclamation. The matter will not be lost sight of, and will be completed as soon as possible.

Mr. TURNER (Kelvin Grove) (3.58 p.m.): I have already congratulated the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank and his return to good health. I want now to pay a tribute to the doctors and nurses of the hospital for the skill and attention that made it possible for him to come back into this Chamber and stand up to the gruelling time he has had in the last three days. I feel sure that they will be delighted to see the vigour with which he has tackled his job. In answering criticism levelled at his department he has expressed himself forcibly.

The debate that has taken place on this vote has been very interesting, particularly from a metropolitan member's point of view. I have heard condemnation and praise of local authorities, and I have come to the conclusion that a number of hon. members in Opposition are councillors or have been councillors at some time in their lives. I have wondered why it has been necessary for this Government to subsidise local authorities to the extent to which they have over the years, I have also wondered why local authorities have not sought some increase in rates in order to give the services people have been asking for, but when one sees the type of aldermen representing them and the particular interests those men have within their areas, one realises why they did not attempt to increase rates. Rather than do that they have called upon the Government for subsidies.

My mind went back to an experience I had three years ago, when I visited Beaudesert with the then Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, Hon. T. A. Foley. It was just after the Government had passed the Act relieving local authorities of the hospital precepts. To my amazement the hospital in the wealthy district of Beaudesert had no proper water supply. It had big concrete tanks in the yard and on these it depended entirely. Knowing that there was an abundant supply of water in the Beaudesert district and that there were five or six local authorities there I inquired the reason for the absence of a proper water supply, which is very necessary for a progressive and prosperous town like Beaudesert and I found that the local councillors would not agree to the provision of such a water supply because it would be necessary to increase the rates and the people round about the area would not receive any benefit directly from a water supply for Beaudesert.

Mr. Aikens: That is pure bunkum. They would all get the benefit of the water supply.

Mr. TURNER: That was the information given to me by the people in the locality and I am simply repeating what they told me. I was also staggered to find that there was no sterilising plant in the hospital, a hospital situated in a wealthy district like that. Immediately the Government relieved the local authorities of the hospital precepts and took over the entire responsibility of maintaining the hospitals the Minister was inundated with requests from hospital boards for this, that, and the other thing.

I wish to devote a part of my time to a measure of praise of the workmen of this great department for some of the work they have done and particularly do I want to congratulate them on the transformation that they made of Smellie's Building at the corner of Edward and Alice Streets, now the Industrial High School. I visited the building several times and I know that they made a remarkably good job there. The entire staff are happy and the children are very contented with their educational surroundings. I was in the art room one day. The way it has been laid out is a revelation. There are the utmost conveniences for the education of the young folk, with fluorescent lighting and an oval-shaped school room with the teacher in the centre with children placed round a railing so that they can all get the personal attention of the teacher. I saw some of the work exhibited there. I saw budding architects receiving tuition and encouragement that would enable them to go on to the University and eventually become the future architects of this State. They will be of great value to this department.

Unfortunately the school does not offer the playing facilities that such a school should have but it is difficult to have big playing areas attached to such a school in the heart of the city. It is unfortunate that such a school should have been established right in the centre of the city but with the shortage of supplies and labour the Government were unable to carry out their plan of secondary education as they would like and so they had no option but to adopt this emergency measure of establishing this school right in the city. However, they have made a very fine job of it.

Personally, I have no room for complaint, about the schooling facilities in my electorate. I have only one school in my electorate, which has an area of 3 and a-quarter miles. It is one of the most modern schools in the southern hemisphere, and I have been associated with its committee for 16 years. I have been its secretary and I have been its chairman now for seven years. We realised during the war years that as the war had to be won it was necessary for us to reduce our peace-time activities. At the same time we kept in mind the little repairs that were necessary. Any work that could be accomplished by the committee was for the most part done by working bees. We are beginning to get active again and when supplies of materials are in greater abundance we shall be making some representations to the department.

I can support the Minister's remarks on the scarcity of supplies. Much of the shortage has been man-made. I have on several occasions in this Chamber said that the shortages in the months of March, April and May last year were deliberately made because people, as they said, "Would not work for Chifley." In other words, the holders of supplies were dodging taxation. Their income had reached a certain limit, so in order to avoid an increase in the rate of taxation they closed down on sales.

Mr. Russell: Controls were largely responsible for restriction of supplies.

At 4.1 p.m.,

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

Mr. TURNER: Controls had nothing to do with it. Had the goods been displayed they would have been sold. The goods would have been readily sold had they been brought from out of cover. Opposition members have been complaining about the black-market. If the goods were not there, they could not have been black-marketed. That has been going on since last May. We have heard great howls to the effect that the working men have been doing this and that but if some have done so they have been taught to do so by the bosses who have restricted sales and profits. The workers should not be blamed for restricting production. Restriction of production in many cases was largely attributable to the manufacturers and the distributors.

I have heard a great many complaints from hon. members opposite about schools in their electorate. I will take the Chamber into the Minister's electorate. He has several schools in his electorate and I do not think older schools can be found in any other electorate than the Petrie Terrace Girls' and the Kelvin Grove Girls' and Infants' State Schools. No school in any part of the State has been more neglected than these two. Yet they are in the Minister's electorate! At the present time temporary repairs are being effected to the Kelvin Grove Girls' and Infants' School.

Mr. Plunkett: Have you seen the Southport State School?

Mr. TURNER: I have seen the Southport State School. Its condition is better than this school.

Before the war a sewerage scheme was being considered in connection with this school but it is only now that attention is being paid to it. Some hon. members would make it appear that only schools in electorates represented by Labour men receive attention. That is not so. The Minister, as hon. member for Barooona, could not be excelled in his fight for matters pertaining to his electorate. If anything could have been done to his schools I am sure that it would have been done years before he became Minister. He realised that it would be asking an impossibility to ask for repairs to them in the war period as first consideration for homes for the people was the keyword of the Government.

The Minister has been applauded for his statement concerning the reorganisation of his department. I join with him in that

matter I hope he will not be guided by the suggestion made from the Queensland People's Party members that he should go outside the department for his skilled officers.

What need have outside organisations to encourage officers to leave our department if as hon. members opposite say, there are better men in outside employment? We have officers capable of doing any work any architect in outside service can do. There is something wrong in the department but we just do not know where it is.

Mr. Russell: Are you attacking the ex-Minister?

Mr. TURNER: I am talking a little common sense. We can safely leave the matter in the hands of the Minister to clean up. If he adopts the policy he has outlined, if he gives every officer in the department the opportunity to express himself and make suggestions as to where the department can be improved, he will be doing a great job; he will be doing justice to each and every member of his staff and he will give no-one the opportunity to put a dagger in a man's back when he is not looking. That is what is wanted in all departments of industry. We do not want the practice that operates in private enterprise—the backdoor of the manager's office is open while someone sneaks in to tell him that someone has gone down to have a haircut or is making tea, and the employee gets his pay on Friday night and is told he is not wanted, and if he wants to know the reason he is told there is no reason at all. If the Minister conducts his inquiry in the way he told the Chamber he would—and I am sure he will; everybody will have the opportunity to express himself—everyone will know where he is and the department will go on smoothly and give the satisfaction that we have been looking for.

Sometimes I feel that there is a little professional jealousy there. On one occasion I knew a young architect in that department—a brilliant young man with brilliant ideas—and he was given a job to do and he took a suggestion to his superior officer. He was told that it sounded all right and his boss said to him, "You may have some brilliant ideas but you had better keep your brilliant ideas till I am out of this department. I have not long to go, but while I am here none of your ideas will be implemented." Unfortunately that young man left and the officer concerned is dead. That attitude was causing a considerable amount of dissatisfaction in that department, because the young architects were eager to express themselves in their plans and ideas, but they were unable to do it because of this officer who, although a splendid architect, had staid ideas. He could draw beautiful designs, such as the hon. member for West Moreton spoke of, but these do not provide schools for the children or homes for the people. Very massive pillars and heavy masonry look beautiful, but it does not give comfort to the employee, and that should be the aim of the architect—the comfort of employees by providing natural light and the elimination of shadows and abundance of fresh air. That is what modern

architecture is trying to produce today. Unfortunately the older fellows do not see the need for it. For instance, modern architecture adopts a nine-foot ceiling, whereas many years ago they could not go high enough. Many old homes have 11 ft. 6 in. ceilings, but today they are down to 9 feet. They dropped from 11 ft. 6 ins. to 10 ft. 6 ins. and modern architecture has adopted 9 feet. Many want to go lower than that; they want it brought down to the tops of the windows because they contend that there is much dead air in the high ceilings, which is not healthy.

I support the Minister. I hope that he will succeed in bringing his department up to the standard at which he aims. He has proved here that he himself is efficient and if he brings his staff to the same standard of efficiency as he has set himself he will have done a mighty job.

Mr. BROWN (Buranda) (4.16 p.m.): First of all I congratulate my old friend, the Minister, on his recovery from a very severe illness. I hope his recovery will be lasting and he will be long spared to enjoy good health in the department to which he has been elevated.

I would take this opportunity also of congratulating the department on the good workmanship to be seen in joinery and other work it turns out. The demand for joinery and school furniture was so great that some time ago the department decided to call tenders for some of it. The result is in favour of day labour, as shown by the following prices:—

	Private firm tender.		Government Workshop.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Desks and Forms—				
Size A ..	5	15 6	4	1 1
Size B ..	5	13 6	3	7 11
Size C ..	5	16 0	3	11 7

Naturally the department did not accept the tenders, owing to the great difference in price, and today the workshops are turning out a very good job in that line of equipment. Of course, the aim of day labour is to turn out a good article and private enterprise cannot possibly do just as good a job at the price.

I am also pleased to be able to state that the output of the Government workshops has increased in value during the last 10 years as the following figures show:—

1936-37	£29,668
1946-47	£53,589

And what a wonderful job the workshops are doing for the people of Queensland!

There has been much talk during this debate of the difficulties besetting schools and school grounds. We are suffering to a certain extent because of lack of foresight of our forefathers who when setting aside spaces for school grounds did not visualise Queensland as a colony that would expand to the degree that she has. The Junction Park School in my electorate was built approximately 60 years ago. A new school was built about seven or eight years ago, but the grounds are too small today.

Since that time a number of other schools have been built in the surrounding area. I refer to the infant school, the girls' school and the boys' school at Buranda, with an average daily attendance of 1,000. It was built in 1918 and referred to then by hon. members opposite as Huxham's Folly. The fact that it has an average daily attendance of 1,000, together with the fact that the surrounding schools are fully attended, is proof of the foresight shown by the Government of the day in building the Buranda State School. The grounds have been described as small and barren of grass. With 1,000 children running over a small area for five days a week it is only natural that it is impossible to grow grass. Many school grounds in the metropolitan area are barren of grass.

The Greenslopes school has an average attendance of 750. Its grounds are very small. I am supporting the committee in asking that the present buildings be demolished and that a two-storey brick building be erected in its place. Such a building would occupy only about one-quarter of the school grounds, accommodate all the children likely to attend, and at the same time give the pupils better playing facilities. In my opinion the school will never have a greater average daily attendance than 750, but it will always be required, and I make the suggestion as one way of giving better playing facilities to the children. I agree also with the hon. member for Herbert that all future buildings should be constructed of brick, concrete, or some other material that does not deteriorate as rapidly as timber.

I am also pleased to know that a start has been made on the new hospital for South Brisbane. Some months ago excavation and levelling work was done in preparation for the foundations on the site now occupied by the Diamantina or South Brisbane Auxiliary Hospital. Although it is a tremendous task to undertake at a time when there is a shortage of labour, material, nurses, hospital equipment, doctors, and so on, it is urgently needed, and the sooner it is completed the better.

I have much pleasure in supporting the vote, and I trust that in the near future many of the present obstacles in the way of building will be eliminated and that we shall be able to go ahead with the vast building programme we have in mind.

Mr. EVANS (Mirani) (4.25 p.m.): The Minister suggested that councils on occasions, were forcing people who were subdividing land to put in roads as good as if not better than roads in the locality. The Act is plain and says that people who subdivide land shall build roads in conformity with the roads existing in the local authority at the time. That is a definite responsibility. There are areas where the people have paid for the supply of water and electricity and persons holding big areas in that locality have had the value of their properties increased as a result. Owing to the unearned increment they receive on the sale of the land it is necessary that they should build roads in conformity with the standard of existing roads. Local authorities are bound by the Act and my council has

always insisted that people who subdivide should pay to some extent for the unearned increment.

Mr. Power: I am not objecting.

Mr. EVANS: I am explaining the position that exists. When people subdivide it is their clear responsibility to put some of the unearned increment back into facilities.

The subdivisions referred to by the hon. member for Mundingburra were Crown subdivisions. When a private person subdivides, he must submit plans to the local authority for its approval but where the Crown subdivides no plans are submitted and when the land is sold the Crown gets the unearned increment and builds no roads at all. I say that the Minister concerned—I am not referring to the Secretary for Public Works—should give consideration to using some of that money to help local authorities that have to build roads in areas where the unearned increment is going to the Crown.

Mr. Power: It gets £3 a £100—3 per cent.

Mr. EVANS: Where the value of a property before electric light and a water scheme was put in is, say £5 to £10, that value jumps to £100 a quarter acre. I say that the Crown should pay something towards the cost of roads put in, instead of expecting the people in the area to pay for those roads.

Mr. Power: You have overlooked the fact that the Crown gives you a subsidy to carry out certain works.

Mr. EVANS: It is a special department that gets the revenue from the sale of the land and I believe that the Department of Public Lands should be responsible to a great extent for the building of the roads.

It has been said that local authorities do not want high valuations.

Mr. Power: It was not said by me.

Mr. EVANS: It was said by one hon. member. I want to say that it makes no difference to local authorities whether valuations are high or low, because you base your rate on the revenue you need. Equity of valuations between property and property is what councils desire. If your valuation is low you have to increase the rate—

Mr. Brown: You can only go to a certain rate.

Mr. EVANS: Few shires in Queensland are up to the rate mentioned in the Local Government Act and I do not think any local authority in Queensland is worried about the limitation. Whether valuations are high or low does not make much difference because many local authorities, to facilitate bookkeeping bulk the loan rate with the general rate. The only way in which a high valuation may affect property-owners to some extent would be in increased land tax.

I now come to the subject of town planning, one of the most important projects that any local authority could undertake. I suggest to the Minister that he give every

encouragement in this direction. I am chairman of a shire adjoining the city of Mackay with North Mackay in the Pioneer shire.

(Time expired.)

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (4.31 p.m.): I desire to thank the hon. member for Kelvin Grove for his congratulations on my elevation to Ministerial rank. He made mention of the fact that towards the end of the financial year many firms refused to supply goods on the ground that they would not work for Mr. Chifley. Unfortunately that statement is true—many firms in Queensland and I suppose in other parts of Australia have refused to supply timber at certain times of the year. I know that on some occasions timber has been actually lying in a yard of private traders who have refused to make it available to builders who wished to erect homes for the people. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggested that that was a matter that the Government might take up with the Commissioner of Taxation but I want to remind him that the State Government is no longer an income-taxing authority, that that is now the sole prerogative of the Commonwealth Government. Therefore, if there has been any hold-up in building jobs the responsibility lies with private enterprise, not with the Government. We have endeavoured as far as possible to meet the requirements of the people and of honourable members on both sides of the Chamber on their behalf. At the present time we have a number of officers from the Department of Public Works and the State Housing Commission operating throughout Queensland endeavouring to secure timber from a number of sources so that our public-works and home-building programmes may be carried out and we are meeting with some success. We also have some specialised officers from the department visiting various tradespeople in the metropolis and other parts of the State endeavouring to obtain appurtenances for buildings, such as baths, sinks, and stoves, and the like. It has been said that the Department of Public Works and the State Housing Commission have a big stock of building supplies that outside contractors urgently need to complete the construction of homes. I want to deny that statement and to point out that the department is in no better position than any private builder.

The hon. member for Buranda referred to the department's Ipswich road joinery shop, a valuable adjunct to the department and one that is playing a very important part today in helping to relieve building shortages. Recently I was able to place an order with that shop for £8,000 on behalf of the State Housing Commission. Private enterprise was unable to supply all our joinery requirements but our Ipswich road workshop came to the rescue and it has been able to supply material to the State Housing Commission and in addition desks for schools and many other things that we could not get from outside sources. However, I want to add that private enterprise has been very helpful, particularly to the Department of Public Works and the State Housing Commission.

An excellent suggestion came from the hon. member for Buranda. I will not make him any promise that the Greenslopes State School will be demolished and a new one erected in the near future. I can assure him, however, that any request from the Department of Public Instruction for the construction of a new school at Greenslopes will receive favourable consideration. The hon. member made a constructive suggestion in relation to that school's playground, and one that can be applied to schools generally. Its ground area is not large enough for present requirements, and he suggested that any new school should be of two or more floors in order to conserve the recreation area for the children. In the past, schools have been erected in many parts of the State without regard to the growth of population, and today it is impossible to obtain new sites. Seventy-five or eighty years ago schools were built right alongside railways and tramlines. It is very difficult for the teachers to impart knowledge in those schools, as the attention of pupils is often distracted by the noise. It is impossible to embark upon any policy of resumption, as sites are not available, and I will not agree to any policy of resumption involving the homes of the people, which would force them into temporary accommodation.

There is a solution of the problem, and an approach has been made to the Department of Public Instruction in the matter. It is that girls' and boys' schools should be merged and one school built along the lines of the suggestion of the hon. member for Nundah. Some objections have been made to the merging of these schools. One objection is the outcome of the jealousy that does operate in Government departments. There are those who do not like mixed schools. When it comes to the question of imparting education to our young, all such objections must be swept aside. Petty jealousies must not be allowed to conflict with Government policy. The suggestion made by the hon. member is an excellent one, and will receive serious consideration by my department in the erection of new schools. If we have the necessary ground area it will not be necessary to erect two- or three-storey school buildings, but if the ground is not available we must build according to the position that confronts us.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: There will be criticism of the fact that children will be called on to climb stairs constantly.

Mr. POWER: That is so, but there is no reason why lifts should not be installed in such schools. Anyhow, there is nothing wrong with a young child's running up and down steps. It is good exercise and physical training. There may be a child who is not strong enough to walk up stairs or a child may suffer from a little deformity or heart affliction and due consideration must be given to them. There is no reason, however, why three-storey schools should not be constructed with lifts, in order that a bigger playground shall be available for the pupils. That is one factor which will receive consideration in requests for the erection of new schools.

Mr. Russell: You will have to have attendants continually on duty on the lifts.

Mr. POWER: The Government will carry out any provision of the award in that respect.

I heartily agree with the hon. member for Mirani as to the subdivision of property. Land-owners who subdivide their property are compelled to pay local authorities a certain amount for road construction.

Mr. Evans: I understood you to say they were charged too much.

Mr. POWER: I did say some local authorities were asking the land-owners to put in roads that were of a much better class than those put in by the council in contiguous areas. Provision has been made to grant these owners some protection in the form of an appeal against any decision of the local authority.

Mr. Evans: It is contrary to the Act, too.

Mr. POWER: It is contrary to the Act, but some local authorities have done it. It was done in Brisbane and in another local authority whose name I cannot recollect for the time being. Provision is made for the right of appeal. We took the necessary action and someone was appointed to deal with the question. In one case the condition was modified, the Surveyor-General being the person who finally determined the appeal. It is necessary that you shall have a qualified man, and I do not think that you could get a better man than the Surveyor-General. I agree that those people whose properties are to be subdivided should pay something for the subdivision, but I cannot agree with the hon. member when he deals with the question of transfer. This might be outside the scope of the debate, but with your approval Mr. Mann, I should like to reply to the hon. member. Crown lands are subdivided and sold on a leasehold basis and the rental is £3 in the £100. Surely the hon. member is not going to ask us to give the £3 to the local authorities as some contribution towards the subdivision of the property? It is no use asking the Crown to bear the whole cost. The Crown has been very generous—and it should be; I have the greatest respect for the local authorities, whose work I think is of major importance—and the Government have a system of subsidies.

But there should be some reciprocity from the local authorities in subdivisions for the purpose of erecting homes. The local authority receives a benefit as a result of the subdivision of Crown lands. Crown lands are subject to service rates but they are not subject to rating. Once the land has been leased or sold it becomes liable not only to service rates but to general rates also, which are levied on a freehold basis and the local authority gets extra revenue as a result. We do not restrict the local authority's right to levy rates on it. I think the local authority should at least give some consideration to this matter and not try to squeeze the last ounce

out of the Government, because the Government have been rather generous in their assistance to local authorities which have done a very good job.

Coming to the final matter raised by the hon. member, I agree that town planning is of major importance. If the old local authorities throughout Queensland had only had a better idea of town planning years ago we should not be finding ourselves in the state of chaos in which we are finding ourselves today. As a result of the town-planning proposals of local authorities, we find that the people will have to find a great deal of money for resumptions.

Mr. Evans: The longer you leave it the more it will be.

Mr. POWER: I quite agree. We must pay some attention to the matter. We have the spectacle in the heart of this city of bottle yards adjacent to excellent homes, heavy industries in the one area and homes built round them. We have continual complaints from owners and tenants that people are working all hours of the day and night, to the annoyance of the occupants of the houses. Town planning should be undertaken by the local authorities. I can assure the hon. member that I am interested in the work of local authorities and if there is anything I can do to further their work I shall be happy to do it.

Mr. Evans: Expedition of the approval of plans is important.

Mr. POWER: The local authority may approve of the plan but the ratepayers have some rights.

Mr. Evans: I know.

Mr. POWER: If the ratepayers submit a petition to the Government the matter is first of all dealt with by the local authority, which dismisses the matter willy nilly because somebody opposes the plan. The matter then comes to the Director of Local Government for determination. The Minister cannot decide these matters; he must be guided by the technical advice of someone with full knowledge of what is required. In any decision I make in any matter, I can assure the hon. member that I shall be well fortified by the recommendations of a qualified officer. Where there is a request for a poll, it is the duty of the Government to see that the poll is held, and that the people have the right to express their views in the matter. As we know, a number of people are always opposed to town planning, because they realise that perhaps a few more shillings will be charged to them each year in rates. All these objections must be swept away and the right of the majority of people must be preserved. The right of the majority must be considered at all times in town planning and the development of this nation along the lines on which a nation should be developed.

Mr. CLARK (Fitzroy) (4.47 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on being elevated to the position of Secretary for Public Works. If the hon. gentleman continues to show the energy he has shown in this Chamber during

the discussions of the Estimates of his department we shall see something big done within the next few years.

The Department of Public Works is only a constructing authority; it has to get the right-of-way from other departments before it can proceed with the building. In my electorate many school buildings need attention, but I would point out that during the past three years some of the schools have been attended to, additions have been made to some, and others have been repaired.

I have noticed that as soon as the department erects an addition to a school it is no time before the building is overcrowded again. I have had that experience on two occasions within my electorate within the last few years. I know also that schools built nearer to cities are becoming useless because the children round those schools have grown to adults and are shifting into the outer areas of the cities and towns.

I believe that in spite of all criticism this department has been doing a good job. We all realise that man-power and materials have been short, and are still short. That is one of the greatest obstacles to be overcome by the department, but as time goes on and man-power and materials become available I think we shall see a great alteration in the doings of this department.

The Department of Local Government within the Department of Public Works has been doing a good job. The Mt. Morgan district in my electorate is considered a very dry area. Although Mt. Morgan has been on the map for 60-odd years, it was not until recently that a water scheme could be provided for the town, but I am now happy to be able to say that within the last 12 months or so, with the assistance of the Department of Local Government, the local authority of Mt. Morgan and the Mt. Morgan Gold Mining Company, an underground supply has been discovered. This will be greatly appreciated by the people of Mt. Morgan, not only the people there but the company too will be happy in having the extra supply to draw on in dry seasons.

I have not heard many hon. members refer to the department's policy of training apprentices. It is doing great work in this direction. It is employing apprentices and making good tradesmen of them. I suggest that one of the greatest works we can do at the moment is train men for the occupations in which skilled tradesmen are urgently needed. At the moment the department is employing 114 carpenters, 28 plumbers, 23 electricians, 17 painters, 16 plasterers, 14 bricklayers and 2 polishers and it is pleasing to see that apprentices are being trained for each of those callings. Such a policy will go a long way towards overcoming the present man-power shortage. At times the department has even gone so far as to employ the apprentices whom private employers cannot occupy on full time. This is a grand gesture on the part of the department for it enables these lads to get through their period of training.

Under the post-war reconstruction and training scheme the department is employing 75 trainees. These men are doing good work, according to the department's report, and they are all interested in their jobs. I suggest that it would be a good thing if the railways and other labour-employing departments employed more of these post-war trainees. In Rockhampton, where we have a number of these men looking for work, I have endeavoured to persuade the Railway Department to give them employment and I suggest that it would be better if these men were employed by one department or the other.

The other day the hon. member for Logan questioned whether £125,000 would be needed for the erection of the homes of the aged and infirm at Rockhampton. Let me inform the hon. member that this is a big project. Already a number of cottages have been erected and we have still to build the hospital and administrative blocks. I remind him also that before the department could proceed with the work part of the old Rockhampton gaol had to be demolished, and this took some time. Let me assure the hon. member also that when the project is finished it will be greatly appreciated by the old people. The cottages that have been built already are equipped with all modern amenities and I am confident that the old people occupying them will be extremely happy at having such places in which to spend the last days of their lives.

The State Housing Commission is doing a very good job. I know that some hon. members opposite have had complaints to make about homes built by the commission but I want to say that in my opinion homes being built by the commission in Queensland compare very favourably with those built by private enterprise—some are better. I have seen a lot of the homes built by the commission and I have seen some built by private enterprise, and if I had my pick I would pick the home built under the commission's scheme.

Whilst we have not got many homes built by the commission in the Central District the people living in them are satisfied. There is, however, only one complaint I have to make and that is that up to the present time no such houses have been built in Mt. Morgan. I should like to see one or two or even half a dozen built in Mt. Morgan, so that the people there would have some idea of what the Government are doing for those in need of homes.

Mr. PEE (Windsor) (4.56 p.m.): I have only a few minutes at my disposal but I want to bring before the Minister's notice matters in relation to the Breakfast Creek State School and some of the statements made. With your permission, Mr. Devries, I should like to read this letter from the Breakfast Creek State School committee—

“The committee of the above school has instructed me to write and give you full particulars concerning the property adjacent to the school grounds. In March, 1936, I wrote to the Education Department submitting the owner's price for two (2) cottages and land to enlarge the school

grounds. The price asked for was £650. On 19 March, 1936, I received a letter from the department informing me that the Lands Department had been requested to furnish a valuation of the property. On the 26th October, 1937, I received a letter through Mr. H. Williams, M.L.A. for Windsor from Mr. F. Cooper, Minister for Education, informing him (Mr. Williams) that the department could not see their way clear to purchase the property on account of other urgent building requirements.

"The school committee then decided to purchase the property—namely, one (1) cottage and land. The committee instructed me to interview the owner, Mr. Doyle. Mr. Doyle told me he was prepared to sell the cottage adjacent to the school grounds for £400 on the following terms—£50 deposit and £5 per month at 5 per cent. interest.

"At a special meeting of the committee I was instructed to purchase the property on the above terms. The following trustees were elected—G. B. Mellifont, F. Oliver and the head teacher, Mr. R. Brown.

"Mr. Doyle allowed me £20 commission, he said he would have to pay an agent that amount. I told him to deduct the £20 off the £400, leaving the price of the property at £380.

"I informed Mr. H. Williams, M.L.A., what the committee had done in regard to the purchasing of the property and he said he would see what he could do about the department taking over the property. Some time later Mr. Williams, M.L.A. received word from the department to the effect that if the committee paid £190 off the £380 the department would pay the balance. The committee paid the £100 on the understanding from Mr. Williams, M.L.A. for Windsor (since deceased) that the property would be under the control of the trustees of the school committee.

"In December, 1942, I received a letter from the department asking for payment of outstanding interest (£45 7s. 11d.) up to the 30th December, 1942, plus an increase of 9d. per day thereafter and that in future all moneys received as rental of the property are to be paid to the accountant of Public Instruction (the cottage being rented at 17s. per week).

"On 13th January, 1943, the sum of £45 10s. was paid to the department.

"In July, 1943, I received a letter from the department, asking for the payment of £22 7s. 2d., being on rates outstanding. On the 6th of the 4th, 1943, £7 17s. 6d. was paid to the department—rental from the cottage."

At. 4.59 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. PIE:

"The property has cost the committee £195 14s. 8d. It was the intention of the committee to build a swimming pool on the property. The committee are of the opinion that they have not been treated fairly by the department in regard to the property.

"First of all they refused to buy and when the committee bought they take the property off them. All we, the committee, ask for is that the property be handed back to them.

"The department has collected about £200 in rent from the property and with the £195 that it cost the committee the department will lose nothing by handing it over so as it can be put to some use by the children and give the school committee their long felt want in building a memorial swimming pool in honour of the past pupils of the school who have paid the supreme sacrifice.

"(Sgd.) G. B. Mellifont,

"Chairman and Secretary,

"School Committee."

The letter is dated 4 October, 1947, and I bring it before the notice of the Minister to indicate what this little school committee has done, so that the Minister may be aware of it and reply to it later, not at once, if he wishes to do so.

These poorer people in the Breakfast Creek area desire to give this extra school facility to the poorer children in the area, who have been neglected. It is useless to say that money is not being spent on schools, because I have here pictures showing the schools that are being erected throughout the State and I know that last year the sum of £105,141 was spent on schools. My point is that it is not being spent on the schools in the poorer areas, and I now have in mind Breakfast Creek and Fortitude Valley, where unfortunately there are some poor people. They are being neglected on every hand and we have the Government taking £198 from the school committee at Breakfast Creek. Go down to these school-rooms and you will see that they are unlined and dirty and not fit for children to be educated in. I have seen some of them and I appeal to the Minister in all fairness to make an investigation of the Breakfast Creek State School, when he will see that what I say is correct. Do you know that the committee spent £500 in filling in this ground, and that was done before the present Minister assumed control of the department? I have the correspondence on it, reams of it. The matter was brought before the Minister of the department.

(Time expired.)

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (5.2 p.m.): The hon. member for Fitzroy referred to the number of extensions that have been made to various schools in his electorate, and he went on to say that as soon as the extensions were completed the schools became so overcrowded again that further extensions were required. I only wish that many other parts of Queensland would increase their population in that way, and I can assure the hon. member that if his electorate continues with this good work then I, as Minister in charge of this department, will endeavour to assist by providing the additional schooling accommodation necessary to meet the needs of the increasing population.

The hon. member referred also to the water scheme for Mount Morgan. It is very important that there should be a water supply for every town, where that is possible. The local authority has done something in this direction. In some instances a number of local authorities have banded together to form a joint water board. I am glad that the wishes of the hon. member for Fitzroy have been met in this connection.

Reference has been made to the number of apprentices employed by the department, and I should like to explain that because of the shortage of materials the department is seriously handicapped in carrying out its full building programme. However, we have engaged our full quota of apprentices in all phases of industry, and we do not intend to relax that policy, because these young boys will be required to carry out the extensive building programme that will have to be undertaken in this State in the years to come. In addition, we have absorbed 75 adults who served their country during the war and are now going through a rehabilitation course of training.

In the first year of the training the Commonwealth Government contribute 60 per cent. of their wages and the department 40 per cent. A number of private employers also are training a number of returned men for the building trades. These workmen have done excellent work in the department. We are prepared to employ them to the maximum number allowed in the agreement.

Mr. Kerr: A number are still being trained.

Mr. POWER: That is so. Despite the fact that quite a number of returned men are being trained in the building trades throughout the length and breadth of Queensland, it has been impossible for industry to absorb them all, because of the shortage of material—not so much the shortage of timber as the shortage of roofing material. I should like the matter to be investigated so that a large number of men could be trained under this scheme and absorbed into industry at full journeyman's rates as soon as their training was completed. These young men fought for their country and they are entitled to what can be done for them in this respect.

I want to come back to the matter raised by the hon. member for Windsor in regard to the Breakfast Creek State School and the letter he read from Mr. Mellifont. Mr. Mellifont may have his own views of the matter. I can only give the position as it has been outlined to me by the departmental officers. I cannot suggest that such an excellent gentleman as the Under Secretary for Public Works, Mr. Lyons, would attempt to deliberately mislead me by telling me a lie. Mr. Lyons' reputation is such that he would exert every effort to preserve it. He would not, therefore, under any circumstances try to mislead the Minister in an attempt to bolster up something his department has done.

In 1940 the school committee approached the department to take over its liability. The request came from the school committee

despite what Mr. Mellifont says. The purchase price of the land was £380 and the committee had paid £100 off the purchase price. It was approved that the department take over the liability conditionally on the title of the land being transferred to the Crown. Is it not right that land bought by the school committee should, when the liability on it is taken over from the committee by the Crown, have its title transferred to the Crown? When I say "the Crown" I do not refer to myself or the Under Secretary. It is the people, who are the trustees. Is it not right and proper for the department to protect its interests? That is what was done.

Let us have a look at the suggestion that we made the committee pay rates until the title was transferred.

Mr. Pie: The committee paid £45 in rates on 7 January, 1943.

Mr. POWER: That is a long way back. The hon. member for Windsor is trying to make some political capital out of this matter. The members of the Queensland People's Party would use anything for political purposes in order to score a point against the Government. I am not going to allow the hon. member for Windsor to make it appear to the public that I was misled by the Under Secretary by being given information that was not true. I am only concerned with the information supplied by my adviser, whose integrity cannot be questioned.

Let me analyse where this money came from in the first place. The committee obtained it as the result of the Crown's allowing its members to open the gates of the school in order to park motor cars while their owners attended the races.

Mr. Pie: The Committee provided people to do that.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member for Windsor, seeing that he is in a jam, is now wriggling like a snake to get out of it. If it had not been for the action of the Crown in allowing the school grounds to be made available for the parking of cars the school committee would never have been able to raise the money.

Mr. Wanstall: It had no money.

Mr. POWER: How does the hon. member know that? Let him stick to Toowong; he knows nothing about Breakfast Creek. The hon. member is trying to make political capital out of this matter.

That money was raised as a result of the action of the Crown in allowing the school grounds to be opened for that purpose. I am not prepared to accept the letter sent by Mr. Mellifont, and I am not prepared to accept what the committee said, because we have the information supplied by the Under Secretary, whose word I am prepared to take.

Mr. Pie interjected.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member for Windsor makes a lot of noise in this Chamber. For a number of years he has made a lot of noise, and made statements that are not true.

He has made more personal explanations than any three members put together. The hon. member has no chance of ruffling me. I am now going to show where he has made statements that indicate that he does not know what he is talking about.

Let me deal with the question of expenditure by the Government. The hon. member referred to the amount of money expended in connection with the schools. I dealt with that on Thursday last, and I am not going to go over that ground again. I fully explained at the time the number of schools that had been built and repaired, and the number of school teachers' residences that had been built and repaired. I now propose to show some of the expenditure that has been incurred by the Government during the last 10 years on public buildings. For the purposes of comparison, I will take the period when the State of Queensland was controlled by an anti-labour Government—the Moore Government. The amounts expended on public buildings under the Moore regime were:—

Year	£
1929-30	348,672
1930-31	207,102
1931-32	215,047

Included in those figures is a large amount of money taken from the Unemployment Relief Fund.

Let us make a comparison with the years during the lifetime of the Labour Government, and see what this Government have done in regard to expenditure on public buildings. We heard a good deal about dilapidated public buildings and it was said that no attention was paid to them and they were in a poor state of repair. It is just as well to let the general public know what we have expended on public buildings. The figures are as follows:—

Year	£	s.	d.
1937-38	447,387	18	0
1938-39	426,294	10	11
1939-40	433,351	19	6
1940-41	450,653	7	9
1941-42	302,370	2	10

There is a drop then because it is during the war period.

Year	£	s.	d.
1942-43	123,598	6	9
1943-44	170,437	12	11
1944-45	333,716	15	3
1945-46	409,413,	5	9
1946-47	629,987	4	8

Last year, despite the fact that we have heard so much about neglect of public buildings and nothing being done, the amount expended was £629,987 4s. 8d.; inclusive of expenditure by other departments it amounts to £800,000. There is the lie direct to the statement that the Government have neglected Government buildings. The evidence is there, and I have given those figures so as to refute the statements made by certain members of the Opposition that the Government are not preserving their assets and they are allowing them to deteriorate.

Mr. CROWLEY (Cairns) (5.15 p.m.): I must congratulate the Minister on his transfer from the back benches to the front benches.

Mr. Sparkes: He is the best battler you have got.

Mr. CROWLEY: That is so, and I hope the Opposition appreciate the way he answers their requests immediately and his replies to their criticisms. It is something new for the Opposition to get replies so quickly, and at times they are not pleasant.

I also congratulate the Department of Public Works for the work done in North Queensland in the past. Much criticism of the department has been levelled against the Cairns division under the control of Mr. Toleher, but I would point out that he has carried out a great job. We have had some important buildings erected there by day labour; for instance the high school, at a cost of £30,000-odd is a credit to the department. In addition we have the Government offices in Cairns, erected also at a cost of £30,000-odd, and there are other jobs on the Tableland and as far south as Ingham that are worthy of any Government. I congratulate the department also on the houses built by the Housing Commission in Cairns. The tenants inform me that they are much superior to homes they rented from private enterprise.

Mr. Sparkes: What is this you are talking about now?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to link up anything he has to say about housing with the Department of Public Works. The Housing Commission comes under a separate vote, under Trust Funds, and not under this vote.

Mr. CROWLEY: Mighty good houses are built for officials by the Department of Public Works. Some of the tenants working for the department have told me they are much superior to any of the houses they had previously rented about the district.

Much criticism has been levelled at the amount of work carried out in country districts. I cannot criticise the Government for what they have done in the North; considering the time, we have had very fair treatment. We have permission to go ahead with the Tully scheme at a cost of over £1,000,000 and the Cairns-Mulgrave water scheme at a cost of over £300,000. Authority has been given for the expenditure of £100,000-odd in Cairns this year on streets and drains and we have a sewerage scheme in progress to cost £500,000. This gives the lie direct to any person who criticises the Government for lack of assistance to local authorities. Of course, if a local authority is not progressive it cannot expect to have work carried out, but if it is prepared to go ahead naturally it will get the support of the Government. These figures give the lie to members of the Opposition who have stated that the Government are not sympathetic with the North.

I must congratulate the Minister and the Government on the work that is being carried out.

Mr. JESSON (Kennedy) (5.19 p.m.): I also offer my congratulations to the Minister on his appointment. I think he has shown quite clearly on his handling of the Estimates of his department in the last few days that he has a thorough grip of his portfolio. I believe that much good will come to this State from his energy while he holds this office.

I wish to bring before the Minister the need for giving serious consideration to an amendment of the Local Government Act, which provides that land cannot be subdivided until roads and channelling are put through it. That regulation is having a detrimental effect on the building of homes for the workers. There is considerable land in the metropolitan area and closely adjacent to Brisbane, Townsville and other towns in this State that could be used for home-building.

The owners cannot bear the burden of building roads through their blocks. I remind honourable members that one of the conditions laid down is that a certain amount shall be spent on these roads. This has a retarding effect on the building programmes of both the Government and private enterprise.

I should like to trace the history of this provision. Many years ago big land agents like T. M. Burke and others would buy up great blocks of land, draw blue prints and then send their salesmen north, south, east and west throughout the State selling land from the map to people who were desirous of owning blocks in Brisbane. No roads or access of any kind was ever provided and the Government found it necessary to introduce legislation to put a stop to this racket. To my mind the day when big companies can sell land under these conditions has passed and I feel that it might be possible to review this provision. I know of an area of land in the Toowong electorate admirably suitable for subdivision into building sites but the owner cannot sell the land, not because the price is high—it is reasonable—but because the cost of constructing the roads would be three or four times greater than the value of the land. As one way over the difficulty I suggest that the Government or the local authority might consider constructing the required roads after plans have been submitted to the City Architect or Director of Local Government and the cost of the work could be a charge against the estate. When the blocks are sold, or after the buildings have been erected provision should be made whereby the vendor and the purchaser contribute towards the cost on a 50-50 basis. Architects and builders have asked me to bring this matter before the Government and I believe it is worthy of consideration.

I am astounded at the stone-walling tactics adopted today by the Opposition. They have been talking all round the clock all day. I am anxious to deal with other Estimates but I am being deprived of that opportunity by the stone-walling of the Opposition. It seems to me that they are adopting these tactics simply because the hon. member for Cooroora hit the headlines in the "Telegraph" with a photograph of the shelter shed at Tewantin. He stated early in the debate that

our schools were falling down, and that our public buildings were in a deplorable condition, and he gets publicity. Now, the Country Party and the Queensland People's Party are flogging their joss, as it were, because they believe that it will be detrimental to the Government.

The other day in this Chamber when we were speaking about the efficiency of a department of the Government, the Public Curator—one of the Government instrumentalities doing a very good job for the State—hon. members opposite moved a reduction in the vote.

Mr. Russell: What Estimates do you want to get to?

Mr. JESSON: I will tell the hon. member privately. They moved a reduction in the vote and prolonged the debate another four or five hours—a sort of a busman's holiday. I am rather worried to think that they have gone on with this historic stonewalling today. We might have got onto a discussion of the Department of Health and Home Affairs and the Railway Estimates, and hon. members on this side of the Chamber have been deprived of this opportunity. I add my protest at their actions.

I should like to ask the Minister when the people of my electorate can expect some improvement in our public buildings. I am referring to the police station, the court house, and the single policemen's quarters at Ingham. As a matter of fact the programme was worked out for these buildings some years ago, and the rebuilding plan was formulated in the Department of Public Works. Unfortunately the war came along, and some misinformed person looked upon my electorate as being the nerve centre of North Queensland and public works of all kinds were pushed into the background. I know that the war has been over some two years and I understand the difficulties in the way, but I am asking the Minister to give serious consideration to changing the policy and getting on with these works.

Mr. Russell: Working the parish pump?

Mr. JESSON: I did not have my piece prepared for me—what I have to say comes out of my head. The hon. member for Dalby moves me to say that the Government have been too generous to members of the Opposition. As a matter of fact, within the last few months I made a tour round Kingaroy and out through Dalby and back through many Country Party electorates, and, believe me, Mr. Mann, I was astounded, envious, and jealous of the public buildings built in Tory electorates, particularly when comparing them with my own. Those hon. members opposite get up and talk with their tongues in their cheeks and whine and whinge like our friend "Cheerless Charlie."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to address all hon. members by their correct titles.

Mr. JESSON: "Cheerless Charlie" could be anybody; you should not be in the secret.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: In this Chamber hon. members opposite are whingeing because they say things are not done in their electorates. I saw a beautiful macadamised road, lovely brick buildings, beautiful sergeants' residences, and similar amenities given to members of the Public Service. I saw brick schools and the land for the two-story hospital going to be built at Dalby. It did not come out of the swamp. Some person must have owned that swamp and sold it to the hospitals board.

Mr. Low: Next time you should take a trip up the North Coast.

Mr. JESSON: I have just come back from there and I am astounded at the number of public buildings there, too. I see no reason why the school committee itself could not repair the roof of the Tewantin State School. A lot of cockies would rather drive round a hole in the road than throw in a bag of dirt and fill it up. They prefer to wait until the local authority sends out a number of men, say 30-odd miles to do the job and then complain because rates are increased to cover the increasing cost of local-authority work. You see that on many occasions. A tree will fall across a road but the local men, instead of taking an axe and cutting it through and hauling it to one side of the road, will drive another quarter of a mile round the tree and make a new track. You will see that repeatedly, every day in the week, and then when the rates are increased they blame the Government or the local authority for putting up their rates. The same has happened in my electorate. Along the Townsville road a hole may have been made by someone with a tractor or a car that was bogged. The result is that there is a hole in the road but the local cockies drive round it. The farmers are the same the world over.

Mr. Maher: Are you criticising the farmers?

Mr. JESSON: They have no need to do that in the West Moreton electorate, because the roads are all macadamised. Farmers and others living in country electorates would rather drive round the hole in the road than put in a bit of dirt to fill it up. They leave it to the council to send out two men and a dray with perhaps four or five horses to work for three or four days filling in the hole, when the farmers themselves could perhaps throw in a chaff bag or a sugar bag of dirt and effect the repair in that way. You see that every day in the week.

Now let me get back to the subject of building. I will leave the local authorities in peace for the time being. As I was saying, I hope the Minister will begin a vigorous works policy in respect of public buildings in my electorate. I am not blaming the department for their present condition because I know what was required of the district during the war. There has also been a shortage of material but in future this excuse cannot be countenanced any longer in my electorate. There is a brickyard there producing the best bricks in Queensland and cheaper than anywhere else in Australia.

There are millions of feet of timber in the back country with the necessary sawmills to supply the requirements of the State and perhaps other parts of Australia. There is now no reason why the buildings required in my electorate cannot be attended to, and I am asking the Minister to give serious conditions to the matter at the earliest opportunity.

I come now particularly to the requirements of the electorate in connection with school buildings. The trustees of the local race-course did not require the whole of the race-course grounds and part of them was taken over by the Government. Other people in the district wanted to sell the Government a swamp for a school, just as a swamp was sold in the Dalby electorate. Other people wanted to sell land to the Government, but the Government decided that they would build the school on their own land. The selection of a proper site has been the fly in the ointment in my electorate for a number of years.

Mr. Low: What school is it?

Mr. JESSON: Not the school at Tewantin. The Government have decided to build it on Crown land and all schools should be built on Crown land where it is available. I am now referring to the Ingham High School. As a matter of fact I was rather envious and jealous of the hon. member for Dalby because of the high school in the Dalby electorate. The Ingham district is wealthier than the Dalby area; indeed, the income or turnover in the Hinchinbrook and adjoining shires runs into £1,500,000 per annum. It comes the the grazing, dairying, and tobacco industries, from mixed farming, from mining, sugarcropping, fishing, and from the cultivation of other commodities that grow so prolifically there. In fact, the turnover in the Ingham district is greater per annum than the turnover from Charters Towers in the heyday of that great gold-mining field. The money is regular.

Mr. Maher: You must find it hard to represent such an aggregation of capital. (Laughter.)

Mr. JESSON: That is what I was just about to say. The industrious law-abiding people of that district, who love the land, were the most maligned people during the war years. The hon. member for Hamilton one day suggested that I was shedding tears and sobbing for the people I represent. I have not dealt with him yet, but I will do so at the opportune moment.

There is no excuse now for not proceeding with the construction of the Ingham High School, particularly when you have a high school in a little place like Dalby, which you can put in the back yard of some of the cane farms in the Ingham district, in order that the people in the district can give their children a secondary education.

Mr. Russell: You have not been doing your job.

Mr. JESSON: Prior to my election to this Parliament the local authority was composed of Tory representatives. They opposed the

construction of a road from Townsville to Ingham, fearing that it would take trade away from Ingham. They also opposed the construction of a road to Mount Fox, as they believed it would take people out of the place to the Tableland. They did not think of the people it would bring to the town and through their district. The town had no roads or water supply. The people in it were bled white by a private electricity company, which charged 1s. 11d. a unit for electric light. It had no hospital either. In the first few years after my election to this Chamber I endeavoured to see that the people got plenty of water, cheap electric light, good roads and all the amenities they were justly entitled to.

Mr. Russell: Who was the representative before you came here?

Mr. JESSON: Mr. Fadden, the one-time Prime Minister of Australia for six days. (Laughter.) He built the police station.

Mr. Russell: Who was there before him?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would remind the hon. member for Dalby that the hon. member for Kennedy has only 25 minutes to make his speech. If he desires to make a speech he can follow him.

Mr. JESSON: I can still get a lot of this matter in on the Resolutions. I shall have an hour to speak on that item.

There is nothing to stop the high school from being built in Ingham now. The importance of the district warrants this educational facility. At present residents are put to the extra expense of sending their children to colleges at Charters Towers for their secondary education. That retards the district's development. The people ask why, if they cannot obtain a secondary education for their children in Ingham they should continue sending them to school. The building programme of the Government ceased during the war but the war has now been over a couple of years, and I am hoping that I can co-operate with the Minister in solving some of the present problems by getting timber for public works. I can solve the labour problem also, for in a month's time 500 or 600 men in my district can be absorbed in a public-works programme in Ingham and the Hinchinbrook shire. I hope that the Minister will give serious consideration to this matter, as well as my representations that when land is cut up the local authority be compelled to build roads through the subdivision.

That served its purpose in the early days, but I think some scheme should be evolved whereby the job could be done first, the buildings put up and the cost of the roads charged over a period to the tenants in conjunction with the owner. In other words, where there is land available for building purposes and there is a hold-up the Government could resume it and then sell it to the person who wants to buy land for a home so that the builders can go ahead and build homes.

I commend those few suggestions to the Minister, knowing that he will give them consideration in the future.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (5.41 p.m.): I thank the hon. member for Cairns for his remarks concerning the Department of Public Works. I find I have another satisfied member and he too is on this side.

The matter raised by the hon. member for Kennedy regarding homes and subdivisions will receive consideration and he will be informed of the result in due course.

The question of public utilities is one that has given the department great concern. There is justification for complaints by the hon. member. The war has been responsible for a hold-up of plans, particularly in police administration. We have a programme for certain works to be done this year in connection with the establishment of a new court house, the conversion of the existing court house into police buildings, and the erection of a new senior sergeant's residence in the Ingham district. Those matters are on the Estimates for this year. An officer is busy preparing plans for carrying out that work.

The question of a new school comes under the Department of Public Instruction; and if a request is made to the Department of Public Works for the erection of a new school there, favourable consideration will be given to the matter by my department.

I want to thank all those hon. members who congratulated me on my elevation to Cabinet. I thank hon. members also for their good wishes on my return to good health. I thank the members of the Country Party who visited me while I was in hospital and the wives of several members who rang up. I am now restored to good health. I thank the doctors who attended me, the nursing sisters, and the Sisters of Mercy at the hospital; and I thank God for my recovery.

Honourable Members: Hear! hear!

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

SERVICES—PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (5.43 p.m.): I move—

“That £100,950 be granted for ‘Services—Public Buildings.’”

The proposed appropriation for 1947-48 is an increase of £18,550 on the vote for 1946-47, £82,400. The increased provision is made necessary by the increase in services to new buildings and additions to existing buildings, increased charges for electricity, gas and water services, increased basic wage, purchase of cleaning equipment, and the employment of additional cleaning staff.

If any hon. member desires further information I will give it. I think we have had a pretty good debate in connection with the department. The hon. member for Kennedy was rather annoyed at the stone-walling; he is anxious to get on to some other Estimate. I do not propose to deal with the matter any further.

Vote agreed to.

BUILDINGS.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (5.44 p.m.): I move—

“That £95,000 be granted for ‘Buildings.’”

It will be noted that the proposed appropriation for the Consolidated Revenue Vote for “Buildings” is £5,000 in excess of that appropriated for 1946-47, £90,000. An increased amount is required to carry out essential maintenance work.

Vote agreed to.

GAS ACTS.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (5.46 p.m.): I move—

“That the £5,227 be granted for ‘The Gas Acts, 1916 to 1933.’”

It will be noted that the appropriation for the year 1947-48 is £1,862 in excess of the amount voted for 1946-47, which was £3,365. The increased appropriation is necessary to meet expenditure on equipment required by the Chief Gas Examiner for inspection and testing purposes.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (5.47 p.m.): I wish to introduce at this stage of the debate a matter that is of vital concern to the people of Townsville and should, I think, vitally concern this Government, who should naturally be interested in the welfare of the ordinary citizen of the State. I do not know what the gas position is in other cities in Queensland, but I do know that the Townsville Gas Company regularly holds up the people of Townsville to ransom.

The Townsville Gas Company is Townsville in name only. All the shares, with the exception of a handful that are held by selected people in Townsville for dummifying purposes, are held by a Melbourne syndicate and the same people who hold the controlling interest in the Townsville Gas Company have also considerable shareholdings in Southern coal-mines and Southern shipping companies, and consequently the people of Townsville are exploited in three ways: they are exploited by the gas company, they are exploited because the gas company in Townsville will use only the coal from its own mines or from kindred mines in New South Wales, and because that coal has to be brought to Townsville in ships owned by the shareholders who own the Townsville Gas Company. This financial interlocking is a pernicious but common feature of modern capitalism. One set of shareholders will own a certain instrumentality and they often compel that instrumentality to buy its necessary raw materials from an other instrumentality they own in other parts of Australia.

I brought this matter up at the Townsville City Council table meeting and got a resolution through with the support of my colleagues asking the Premier of this Government to hold a Royal Commission into the operations of the Townsville Gas Company. The Townsville Gas Company has put the Townsville people on short rations of gas more

than once and they will continue to sacrifice the people of Townsville on the altar of their own profits while the present pernicious system remains. The Townsville Gas Company will not use and will not attempt to use, or would not use and would not attempt to use, coal from any other source than their own mines in New South Wales. When I say “their own mines,” of course I mean the mines that are owned by the same shareholders who own the Townsville Gas Company.

After I had made this statement at the Townsville City Council meeting and it was reported in the Townsville “Daily Bulletin” the gas company waited about eight or nine days until it sent my statement to Melbourne and then the Melbourne shareholders of the company sent information to the manager of the Townsville Gas Company to put a statement in the Townsville Press saying that my statement was not correct because the Townsville Gas Company did not own any coal-mines in New South Wales. Of course, that was just a stupid quibble. I do not suggest that these financial Moguls are so silly as to have the Townsville Gas Company holding shares in Southern coal-mines, but I did say then and I say now that the men who own the Townsville Gas Company hold also a big controlling share interest in Southern coal-mines and will not use any other coal, or would not use any other until quite recently, at the Townsville Gas Company’s works than the coal from their own mines.

They do this despite the fact that the Townsville people have been rationed in their gas supply off and on for many many months. The shareholders of the Townsville Gas Company, these big Melbourne monopolists, do not care a hoot about the inconvenience and dismay they cause the housewives of Townsville, with the gas rationed to two or three hours a day for weeks at a time. They are not concerned with serving the people of Townsville; they are not concerned with their customers and consumers; they are concerned only with the amassing of their own profits, consequently I think the time is rotten ripe for this Government to have a complete and full investigation even to the extent of a Royal Commission into the operations of the Townsville Gas Company.

Mr. Power: On what grounds?

Mr. AIKENS: The Townsville Gas Company holds a franchise to supply the people of Townsville with gas.

Mr. Kerr: They are limited as to profits.

Mr. AIKENS: I advise the hon. member never to try to kid himself that the gas company is limited as to profits, because, when there are interlocking holdings as there are interlocking holdings in connection with the Townsville Gas Company, it is absolutely impossible to discover the real profit. Even though they may show only a small profit in the operations of the Townsville Gas Company—and sometimes I would not put it past them even to show a loss on the books, what is known as a pen-and-ink loss—that small

profit or pen-and-ink loss in the actual operations of the Townsville Gas Company, is more than compensated for by the gross profits that they make from their coal-mines and ships. It does not matter whether they make an actual profit from the Townsville Gas Company or not. What they lose on the swings they gain on the roundabouts. That is a very old saying, but it is a very true one so far as the Townsville Gas Company is concerned.

The grounds on which a Royal Commission should be held are that the Townsville Gas Company holds a franchise from the Queensland Government to supply gas to those people of Townsville who require gas. They exercise their franchise in a very arbitrary way. They have power to dig up the streets and lay their gas mains in the streets: They have power to take their gas into any home, consequently, they accept the protection of the Government through the franchise granted to them by the Government. In granting them a franchise the Government have a duty to see that the franchise is not prostituted on the altar of company profit. That is why a Royal Commission should be held. The Government owe a duty to the public to see that the Townsville Gas Company does not prostitute the franchise it holds from this Government to supply gas to the people of Townsville.

I say now that the Townsville Gas Company is prostituting that franchise. For the benefit of any hon. member who was not here earlier I repeat that the Townsville Gas Company is prostituting its franchise because it has adopted the attitude that it does not care a continental red cent how the people of Townsville get on, it is determined to produce gas from coal from its own mines or it will not produce gas at all. As far as the company is concerned, the people of Townsville can starve until it gets coal from its own mines.

Quite recently, after I had raised the question in the House, and after I had raised the question at the council table in Townsville, the gas company got the wind up temporarily, if I may be permitted to use the vernacular, and ordered one small consignment of Queensland coal in order to tide it over a particularly difficult period. Now that the management think the matter has ended there, they will go on and on demanding that they get Greta coal into the Townsville Gas Company or none at all.

Mr. Russell: Where do they get the coal?

Mr. AIKENS: They get it at Greta from mines owned by their own shareholders. The same men who own the Townsville Gas Company have big shareholdings in the Greta mines.

Mr. Russell: Could they buy it in Queensland?

Mr. AIKENS: If the hon. member had been in the Chamber—and I believe he was, because he is more or less a regular attender, which is something I cannot say for every

hon. member in the Chamber—he will remember that on 16 September I asked the Secretary for Mines the following question—

“1. Did the Government at any time offer to supply Queensland coal to the Townsville Gas Company in order to assist it in maintaining a supply of gas to the Townsville people?

“2. If so, was the offer accepted?

“3. How many cubic feet of gas can be produced at Townsville from one ton of (a) New South Wales coal; (b) Queensland coal?

“4. If New South Wales coal is considered by the Gas Company to be necessary to ensure a normal supply of gas, what percentage of normal supply would be generated from (a) Queensland coal; (b) 75 per cent. Queensland and 25 per cent. New South Wales coal; (c) 50 per cent. Queensland and New South Wales; (d) 75 per cent. New South Wales and 25 per cent. Queensland?

“5. What restrictions are being imposed on consumers by the Townsville Gas Company at present?

And this is the important question—

“6. Are any other gas companies in Queensland using Queensland coal?”

The Minister replied in these words—

“1. Yes, on at least three occasions,

“2. In respect of two previous occasions, during June and August of this year, the Townsville Gas Company indicated it was not prepared to use Queensland coals on the grounds that the plant was specially designed for the sole use of Maitland (New South Wales) gas coals, and, by the use of Styx (Queensland) gas coal the carbonizing capacity of the plant would be reduced to the extent that gas making capacity would be reduced to about 50 per cent. of the output obtained by the use of Maitland (New South Wales) coal, which would result in drastic rationing of gas to consumers.”

And this is after I raised the matter at the Townsville City Council and the Council asked for a Royal Commission—

“However, on the third occasion, on 12th instant, the company agreed to accept an offer to take delivery of 200 tons of screened gas coal from the Styx State Coal Mine, Ogmoo, and such coal is now being railed to Townsville.

The Minister went on to answer the other questions in much more detail and I will deal with No. 6 later.

The Townsville people have been on short rations intermittently for months and when we were getting gas you could put your hand on the flame and you would not be burnt. You could put a roast in the oven at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning and it would not be cooked at 1 o'clock Sunday dinner-time. The gas was boosted by a boosting agent which reduced its calorific value to a minimum. I asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry whether tests were ever taken of the calorific

value of gas supplied by the Townsville Gas Company and whether the company was notified that the inspector was going forward to make these tests. I do not think the inspector would notify the company when he was about to make tests, but it would suggest that the company knew when the inspector was going because when there is an inspector in Townsville you can cook on the gas but when he is not there you might as well hold a lighted wooden match under the kettle. The gas company is working under a franchise from the Government and has sacrificed the people of Townsville and is prepared to continue to sacrifice the people of Townsville until it gets its own coal and manufactures gas from its own coal.

On Thursday, 28 August last, I asked the Minister for Mines—

“1. Has the Townsville Gas Company made any attempt to secure coal for its plant from my Queensland mines?”

“2. If so, how much did it require and from what mines were the orders filled?”

“3. If not, will he inform the House whether the Government have any power to compel the Townsville Gas Company to use Queensland coal in order to relieve the Townsville people of the intolerable burden imposed upon them by the rationing of supply by the company?”

To these questions the Minister replied—

“1. I am not aware of any attempt by the Gas Company to secure Queensland coal.

“2. See 1 above.

“3. The Government has no power in this regard.”

I want to tie that up with the answer to question No. 6, which I addressed to the Minister on Thursday, 16 September, as follows:—

“Are any other gas companies in Queensland using Queensland coal?”

To which the Minister replied—

“Yes. The only gas companies in Queensland exclusively using New South Wales gas coals are those at Townsville, Charters Towers, and Cairns.”

Therefore it is quite obvious that gas can be generated, and generated profitably, from Queensland coal, because every gas company in Queensland with the exception of the Townsville, Charters Towers, and Cairns companies is generating its gas from Queensland coal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Under the Gas Acts the Government have no power to direct the source from which a gas company shall obtain its coal. They can only test the quality of gas and the flow of gas.

Mr. AIKENS: Very well, Mr. Mann.

Immediately the Townsville Gas Company is running short of its Maitland coal it publishes scare headlines in the local Press to the effect that the company's coal supply is running short, and that after a certain date gas will be rationed to the people of Townsville. That creates a scare, and questions are asked of the Premier in this Parliament, and questions are addressed to the

Prime Minister by the Federal member for Herbert, asking him to make ships available to take Maitland coal to Townsville, and consequently every effort is made to fit right in with the requirements of the Townsville Gas Company. In other words, they use the plight of the Townsville people as a bludgeon to get their own coal for their gas works. This attitude cannot be condemned too strongly. There is no use in telling me, as one hon. member suggested before the adjournment, that the Townsville Gas Company makes only a small profit, because it is so inextricably interwoven with various companies throughout Australia that it would be well nigh impossible to determine the actual profit made by the Townsville Gas Company. I believe that the function of every public company is first of all to serve the public, not its shareholders. Take the kindred organisation in Townsville, the electric authority of Townsville, at one time controlled by the Townsville City Council.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. member is making the debate a very wide one. He must confine his remarks to the subject before the Committee.

Mr. AIKENS: I was only making a comparison with the Townsville electricity power house. When it ran short of coal the Townsville City Council, which at one time owned and controlled the Townsville electric authority, bought coal anywhere it could. It picked up old coal about the yard, it used cow manure, the droppings of goats, chips, anything at all that it could feed into the boilers in order to give the people of Townsville as much electricity as it possibly could, and since the Townsville Regional Electrical Authority has taken it over it has pursued the same policy—it has endeavoured to give the people of Townsville as much electric current as it could by using any type of fuel that it could get. However, when the Townsville Gas Company finds that it is short of coal it does not adopt that attitude but demands that it shall get an adequate supply of its own coal to generate gas, otherwise it will ration the supply to the consumers. It does not place the interests of its consumers first. It simply adopts the attitude that if it cannot get its own coal the people of Townsville can go short of gas.

After I had raised the matter at the Townsville City Council's table in Townsville recently the company was scared into taking a consignment of Styx coal from the Department of Mines, but it never tried to get gas from it. My information is that the Townsville Gas Company did everything it could to sabotage the production of gas from the Styx coal, so that it could write down and tell the Secretary for Mines that the use of Styx coal in Townsville retorts was a failure. It never seriously tried to get gas from the Styx Coal, but, because I raised the question it reluctantly took consignments of that coal and used it in such a way as to make an argument against its use. I was informed by a man who has had considerable technical knowledge in gas-making that the company only had to make a slight alteration to its retorts to enable it to use Styx coal or any other Queensland

coal, the same as any other gas company in Queensland with the exception of the Cairns, Townsville and Charters Towers gas companies, in order that the people of Townsville could get supplies of gas of the correct calorific value.

I ventilate the matter on the floor of this Chamber so that it will be placed on record as a protest on behalf of the Townsville City Council and its people who have been held at ransom by the Townsville Gas Company and at times sacrificed on the altar of the profits of the Townsville Gas Company.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (7.22 p.m.): First of all I desire to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Minister on his elevation to his high office and to welcome him back to his office after his serious illness. The Minister attained his position by zealous and arduous work. I am quite satisfied that he has the capacity and ability to discharge his duties with credit to himself and with benefit to the people of Queensland.

I listened attentively to the hon. member for Mundingburra's remarks concerning the position that has arisen at times in connection with the gas supply at Townsville. The Townsville branch of the Australian Labour Party has taken a keen interest in this matter. It has on many occasions made representations to the Minister to have tests made of the gas. As a result, the department informed the Branch over 12 months ago that a testing station would be established at Townsville for the purpose of testing not only the gas supply at Townsville, but the gas supplied in all northern towns. The installation of that unit has been delayed because the necessary instruments could not be installed. I have it on the best authority that as soon as the instruments are available they will be installed.

The hon. member for Mundingburra commented on the Townsville Gas Company's desire not to use Styx coal in the manufacture of gas and its desire to use Maitland coal only. I understand that tests were carried out by the department to see whether coal other than Maitland coal could be used in the company's vertical retorts. They are not horizontal retorts. I understand that this coal burns into a mere nothing and gives off a great volume of gas whereas the Styx and other Queensland coal swells and leaves a clinker. This tends to crack the vertical retorts and destroys them. That was the danger at that time in using any other coal but Maitland coal. Had the retorts been cracked it would have been difficult to replace them and Townsville would have been in a very serious position. Queensland coal can be used in the horizontal type of retort only, without any danger of the retort's being damaged. I do not know whether the hon. member for Mundingburra is aware of that fact.

Mr. Aikens: I am not an apologist for the Townsville Gas Company.

Mr. KEYATTA: We have taken a very keen interest in this matter. In fact, we were just as interested as the hon. member or any other hon. member in the welfare of

the people of Townsville. Although I do not rise as often as the hon. member and voice my opinion on the many matters affecting my electorate, I have made very effective representations on numerous occasions on this matter on behalf of the people of Townsville. In fact, there is voluminous correspondence in the Minister's department from other hon. members and myself on the point. I have heard that credit has been taken by someone else for what has been done, but we do not want the credit for it. It is our job to make these representations.

I am pleased to state that the Government do move when the position is explained. I have a great deal of faith and confidence in the officers of the department. When we wrote to the department in regard to the quality of the gas we were given to understand that it was caused through a set of circumstances that the officer concerned explained. He was very keen and explained that the pressure in the main caused by corrosion caused a great deal of our difficulty. As a result of co-operation between the department, the Townsville Gas Company and the shipping company, we were able to relieve the position in regard to the supply of pipes and coal. During the war our supply of coal was restricted. Owing to corrosion the pipes would not carry the full capacity of gas and the pressure was low and many additional consumers were drawing from these mains and larger mains could not be laid owing to shortages of iron. Many members complained. When new pipes were available the old ones were replaced and the position has been adjusted. I am not apologising for the Townsville Gas Company—not by any means. We are gas-users and we are sufferers the same as other citizens.

Since the replacement of the pipes there has been a reasonable continuity of supply of coal and the position has improved. When the gas inspector comes we are not aware that he is there, but after his inspection he calls on the president of the branch.

Mr. Sparkes: You are quite happy about the workings of the gas company?

Mr. KEYATTA: It is like any other concern or institution. We have the same difficulty probably in our Government departments. Anomalies do occur. No matter how well established a Government department, local authority, or private business is, there are anomalies and difficulties. We pride ourselves on having not only a keen sense of fairness but being big enough to admit a fault. I cannot recall a single case raised by the Australian Labour Party branch in which the Government and their officers have not responded.

Another matter I wish to refer to is the meter position. The Government should be responsible for the testing of all gas meters and when we are dealing with another vote I shall urge that that should apply to water meters also.

Hon. D. A. GLEDSON (Ipswich—Attorney-General) (7.30 p.m.): I cannot speak on these Estimates without offering my

thanks to the Minister and his staff for the work done during the year. Of course, there is coal to be found all round Ipswich, but we had difficulty with the gas company in Ipswich because of similar happenings to those in Townsville. Neither the pressure nor quality of gas was there, and it was necessary to get in touch with the Chief Gas Examiner. The hon. member for Townsville has stated that his organisation had to take the matter up and in Ipswich my organisation did so and made representations to the department to have these matters attended to. This was done and once the Chief Gas Examiner discovered the cause exactly an improvement was immediately effected.

In Ipswich we found—and I suppose this happened in other places—that the pressure and quality of the gas supplied to some areas were satisfactory and in others unsatisfactory, although it was difficult to understand how the quality could be better in one than another unless there was something wrong with the distribution, for instance a leakage in the pipes that allowed air to be sucked in and mixed with the gas coming through the pipes. It was found that there were no complaints from some districts whereas there were some from others. The former appeared to be quite well served by the gas company, but when the matter was investigated by the Chief Gas Examiner there was a great improvement and I take this opportunity of extending my thanks to the Minister and his department, especially the Chief Gas Examiner for immediately attending to the matter once it was brought to his notice.

Much has been said about the production of gas from different classes of coal. There are seams of coal throughout Australia and on analysis some are found to be very good for steaming purposes. Bituminous coal is very good in this respect. The cannel coal in the Rosewood district was at one time exceptionally good for gas-making. In the North of Queensland is to be found bituminous coal from which gas and coke can be made, and is very useful for steaming purposes also. It is possible for the same seam of coal, however, to produce coal of different qualities. For instance, a seam in the Rosewood district produced splendid gas through the retorts, 15,000 cubic feet to the ton, whereas other coal went down to 11,000 and 12,000 cubic feet. Of course, it should not make any difference in quality, because the gas is purified in the course of production. There was a time in our history when coal from the Lanefield seam in the Rosewood district was regularly sent in shiploads to Melbourne for the purpose of purifying the gas retorts there, not for producing gas.

Mr. Macdonald: How did they do that?

Mr. GLEDSON: They put a certain battery of coal through the retorts. As we know, everything is purified by fire.

Gold is purified by fire. We happen to be purified by fire, too. (Laughter.) The same applies to coal. Coal has to be subjected to a chemical change. That change takes place in the retorts when certain gases are extracted. The residue comes out as coke. The volatile

matter contained in the coal produces the gas. Unless there is a good percentage of volatile matter in coal it is not a good gas-making coal. I understand that at present we are not getting the same quantity of gas per ton of coal as we did in the early days.

Mr. Macdonald: How did the Lanefield coal clean the retorts?

Mr. GLEDSON: At that time the Lanefield seam was exceptionally good. The hon. member for Stanley will understand that you can get a good coal in one part of the seam and an inferior coal in another part. At one period one patch of the Lanefield seam made splendid gas.

Mr. Nicklin: What was the test?

Mr. GLEDSON: It ran between 15,000 and 16,000 cubic feet of gas to the ton of coal, and the quality of the gas was exceptionally good.

Take the matters raised by the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Mundingburra. Both hon. members referred to the difference in the content of the coal. There is certain coal in the Maitland district that makes exceptionally good gas.

Mr. Aikens: That is the coal they get at Townsville.

Mr. GLEDSON: I think it runs into 18,000 cubic feet of gas to the ton. The Styx coal is a harder coal, more like what is known as anthracitic coal. In some faces it is almost what is known as stone coal in Britain, it is so hard. It is a splendid heating coal of high calorific value, but it is not so good for making gas as the bituminous coal because the volatile content is not as high as that of the Maitland coal.

In Townsville they ran out of Maitland coal and had made no provision to get any other coal. Most coals will make gas. Of course, I do not think you could get gas out of the Blair Athol coal because, although Blair Athol is a splendid steaming coal, it burns away with virtually no ash at all.

Mr. Luckins: I think it has the lowest ash content of any coal in Australia.

Mr. GLEDSON: You get a feather ash from it. A chemical analysis of the Blair Athol coal shows that we have not the volatile matters in it that are useful for gas-making purposes. That brings us to this point: that it will be necessary for the Government—and I understand they are taking steps to do it now—to find out what coals are suitable for gas-making, and as far as possible arrange for those coals to be supplied to the gas works. It will be necessary to take steps to see that coal is not wasted, and to set aside the coals that should be used for firing and locomotive work and other work. Coals should be directed to the purposes to which they are suited. Townsville will be in the same position as any other district in Queensland, and if it cannot get the best coal will have to arrange to take the next-best coal. It might have to put in other retorts than those it has now as is done all over Queensland. The South Brisbane Gas Co. had to

alter its retorts not long ago according to the class of coal in supply at the time. New retorts were put in.

The difficulty we have is that coal should be prepared for the market and it is not now prepared for the market. Most of it is marketed as it comes out of the mine, although some colliery-owners—not many of them—have installed washing-machines to take out the dirt. The bulk of it is sent away to the consumer as it comes from the mine, and no attempt is made to clean it. As a consequence, sometimes in our gas works we find that the quantity of ash content in the coal interferes with the production of gas in the retorts. Naturally, if you are expecting to get so many thousand cubic feet from a ton, working on a certain basis, and you get a large quantity of stone your volatile matter is reduced and the efficiency of the retorts is affected. They have to be cleaned out and production is stopped whilst they are being cleaned out.

Mr. Plunkett: And that sends up the costs.

Mr. GLEDSON: I am not worrying about that, because I am dealing with the production of gas from the classes of coal in the retorts we have. As I said, retorts have had to be altered in Brisbane, and Townsville will have to do the same thing to use the coal it is able to get.

Mr. Aikens: So long as we are assured of that we shall be satisfied.

Mr. GLEDSON: That is the position; we have to cut our coat according to the cloth we have. I am sorry I have taken up so much of my colleague's time—

Mr. Sparkes: You are not helping him to play out time, by any chance?

Mr. GLEDSON: I have not spoken during the last three weeks, and I never get up to speak for the simple purpose of taking up time. I rose particularly to thank the Chief Gas Examiner and the Minister for attending to our little complaints. I was led astray by the hon. member for Stanley, who led me onto one of my pet subjects. I have spent my lifetime studying coal and if I had the time I could go on all night telling the Committee about coal.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (7.45 p.m.): I am sure that the Chamber generally appreciates the explanation given by the Attorney-General on gas-making. He has a firsthand knowledge of the subject and his information will be of immense value to hon. members. I was rather interested to hear him say that we were purified by fire but I can assure him that I do not want to be purified, if it is to be done by fire.

The hon. member for Mundingburra referred first of all to the profits and dividends of gas companies. The profits of gas companies do not concern my department but I am concerned about the supply of gas to the people of Townsville. According to information supplied to me by the Chief Gas Examiner, when the Townsville Gas Company

was established it had access to coal only by sea and its present retorts are suitable only for making gas from coal from Maitland. However, if it cannot get coal from Maitland, gas is not going to be withheld from the people of Townsville because of the action of the Townsville Gas Company. I want to give the hon. member for Townsville and the Townsville Australian Labour Party full credit for their attitude in this matter. It was raised by the Townsville Australian Labour Party long before the hon. member for Mundingburra raised it and he is simply trying to cash in now and get a little kudos from what was done by the Townsville Australian Labour Party and the hon. member for Townsville, who has been most persistent in his efforts to have something done to alleviate the position.

Mr. AIKENS: Mr. Mann, I rise to a point of order. I know that political propaganda is the order of the day in this Chamber. I rose here today to ask for the appointment of a royal commission into the operations of the Townsville Gas Company and I should be pleased to have the Minister's assurance that the Townsville Branch of the Australian Labour Party has asked for a royal commission into the activities of the Townsville Gas Company.

Mr. POWER: I have no intention of asking the Government to appoint a royal commission to inquire into the matter raised by the hon. member for Mundingburra, who is always asking for royal commissions about one thing and another. We are not going to waste the time of judges in investigating the matter mentioned by the hon. member.

The Townsville Gas Company did use Styx coal when it could not get coal from Maitland and I am informed that the Newcastle coal gives 18,000 cubic feet of gas to the ton, whereas the Styx coal gives 12,500 to 13,000 cubic feet to the ton, and that if only Styx coal is used there will be an application by the Townsville Gas Company to the Gas Referee for an increase in the price of gas. However, that is by the way. The important thing is to see that the people of Townsville get an adequate supply of gas and that a proper pressure is available. Certain improvements have already been carried out—a new booster has been installed and the pressure is now much greater than it was before. Under the authority of the Minister—I am now referring to my predecessor in office, the Hon. H. A. Bruce—the Chief Gas Examiner is establishing a testing place at Townsville. A suitable room in the Government building in Wickham Street has been allotted to him and a gas examiner is making this his headquarters. His area will cover the gas companies between Rockhampton and Cairns. A calorimeter and other test apparatus for the testing place were ordered from England as far back as 18 February last. We are still waiting for them. That is the reason why proper tests are not being made. At the present time a man is permanently stationed in North Queensland and to enable more frequent northern inspections, an additional gas examiner, Mr. Grey, was appointed on 8 July, 1946. After three months of work

at head office he was sent to northern areas. Of 301 days spent by him in northern areas, 116 were spent in Townsville testing and stamping meters, testing gas for heat value, purity and pressure, and on general inspection work.

The Government introduced legislation dealing with the pressure of gas last session. It is a subject to which the Government have given serious consideration. As a matter of fact, previous to the introduction of that amending legislation the pressure of gas was decided at the intake of the meter, not the outlet and now gas is tested at the outlet and if the pressure is not what it should be the matter can be adjusted.

I want to assure the hon. member for Townsville, who has been most consistent and persistent in his efforts to see that a good supply of gas is made available to the people of Townsville, and also the hon. member for Mundingburra, that if there is any hold-up in the gas supply at Townsville and the Government are able to be of help action will be taken to see that the people of Townsville are not deprived of a supply of gas.

Mr. FARRELL (Maryborough) (7.51 p.m.): This debate has centred round the Townsville gas supply. I want to get away from the Townsville gas supply and deal with matters affecting gas supply generally. It is interesting to note that during this discussion we have had illustrations to show how important a supply of gas is in the home life of the people; it is on that aspect that we should centre our thoughts. Gas is a service to the community and amenities associated with a gas supply affect our home life to a quite large extent. We are distinctly fortunate in this State in that we have right along our coast line a stretch of coal-bearing area that will produce coal of a quality that will in turn produce an immense amount of gas to the ton of coal. As the Attorney-General explained, coal from Lane-field in the Ipswich district produces a high percentage of gas. That coal is more or less sent to the Brisbane and South Brisbane Gas Companies to make gas for distribution in their respective areas. If we go up the coast we find that in my district, the Maryborough district, we have a supply of coal almost equal in gas-producing quality to that of the Ipswich district. Tests that have been made have shown that it can produce gas ranging up to 17,000 cubic feet from each ton of coal. That is a very high percentage, nevertheless it is not in the same class for gas-producing purposes as coal from the Newcastle area. If the Townsville Gas Company uses coal that produces less gas per ton than Maitland coal the people of Townsville will have to pay more for their gas. The Townsville company is no different from any other company that sets out to make profits by serving communities with the amenities of life.

The Gladstone meatworks took up a similar attitude to the Townsville Gas Company and said it would get supplies of coal only from Newcastle. Today it is compelled to take

our coal and after having used it at its works now prefer it to Newcastle coal. The Townsville Gas Company is today getting a supply of coal from Newcastle that is to its liking but it may be necessary at some future time to make provision for the establishment of local coal depots on the Queensland coast. My own district could relieve the people of Townsville by sending its coal there for the purpose of testing. In fact, that has been done previously. We have supplied coal for gas-making purposes from Gympie to Rock-hampton. That is our regular run.

We introduced the Gas Act with a view to stabilising gas companies throughout the State, so that they might be able to give a service to the community. Gas referees were appointed to determine the price to be paid for gas in certain localities, and as a result we are today giving an excellent service to the people along the coastal belt. I find that in my area—and it is no different from any other area—the greatest difficulty is to find the raw materials or pipes necessary to convey the gas to the respective householders. If we were able to get the pipes necessary to meet the requirements in Maryborough alone, we should require a tremendous amount more coal for the production of gas, and that would apply generally to all the coastal belt.

We were privileged to meet some of the members of the Parliamentary delegation that came out from England and I was impressed by the remarks made by Mr. Davis, a member of that delegation, who was a coal-miner representing a coal-mining industry. He spoke of the progress made by gas companies in England.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. member is getting away from the vote.

Mr. FARRELL: I am still on the gas; I want to make my point. In the Old Country they established their gas plants at the mines and convey it to the big cities by means of pipes. That cannot be done here, consequently we have to carry the coal to those areas it is desired to supply.

I feel sure that the time will come when Townsville and other places will have to use Queensland coal for the production of gas, and I feel sure we shall be able to meet the demands of the gas companies. Recently inquiries were made in my own area for coal for gas production outside the State. At the present time our coal is being tested to see whether it will meet the requirements of the people who want to buy it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. FARRELL: I feel that the Gas Referee has done an excellent job in his administration of the Act. To the best of his ability he has met the demands on his services. The Government are doing everything they possibly can so that the people may receive this very desirable amenity, which is directly obtained from our coal.

Vote (The Gas Acts, 1916 to 1933) agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (7.59 p.m.): I move—
 “That £65,501 be granted for ‘Local Government.’”

This appropriation is required to meet salaries and contingencies of the Local Government Branch and expenses of the corporation of the Director of Local Government, Thursday Island.

It will be noted that the appropriation for the financial year 1947-48 is £18,658 in excess of the provision for 1946-47. The salary items show an increase of £3,663 occasioned by the engagement of additional technical staff in the Town Water Supply and Sewerage Section.

An additional sum of £9,255 is required for restoration work at Thursday Island.

Maintenance of essential services at Thursday Island requires an increased provision of £1,500 and the balance of the increased appropriation makes provision for the purchase of construction plant and tools.

The Director of Local Government, Mr. Chuter, retires at the end of the year. Mr. Chuter has given many years of valuable service to the department and during the time he has held the position of Director of Local Government he has been a great help to the local authorities throughout Queensland. I take this opportunity of paying tribute to Mr. Chuter. During his years of service to the Government and particularly during the time he has been Director of Local Government he has done his work in the interest of the State and local authorities with credit to himself. It is with regret that we lose the services of Mr. Chuter but in accordance with the provisions of the Public Service Act, as Mr. Chuter has gone over the retiring age, he automatically finishes his service with the Government on 31 December next. I regret that Mr. Chuter has to go but like everyone else he has grown old in his job and now has to vacate it to make room for a younger man. It will be very difficult to fill his position but I suppose that as one man passes on there is always another to take his place.

At the present time Thursday Island is a section of the Department of Local Government and we have an officer in control there, his powers being delegated to him by Mr. Chuter, but I believe the time is ripe for considering the restoration of local government to the island. As I said previously, a valuer will be going there early in January to investigate the position and make a valuation of the property, in fact generally to review the whole position and after the valuation is made and a report submitted to me as Minister the restoration of local government to the island will be considered by the Government. If we feel that it can be restored and run economically the Government will take that course.

Mr. LUCKINS (Maree) (8.3 p.m.): I am very sorry to hear of the pending retirement of Mr. Chuter. I know that hon. members on

both sides will regret the termination of his occupancy of the position as Director of Local Government. Mr. Chuter has done a splendid job for Queensland. He is one of the most outstanding personalities in local-government affairs and I am sure the Government will feel the loss of his services. However, we can only wish him well in the years to come but I am sure he will be of great help to the local authorities of Queensland in an advisory capacity, especially those desiring advice from the legal angle. Very few men in Queensland are qualified in local-government law and affairs. I hope the department has a man of the capabilities of Mr. Chuter to follow in his footsteps. Mr. Chuter's name will long be remembered in Queensland and for a monument to him one need only look at the local authorities themselves.

I am pleased to hear the Minister mention that the laws as to the subdivision of land by local authority, more particularly those of the Brisbane City Council, which is under a separate Act of Parliament, will be looked into. If members of the Committee will cast their memories back a few years they will realise, as I say now openly and frankly, that land-owners in the early days did take advantage when subdividing their land of leaving the local authorities to construct the roads and footpaths at the cost of the ratepayers. In the course of time the law was altered and to some extent reversed; the property-owner had to provide the footpaths and roads. That was a very good law up to a point but today we find that land-owners are confronted with a difficulty.

We had an experience of the harshness of this provision in Brisbane. I know that at Chermiside a property is available for subdivision but the owner cannot bear the impost of the cost of roads, footpaths and channelling.

Mr. Power: They put it onto the State Housing Commission, too.

Mr. LUCKINS: We must be fair and reasonable in these things. We must recognise what the early pioneers have done, people who bought an acre or two and who now find that with the growth of the city it is imperative that the land be subdivided into building blocks but cannot afford the cost imposed by the provision to which I refer. I am pleased that the Minister intends looking into the matter with a view to easing the situation. The land is required so that people may settle close to transport, water, electricity, and other facilities. At present, because of the inability of land owners to subdivide their areas, potential home-builders are forced further out and away from these facilities and amenities. I know that land is available at Chermiside and other suburbs that could be subdivided if some relief could be given in connection with channelling and roads. It seems unreasonable to insist upon bitumen roads, concrete footpaths and channelling in new subdivisions when adjacent to the area none of these amenities is provided.

In conclusion, let me say that as one who has been a member of the Brisbane City Council for a number of years, I do not agree

with the policy of the present administration in imposing such high costs on land-owners who wish to subdivide.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) 8.9 p.m.): At the outset I wish to express regret at the coming retirement of Mr. Chuter after long, faithful and loyal service to the State. He was a friend to all. His advice was always sound and it is with regret that I say to him, "Au revoir! your work was well done. We hope you will not be forgotten. One consoling feature is that work well done is a monument to sound reasoning, common sense and loyal service to the State."

I realise the difficulties the department has to meet in the administration of such a huge undertaking as local government. I know the capacity of the Minister and I know that he is supported in his work by loyal officers.

I want particularly to refer to the charges made by local authorities for the installation of meters and the charge for testing meters. If you have any doubt as to the correctness of your water meter the onus is on you to have the meter tested. If the meter is found to be correct you have to forfeit a sum of money, I think either 10s. or £1. As a member of the Townsville City Council and a member of the Water and Electric Light Committee of the council I know that many meters play all sorts of tricks. I know that meters are sensitive instruments and I know that the very nature of the water—its hardness or its corrosiveness—can affect them. I think it an unfair imposition upon the householder to have to pay for the testing of his meter. He has to make application in the first place to have his meter tested and sometimes has to wait a long while before it is tested. I maintain that this charge should be borne by the local authority. The householder has to pay for the water he uses and he is entitled to have a correct meter. It is the duty of the local council to see that meters are in order. They should be tested regularly and I am making this appeal to the Minister in order that something along those lines might be done. Many anomalies, difficulties, and hardships on householders have occurred in the measurement of water by meters. There have been cases where a person with an excellent garden uses a normal amount of water but his meter registers less than his neighbour's, who has no garden. I hope the Minister will take note of my request and grasp the significance of it, because charges for water can be heavy.

I compliment the Minister on his administration and on the zeal he has shown in the short time he has held that office. He has done remarkably well and is following in the footsteps of his predecessor who administered the Department of Public Works quite well.

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland—Secretary for Public Instruction) (8.14 p.m.): I do not know very much about the blocks of land at Chermiside but I believe that on the big blocks the State has taken over, the local authority forced it to put in roads,

water channels, and footpaths. I think the council should at least pay half the cost of that work.

At 8.15 p.m.,

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

Mr. BRUCE: I rose more particularly to pay my respects to Mr. Chuter. He has been for 49 years in the Government service and during the time I have associated with him as Minister in charge of the department I know that local authorities and individuals throughout the length and breadth of the State sought his advice and information on local-authority matters. I do not suppose that there is any member of a local authority who has not had some advice from him and I am sure that it was splendid advice freely given. One of his most recent achievements took place just before I vacated the position of Secretary for Public Works. The members of the Mulgrave Shire Council and the Cairns City Council were unable to agree about a water supply but Mr. Chuter took the matter in hand on their behalf and within 24 hours it had been amicably adjusted.

Mr. Brand: He was very clever in composing their differences.

Mr. BRUCE: There was a touch of sadness in what the hon. member for Townsville had to say about Mr. Chuter, suggesting perhaps that he was passing away, but Mr. Chuter is very fit and very well and although he has given the Government information and advice as a public servant I am sure that there would be many local authorities who would be happy to pay him a good fee for his advice after he leaves the service. Although the Public Service Act decrees that Mr. Chuter must now retire from the Public Service I think we shall have him with us for many years yet, and although he may not get as much money after he retires—and I only say he may not—as he now gets in the service, he certainly will not have to work as hard as he does as a public servant. I really think that he will get quite good money in any sphere in which he serves and he will get it more easily than he got it as a public servant.

Mr. Kerr: What will he hold himself out as?

Mr. BRUCE: I do not believe in long technical terms. I said that any local authority would be prepared to pay Mr. Chuter for his advice. I am not reflecting upon any local authority when I say that quite a number of them have benefited from his advice. (Hear, hear!) And quite a number past and present would have benefited very much indeed had they had his advice. Thousands of pounds would have been saved to the Government if the whole of the local authorities had been under Charlie Chuter.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (8.19 p.m.): I want to pay my tribute to the work of the Director of Local Government, Mr. Chuter. I think his place will be particularly difficult to fill. He has been a tower of

strength and a fount of wisdom to many local authorities throughout the State, and I sincerely regret his passing from the public service of Queensland.

I first came in contact with Mr. Charlie Chuter when he stood almost alone, side by side with that courageous woman, Sister Elizabeth Kenny, in fighting the ignorance and avarice of the medical profession. It was my pleasure indeed to go down to see Sister Elizabeth Kenny at Lennon's Hotel quite recently and to know that she was on top of the world despite the fact that the little yelping poodles of the medical profession in Queensland were still barking and snivelling round her heels.

Charlie Chuter will take into his retirement the knowledge, irrespective of what he has done for local authorities—and he has done much for them—that the greatest tribute one could pay him is in respect of the fight he put up, and almost a lone fight at first for one of the greatest Queenslanders who ever lived, Sister Elizabeth Kenny.

I know there are many who will be glad to see Charlie Chuter passing from the Public Service because many regret the day that he was ever a member of the Public Service. It was because he was a member of the Public Service, and an honest and respected member of the Public Service, that he was able to do so much for the courageous fighter who devoted all her life to the interests of little crippled children, not only in Queensland and Australia, but the whole world. It is to be regretted that such a woman left Queensland today almost without a sigh, except for the very fine article in the "Courier-Mail" and the well-wishes of her many friends. There are many members of the medical profession who were only too glad to see her go. They know that once they get her out of the road they can batten and fatten on the parents of children who are unfortunate enough to attract the dread disease of infantile paralysis. They will be able to bleed every penny from these parents by prescribing some useless treatment for these unfortunate children, then when the parents' money is exhausted they will strap them in irons, splints, and braces that would make Torquemada blush with envy.

It was men like Charles Chuter who first realised the significance and worth of Sister Kenny and her treatment. The greatest tribute the State will ever be able to pay to Charles Chuter will be to place on record the magnificent work he did in fighting for the recognition of a woman that I and hundreds of other decent Queenslanders have been particularly proud to know. I know that the friendship I formed with Charles Chuter in those troublous days will last with me while I live and while Charles Chuter lives. He takes with him, wherever he goes, my fondest and best wishes for happiness, prosperity, and long life.

After having paid my small tribute to the excellent work of Charles Chuter, I just want to touch on a little matter concerning local authorities. His appointment to the high office of Director of Local Government did

much to smooth out the difficulties confronting local authorities from time to time. It at least gave the local authorities a liaison officer through whom they could work with the various other Government departments. Unfortunately, some Government departments are particularly difficult to work with. I rise tonight in an attempt to mention the Townsville City Council and its efforts to deal with health matters. The Townsville City Council carries a bigger staff of health inspectors, proportionately, than any other city in Queensland. Although our population is, roughly, 35,000 we carry a chief city health inspector, two fully qualified health inspectors, and two post-war rehabilitation health-inspector trainees. Therefore, we carry five health inspectors for a population of 35,000 people. If Brisbane carried a proportionate number of health inspectors as Townsville, it would carry nearly twelve times that number, namely, 35 health inspectors and 23 trainee inspectors. Instead we have the Brisbane City Council, I understand, battling along with 15 health and assistant health inspectors.

The point I want to make is that for some time the Health department of the Townsville City Council was not quite satisfied with the way its health department was being run, in so far as the allocation of the inspectors' work was concerned. We were quite satisfied with the city Health Inspector, and we hold him in the highest regard. We know he is a health officer of the highest ranking, and we find no fault whatever with his work.

But we did disagree with him on the allocation of the work of the health inspectors under his control. So, with the knowledge and consent of the chairman and members of the health committee of the Townsville City Council, I approached Dr. Coffey, who was then the Acting Director-General of Health and Medical Services in Queensland, and Mr. O'Shea of the Health Department, and I asked them whether, if the Townsville City Council required the Health Department at any time to send an officer of the State Health Department to Townsville to assist us in reorganising and working out what might be termed a roster for the health inspectors, would they do so. Our city inspector was then quite satisfied with the work his health inspectors were doing, but we were not satisfied. We disagreed with him only on that point. We had no idea what might constitute a day's work for a health inspector, but we felt as members of the health committee—and our feelings were shared by every other alderman—that our health inspectors were not being used to the best advantage. We disagreed with our city inspector on that point only. Consequently I asked Dr. Coffey and Mr. O'Shea whether, if the Townsville City Council expressed the desire by open resolution—we did not want to do anything by hole-and-corner means—they make a State Health Department officer available to assist us to reorganise our health department. They promised that they would. We think that is one of the functions of the Health Department. It controls our health officers. We cannot

appoint them without the O.K. from the State Health Department. We cannot dismiss them or disrate them without the approval of the State Health Department. Consequently, as the State Health Department holds the right of life and death over council health officers and because of the fact that many health officers believe that the council existed only to pay their salaries and they believed that no matter what they did they could not be dismissed, because the Health Department would protect them against the council, we thought it only reasonable that the Health Department should play its part and send an officer to assist us to reorganise our health department. So at a meeting of the Townsville City Council a resolution was passed—quite openly it was passed—asking that a State health officer be sent to Townsville to assist the Townsville City Council in a reorganisation of its health department. Strangely enough, the Government refused our request. I do not know why. Probably because it was made just prior to the election. They refused our request and wrote to say that they thought we should be able to control our own health department. We feel we are competent to control our own health department, but where a point of difference existed between the health committee and its own city inspector with regard to the working of these health inspectors the least thing the State department could have done was to send an officer to Townsville, as Dr. Coffey promised me he would.

At 8.28 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. AIKENS: Since that request was made and refused—and I understand it was a Cabinet refusal; I understand the State Health Department submitted it to Cabinet and Cabinet in its wisdom or unwisdom decided not to make a State Health officer available to the Townsville City Council for this purpose—we have been able to convince the city inspector that all was not right in his own department in that particular regard. On one occasion one of our health officers was seen at the bowling green for a couple of hours one afternoon and an inquiry was held by the health committee of the Townsville City Council and the city inspector was present; and what transpired at that meeting of the health committee when the health inspector was asked to explain his presence at the bowling green was very illuminating to the city inspector himself, and I think now he sees eye to eye with the health committee of the Townsville City Council: and he has with our approval and consent introduced a roster system that is giving us the fullest co-operation and collaboration.

But had it not been for the incident, when one of our health inspectors was at the bowling green one afternoon when everyone thought he was working, we should still have been at variance with our city inspector over the working of the four inspectors under his control.

I believe that if any city council or other local authority in the State writes and asks

any State department to make an officer available to make an investigation and report in order to facilitate the work of that local authority, the least the State department could do is to make a man available. I make no apology for saying that many health inspectors throughout this State treat the aldermen of a city council or the local authority for which they work with contempt. They adopt the attitude that they cannot be dismissed or punished without the full approval of the State Health Department, and they take no notice of what they consider the local bumbles or the country bumpkins.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would remind the hon. member that that section is under the Department of Health and Home Affairs and there is no provision for it under this vote.

Mr. AIKENS: Every local authority has its own health department, and I am dealing with the health department of the Townsville City Council and of every other city council.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would point out that any representation made to the Department of Health and Home Affairs is not necessarily passed to the Department of Local Government in the Department of Public Works.

Mr. AIKENS: If I was to speak on the Health Department vote concerning the health department of the Townsville City Council, you would probably rule that the Townsville City Council came under the Department of Public Works. So you would get me coming and going.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: However, I have said what I intended to say. I cannot understand the intricate interlacing of the various departments, how they are interlaced like leaves and twigs on a tree. I know you do your honest best to see the daylight through the foliage. I rose to deal with the health department of the Townsville City Council, and the fair and reasonable request we made to the Department of Health in Brisbane to send an officer to the Townsville City Council to settle a difference of opinion between our city inspector and the health committee of the Townsville City Council, of which I am a member, and after Dr. Coffey had promised in all good faith that he would make an officer available Cabinet for some reason known only to itself and its God refused the application.

Mr. KERR (Oxley) (8.33 p.m.): I cannot let this occasion pass without paying my simple tribute to the Director of Local Government. Mr. Chuter has been an outstanding public servant and his services have been very valuable to the State. When he retires his memory will be held dear by many people, not only hon. members in this Chamber but throughout the State of Queensland. He has left his mark on our affairs, and we wish him all happiness in his retirement, which we hope will be long.

I understand that recently the hon. member for Kennedy has started a business in the city of Brisbane, and no doubt with his contact with the public realises now that it is necessary that something be done in regard to the subdivision of estates. I dealt with this matter in my speech on the Address in Reply. The ordinances brought down by the Brisbane City Council have to receive the approval of the Government, and no doubt the Government approved of these ordinances in regard to the subdivision of estates in the metropolitan area. They are far too severe and harsh. They are a long way from the practices that obtained in the olden days when all one need do when sub-dividing an estate was to dedicate the roads. One could run a plough over the ground and one had a road. Under the ordinances of today a first-class road has to be provided in most instances, in many instances it has to be a bitumen road and concrete water-channelling and in some instances concrete footpaths have to be provided.

That makes it highly costly to the owner of the land and often the expense is far beyond his capacity. I know of areas in the Sandgate, Toowong, Enoggera, Logan, and Oxley electorates waiting to be subdivided but the owners cannot possibly go on with the work because of this strict and harsh condition. It has to be remembered also that these costs are passed on to the buyers of the land. The vendor pays for it in the first instance, but it is the purchaser who eventually pays for the high cost of roads.

Another feature is that it is driving people out of the Greater Brisbane area into the Waterford, Cleveland, and other shires outside the metropolitan area where they have no amenities or facilities whatsoever. When these conditions are imposed and carried out it means that high valuations are placed on the allotments and the Brisbane City Council levies in perpetuity a high rate for something towards which it has contributed no cost whatsoever. The purchaser really pays twice.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is getting away from the matter before the Committee. He is dealing with internal matters of local government. The question before the Committee is general administration.

Mr. KERR: I think I am in order in making comparisons and pointing out the harshness of the existing ordinances. In my opinion it is absolutely wrong that any local authority should impose these conditions upon the people because it levies in perpetuity rates on high valuations brought about by something to which it has not contributed one farthing. Rates are levied primarily to pay for such things as roads. Under the ordinance to which I refer the purchaser of the land pays the cost of roads when buying the land and then continues to pay for the roads over and over again in his rates. The Minister has already hinted that he intends to do something about it and I trust that in his reply he will give us some indication of what he intends to do.

Mr. ROBERTS (Nundah) (8.39 p.m.): I cannot allow the remarks just made by the hon. member for Oxley to go unanswered. I feel that the statements we have heard tonight by way of sympathy with landowners who have small pieces of land that they are unable to subdivide because of this ordinance do not meet the case at all. Personally I have every sympathy with the man who has an acre or some small area of land and who, because of this ordinance, cannot subdivide and dispose of it. I feel that it is not for such people that hon. members opposite have risen in this Chamber this afternoon and this evening but that at the back of their minds they are more concerned with the big landowners than the holders of small areas.

I feel that the hon. member is being unjust when he places the responsibility for this ordinance upon the Government. Much as I dislike doing it, I do rise to commend the present city administration for that ordinance.

The people for whom the Opposition are concerned are those who have in the past made a business of purchasing land in outlying districts and taking an interest in local-government affairs and getting on to local-government organisations in order to get transport facilities to this land and selling at exorbitant prices the land they have bought for a song, leaving it to the local authorities to put down bitumen roads, water tabling, and footpaths, and later water and other amenities into the district. I feel that the Brisbane City Council—and I have said I dislike saying anything in its favour, because I know in many respects it has fallen down on its job—in safeguarding the public of Brisbane against these sharks, has been doing an excellent job.

What has been the history of Brisbane in the past? Whole estates have been bought up at a mere pittance by people who are represented by hon. members on the other side of the Chamber and as soon as they have been able to get the tramline or a bus service or a railway line into the vicinity they have been able to subdivide and sell to the unsuspecting public. What about the unsuspecting public who have bought these allotments?

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member is widening the debate. I have already pointed out that the internal workings of any local authority do not come within the ambit of this vote.

Mr. ROBERTS: I do not propose to widen the debate, but at the same time I think that these allegations should be answered. The ordinances with which I am dealing had to be approved of by the Government and so the matter would come under the administration of local government, the vote with which we are dealing.

We can see in and around Brisbane, in localities settled for many years—and I can take hon. members down to Pinkenba in the Nundah electorate and show them some—areas where people have been living for 50 and 60 years and where there is not one chain of water-tabling. Anybody who goes to our housing estates and sees the new homes going

up supplied with bitumen roads, water channelling, and other things must commend the Brisbane City Council for putting these ordinances into effect.

With other members of the Committee, although I have not known Mr. Chuter for a long time, I should like to place on record my appreciation of the work he has done in his job, which he filled with great advantage to the State and honour to himself.

Mr. SMITH (Carpentaria) (8.44 p.m.): Before making a few remarks on local-authority affairs I also wish to identify myself with the tribute that has been paid to Mr. Charles Chuter. I knew him first when he was in the Department of Health and Home Affairs and I think we can connect Mr. Chuter with the wonderful hospital organisation we have in this State today. If it were not for men such as the hon. members for Aubigny and Dalby, I think our base hospitals in the western part of the State would be far more advanced than they are at the present time.

I remember when Mr. Chuter was given the task of organising base hospitals in places like Charleville, Longreach, Cloncurry and other western districts he was met with extreme hostility by members of local authorities like the hon. member for Aubigny and the hon. member for Dalby. These local authorities consisted of graziers and they were afraid that the construction of base hospitals in western towns would mean perhaps an extra farthing in the pound on their rates. If they had given Mr. Chuter the co-operation they appear to offer today, when hospitals are no longer a charge upon local authorities, the hospital position in the far West would have been even better than it is now. Realising that today the financial responsibility in connection with hospitals devolves upon the Government alone, hon. members opposite are demanding that an extensive hospital-building programme be carried out in the western areas but as I said before, if they had given Mr. Chuter the co-operation they pretend to give today at a time when the Government were responsible for 60 per cent. and later 75 per cent. of the difference between hospital receipts and expenditure, there would have been an even better hospital service in the western areas than we have today. I quite well remember the hostility shown to Mr. Chuter by members of local authorities in the far West, graziers of course and of a type similar to the hon. member for Aubigny.

It was fortunate indeed that Cabinet decided that Mr. Chuter should act as adviser to the local authorities, and in this sphere he has given a splendid service. He has given a splendid service indeed in his battle with the backward children of the West like the hon. member for Aubigny because there is yet hope that they will become useful citizens of the State. The work of Mr. Chuter in the local-authority arena and in connection with hospitals in particular will live as a monument to his memory. I wish him well in the future. I agree with the Secretary for Public Instruction that local authorities would be well advised to seek his services if they are not

available to the Government in some way or other after he retires from the Public Service on 31 December next.

During the debate a comparison has been made between subsidies granted to local authorities in the country and the subsidies granted to the Brisbane City Council. I have seven local authorities in my electorate and you can imagine the position I was in on visiting each in turn at their monthly meetings and explaining to them that the western areas got a greater share of loan subsidy from the Government than the Brisbane City Council did.

It was very fortunate that the Premier on his recent visit to the western areas included Cloncurry in his itinerary. A deputation from the shire council there waited on him and members of that deputation complained bitterly of the treatment it had received with respect to the amount of subsidy-loan money received for local-authority work compared with that received by the Brisbane City Council. On the return of the Premier to Brisbane he went fully into the matter. It was not long before he outlined fully what loan-subsidies had been made available to western shires. The information, which I will read, includes not only the Cloncurry Shire Council but every local authority outside the metropolitan area. At one time I must confess that I was under the impression that Brisbane got a better deal than country local authorities. The Premier's letter will enlighten hon. members as to just how outside local authorities fared as compared with the metropolitan area.

Mr. Muller interjected.

Mr. SMITH: I will not waste my time dealing with the hon. member for Fassifern. He is one of the most consistent belly-achers concerning the treatment meted out by the Government to the metropolitan area as compared with outside areas. The letter I propose to read will be printed in "Hansard." I send many copies of "Hansard" to my electors, who at all times are interested in what the Government have done and are doing for the north-western part of the State particularly, compared with what they are doing for Brisbane.

Mr. Muller again interjected.

Mr. SMITH: There are pastoralists in that area who have submitted to what hon. members opposite call the iniquitous buffalo-fly tax. I remember that the hon. member contended that that tax should be borne by the pastoralists in the Gulf area only and not by every cattle-owner, notwithstanding that these poor unfortunate graziers in the Gulf country not only lost revenue from the ravages of the buffalo-fly but had to put up with the many difficulties associated with the spraying of their cattle. We have a type of grazier there who are he-men, men of ability and integrity.

The letter from the Premier reads—

"With reference to your representations relative to the question raised by the deputation from the Council of the Shire of

Cloncurry which waited on you at Cloncurry on the 26th July, 1946, regarding the rate of subsidies payable to Local Authorities, I desire to inform you that it is noted that the notes of the deputation refer to a subsidy rate of 33½ per cent. for general works in Brisbane, as compared with 15 per cent. at Cloncurry. The subsidy rate applicable to general works carried out by the Brisbane City Council is, however, 17½ per cent., in accordance with the approved subsidy scheme."

It will be seen that the subsidy granted to the local authorities in the western areas was greater than that granted in the metropolitan area.

I found, not only as a member for many years of the Cloncurry Shire Council but from my travels through my electorate, that a particular type of councillor on these local authorities who does not represent the people so much as the vast pastoral interests of southern or overseas companies, of which he is their local manager, is averse at all times to any proposal for amenities or benefits for a section of the people in a particular area.

On the public platform and by address to the local authority, I have asked local authority men to take advantage of the reasonable subsidy moneys available to them through the State Labour Government, and I have found it very hard to overcome the hostility to spending public moneys in these areas, but I am glad to be able to say that over a period of time I have convinced these men that this money is available for the purpose of local authority work.

At 8.56 p.m.,

Mr. HILTON (Carnarvon) relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. SMITH: I have convinced my seven local authorities, and I do not think any hon. member has half as many in his electorate. For the financial year 1947-48 the works programme for the local authorities in my area to be defrayed from loan and subsidy moneys represents a sum of £77,154. This amount has been allocated to these local authorities through the loan and subsidy scheme provided by the Government.

Certain individuals on these local authorities said, "Why carry out the Government regulations? We have no time to fill in the forms that the Government department wants. We cannot afford to pay a fully qualified engineer to carry out this work, so that it can be submitted to the Loan Council through the Co-ordinator-General." Year after year they have waived this method of raising funds for the work necessary for the shire council.

I will read out a list of works that are to be carried out in the Cloncurry shire, which is spending approximately £56,000 this year. It is only since the people who represent the Australian Labour Party and sympathisers with the Labour Government

have taken control of these local authorities that the people in those areas are getting any benefit. The following is the list of works:—

	£
Cloncurry swimming pool ..	12,000
Purchase of road-making plant ..	5,000
Erection of houses at Cloncurry and Mount Isa	20,000
Cemetery road	754
Kerbing and channelling, Cloncurry	2,500
Improvements to Cloncurry Recreation Reserve	3,185
Street beautification, Cloncurry ..	510
Cloncurry park and children's playground	1,500
Esplanade improvements, Mount Isa	3,010
Kerbing and channelling, Mount Isa	2,494
Dajarra township improvements	1,500
Dajarra aerodrome	1,000
Homes for invalid and old-age pensioners, Cloncurry and Mount Isa	3,600
Water supply improvements ..	6,400

Those are some of the main items that are going to be a benefit to the people of that shire. After much agitation they have agreed to take advantage of the loan and subsidy money made available by the State Labour Government. These things are worth mentioning, because the Opposition are always saying that the Government are not helping the people in the West and North-west. If the local-authority members will do the job they are there to do and carry out the by-laws of the local authority as far as loan-subsidy money is concerned, money will be available for the benefit of the people they represent.

Recently I spoke in the Committee about the fact that local authorities had to construct aerodromes in the western part of this State, or for that matter anywhere. I made a statement that because Civil Aviation officials stated that the local authority in a particular area was not carrying out maintenance on an aerodrome that aerodrome was closed to the public of that district and also to the Flying Doctor Service. My statement was made on Thursday and in the Brisbane "Courier-Mail" of Saturday, 15 November, it was reported that some Civil Aviation person, one of those Commonwealth bureaucrats, one of those leeches that hang to the Federal Labour Government, gave out this statement—

"The official denied claims by Mr. Smith (Labour, Carpentaria) in Parliament on Thursday that the Federal attitude was 'to hell with the people of the West,' and that the Civil Aviation Department policy was to maintain only aerodromes needed for regular flying services."

This individual of the Civil Aviation Department is again out of step with the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. He is an official working for the Commonwealth Government but the Prime Minister, in a

letter to our Premier, says—and this is in relation to retaining the McKinlay aerodrome used exclusively by the Flying Doctor—

“The matter of retaining this ground has been re-examined in the Department of Civil Aviation having due regard to the fact that it is the policy of the Commonwealth Government—”

I ask members to remember these words—

“to maintain only such places as are necessary as regular landing places or as essential emergency landing grounds on approved civil air routes.”

This individual, this bureaucratic octopus, or this leech that hangs onto the tail of the Federal Government states that that is not the policy. He is out of step with the Prime Minister when he states—

“Traffic to some of those closed did not warrant the expenditure of public funds in keeping them open. Others had not been maintained adequately by local authorities.”

Why should local authorities maintain aerodromes in the western part of this State? Do the ratepayers of the city of Brisbane pay for the upkeep of Archerfield aerodrome or the Eagle Farm aerodrome? Are the ratepayers of the Sydney municipality to pay for the construction and upkeep of the £10,000,000 flying boat and aeroplane base to be built in Sydney? Do the ratepayers of Townsville pay for the upkeep of the Garbutt aerodrome or the ratepayers of Rockhampton pay for the upkeep of the aerodrome there? But the people of the West, in order to obtain these services, have to pay through their rates to the local authority for the aerodromes in the western part of the State. Is it fair they have to do this?

To prove my remarks on the closure of the McKinlay aerodrome I will read from a letter written by Mr. McKerrow of Moorooka Station, outside McKinlay. He is writing me in connection with an application for a utility vehicle for work on his station and states among other things—

“To visit our nearest business centre and doctor necessitates a car journey of 156 miles, and our nearest rail point a trip of 116 miles. Furthermore, now that the nearest landing strip has been condemned we are denied the hitherto available services of the Flying Doctor.”

Is it fair that these bureaucrats should force the local authorities to maintain the aerodrome in that centre when the big aerodromes of the cities and closer-settled areas are being maintained out of public funds raised through the petrol tax, the tax on airlines, and so on? Is it fair that these people should be denied the services of a Flying Doctor by the closure of aerodromes?

I have now received this letter requesting a permit for a motor vehicle in order that a man may have access to a doctor for his wife and family because these bureaucrats have closed the aerodrome and said it was not the responsibility of the Department of Civil Aviation to maintain it for a Flying Doctor

service. They suggest that it is the responsibility of the local authority. If that is so, why should not Eagle Farm and Archerfield be the responsibility of the Brisbane City Council? Why should not the maintenance of the big aerodromes in Sydney be the responsibility of the Sydney City Council, and the same with Townsville, Cairns, Rockhampton, and Mackay?

I shall have more to say about this at a later date, but I repeat that any local authority desiring to provide amenities for the people of its shire can have all the money it requires by taking advantage of our reasonable loan-subsidy scheme, for there is more money available than they will be able to use.

Mr. BROWN (Buranda) (9.8 p.m.): At the outset I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Chuter, with whom I have had dealings since as far back as 1924. On every occasion his advice on local-government matters has been of the highest possible standard and the State is unfortunate in losing the services of such a grand public servant.

Much has been said about the local government of Brisbane and the cutting up of land. To my mind every speaker has missed the real point. An ordinance of the Brisbane City Council requires that when land is being subdivided roads and concrete water channels shall be constructed. I am more concerned about the purchaser of the allotment than I am about the seller because the purchaser is the one who will be building his home and living there. It must be appreciated that if the ordinary earth roads and water-tables were permissible they would not be the permanent levels for a later date.

A person who buys an allotment of land on which to build a home might find that the council would come along and raise the road or cut it down some three or five or more feet. That person would then be either on a hill or down in a hollow. I think these points should be considered. I know perfectly well that if you buy a piece of land and ask the council for the permanent levels it must give you those levels within six months, but it is too late after the person has bought the land to find that out. Once concrete water-tabling is down you have the permanent level and you know what class of house to build on your land. I think that is a point worthy of consideration because the purchaser of the land is the one most concerned.

Hon. W. POWER (Barooka—Secretary for Public Works) (9.11 p.m.): For the information of the hon. member for Mundingburra, let me say that the question of health inspectors is a matter for the Department of Health and Home Affairs.

On the question of subdivisions raised by the hon. member for Maree, I think there is room for thought, particularly in regard to small areas of land, say, of one and two acres. The local authority compels the owner of the property upon subdivision to put in water-tabling, and in addition he may be compelled to lay bitumen roads. All these things cost money, and it may not pay the owner

of the property to subdivide under those terms; the land is left as it is and very little use can be made of it by the owner. I think that some consideration could be given to the case of small areas of land, and a reduction in the costs of subdivision.

The question of subdivision of large areas also is one for consideration. The Department of Works and Housing, where it has bought large estates, has been compelled by the Brisbane City Council and other local authorities to put down water-channelling and bitumen roads. Not only have we been asked to put down bitumen roads, but we have been asked to put them down extending from channel to channel. If one examines roads in the suburbs of Brisbane laid by the Brisbane City Council one will find a strip of bitumen down the centre or a strip of Colfix running down the centre of the road. But a private owner subdividing is asked to go to heavy expense. I think commonsense should be applied to the subdivision of land. We know that provision is made whereby an appeal can lie against any local authority in regard to subdivisions. The matter should be reviewed and further consideration given, particularly to the subdivision of small areas.

The hon. member for Townsville spoke about examination of water meters. A similar position arose in the city of Brisbane and we find that in the majority of cases water meters have been discarded and are not now in use in the ordinary householder's residence, but when they were installed and a householder was overcharged for allegedly using an excessive amount of water, he could complain and could ask to have his meter taken away and tested.

If the meter is found to be correct the householder is required to pay a fee of 10s. 6d. but that was an appeal from Caesar to Caesar. I will take the matter up with the Director of Local Government to see whether the testing of the meters can be carried out by an independent person. There is what is termed a creeping meter and it has been brought under my notice that if a tap was turned on and allowed to run for 24 hours of the day for each of the 365 days in the year there would not flow through the tap the quantity of water that the Brisbane City Council has in some instances asked householders to pay for. However, when the matter was brought under the notice of a senior officer of the Brisbane City Council it was promptly attended to but, as I say, it is an appeal from Caesar to Caesar and I think that the test should be made by an independent person.

I was glad to hear the compliments paid to Mr. Chuter by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber on his splendid work in the Public Service. When he retires he can rest on his laurels, knowing that he has discharged his duties faithfully and well and that his work is appreciated not only by me as Minister in charge of the department but also by every other member of the Government Party.

Vote (Local Government) agreed to.

VALUER-GENERAL.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (9.17 p.m.): I move—

“That £28,687 be granted for ‘Valuer-General.’”

The appropriation for this year is £7,178 in excess of the amount voted last year. Of the increase the sum of £5,428 is necessary to meet the salaries of additional appointees to the staff. An increased provision of £1,750 is also necessary under the heading of Contingencies for the efficient working of the department.

The staff is being increased from time to time. Recently a number of young men passed their examinations and were appointed. We have instituted a system of cadet valuers, appointing them to the staff and training them to become valuers. This means an increase in wages cost of the department. The increase in Contingencies will be necessary because valuers will be going from place to place carrying out valuations.

The hon. member for Cunningham and I think the hon. member for Aubigny too referred to the declaration of valuations. It was pointed out that under the old Act, before a valuation could be declared, the whole valuation district had to be valued but the amending Act provides that as a valuation is completed it can be declared. Within the next fortnight valuations will be declared in respect of the shires of Clifton, Cambooya, Drayton and Pittsworth and the valuations for the rest of the local authorities on the Darling Downs will be pushed ahead as quickly as possible. It is important that the valuations should be declared before the whole of the division is valued, otherwise there would be a great number of appeals to be heard by the appeal courts. I think the present arrangement meets the situation fairly well.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (9.20 p.m.): The Minister misunderstood an interjection I made today. I was worrying about those shires that have undertaken an expense of probably some £600 or £700 in making a valuation, because I did not think those valuations would last for any length of time. That might not happen, but remarkable things do happen at times, and it might. The Minister, by way of interjection, said there was nothing to stop a fresh valuation from being made. The hon. gentleman now nods his head. No shire would commit itself to the expense of a valuation this year if it knew it would be forced to make another valuation next year.

Mr. Power: I just told you that we were beginning to proclaim the valuations in three Darling Downs shires, and that we were going right through the Downs.

Mr. SPARKES: Unfortunately the Minister was sick when the relevant legislation was before this Parliament. It was handled by the Acting Minister. He assured us that we should get two or three years' grace because men were not available to make the valuation.

Mr. Power: Any undertaking given by the Acting Minister will be honoured by me.

Mr. SPARKES: It is very nice to know that. Despite my appreciation of the hon. gentleman I am a bit like the hon. member for Stanley, as I prefer such assurances to be in the Bill itself. At that time the shires in my electorate were suffering from anomalies in their valuations, and desired to make fresh valuations, but I advised them not to do so, despite the undertaking given by the Acting Minister.

Mr. Collins: This would be a very bad time to have a valuation of the shires out there.

Mr. SPARKES: What has the Minister discovered? He should look after matters pertaining to his own department and see that the wheat crop was being garnered. If so he would be doing greater service for this State. This sub-department has declared valuations for the Clifton shire and two other shires on the Downs. Look at the position they would now be in if they had made valuations themselves. The Minister said that any guarantee given by the Acting Minister would be honoured. Where should we be in the Wambo, Jondaryan, or other shire on that part of the Darling Downs which is at the present time expending £500 or £600 in making a valuation.

Valuers in different sections of the State should have a fair knowledge of land matters. I have travelled the greater part of Queensland, but I should hesitate to go to the North Coast and make a valuation. For that reason I appeal to the Minister to see that men are specially trained to handle such districts.

Mr. Power: That is being done.

Mr. SPARKES: That does not always apply. We have had men coming along without the requisite knowledge of the district. I have heard men stating that land was worth so much and the men in the district would not agree with them.

Mr. Collins: They know it is worth twice as much.

Mr. SPARKES: I hope the Minister is listening to what the hon. gentleman is telling us—that the land in the Dalby district is worth twice as much. If the hon. gentleman goes up there I can visualise the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock giving evidence that this land is worth this much and it has been taken for soldier settlement at probably one-third of the value. The hon. gentleman may find himself in a troubled seat.

Mr. Collins: It is a land-sellers' market at the present time.

Mr. Power: You are going to make the soldiers pay.

Mr. SPARKES: Hon. gentlemen are making speeches over there; I do not know what they are talking about. The Government supported by the hon. gentlemen—the Commonwealth Government—the other day wrote a letter to my shire and suggested that the shire should not charge any rates to the returned soldiers who had taken over this

land for the first year. Why did not the Commonwealth Government make that payment? Why throw it onto the shires?

Mr. Hanlon: What is that to do with the valuer?

Mr. SPARKES: He asked for it. (Laughter.) I am only giving him a little information. The Valuer-General's task is not going to be an easy one, and for that reason we must have men acquainted with local conditions, otherwise there will be a number of appeals and much expense.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works) (9.27 p.m.): Any undertaking given to this Chamber by the hon. member for The Tableland during the time he was Secretary for Public Works will be honoured by the department and by myself. A valuation method has been set down for guidance of the valuers. I and the Valuer-General appreciate the difference between valuing land at the seaside and valuing land in the country. Productivity has to be taken into consideration. We are not going to give barren land the same value as land with a high productivity capacity. The valuers of the department are being trained and the hon. member need have no fear or misgivings as to the valuations made by the officers when they set out on this very important undertaking.

Vote (Valuer-General) agreed to.
Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.