

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 1948

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such a meeting, the persons nominated or elected at the meeting are appointed as a school committee by the Secretary for Public Instruction. Subsidy under the School Ground Improvement Scheme and for school amenities is payable on approved projects submitted by school committees, head teachers, parents' associations, or local organisations working in the interests of schools."

STATE EDUCATION ACTS AMENDMENT
BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 23 November (see page 1564) on Mr. Bruce's motion—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.4 a.m.): I repeat that I regret that the Minister did not give the House the information to which it was entitled in connection with the form of bond and as to exactly what the department will require under this measure. That information is important when we are giving consideration to such an amendment of the law as this.

However, I wish to examine the question as a whole with a view to seeing just what effect this proposed amendment might have on the urgent need of the department to obtain recruits to the teaching service. As the Minister has said in this Chamber, and as the Director-General of Education has indicated in his annual report, educational administration and progress have been hampered during the past year by shortage of teaching staff and by the difficulty of providing adequate accommodation and equipment. Those words constitute the first sentence of the report of the Director-General of Education. He emphasises there and later in his report that this is one of the principal problems in the efficient and effective work of the department.

Up to the present no solution has been found to the problem of adequately increasing the teaching staff. The losses in the teaching staff that have occurred over the years emphasise that grave statement made by the Director-General. I quote again from his report in these words—

"From the beginning of 1945 to 1 August, 1948, 1,158 teachers were admitted to the service, but losses during the same period amounted to 1,508, giving a net loss of 350 teachers during that period."

That stresses the very serious position the department finds itself in at present.

Dealing with the enrolment of pupils in our schools, we find the following comments made in the Director-General's report—

"This table—"

and he refers to a table showing the net enrolment and average attendance at State schools, both primary and secondary—

"... indicates that while there was a reduction in the school population between 1940 and 1943 there has been

WEDNESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER, 1948.

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

QUESTION.

STATE SCHOOLS WITHOUT COMMITTEES.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

"In view of the fact that certain facilities and amenities are required to be provided by school committees, where such committees are functioning, and a subsidy is paid on any moneys raised by the committees for such purposes, how are these facilities and amenities provided at those schools where the headmaster refuses to allow a school committee to be formed?"

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

"A head teacher cannot refuse to allow a school committee to be formed. In accordance with the regulations, head teachers must issue to parents notices inviting their attendance at meetings for the election of a school committee. If the requisite number of parents attend

an increase since the latter year and that increase has been very rapid during the past two years. It is likely that the rate of increase will be maintained for some years”

I particularly emphasise these words, which follow:—

“ . . . and the need for a substantial increase in the number of young people admitted to the Teachers’ Training College is apparent.”

The need for a strong recruitment of trainee teachers is apparent, and we have to examine this amending Bill in relation to that statement made by the Director-General of Education to see whether it will have the effect of increasing or decreasing the enrolments into the Teachers’ Training College.

There is no doubt that in addition to the urgent need for more teachers to cope with the present and prospective increases in enrolments in our schools, we have to have more teachers to cope with any improvements and extended services the department might introduce. We face an extension and improvement of the syllabus. We have to attain that very necessary objective of smaller classes per teacher. We have to consider the projected policy of extending the school-leaving age. These are matters that might affect our problem. Let us take them one by one.

Our Department of Public Instruction cannot afford to stand still, and it does not propose to stand still but to extend and improve the syllabus. How can we put into effect a plan for an improved and expanded syllabus unless we have enough teachers to cope with it? That is a factor that will have to be taken very much into consideration in dealing with recruitment to the Teachers’ Training College.

Then we shall have to give consideration to the number of pupils in the class. At the moment teachers are called upon to handle as many as 60 to 70 children in a class, whereas it was stated some time ago that the objective of the department was a maximum of 30 children, and that is enough for any teacher to handle properly. Judging by the way we are going, it would appear that it will be many years before we attain that desirable objective.

I am afraid that we shall have to forget the raising of the school-leaving age for the moment. We cannot do anything else. We shall be compelled to do so because of the extreme shortage of teachers.

How are we to attract more pupils to the Teachers’ Training College? There is a shortage of labour generally and there is only one pool from which we can draw. Here the department is meeting a serious competitor in general industry and because of the extreme shortage of labour, industry is offering better than award wages and conditions in an endeavour to attract people to its ranks. The department is therefore subject to particularly keen competition for teachers and to counter that it will have

to offer much more attractive conditions than it offers today. That is the only way in which it will be able to increase the intake of pupils into the Teachers’ Training College.

The department will also have to consider a proposal to make the service much more attractive generally than it is today. It is not sufficient to say that it is the duty of a certain section of the community to enter the Teachers’ Training College. After all, it involves a good deal of self-sacrifice and we shall have to play up to the young people, if I may use the term, so as to induce a number of pupils leaving secondary schools to enter the Teachers’ Training College. In short, the conditions will have to be made at least as attractive as those in industry generally.

Of course, one of the most important factors is salary. There is no doubt that the teaching profession is not getting the salaries to which it is entitled in view of the importance of its work. The recent increases in salaries may do something in this respect but the department will have to reconsider its attitude in the matter of appointments and transfers. One of the greatest factors operating against adequate admissions to the Teachers’ Training College is the fact that the young people who propose to enter it are not altogether satisfied that after they leave the college they will receive suitable appointments. They will not be content if they are faced with the prospect of being appointed to far distant parts of the State, to remain there for very many years. The department will have to look into the present system of appointments and transfers because, unfortunately, at the present time quite a number of them serve almost the whole of their teaching life in the metropolitan area and big centres of population while others never get within cooee of a big town. That is a factor that is operating very much against the entry of our young people to the teaching profession through the Teachers’ Training College. I know that any question of entering the teaching profession is affected by the consideration of transfers.

We all know only too well the need to keep the one-teacher school going in the isolated and far-flung parts of the State. People living in those areas are entitled to all the facilities of our educational system. Everyone cannot live in our cities and towns. There should be a fair and equitable distribution of the service between the more populous and the more remote areas, so that we shall remove what is undoubtedly one of the more serious bars now prevailing against entry to the teaching profession.

In addition to the factors I have mentioned, there is another thing to be considered when we are seeking recruits for the Teachers’ Training College. That is, it is essential that these recruits should be of a certain standard educationally, physically and morally. We set a very high standard and this eliminates some who seek to qualify for entering the college. I do not advocate any breaking down of that high standard,

because the teaching profession is so important that we should have only the highest possible standards in candidates entering the profession.

Over the years the department has built up the practice of insisting that all recruits to the teaching profession shall go through the Teachers' Training College, and has cast overboard the system we had years ago called the pupil-teacher system, through which many teachers entered the service. I agree that the Teachers' Training College is the best method of training teachers that the department has evolved, but, I asked earlier, in order to cope with the dire necessity of filling the vacancies in our teaching profession, could not some method be evolved to reintroduce temporarily the system of pupil-teacher plus a limited training in the Teachers' Training College? That might enable us to get recruits for the service more quickly than under the present method.

It might be said that this suggestion would lead to the breaking down of the high standards set in the Teachers' Training College. We do not desire that, and a great deal of argument could be advanced against it, but this is only a suggestion to overcome a difficulty temporarily. Some of the best teachers we have in the department entered the service by means of the pupil-teacher system. As an example, we have our Director-General of Education. He entered the department as a pupil teacher.

Mr. Bruce: At 5s. a week, payable quarterly.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Minister interjects "5s." That shows his mentality.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Bruce: I said 5s. a week payable quarterly. Pupil teachers under a Tory Government started at 5s. a week, which was paid quarterly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I suggest to hon. members that this debate should be confined to the question before the Chair. I can readily see that we are going to drift into a debate along the lines of the debate on the Estimates. I would therefore ask hon. members to keep as close as possible to the principles contained in the Bill.

Mr. NICKLIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I accept the Minister's assurance.

Mr. BRUCE: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the hon. member withdraw the statement that I suggested 5s. a week.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will have to accept the Minister's assurance.

Mr. NICKLIN: I did accept the Minister's assurance and he justified me by confirming my statement. However, let us get on with the matter under discussion.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is not for me to suggest. I suggest that the department should examine this question to see whether

it would be practicable and possible to work it out. I am not going to go into the details of the system. I referred to it as a means of meeting the very serious trouble we have in regard to the shortage of teachers.

The system of entry to the teaching profession through the Teachers' Training College is expensive to the Government. They spend a great deal of money on students who go through the college. It is expensive to the students and the parents of the students also, because the allowance they receive, particularly in the early years at the college, make it necessary for those students to be subsidised by their parents to enable them to continue their studies; so it is a case of sacrifice by both parties—the Government and the students and their parents—in order to maintain the system of training at the Teachers' Training College.

After examining the various factors operating in regard to the entrance to the Training College I now want to come to the points of the amendment. Any student entering the college will now have to arrange for a bond that will protect the Government in regard to the amount of money spent on him or her in training. There may be merit in that proposal. After all, the Government are entitled to some protection in return for the money they spend. What I am concerned about is how this condition is going to be administered. Is it going to mean fewer students entering the Training College and thus rebound on the Government's head and nullify the efforts to increase the number of entrants to our Teachers' Training College? It will be essential for the Government to exercise every care in putting these amendments into effect. That is why I must emphasise that it is important that the Minister should have given us some indication as to exactly how this amendment is going to be administered. It provides that the allowance paid under the teacher's scholarship is to be refunded and is recoverable as a debt to the Crown if the student fails to carry out his undertaking to enter the teaching service of the department or remain in the teaching service for a stipulated period. I understand the Minister to say that that period would be a period equal to the currency of the scholarship. The amendment also includes the case of termination of service within the stipulated period of the departmental or Public Service regulation.

With such provisions in the Bill it appears necessary to meet the case of a student who resigns of his own free will or whose services are terminated through some misdemeanour or similar cause without having given the agreed amount of service to the department in return for the allowance given to him in the period of training. The difficulty I see in regard to this point is that the student's services may be terminated through no real fault of his own, before the expiration of the prescribed period.

In the introductory stage, I think it was the hon. member for Mirani who quoted the case of a student whose services were terminated through no fault of her own and the department is now asking the mother

to meet the undertaking of the bond entered into. That mother is not in a position to meet the financial responsibility entailed.

Mr. Bruce: What happened to the father?

Mr. NICKLIN: Unfortunately the mother was a widow, which makes the case much worse than it would have been had there been a father to accept a share of the burden. What is to happen to the student who after a period of training is found to be unsuitable for the teaching profession, even though a genuine effort has been made, and notwithstanding the checks made by the department before any student is passed as fit for entrance into the college? There are circumstances such as these and they must be taken care of. There may be the student who may fail in the examination, although he has made an earnest endeavour to meet the educational requirements of the course. There are cases such as these. Many other instances could be quoted of students who through no fault of their own are forced to withdraw from or leave the college. So far as I can see, this Bill makes no provision whatever for these cases. The only provision the Bill makes is that any entrant to the Teachers' Training College, either personally or by way of parents or guardians, has to give an indemnity to the Crown, and if the student does not give the stipulated period of service the bond will become operative. As I have said, the Government are entitled to some protection from the student who may deliberately default and the Government are entitled to recover whatever possible from the deliberate defaulter. But there are others who through no fault of their own cannot make the grade, and there should be some protection to prevent their being harshly dealt with.

I should like the Minister when replying to give an explanation of the administrative intention of the department. The principle of asking for a bond from persons on whom the Government spend a good deal of money is sound—the Government are entitled to that protection—but there are those who may fall down through no fault of their own. They are entitled to just as much protection. Much will depend on the administration of this amendment and the House is entitled to know exactly the Minister's intention in this respect.

I think that covers very adequately the first principle in the Bill—the making of an allowance and providing that such allowance is covered by bond or guarantee—except the one point, and that is the effect that this provision may have on the possible entry into the training college of students whose parents may not be prepared or may not be able to accept the financial responsibility necessary to cover the training of son or daughter. As a result, the department may lose some of the most brilliant prospective teachers. If the Minister will make a definite announcement on behalf of the Government and his department as to how this measure is to be administered, and if he will explain that students in

the class I have mentioned will not be at any disadvantage so long as they make a genuine effort to fulfill all the conditions laid down, it will lead to a greater influx of teachers into the Teachers' Training College. While there is any doubt in the minds of parents of possible students that they may be at a disadvantage in some way by the harsh administration of this amendment, these prospective students will pass over the teaching service and go into the many other avenues offering in the commercial world at the present time. In view of the keen competition the teaching service is meeting from the commercial world, it is right that something definite should be stated on this point, so that there will be no doubt in the minds of those who might be considering entering the profession.

I agree that the amendment proposed by the Minister in connection with religious instruction in schools is not only desirable but also more workable than the provision it is proposed to replace. It should certainly make for the better and more efficient giving of religious instruction in schools.

The Bill is in the main desirable, if the administration of the provision relating to recovery of moneys under bonds is carried out sympathetically and with the idea of assisting rather than retarding the entry of students into the Teachers' Training College.

Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera) (11.32 a.m.): I do not think anybody could possibly quarrel with the second provision of the Bill. I think we all appreciate its wisdom and realise that it will certainly make for more satisfactory working.

There is, however, room for a good deal of doubt and debate in connection with the first provision. As I see it, the first provision gives the department the means of tightening up on the recovery of living allowances paid to students. It is not for the recovery of wages, because student teachers at the college do not receive wages; they receive living allowances, which run from approximately £78 a year upwards. The clause gives the Government greater power to recover from the students the amount of money that has been received by the student by way of living allowances if the student himself does not fulfill certain conditions required of him. As I see it, what is required of the student is that after leaving the college and going out to teach he must teach for a period equal to the time he has spent in training, otherwise the Government will have the right to proceed against him for the recovery of the living allowances he has received.

This provision should be examined from two viewpoints. First of all, I believe we should think about whether it is fair and just for the Government to impose this bond, if you like to use that term—it was first used by the Minister—and require it to be signed by the parents of the young man or young woman prior to his or her entering the Teachers' Training College.

I can visualise certain circumstances in which it would be quite fair for the department to ask for that bond to be signed, and for the Government to proceed against the parents for the recovery of the living allowance. At the same time I can visualise circumstances in which it would not be fair for that to be done. I believe that this arrangement really constitutes a contract between the Government on the one hand and the pupil on the other. The Government contract to give the pupil sufficient training at the Teachers' Training College, and incidentally actual practical experience in schools, so that the pupil may become not only a suitable teacher, but also a classified teacher. I think that that is an important factor. In years gone by there was a policy whereby young men and women were appointed pupil teachers but it has now more or less gone by the board. I have heard hon. members say they agreed with it. Frankly, I do not. I think that the policy adopted in recent years and now in operation in Queensland and other States—most of the States throughout Australia—whereby a pupil enters the college and receives the whole of his training at the college before going out teaching, is the right policy, because it enables that young man or woman to concentrate on the job of teaching when he or she gets to the actual work. If we expect young, unclassified teachers to go into the bush and teach at one-teacher schools, and get their classification and pass the senior and the examination on educational psychology out there, we are imposing too great a strain on them. The policy in operation today, whereby the Government will train a young teacher to the stage at which he or she becomes classified before going to a school, is the better one, and I say that the Government are justified and quite right in asking for the recovery of the living allowance from the teacher if that teacher leaves of his own accord before he has finished his training.

There is, however, another angle to the matter. There are some teachers, as the Leader of the Opposition said, who by force of circumstances are obliged to leave before they have completed the stipulated time as mentioned in the Bill. Consideration should be given to them if circumstances arise whereby it is utterly impossible for them to continue the work and I think the Government should be lenient and forgo the recovery of the money in such circumstances. I think there are cases today in which the Government would not be right in proceeding against students for the recovery of the money. I have been given to understand—and I am open to correction on the point and I most sincerely hope that the Minister can prove that what I am about to state is incorrect—that there is at the Teachers' Training College a class of approximately 29 young men and women who entered the college nearly two years ago after having passed the Junior public examination. Many of them, I believe, have not been given the opportunity to pass the Senior examination or to matriculate or become classified and at present

they are under the impression—having been told this by one of the teachers at the college—that at the end of the year they will be sent to many centres throughout the State as unclassified teachers. That is a grave injustice to these young men and women and the first clause in the Bill should not be carried out in those circumstances. These men and women are not being given a full opportunity and the Government in not allowing the teachers to become classified before they are appointed to the service are not carrying out their contract. They should have the opportunity to become classified, or this clause should not be imposed. My attitude briefly is that if the department carries out its moral obligation to the student who enters the Teachers' Training College it is the duty of the student to carry out his moral obligation to the department and if he leaves before the completion of the stipulated time he should refund to the department the living allowance paid to him for the time he served in the college. Of course, I would make an exception in the case of hardship.

Let us view this problem from another angle, that of expediency. While the principle may be just in certain circumstances I do not think it is expedient to introduce this principle at the present time. As the Leader of the Opposition explained, we are facing an extremely grave problem in our teaching service and it is one that is becoming graver, not only year by year but month by month, because of resignations. The head masters of the various schools have no opportunity whatever of reducing the size of the classes and that is a grave problem in teaching today. In some instances one teacher is required to look after a class of 70 to 80 children, but it is impossible to do good work under those conditions. The schools are very seldom fully staffed, even with classes of the present size. In a number of cases the head master, in addition to his work of supervising, and examining, has to take full responsibility for teaching a class himself. The school population is growing rapidly, too. That is mentioned by the Director-General in his report and in the next five years there will be a constantly increasing number of children requiring education.

Therefore I ask again: is it expedient to amend the Act when such an amendment might conceivably reduce the number of young men and women who enter the teaching profession? We should consider this clause very carefully before we proceed any further with it. We must consider also the question in relation to the raising of the school-leaving age. It has been accepted all over the world as a necessity, but if we adopt the Bill in its present form we take the risk of cutting down the number of teachers available to the department, especially if we raise the school-leaving age beyond the present age of 14 years.

After taking all the various factors into consideration, I think it is fair and just that in certain circumstances this legislation should be put on our statute book. Taking all

factors into consideration, however, including the urgent need for teachers, I believe it is unwise to introduce it here today. Therefore I hope that the Bill will not be proceeded with, for that reason. As far as the training of these young teachers is concerned, it would be better for us to carry on as we are for another two or three years, even with our short staff, than adopt the policy that it appears will be adopted of sending out teachers before they are fully trained and thus making their job in life much more difficult and arduous, judged by present educational standards.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (11.46 a.m.): I have very little to say at this stage except that we have to recognise the fact that the best scholar does not always make the best teacher, just as we have to recognise the fact that the best medical student does not always make the best doctor. We have to train our teachers not only to absorb knowledge in the Teachers' Training College but to go out into the schools and impart that knowledge to the pupils. Frankly, that is a problem we do not appear to be able to completely overcome.

I can give you cases of men of high academic qualifications. We have a bachelor of arts, one of many who come into the department, who entered the service from a denominational school. Although the man has high educational qualifications he has been chased and shifted about from school to school, simply because he is a failure as a teacher and cannot impart to the pupils any of his high intellectual attainments as a teacher. We have him in Townsville at the present time. How long he will remain there I do not know. That is the whole sum and substance of the problem of teaching pupils in any State—getting a teacher to be able to impart his knowledge to the youth.

I do not see any grave danger in this Bill if it is administered sympathetically after it has been placed on the statute book. I realise that certain pupils take a course in the Teachers' Training College purely for their own convenience, and when it suits their purpose they leave the college and go out into another industry. The department has to be protected from that type of student. Then there is the student who enters the college honestly and conscientiously desirous of finishing his or her course but for some reason or circumstance over which he or she has no control is obliged to finish the course much earlier than was expected and leave the college. Frankly, I cannot see why these students who are honest, sincere, and conscientious should be penalised.

Mr. Bruce: The department gives consideration to those cases in which it is not possible to fulfil the obligations of the course.

Mr. AIKENS: If this Bill is administered sympathetically there cannot be much wrong with it.

I wish to draw attention to a particularly dangerous principle that is inserted in this Bill, that is, it considers the dismissal of one of these student teachers as being similar to the voluntary retirement of a student teacher.

If a student enters the Teachers' Training College and during the course of his study, although he may sincerely, conscientiously and eagerly desire to continue the course until its completion, falls foul of one of the department's many regulations and this results in his being dismissed from the college, that student is considered to have voluntarily retired. The Bill provides that in that case, even though the student is dismissed from the college notwithstanding that he may be desirous of continuing his course, the Minister can take action to forfeit an amount under the bond equivalent to the money that has been spent on the student.

I do not think that is quite right. I realise the department's attitude. I realise that there may be some students at the Teachers' Training College who reach a point where they want to leave of their own volition and they believe that if they do so the bond may be estreated to the extent of the money already spent on them; consequently they may adopt the dodge of deliberately provoking the administration into dismissing them and so evade their responsibility. Nevertheless, on the whole it is a particularly dangerous principle, but if the Minister can advance any good or cogent reason why it should be retained in the interests of the department and the students as a whole, perhaps I may be converted and support it.

With regard to the third principle, religious training in schools, we have to face up to this fact: that the churches, having failed to get the children to go to Sunday school, have for some years prevailed on the department to allow them to take the Sunday school to the State schools. It is an admission of failure on the part of the various denominations. But as there is no great opposition to it from the parents or the pupils, I see no reason why the system should not be continued. I do say, though, that it is an admission of failure on the part of the various denominations that have failed to make religion so attractive or so instructional that the children were not sent to Sunday school by their parents, consequently they were forced to ask the Education Department to allow them to go to these State schools and take Sunday-school training or religious teaching to the children themselves.

Mr. KERR (Oxley) (11.52 a.m.): I am concerned about whether all the avenues of filling up the dearth of school teachers have been fully exploited. It occurs to me that some new idea might be used to get recruits in country areas. Some serious attempt should be made to do so, perhaps with an undertaking that they will go back to their own districts. One of the disabilities of young teachers is the difficulty of getting suitable accommodation when they are sent out to the country. There is also continual controversy in the teaching profession about transfers. I do not know whether the Minister has given consideration to recruiting teachers in the country areas and taking them on on a probationary basis in the country schools for a period of a year or

two, during which time they could go through a course by correspondence, and after they had done the elementary part of it sending them to the Teachers' Training College, where they would finish their training and then be sent back to their own areas.

In regard to the recovery of moneys from pupil teachers who may turn in their indentures, the Minister should move very carefully. There is a great danger that this may deter people from entering the college. It may deter many parents from allowing their children to enter this profession, because no parent knows exactly how his children will react after a year or two years' training in the Teachers' Training College; such students may find after a year that the profession does not suit them—they may not, for instance, be able to assimilate all the knowledge required of them—and this sword of Damocles as it were, hanging over the heads of these prospective teachers may help to deter them from entering the college in the first place.

The Minister would be well advised to watch this point very carefully. I agree that there should be some undertaking or bond. When all is said and done, making a comparison between the student teacher and the apprentice to a trade, we find there is no penalty incurred by an apprentice for breaking his indenture but that he is certainly of some value to the employer during the course of the apprenticeship. Of course, the apprentice cannot be entirely compared with the trainee-teacher, who does not give any return for the allowances given, although the payments made to an apprentice are the equivalent of the allowance made to the trainee-teacher. They are virtually on all fours in that respect, but if the department or the Minister elects to ask for a refund of the amount of the bond the student-teacher is penalised to a certain extent compared with the trainee in any other trade.

If we are to fill up the gap in the supply of teachers, we must be mighty careful how this Bill is applied; otherwise, as I said, the making of a refund of a substantial part of the allowance will be like the sword of Damocles hanging over the head of the parents. This can act as a useful penalty, but it will be a dangerous principle when we are trying to attract trainees into the Teachers' Training College in order to enter the teaching profession later.

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland—Secretary for Public Instruction) (11.57 a.m.) in reply: It is clearly evident that there has been a stone-walling of this Bill by the Opposition, and I am prepared to continue it. I do not intend to allow the Opposition to get away with some of their statements.

I cannot understand the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. Every question he asked on this second-reading stage was answered on the introductory stage. In my opening remarks I stated that this system of requiring a bond had been in operation for a considerable number of

years, but we have referred the matter to the Solicitor-General and found the bond was not legally binding and the reason for this Bill is to make it legally binding. Apparently the Leader of the Opposition forgot that.

The hon. gentleman referred to the need for improving the salaries of teachers, but he did not mention the fact that the teachers had an industrial award which came into operation in April last and improved the conditions considerably, making the teaching service much more attractive than formerly. I also assured the hon. gentleman on the initiation that when there was a case of hardship the Minister did, and would continue to give consideration to remitting the penalty, yet the hon. gentleman spent a quarter of an hour on that point.

At the concluding stage of his speech he said that parents might refuse to undertake the responsibility of entering into a bond. If parents are interested in the welfare of their children—and most parents are—I do not think they will refuse to undertake that responsibility. In any case they will have to undertake the responsibility only until the son or daughter reaches the age of 21, when of course the responsibility is that of the young man or woman.

When the hon. gentleman was discussing pupil teachers, I made the interjection that in the good old Tory days they started off at 5s. a week, paid quarterly. Some of the leading men in the Department of Public Instruction today started their careers under this system. There is no question about the quality of these men, but some of them started at the magnificent salary of 11s. 10d. a week, paid quarterly, or £30 a year. Then the Leader of the Opposition—and it was most unusual for him—stated that that suggestion, although it was merely a statement of fact, showed the mentality of the Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the provisions of Standing Order 307 and the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 18 August last, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Order of the Day No. 4 Supply.

SUPPLY.

SEVENTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY—RECEPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The Resolutions reported from the Committee of Supply on Tuesday, 23 November, were presented and, on motion of Mr. Larcambe, received.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The Resolutions being taken as read—

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton—Treasurer): I move—

“That the Resolutions be now agreed to.”

And hon. members indicating a desire to discuss certain Resolutions.

Resolutions 1, 2, 5, 9, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20 and 21 agreed to.

Resolution 3—Department of Agriculture and Stock—

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) 12.4 p.m.): Last evening the hon. member for Dalby reminded me of the blackfellow who had acquired all the bad habits of the white man but none of his virtues. He has more or less followed that procedure politically. He has acquainted himself with all the viciousness of politics without acquiring any of its virtues. Last night he quoted figures relating to livestock, hoping to deceive us into believing that through bad government the numbers of stock have decreased in recent years. He cunningly selected a period of bounteous years under the Tory Governments and compared them with years of drought under Labour Governments. I have followed the hon. member for Dalby fairly closely since I have been in this Chamber and he seems to have a weakness for quoting figures very carelessly, and I feel that I should correct him. His lack of political decency prevents him from realising that the use of such tactics is sufficient to damn his prospects and frustrate his efforts to become the leader of his party, to which end, I understand, he has strong ambitions.

The hon. member apparently thought that he was the only hon. member in this Chamber with a copy of the Queensland Year Book. We all get a free copy of that publication and he should realise that he is perhaps not the only hon. member to read it. I propose to quote some figures from it that will completely refute the hon. member's inferences and show him up as having handled facts very carelessly.

In the year 1905, when Queensland was under a Tory Government, we had—

“Cattle	2,963,695
Sheep	12,535,231
Pigs	164,087.”

In 1915, the first year of a Labour Government, we had—

“Cattle	4,780,893
Sheep	15,950,154
Pigs	117,787.”

In 1932, when labour was cheap, the year that the Tory Government hit the dust, we had—

“Cattle	5,535,065
Sheep	21,312,865
Pigs	213,249.”

In 1945, under a Labour Government, we had—

“Cattle	6,542,210
Sheep	18,943,762
Pigs	415,411.”

Mr. Sparkes: Don't you realise that your Minister pointed out that the decrease was due to the cutting up of properties?

Mr. BURROWS: If the hon. member followed the Minister he would be happier.

In 1894, the year to which the hon. member for Dalby went back, closer settlement, as we know it today, was virtually non-existent, and Queensland was little more than a series of sheep and cattle runs. We did not have

prickly-pear, noogoora burr and Bathurst burr and other noxious weeds to worry the cattle-owner. Ticks affected a relatively small area and then only mildly. The arsenic-resistant tick was not known even 10 years ago. This is a particularly virulent type of tick causing severe loss and damage to our livestock industry; and it is a product of only recent years. The hon. member could not mention one of these things; he could not give the complete figures. He was not fair and it would have been foreign to his political doctrine to be fair.

There is no doubt that it was disappointing and even discouraging to the hon. member to find that the Labour Government had made a pretty good job of governing the State. I sincerely hope that it was in a spirit of desperation more than anything else that he was prompted to be so careless in handling the facts in relation to this matter. As I said before, since I have been in this House I have not been able to help noticing the facility with which the hon. member seems to grasp the more or less dishonest points and dishonest logic associated with politics.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to refrain from personalities.

Mr. SPARKES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. In fairness to my colleague I ask that the hon. member for Port Curtis withdraw that statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member for Port Curtis to withdraw the statement.

Mr. BURROWS: I withdraw it. I hope that the hon. member for Dalby is more a victim of his environment. While he may have inherited a palatial home and a fabulous fortune, his inheritance matters little. What really matters and really counts is the make-up of the man, especially in one who aspires to become the Leader of a party.

I was also very disappointed last night to hear the splenetic attack by the hon. member for Stanley on the Minister. The hon. member made his speech a pretext for arguing in favour of increasing salaries, but what is the hon. member for Stanley's record in respect of salaries? Only a few months ago we had his record as an employer exposed in this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I suggest to the hon. member for Port Curtis that he leave personalities alone, because personalities only draw attack and counter-attack. The hon. member is quite capable of making a very able speech without personalities.

Mr. BURROWS: Last night, without any provocation at all, the hon. member for Stanley made one of the most splenetic and personal attacks on the Minister that I have ever heard in this Chamber, and I am not apologising to the hon. member for Stanley in that regard. What has the hon. member for Stanley done? He admitted here that he dealt with a couple of State children because they took a quart of milk from the separator. His whole speech on the subject last night

can only be taken as an admission of defeat and as the waving of the white flag of submission in reply to the very logical and well-considered case submitted by the Minister.

Mr. MARRIOTT (Bulimba) (12.14 p.m.): For five or six years I have heard the hon. gentleman who occupied the position of Secretary for Agriculture and Stock at different times urge that we should become interested in the cultivation of rice in Queensland.

In company with the hon. member for Albert, and in more recent years the hon. member for Mundingburra, we have sought to obtain from the Minister of the day some information as to why the cultivation of rice was prevented in Queensland. In spite of the more recent denials, I want to say that the earliest reply to our questions six years ago was that the cultivation of rice in Queensland was prevented by an undertaking between the Department of Agriculture in Queensland and the similar department in New South Wales, a sort of gentleman's agreement, as I termed it some years ago. The reciprocal arrangement of that unwritten agreement was that as long as New South Wales would not increase her sugar acreage, then Queensland would not allow the cultivation of rice.

The matter was brought prominently before the public just on six years ago when a farmer on the Merrimac estate in the Southport district grew a particularly heavy crop of rice on land eminently suited for the purpose. Despite the shortage of rice and the heavy demand for that commodity, he was not allowed to market his crop and was obliged to feed it to his pigs. We had the matter raised in this House by the hon. member for Albert, and later on for a period of years I persisted in putting questions to the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock in which I drew attention to the fact that New South Wales had reduced her acreage under cultivation of rice owing to the fact that more profitable crops could be grown by means of irrigation at Leeton and Griffith than rice proved to be.

We must bear in mind that until about 50 years ago Australia imported practically all her rice requirements, but about 18 years ago Australia became a heavy exporter of rice. She was able to supply her own domestic requirements and export heavily. During the war period the Commonwealth Government, under the National Security Regulations, quite naturally declared that all rice grown in Australia had to be reserved for the coloured and other people in the Islands whom they were obliged in some measure to feed. Notwithstanding that prohibition, supplies sent from Australia to New Guinea were so heavy, and probably owing to the usual waste and mismanagement of war, which we used to see going on under the Army system, heavy stocks of rice were not fed to the troops or the people in New Guinea and were consequently destroyed by weevils.

The position had become so acute here that I and other hon. members kept on asking the Minister whether he would do something to abrogate the agreement existing between New South Wales and Queensland. We were told by the Minister about 1944 that there was no good reason for interfering with the existing arrangement, under which an area of 140,000 acres was allotted by the Commonwealth Government for the cultivation of rice, entirely to New South Wales.

We are still finding rice in short supply. A fortnight ago I heard an address by a well-known authority over the air. He was commenting on the food situation throughout the world and the shortage of rice supplies. He pointed out that the prewar production of rice had been reduced by 5 per cent. But the rice-eating population of the world had increased by 9,000,000. Now we are told, in the report from the Department of Agriculture and Stock, that for the last few years efforts have been made to test out and find the most suitable varieties of rice for the Queensland climate. Bear in mind the fact that the present Secretary for Agriculture and Stock spoke on the floor of the House as an ordinary member and urged that the cultivation of rice should be proceeded with in North Queensland, where it was grown successfully 40 years ago.

We were told in 1946, in reply to a question that it was no use increasing cultivation of rice—and this came from the Prime Minister himself—particularly in Queensland, because there would be an over-production of rice. Imagine that in a world hungry for food of all sorts!

We are now told the difficulty is to obtain seed to supply to prospective growers to enable the rice to be produced. When do we get at the truth? I think the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock will pardon me when I say that he gave me his personal assurance in Cairns last Christmas that as far as his inquiries had gone during his occupancy of ministerial office, he had found there was nothing to prevent the cultivation of rice in Queensland.

We still find that rice is not being produced here. Various reasons were given for that. First there was the agreement between the States that there should not be that cultivation here, and we had the instance of the heavy crop at Southport having to be fed to the pigs while people were clamouring for the grain. We were told also that there was likely to be over-production if Queensland was allowed to produce, notwithstanding the fact that the world was hungry for food of all sorts. Now we are told the seed problem is the difficulty. Coupled with that, the experts of the Department of Agriculture and Stock are doing their best to find the type of rice most suitable for cultivation in Queensland.

What is the exact position? Is it a fact that there is no seed? How is it that over a period of years we were not allowed to get seed? Will the Minister be honest and frank—and I believe him to be honest and

frank; I took his word last Christmas in Cairns that there was nothing to prevent its cultivation—will he tell us what the position is?

Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (12.24 p.m.): I am very pleased that the hon. member for Windsor raised this question because it has been shrouded in mystery for quite a number of years. When rice was grown in the Merrimac area—and grown successfully—there was an agitation for rice to be marketed. I brought to this House samples of the rice grown by Mr. Swan, who is only recently deceased. He was a very energetic man and his friends told me that he died of a broken heart because he was not allowed to grow rice. His land was very suitable for rice-growing and he grew it successfully. When he grew the crop to which I referred he was compelled to use it for cattle feed.

I made inquiries and we got the Commonwealth Government involved in the question and I brought it up in this House on several occasions and we were told that there was a gentlemen's agreement that prevented rice being grown in Queensland.

The war then occurred and the demand for rice was such that its sale to the householder was banned. I brought the matter before the House again and asked that a permit be given to grow rice while the shortage existed, but again that request was refused. We have now reached the stage when the Minister tells us that he cannot find any reason why we should not grow rice in Queensland, that there is nothing to prevent our growing rice, except that we cannot get the seed.

I have made repeated attempts to ascertain particulars of the gentlemen's agreement between the two Governments, as to the period and when it would end, but have not been able to do so. Today the position is that we still cannot get rice. The community is short of rice and the only way in which one can obtain it today is to have a doctor's certificate. I think the Minister was quite sincere in what he told us—that there is nothing to prevent Queensland's growing rice. I was astounded to hear that rice seed had been obtained and used in North Queensland, where it was proved it could grow successfully.

Mr. Theodore: Even if you produced it, it would not be for sale here because the Commonwealth Government would commandeer it.

Mr. PLUNKETT: They would not allow you to grow for seed? This man has been growing it for a number of years. He used his own seed and it was of very good quality. Now, however, it is apparent that we have reached the stage where anybody can grow rice if he can get the seed. The public should know this because there are a number of people who can grow rice. There is an admitted world shortage of rice and the only diet of millions of people is rice. There is a shortage of rice in Australia, but it has been demonstrated that Australia can grow rice, and at one time she did it so successfully—that she exported rice. There will always be a big demand for it.

I am very pleased to learn, after all these years of talking about it and bringing the matter before Parliament, that there is nothing to prevent a Queenslander from growing rice if he can get the seed. I would suggest to the Minister that if he cannot get seed rice from the southern States he import it from America and make it available to our farmers. I am glad the hon. member for Bulimba brought the matter up. It is time the people of Queensland knew where they stood.

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Cook—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (12.28 p.m.): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I should like to inform hon. members that the Minister, by replying now does not close the debate on this resolution.

Mr. COLLINS: It has been said on many occasions that there was a gentlemen's agreement between Queensland and New South Wales as to the growing of rice. I agree with the hon. members for Herbert and Albert that rice is a crop that can be grown in Queensland and we should grow it, consequently since my entry into the Department of Agriculture and Stock I have looked through the files to ascertain whether there was anything on them to prevent people from growing rice in Queensland and as a result I have to say what I have said on many other occasions, that I can see no evidence on the files of the existence of any agreement. I cannot say that there was not some personal understanding between former Ministers. There may have been, and for fairly good reasons. I am not here either to approve or condemn them. I certainly am not here to condemn any previous Minister who did not encourage the growing of rice in Queensland because I do not know what the agreement was, if he made one. If he said he had an agreement, he must have had one, and that is all I can say.

The only reason I can assume is that at that time New South Wales was producing more than Australia could consume and possibly the Minister thought the department's activities could be directed to the production of crops for which there was a more ready market. Ever since I have been in the department I have advocated the growing of rice in Queensland. I have endeavoured to procure seed but so far have been successful in procuring only very small quantities. There is nothing legally dishonest about growing rice in Queensland and I know people who have grown it. Mr. Mason, of Cape Tribulation, is not only growing it but has imported machinery to dress it. I believe that machinery arrived in Cairns the other day. That would indicate that anybody can grow rice in Queensland if he wants to and if he can get the seed.

Mr. Kerr: But that rice would have to go into the pool.

Mr. COLLINS: I am not prepared to say that at this juncture, because it would be a Commonwealth matter.

Mr. Kerr: You do not know for sure?

Mr. COLLINS: No.

Mr. Plunkett: I know the late Mr. Swan was prevented from harvesting a crop he had grown.

Mr. COLLINS: That might have been under war-time National Security Regulations for all I know. There is certainly no State law that prevents anybody from growing rice in Queensland. Whether there is any Commonwealth regulation to take over the rice after it is grown I do not know at present, but I will undertake to find that out.

Only this morning I received a letter from a man on the South Coast whose name I have forgotten but who says he is well known to the hon. member for Albert. He offered seed rice that he has to anybody who wants to use it.

Mr. Plunkett: I think he would have to get a permit to sell it.

Mr. COLLINS: That may be. I am merely mentioning the offer that was made to me to sell seed rice. I am having the matter investigated to find out how much he has and whether there are any Commonwealth regulations to control it after it has been grown. All I can say at present is that there is no regulation in Queensland that prevents anybody from growing rice.

Mr. Kerr: Why did not the department buy the whole of that seed?

Mr. COLLINS: I heard about it for the first time this morning.

Mr. Hiley: The reason why he has that seed is that he put the whole of his last year's crop into fresh seed. He did not sell any of last year's crop; he put it into seed and has a bit over.

Mr. COLLINS: He told me he is not planting this year. He also told me that he would allow part of his land to be used for growing it, and I think he said he did not want any rent for it.

Mr. Hiley: I think that is the man who bought Swan's property.

Mr. COLLINS: He may be, but as far as I know there is nothing to prevent anybody from growing rice in Queensland and we are going into the matter with a view to increasing supplies.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (12.34 p.m.): I should like to raise a question that repeats itself continually in the agricultural areas of South Queensland, in the potato-growing areas in particular. It relates to the dissatisfaction of the potato-growers with the policy of the inspectors attached to the Department of Agriculture and Stock, who consistently reject or condemn potatoes because of infestation with moth. These potatoes often have only very slight infestation. They are beautiful products, and in many instances it would not be discernible to the naked eye. The infection would not be detected by any person who was not a potato-grower or an inspector.

The consumer would not detect any difference between this infested potato and what the departmental inspectors regard as a healthy potato. Therefore I say that no injury whatever would be done to the consumer by supplying him with a moth-infested potato. As a matter of fact, this morning I had sample potatoes sent to me by Mr. Koch, a potato-grower at Kalbar. That area is represented in Parliament by my good friend and colleague, the hon. member for Fassifern, but Mr. Koch resides in my electorate although he rails his potatoes from Kalbar. The inspector condemned all the potatoes he brought into the railway station at Kalbar on the ground of moth-infestation. A sample of the potatoes condemned was sent to me by parcel post, and I took them to Mr. Bell—

Mr. Pie interjected.

Mr. MAHER: I object to these back-bench interruptions. I have my rights and privileges in this House and it is nothing to do with the hon. member for Windsor whether I speak on the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Stock or not. He exercised his rights of speech on these Estimates. Is he intolerant of other members' rights?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Hilton): The hon. member for West Moreton is being allowed to exercise his rights.

Mr. MAHER: I had an interview with Mr. Bell, the Under Secretary of the Department this morning and he brought in Dr. Trout, of the Scientific Branch, who admitted to me that there was absolutely nothing in a moth-infested potato that was injurious to the consumer of it. The only difficulty, as was pointed out to me, was that the potatoes were condemned because of the fear that the moth would emerge and infest other potato-growing areas. Where is the risk, with moth-infested potatoes coming onto the Brisbane market, that the moth will emerge and infest other potato-growing areas? If they are condemned and returned to the farm whence they came, there is a chance of the moth's flying to another farm and infesting potatoes grown there.

The point I emphasise is that the moth is not injurious to the consumer. If hon. members had seen the lovely potatoes I took to the department this morning, a sample of those condemned and which Mr. Koch informed me would represent a loss of 400 bags to him, they would have agreed that the potatoes should be going onto the market, particularly at this time when potatoes are in short supply. I should be glad to have the potatoes to eat; I have often eaten plenty worse—those that have been lying in the dark, dim and dingy corners of grocers' shops for three and four months before going into consumption. These potatoes were fresh from the ground, splendid to look at and only slightly infested. And yet this potato-grower will lose his crop on a flimsy point of moth-infestation.

I regret that the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock is not in the Chamber, but no doubt he will go into this matter. I was able to

impress Mr. Bell this morning with the necessity for an investigation of the department's attitude towards the condemnation of these potatoes. I should have liked the Minister to hear what I had to say, but no doubt it will be brought to his notice in due course.

I have before me a copy of "Daily Graphic," London, of 22 September last, and I think the House will be interested to hear the plan that the Premier, Mr. Hanlon, has outlined in England, which is described by Mr. Edward Bishop, the "Daily Graphic" Commonwealth correspondent. Under a photograph of Mr. Hanlon there is the big heading, "He plans to feed Britain." He is a mighty man if he can feed 50,000,000 to 60,000,000 people in Britain. Here is an interesting extract from the paper and of course it has an agricultural bearing. It says—

"Before long the British housewife is going to feel grateful to a chattering parrot in Australia.

"Not long ago Mr. Edward M. Hanlon, Premier of Queensland, received a visit from Mr. L. A. Plummer, executive head of the Overseas Food Corporation—the British Government-sponsored trading concern.

"The theme of their conversation was how Queensland—one of the richest gardens of the Empire—could increase food production for Britain.

"Near them, while they chatted, was a parrot which kicked a couple of score of sunflower seeds from its cage.

"That parrot is a pest," commented Mr. Hanlon. "It is always kicking out sunflower seeds, and they grow like weeds. Look at those over there."

"The two men looked at each other as an idea dawned on them together. Why not cultivate sunflowers?"

I do not know where the sunflower garden is at the present time.

However, Mr. Bishop goes on to say—

"Today Mr. Hanlon is in Britain making final arrangements for a great farm to be started in Queensland on a site set apart by the Queensland authorities for the Overseas Food Corporation.

"If the plan succeeds immense quantities of cooking oil and associated by-products will be available for the British housewife, to say nothing of rich cake for cattle.

"Yesterday Mr. Hanlon had a talk with Mr. Strachey about the scheme, not only on this cooking oil, but on other products as well.

"Mr. Hanlon is 61. He told me cheerfully, 'I hope to see Queensland become one of the greatest and most concentrated food-producing areas in the world.'"

He then goes on to point out—

"Queensland is embarking on a great 'Food for Britain' operation and aims to put bacon back on the breakfast table here by Christmas, 1949.

"Grassland at the rate of 500 acres a day is being prepared for sorghum, which will feed the stock of half-a-million pigs which it is intended to build up.

"The farm is one of the biggest in the world. It covers 250,000 acres and the Overseas Food Corporation has invested £1,500,000 in it. Queensland's contribution is half a million.

"So important is the scheme that railway lines are being pulled up in other parts of Australia and used for a track from the area to Rockhampton, the nearest port."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is on wrong premises at the moment. The resolution before the House does not make any provision for the subject he is discussing, which comes under Trust and Special Funds, Chief Secretary's Department.

Mr. MAHER: I was quoting from the "Daily Graphic," giving the version of its Australian correspondent, Mr. Bishop, who introduces the Premier of Queensland. All I am trying to convey is that the Premier optimistically estimates that the State monopolistic farm in the Emerald district will produce sufficient sorghum to feed half-a-million pigs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am pointing out to the hon. member that there is no provision under this resolution for that matter. He will get an opportunity to discuss it later on, on the proper resolution.

Mr. MAHER: I thought everything that had a bearing on agriculture could be debated on the resolution for the administration of the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The proposal the hon. member is discussing comes under Trust and Special Funds. He will get an opportunity of discussing it later on.

Mr. MAHER: I grant that. This resolution has a dual effect. We cannot divorce it from the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am forced as I have already ruled in the case of the Treasurer, that hon. members cannot discuss that matter on this resolution. The hon. member will get an opportunity later on, and I therefore ask him to obey my ruling.

Mr. MAHER: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I can say this: it is important to produce sufficient pork and bacon not only for our own requirements in this country, but also to help to feed Britain and other countries in the world that are in need of those products. There is no doubt that in England the Premier has caused those interested in feeding Britain to believe that schemes are afoot here that will enable the English housewife to have ample pork and bacon on the table by Christmas, 1949. It seems to me a pity that anything should be said that cannot be carried through successfully. Undoubtedly a big effort is being made but there is many a slip between cup and lip, and there is no certainty that this optimism will be fulfilled.

There is room for the extension of pig and pig-meat products in other directions. I ask those who heard the hon. member for Wide

Bay deliver his very informative speech a few weeks ago whether they do not think that a much greater measure of production could be achieved if a sufficient reward was given to the men who are already set up as individual farmers.

Mr. Collins: The hon. member for Wide Bay pointed out that every time pig-meat producers received an increase in price the number of pigs went down.

Mr. MAHER: No, he did not. That was not his theme at all. It was just the opposite way. He showed how the Prices Branch had for so long failed to recognise the justice of the applications of those engaged in the pig industry for a more payable price, and that had caused pig-producers to greatly curtail production. That is what the hon. member for Wide Bay said. If the plan the hon. member for Wide Bay submitted in his capacity as chairman of the Australian Pig Society, in association with pig-raisers throughout Australia, to the Government and to the British Food Mission that came here from Great Britain had been approved, we should have had the pork and bacon on the table for the English housewife by Christmas, 1949, without any doubt at all.

Mr. Aikens: And they would have made pork and ham a thing of the past for the Australian housewife.

Mr. MAHER: No, they could produce ample for the Australian housewife too. What has been happening in the southern States is that a black-market has been established for pig products. It has had such a deadly effect on the co-operative bacon factories that a number of them had to close down. There was a fixed price for pig-meats and in obedience to the law the co-operative bacon factories could not compete against the black-marketeer who bought up the pig-meats and no doubt exported them to a highly remunerative market overseas, thus depriving the Australian housewife of pig products that otherwise would have been available to them in a great measure.

The question is how to go about increasing production of pigs. To me it seems that the only way is to pay a price that will enable the bacon factories to keep in the business so that they can compete against the black-marketeer, so that the pigs will go into the legitimate market and whatever surplus there is can be exported to Great Britain and elsewhere. As things stand today, the Premier looks at the whole thing over in England through rose-coloured glasses and he deludes himself and many people in Britain who believe him that he is going to give them half-a-million pigs eating up the sorghum grain upon this great farm—one of the greatest in the world—of 250,000 acres, and that it will produce all the pigs and the grain and the sunflowers spoken of so ambitiously and so optimistically by the Premier.

I thought I would like to draw the attention of the House to what the Premier has been saying on this important subject in Great Britain.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government) (12.51 p.m.): I listened to the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about the actions of the Department of Agriculture and Stock concerning the condemnation of certain potatoes. The potatoes of a man named Koeh were examined and found on investigation to be infested with potato moth. Potato moth has a serious effect upon the potato; it affects the flavour and discolours the potato, and it also affects the keeping quality of the other potatoes.

Mr. Maher: It does not injure the consumer.

Mr. POWER: What a lovely statement to make! The hon. member says that it does not injure the consumer. What he wants is the right for people to put inferior potatoes on the market—potatoes such as were condemned—with the other potatoes and get the same price for the inferior potato as for the good potato. I do not accept the hon. member as an authority on the point whether they will affect the consumer or not.

Mr. Maher: I merely asked that it be investigated. I do not want you to defend anything.

Mr. POWER: It has been investigated and the facts are as I have stated them. It affects the keeping quality of the other potatoes. All the potatoes were not condemned. The hon. member was not supplied with the whole of the information. The owner of the potatoes was told to pick over the potatoes and after having picked them over he was able to market the good ones. Is there anything wrong with that? I do not think the hon. member had any justification whatever for the complaint he made this morning; and it is regrettable that people should come to members of Parliament with information and put them in an invidious position because they do not tell the true facts.

Mr. Maher: Oh no.

Mr. POWER: He has not told the hon. member the true facts. The hon. member's speech would lead people to believe that an officer of the department condemned the whole of the potatoes, many of which were not infested. The whole lot were not condemned; only those that were affected were condemned, and rightly so, too. Why should any consumer be asked to buy a bag of potatoes only to find, after he started to retail them, that they were infested and that they were a distinct loss? The right action has been taken by the department because it condemned those that were moth-infested and allowed the grower to pick over the others and put them on the market. Those that were moth-infested could be used for the pigs.

Mr. Maher: I ask the Minister to get his officers to send a sample here; I should like to see them.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member went on to make a statement that if a reasonable price for pigs could have been obtained by January, 1949, bacon could have been on the table of the English people. Here are the

figures that have been quoted, not by me, and which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said were not quoted by the hon. member for Wide Bay. The number of pigs slaughtered and prices are—

		Per lb.
1940-41	.. 707,600	.. 5.91d.
1941-42	.. 638,900	.. 6.43d.

This shows that immediately there was an increase in the price of pig-meats the number of pigs slaughtered decreased.

		Per lb.
1942-43	.. 576,000	.. 8.31d.
1943-44	.. 510,000	.. 9d.
1944-45	.. 510,600	.. 9d.

These are the figures quoted by the hon. member for Wide Bay and they bear out the statement made in this Chamber by the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock that immediately the pig-raisers get a higher price for their pigs fewer pigs are produced. That statement is confirmed by a man engaged in the pig industry and naturally we can take him as being an authority on the matter.

Mr. Nicklin: The years you are quoting were war years.

Mr. POWER: I expected that some hon. member would make such an interjection—blame the war for something. The war has been blamed for everything.

To continue with the figures—

		Per lb.
1945-46	.. 432,100	.. 9d.
1946-47	.. 432,000	.. 9d.
1947-48	.. 352,889	.. 10.28d.

and 1947-48 is a long time after the war. The hon. member for Fassifern may wave his hands, but this is evidence. We find that in 1947-48, as the result of an increase in the price for pig-meats, 352,889 pigs were slaughtered, the price being 10.28d., as compared with 707,600 pigs slaughtered in 1940-41, when the price was 5.91d. It is absolutely ridiculous for members of the Opposition to endeavour to make out a case without knowing the true facts. I have put them before hon. members. That is exactly what has been done. I have not a great knowledge of agriculture, but I have some knowledge. I have submitted the evidence of a plain statement of fact made by the hon. member for Wide Bay, who is connected with a bacon factory, and I am sure hon. members opposite will accept these figures as being correct.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12.58 p.m.): The Minister in charge of the Department of Public Works has bought into an argument on a subject of which he knows nothing. His remarks this morning are an exposition of his ignorance of agriculture.

First of all, dealing with the question of these potatoes, I am sure the hon. gentleman does not understand the position.

Mr. Power: I am not a man who would eat potatoes that are moth-infested.

Mr. MULLER: After the hon. gentleman has heard my side of the story, I think he will agree that the policy I am advocating

would enable the consumer to buy potatoes at a reasonable price. If quite edible potatoes are to be destroyed it will have the effect of bringing about a shortage and there will be people who will not be able to obtain potatoes.

Mr. Collins: Do you suggest that people should be asked to eat bad potatoes?

Mr. MULLER: No. The Minister is always an alarmist. He has adopted a bit of the Queen Street idea, otherwise he would not make such a silly suggestion.

The inspection of potatoes requires close investigation. We do not want to have inspectors coming in with an utter disregard for the welfare of the growers and condemning the whole crop. That means ruin to the growers. I know the man to whom the hon. member for West Moreton referred, and I know his property. Recently I was told that another grower further up had 2,000 bags condemned. I do not suggest that the growers should be allowed to sell something that is not fit for human consumption, but I should like hon. members to realise that it is impossible to keep the early crop free from moth. The growers should not be allowed to trade on that fact and send any old rubbish at all to market, but where only a small percentage is affected the inspectors should be a little more lenient than they have been.

Mr. Collins: Why not pick out the bad potatoes, as the inspectors have asked you to do, and send in the good ones?

Mr. MULLER: Potatoes that are bagged today could appear to be reasonably free from fly and in a day or two the infestation would show up. In that case the inspector would condemn the lot. Of course, when they are sent to Brisbane we are given the right to pick them over, and that is so costly that it is prohibitive and you might just as well send them out as pig-feed.

Of course, if you are going to destroy large quantities of edible potatoes it will have a double-barrelled effect. In the first place the grower will become disgusted and discontinue growing and in the final analysis the consumer will suffer in that he will be required to pay a higher price because of shorter supply.

Mr. Collins: He might as well pay for bad potatoes as good ones, according to you.

Mr. MULLER: At the same time, you can carry condemnation too far, and I say it is being carried too far today. I have in mind the young man who got his first crop last year. He installed an irrigation plant and the whole of his potatoes were condemned. How are these young men to carry on if the regulations are to be administered so drastically?

Mr. Collins: The regulations have been in operation for years. There has been no alteration in the regulations and people have carried on all right.

Mr. MULLER: The position is worse now than it has ever been. I realise, too, that the fly is getting worse than it ever has been and it is really a matter for scientific investigation to discover a better means of combating this menace. Many of the growers work long hours keeping the soil wet and dusting the crop during the growing period in an effort to destroy the fly. We can appreciate the position of such men when the whole of the crop is condemned. It is really of no great moment to the inspector, who draws his salary every week, but the poor unfortunate farmer is faced with ruin as a result of total condemnation. There is only one thing that can happen—the grower goes out of the business and less potatoes come onto the market.

I am not complaining about the price of potatoes because the price today is higher than it has been at any time since the industry has been controlled. Shortages force prices up and encourage black-market operations. I do not know what inspections are applied to potatoes coming from the South, but frequently the consumer buys potatoes that are scarcely fit for use. If this is all right for imported potatoes I think our inspectors should be a little more lenient with regard to our own crops. It is safe to say that on the average 75 per cent. of the potatoes are good—they are not all fly-struck. I have every sympathy with the potato-grower but the person who trades on the position and sends faulty potatoes to the market has not my sympathy; he deserves all he gets. There should be some practical approach to this question; it is no good saying what should be done. Let us go outside and see what the grower has to contend with; the agent can sell them at any price.

I am not blind to the fact that if you allow faulty potatoes to come into competition with good potatoes it will create a difficulty.

Mr. Burrows: What about the risk of contaminating good potatoes?

Mr. MULLER: If the Minister knew the position he would not make that remark. The fly contaminates the potato and the grub follows.

Mr. Collins: Where does the fly come from? The grub?

Mr. MULLER: One potato will not affect another. By the time they are sold and reach the consumers there is no chance of the grub's developing into the moth stage.

Mr. Burrows: What about affecting clean areas?

Mr. MULLER: That is not the position. As a matter of fact, the potato fly is in every part of the State and is probably in the district represented by the hon. member for Port Curtis.

Mr. Burrows: As a matter of fact, it has practically put the potato-grower out of business.

Mr. MULLER: If you slug the potato grower, what is going to happen? In time there will be no growers. Perhaps a more

scientific approach could be made to the problem. All types of regulations are introduced about covering the plants with dust and so on and although I will not say that they are harmful to humans, I believe they are. Every method has been taken to cope with the disease, but I am complaining about inspectors who rush in and condemn the whole of a partly affected consignment.

In this tray that I will place on the table of the House there are some samples of potatoes and I take it that they belong to Mr. Koch, the gentleman who made the complaint. I do not know what the rest of the consignment was like.

I have reason to believe that this condemning of potatoes is a fairly average sample. Mr. Dwyer, who is only a farm or two away from me, has gone to much expense to save his potatoes. I saw him at work a fortnight ago and he had a number of people engaged. I understand that when his potatoes got to the railway station he offered to pick them over but the inspector replied, "If you do that I shall be obliged to condemn the lot."

Mr. Collins: That is not true. The inspector told him that if he picked them over he could sell the good ones and destroy the bad ones. Dr. Trout told me that.

Mr. MULLER: I do not know how the Minister could get the facts about Mr. Dwyer so quickly. Mr. Dwyer did not give me any information direct, but I was told a few days ago by his neighbour that that was the position. The Minister does not appreciate the difficulties associated with the matter, he does not know what is done in actual practice. It is not just simply the picking over of the potatoes that is involved.

Mr. Collins: And the selling of bad potatoes to the public is no good either.

Mr. MULLER: It is no good talking along that line. What happens in these condemnations? The picking over penalises not only the unscrupulous grower but in the majority of cases it penalises the good honest grower, and I do not think the department should be hard on them. All these things rebound on the consumer in an increased price.

The Secretary for Public Works referred to the Government venture in pig-farming, but you have to realise that the position has been brought about by unwise regulations. If these controls have to be introduced they should be applied with a good deal of practical common sense, and if that is not done the effect is bad. There is no doubt that pig-meats are in short supply, but because of the regulations the cost of grain is at a high level. You cannot expect to have pig-meat at a low level when the cost of grain is at a high level. I think the Government will find from experience—and it will not take long for them to make the discovery—that you cannot produce cheap pig-meat with dear grain. When the price of pig-meat was fixed in the first place, the price was about 9d. a lb., but grain was then worth 3s. 6d. to 4s. a bushel. Today it has

increased by 100 per cent., and it now costs 9s. to 10s. a bushel. You cannot expect to produce pig-meat today at less than 1s. 3d. or 1s. 6d. a lb. The point I make is that you must have regard to the economic side of the industry all the time, and if you totally disregard the economics of the industry you lose your product altogether. The best illustration of that was given by the hon. member for Wide Bay a few weeks ago and he is not only a grower of pigs but an expert in this line.

Mr. Collins: He used the worst argument that he could. His argument went to prove that as the price went up so the number of pigs went down. In the end you would have no pigs.

Mr. MULLER: I am glad of that interjection. The matter was mentioned by the Secretary for Public Works, too, and it just shows where hon. gentlemen opposite lacked the practical touch.

Mr. Collins: I do not lack any practical touch.

Mr. MULLER: The following figures show the quantity of pig-meat exported for the years mentioned—

Year	Cwts.
1933	66,000
1934	83,000
1935	147,000
1936	221,000
1937	294,000
1938	269,000
1939	451,000

It is true that when the export was high the price was about 6d. a lb., but you must remember that you could then buy grain, especially wheat, at about 3s. 3d. a bushel. Price-control began in 1943. The hon. member for Wide Bay used figures something like this—they are not altogether identical but are on the same basis—that in 1943 the price of pig-meat was fixed at 9d. a pound. We then produced 510,000 pigs. In 1944-45, when the same price was fixed, we maintained that supply. In 1945-46 the same price was retained but the number of pigs produced went down to 432,000. In 1946-47 the price of pig-meat was fixed at 10.22 pence a pound and the number of pigs produced fell to 353,000.

Mr. Collins: How many would be produced if you got 1s. 6d. a pound? None.

Mr. MULLER: Wait a minute. What the hon. gentleman says is right. It might appear that the higher price caused the reduction in the production of pigs, but it was a question of too little, too late. The controllers were told again and again that the price allowed was not sufficient to enable the growers to produce pigs. It was just as I said; when the price was fixed at 9d. in 1943, 1944, 1945, and 1946 the price of grain was controlled and supplied to pig-growers at 3s. 6½d. a bushel, but today, putting the prices at a modest level, wheat is worth about 8s. a bushel and maize about 12s. You cannot possibly supply pig-meats with feed at anything like those prices. Had

the price been increased in relation to the price of grain the present shortage of pig-meats would not have occurred. Hon. members opposite have only to engage in this business themselves to realise that. I am feeding pigs with grain that at the present time costs 11s. 6d. to 12s. a bushel. We are feeding it to pigs because we have to but it is a losing proposition. We have been trying other grains as an experiment. If the Government are going to grow sorghum and feed it to pigs when they can get a return of approximately 4s. or 5s. a bushel for it they will not be in the business very long, as they will find they can get considerably more for it on the open market than feeding it to pigs. Costs today are too high for you to do that.

You must apply the practical touch to produce pig-meat on grain. If you have not, you will be right out of the business. That is the point I have been trying to stress to the Minister throughout this week. No pig-grower or farmer, or anyone else, wants to go out of business if he can possibly avoid it, but you cannot reasonably expect any person to remain in production, or in industry if he can do better elsewhere. If you can get a higher price or a better rate of pay elsewhere no-one will work on a farm for long hours under those conditions.

The argument in connection with pig-meats and dairy products applies to the production of potatoes. I am not suggesting that we should go back to the old order of things, in other words to an open slather—there must be some control—but I do suggest that common sense and justice should prevail in applying that control. If that is not done then control will have a prejudicial effect on production. If prices of primary produce are fixed with complete disregard to costs of production it must have only one effect, and that effect will react right onto the shoulders of the consumer. Let me appeal again to the Minister, when applying these controls, to have some regard for that side of the industry. If that is done then our primary-production problems will solve themselves.

Mr. HILEY (Logan) (2.35 p.m.): There is nothing new in this problem of moth-infestation in the growing of potatoes in this State but it is true that this year sees one of our worst manifestations of it, because of the excessively dry spring.

My excursions happen to take me amongst a number of potato-growers, and I assure the Minister that there is universal dissatisfaction amongst the potato-growers because of the hidebound methods adopted by the Potato Board in its administration. The way it was explained to me was this: the board will not permit the grower to harvest immature potatoes. If a potato is sent to the market at the peeling stage, because it will not keep, the board says, "We won't accept that potato." You are therefore not allowed to harvest it. The growers say that in a season such as this, when they, the best judges—the local judges—should know well that if they leave the potatoes till they are mature, 90 per cent. of them will be lost

through the bug, they should be permitted to harvest them early. They do not want to keep them for any length of time—that is the main objection to the immature potato; it will not keep—but if they are permitted to harvest the potatoes in their immature condition I am assured that 90 per cent. of the crop would be saved. But the Potato Board says, "In a dry season or in a wet season we will not permit you to harvest immature potatoes."

Mr. Collins: Who controls the Potato Board?

Mr. HILEY: That I take is the hon. gentleman's responsibility or we should not be discussing it.

Mr. Collins: The growers control it.

Mr. HILEY: If the growers are not doing the job rightly the Minister should be doing something about it.

Mr. Collins: The growers elected the board.

Mr. HILEY: I am endeavouring to show how this position could be overcome; if you are not interested, walk out.

The growers say that if they were permitted, in a season such as this when the fly is very prevalent, to harvest early, a great deal of the trouble would be overcome.

Mr. Collins: It is a wonder the growers did not bring that under my notice.

Mr. HILEY: In view of the number of people who told me that it is a wonder the Minister has not heard of it.

The next thing that exercises my mind—and it should exercise the Minister's also—is this: if you look at the sample of potatoes circulated in the Chamber, you will see that the potato is covered with a white dust which, in the majority of cases, is D.D.T. Apparently the board lays down that as soon as there is any fly present harvested potatoes must be smothered with preventive dust. These potatoes smothered with D.D.T. dust are often cooked in their jackets; and even if they are peeled the housewife handles them. I should like the Minister to say whether, in his judgment, it is safe for the people to have offered to them potatoes literally smothered with D.D.T. dust. He may be able to tell us that D.D.T. powder has no toxic effect on the human being. I do not like to feel that potatoes that are permitted to be harvested and sold when the fly is very prevalent, must be smothered with D.D.T. dust before they are offered for human consumption.

On the question of the suitability of these potatoes, about six weeks ago they could not be bought in Brisbane. I went down on the Logan River on a fishing expedition, and Mrs. Hiley said, "If you see any potatoes bring some back." When I got there I found my farmer friend harvesting potatoes. He had two bundles: a bundle of potatoes that were rejected because there was a picking by the fly showing on the face, and he had another bundle ready to market and smothered in D.D.T. powder. I wanted to

take some potatoes home, and, forced to choose, I took home the potatoes that had the fly marks on them. We are still eating them and we find that occasionally we have to nick the corner out of one of the ends and they are all right.

There are thus three questions to be decided. In the first place, we are in a community that at certain stages is starved of potatoes. We are in a world in which the whole of the population is short of food-stuffs and there is a degree of avoidable waste in the harvesting and marketing of potatoes in this State that, as sensible people, we should seek to avoid. Some of it we can cure if the board will have the sense, when the fly is prevalent, to permit early harvesting. From the practical potato-growers in this House who can tell me whether what I am saying is wrong, I learn that early harvesting lessens infinitely the degree of loss from the fly.

On the use of the D.D.T. powder, will the Minister indicate clearly to this House whether there is any hazard in offering to the housewife for human consumption, potatoes that he can see from the sample now in the Chamber are literally covered on the surface with D.D.T. powder?

The third question is whether in view of what hon. members growing potatoes have told us, there should be compulsory waste of potatoes because part of the berry is struck with the fly? Surely that is a marketing problem. They should be marketed as fly-struck potatoes. They should be sensibly priced in relation to the loss involved and the time involved by the housewife in looking over the potato and cutting out the affected part. My experience of eating them over the past few weeks suggests to me that there is no need for this country to waste bags and bags of potatoes that are being thrown away at the present time.

Mr. TURNER (Kelvin Grove) (2.42 p.m.): I understood the hon. member for Fassifern to say that these potatoes had been condemned. My information is that they were rejected, not condemned. The potatoes were rejected at Kalbar.

Mr. Maher: What is the difference between rejection and condemnation?

An Opposition Member: Who rejected them?

Mr. TURNER: The departmental officer at Kalbar.

Mr. Maher: What is the difference between an inspector's rejection and condemnation?

Mr. TURNER: When the inspector rejects them the grower is at liberty to pick them over. This he did and then sent the good ones to the market. If a thing is condemned it has to be destroyed. That is the difference between rejection and condemnation. There were 90-odd bags of potatoes in the lot rejected but after the grower picked them over he sent 45 bags to the market. I was not certain that I had heard the hon. member for Fassifern correctly, but

I understood him to say that these potatoes were condemned and by his silence I am satisfied that he did say they had been condemned. But the truth is that they were rejected by the officer of the department at Kalbar. The farmer took them back to his farm and sorted them over and sent the good ones, 45 bags, to the market.

Mr. ROBERTS (Nundah) (2.43 p.m.): Having listened to the discussion during the past two or three hours concerning what is good enough and what is not good enough for human consumption, I am reminded of a matter that should be raised in this House in order that the department may do something to alleviate the position. We know that at the present time, under the agreement operating between the Commonwealth and the New Zealand Governments with respect to the marketing of wheat in New Zealand, Queensland wheat is being exported to the sister Dominion.

Mr. Sparkes: At enormous loss.

Mr. ROBERTS: At a loss at the present time because of the abnormal conditions that arose. It was expected by the Commonwealth Government that world prices would fall but on the contrary world prices have increased. There is this about it: so far as the farmer is concerned the Commonwealth Government are making up the difference between the price New Zealand is paying and the world price. But that is not the point I desire to raise.

The matter that I desire to raise is that some of the Queensland wheat that is being loaded from the wharves at Pinkenba for New Zealand is inspected by a Commonwealth inspector before being loaded into the ships. On occasions these inspectors have taken samples from a truckload of wheat and, finding them full of rubbish and in some instances smut, have condemned the whole truckload. I have no complaint about that—I think that under the agreement New Zealand is entitled to first-quality wheat—but I do complain about the fact that the wheat that is condemned at Pinkenba, which I know of—doubtless it occurs at other wharves also—is not dumped or sold for some such secondary purpose as fowl feed but is sent to the mills in the metropolitan area to be ground into flour for the purpose of manufacturing bread for distribution in the metropolitan area. Something should be done about that. That wheat would be quite good for fowl feed or pig feed but, the agreement between the Commonwealth and New Zealand, notwithstanding, I believe the people in Brisbane are entitled to first-quality flour for the manufacturing of their bread and I urge the Minister to have his officers look into this matter and see whether anything can be done to improve the quality of the flour we are getting in the metropolitan area at the present time.

Resolution 3—Department of Agriculture and Stock, Administration—agreed to.

Resolution 4—Executive and Legislative—

Mr. HILEY (Logan) (2.47 p.m.): This resolution refers to the expenditure for

“Executive and Legislative,” and as such accords us an opportunity of reviewing the procedure over the last 16 days of the consideration of these Estimates and to consider whether our Standing Orders are operating in a way that is fair to both this institution of Parliament and the people of this State.

We are all familiar with the Standing Orders governing the consideration of the Estimates and other financial questions that come before this House, but I point out that all the Estimates that come before us, as summarised in the resolutions that we are considering today, amount to no less a sum than £75,196,000. Of that sum, £31,500,000 relates to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £21,500,000 to Trust and Special Funds, £10,500,000 to Loan Fund, and then, with the Supplementary Estimates and Votes on Account, another £11,000,000 or £12,000,000 is involved.

In the course of 16 days, under our Standing Orders as they operate now, this House has succeeded in considering votes amounting to only £5,118,000 of a total of £75,000,000.

When I raise this question I may very well be reminded that the cure rests in the hands of hon. members themselves, and I am going to agree that unquestionably no single party in this House can escape its share of blame, during my period in this Chamber, for what impresses me on this occasion as being a colossal Parliamentary tragedy. Here we are discharging our responsibilities in relation to these finances by considering somewhere in the neighbourhood of 7 per cent. of the money voted; 93 per cent. of the money voted will not receive one minute's consideration under our Standing Orders as they stand! That is something that should cause all of us to bow our heads in shame, and I accept my full share of whatever blame is involved.

Mr. Marriott: The remedy?

Mr. HILEY: The remedy is to amend our Standing Orders so as to apportion the time allotted to Estimates to the several Votes. That would ensure that every direction of governmental expenditure would receive some consideration by the hon. members of this House.

Take the situation in which we find ourselves today, and let us look at some of the Votes that have been neglected. I take as my first example the colossal expenditure involved in the Railway Department. At the moment I am glad to say that that department is undergoing major changes in policy that begin to give me a glimmer of hope for the future of the railway of this State, a glimmer that I could not see during the bleak 30 years, to use a term that could aptly summarise the past administration of the Railway Department. The directions in which important developments are taking place in connection with our railways are something this House is entitled to hear from the lips of the Minister in charge, and something—if we are to discharge our responsibilities to the people of this State—that we should have the opportunity of discussing.

Going in turn to the other Estimates, I come to those of the Department of Public Instruction. Perhaps you, Mr. Speaker, might remind me that these Estimates have been considered in earlier years. Leave them for the moment and go to the colossally important direction of Trust and Special Funds and Loan Funds. This year, in common with every year in the last decade, not one minute has been given to consideration of these millions of expenditure. Is Parliament not interested in loan appropriations for the year or in the multitudinous directions in which important tasks are carried out? Let me enumerate some—State Government Insurance Office, Public Curator, and countless other Trust and Special Fund activities.

Mr. Hilton: They could be discussed on the Financial Statement.

Mr. HILEY: They could not, for the reason that time does not permit it. The Financial Statement at its best takes infinitely less time than the 16 days for the Estimates, and I think if we are sensible and honest members of this House we should freely admit, without trying to blame any particular group of members, that our present Standing Orders are functioning very poorly indeed.

Mr. Roberts: Is there any precedent in the other States?

Mr. Aikens: The men who make precedents make history.

Mr. HILEY: I have not examined how other people regulate their affairs, but I feel sufficiently indignant about the way in which we permit our affairs to so march on in this State.

I want to call attention to the evil and point to what I call the remedy. If I remember rightly, some two years ago the Premier indicated to this House that in his judgment the time was ripe for a review of the Standing Orders of this Parliament to ensure greater facility of debate and in other directions to ensure that the functioning of Parliament was improved compared with the standards possible by the practice laid down many years ago. I suggest that in no other direction than the consideration of the finances of this State is there a real and serious need to review the Standing Orders to permit of our rectifying what I regard as being the tragedy of Parliament in operation.

I do not quarrel with the class of consideration given to matters during the Estimates. It is inevitable that there should be a certain amount of parish-pumping and that time should be given to trifles—I believe that it is on the Estimates that one has a few opportunities for working the parish-pump and ventilating of trifles—but when we allow such a tendency to reach the proportions where we succeed, as on this occasion, of examining 7 per cent. of the total appropriations we have allowed the tendency to march to a stage where it becomes ridiculous.

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba—Minister for Transport) (2.55 p.m.): In my capacity as a private member I always seized the opportunity afforded by a consideration of this resolution to place before hon. members some observations on the working and functions of a democracy and the instrument of Parliament in giving expression to the people's will. Your liberal interpretation of the Standing Orders, Mr. Speaker, made it possible for hon. members to deal at some length with what, to me, was a very interesting subject, namely, the preservation of democracy and the making of Parliament the most effective instrument for giving expression to the people's will, and giving hon. members opposite an opportunity of criticising or castigating the Government in respect of their policy, if there were any defects in it. Therefore, it was with a considerable degree of interest that I listened to the speech of the hon. member for Logan.

Undoubtedly the hon. member raised a question that is of very great importance, that is to say, that all acts of Government and all administrative responsibilities of Ministers should be ventilated in the House if there should be justification for a debate on those things.

We then come to the point raised by the hon. member of what machinery can be fashioned for the purpose of enabling hon. members to give consideration to these important matters. I always held the view that there was no reason why the activities of all departments could not be discussed when the Estimates were presented to this House for consideration, but as the hon. member for Logan remarked the remedy lies very largely in the hands of hon. members themselves. It may be that for some reason or other the Leader of the House may think it expedient to place consideration of the activities of a particular department low on the list, but I, personally, have always held the view that while we have a system of ministerial responsibility, Ministers should be prepared to uphold and defend the administration of their departments, and if it is felt that they are incompetent or incapable of discharging those obligations in the House, the obligation rested on the party forming the Government to place in the Cabinet personnel capable of doing that. If we suggest that we have not got the material in the House to discharge that responsibility, it is indeed a shocking condemnation of our system of recruitment to this Assembly. I do not subscribe to the view that we have not the material. I am merely using that assumption to establish the point that we should be prepared to shoulder our responsibilities and reply to the criticism from Opposition benches.

If some sort of an arrangement as outlined by the hon. member for Logan was introduced, we should have less than two days for the consideration of the Estimates of each department. At the moment 16 days in all are allowed for all departments. During that period even a very severe indictment against the administration of a department would not, in my experience, attract

more than passing notice from the Press and, indeed, not more than would be given on the occasion of an Address in Reply debate or the consideration of the Budget, on which two occasions hon. members have full latitude to discuss the whole of the ramifications of government. Therefore, I feel there is nothing for the Government to hide, and on this occasion there is no reason why the Government should attempt to conceal anything or at least prohibit or prevent discussion on any Estimates.

I come now to my own department. I do not want to be facetious, but early in the session I had some dental surgery done and an "immediate" denture fitted which caused some discomfort but which I was pleased to endure as it provided me with the opportunity of participating in the defence of my department on this occasion. But that occasion has not arisen, largely because the Opposition, with some notable exceptions, have not thought fit to practise what they preached, namely, to have a degree of co-operation amongst themselves. If they had shown some degree of co-operation amongst themselves they would have gained an advantage, and I think the standard of debate would probably have been improved.

If consideration of the activities of a department was confined to a maximum of two days, obviously there would be a desire on the part of those considered to be experts in particular subjects to prepare notes and materials to be used on such occasions.

There would consequently be a desire on the part of both the leaders of the Government, the Opposition, and the supporting parties, to select their best speakers to participate in those debates. There is a tendency, I admit, when a debate winds on interminably over a period of days, for hon. members to get up and speak extemporaneously on a Chief Office vote or various sub-department votes.

I have been wondering and trying to analyse the reason why the debate just closed has extended over such a period of time when Estimates of only two departments were discussed, and I have come to the conclusion that although we have been charged as a Government with tactically preventing a discussion of departments that we might feel might attract the censure of the Opposition, the Opposition have on this occasion laid themselves open to a charge of manoeuvring for party-political purposes. I refer to the fact that with the approach of the Federal elections and the decision of the Commonwealth Parliament to increase the size of the Commonwealth Parliament, there is a good deal of disagreement and discussion of the right of Opposition parties to select candidates to contest particular seats. We have read that there have been a number of conferences proceeding behind the scenes as to whether the Country Party or the Queensland branch of the Liberal Party should have the honour of selecting candidates for certain constituencies. I was wondering, in view of the claims and counter-claims made of the right of a particular

party to nominate candidates, whether there has not been a special urge on the part of somebody to establish priority of right for his political party to endorse a political candidate. Therefore, whilst these Estimates have been discussed, I have noticed with particular interest that Country Party members have participated very fully indeed in the discussion of the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. It might be only coincidental, but I was wondering whether, in view of the fact that Country Party men in a large measure are recruited from country areas, they have not seized the opportunity to exclude Liberal members from the debate to establish to their own satisfaction that they are the only party in this House that has the right to represent the rural interests of this State, and therefore have attempted to monopolise the time of the House to the exclusion of the Queensland People's Party.

They have also established their right to be regarded as a sectional party. This is amusing to me, as a responsible spokesman of the Queensland People's Party with great pains tried to impress on the people that their party represented all sections of the community. At the last election they endeavoured to show that their candidates were recruited from the ranks of the artisan right through all the strata of the professional ranks, through the highly educated groups, and even successful business men, practising accountants, lawyers, and all those other men, and that this tended to make them representative of all elements of the community. It might be desirable that we should have in Parliament men whose qualifications entitle them to seats here, to have that leavening of knowledge and to enable them to speak with particular authority on particular subjects, but this contention does expose the fallacy of this organisation's claim to be the only thoroughly representative party of true national interests. It has been revealed here that it is sectional in its outlook. It has been demonstrated very effectively that the Country Party has established to its own satisfaction, to the exclusion of the Queensland People's Party, that it is the true representative of country interests in this House, and that its members are the only representatives who can speak on problems affecting rural matters.

I would exclude the hon. member for Logan from my criticism in this regard because in fairness to him I must say that I have always found him to give reasonable consideration to all problems and to give credit where credit is due and to criticise where he thought criticism was deserved. I have at all times followed with great interest most of his contributions to the debates in this Assembly. I commend him for his action in raising the matter he has raised today, which is important.

I believe the problems of our time are too important to permit of the gradual lowering of the prestige of Parliament. There is, unfortunately, an increasing tendency to criticise Parliament and there are those who indulge in sneering criticism and by gibes

point to the imperfections of the system, without realising the disservice they are thus doing to democracy.

The Press is not without blame in this respect. I have been a member of this House for a period of 13 years and I have seen particular members go to no end of trouble to prepare thoughtful speeches on subjects with which they were more than passing familiar. Next day they found no mention of their contributions, whereas a member who spoke facetiously or perhaps intemperately, and anything else that occurred in debate in which someone lost his temper, were immediately publicised. In this respect I pay a tribute to the hon. member for Wide Bay for his speech on the pig industry. It was a thoughtful contribution from his point of view, but I do not think it was reported in the metropolitan Press although we find other clashes are featured extensively. The papers in the main work on the theory that when a man bites a dog it is news and should be featured as such. If we develop that idea, that all speeches are thoughtful in character but the newspapers have not sufficient space to give space to all of them and therefore pick out what they consider newsy or racy parts of an hon. member's speech, it does tend towards mental laziness. I can recall—talking in the past; I have been informed of it—that Mr. McCormack, the then Minister, presented a Bill dealing with the introduction of cactoblastis into Queensland. At that time Mr. Godfrey Morgan, the member for Murilla, was entrusted by the Opposition to present the Opposition case to the Bill. Next day the morning paper described in three-quarters of a column the speech of the Minister and said that the member for Murilla opposed the introduction of the Bill. Those who knew the hon. member for Murilla no doubt realise that when he was given that task he applied himself to it extensively. As he received no publicity and not wishing to be bitten twice I am informed that thereafter his method was to go through the morning Press and take out any item that he thought might attract notice and ask a question about it—whether it was a fact that two or three calves had arrived at Cannon Hill in an injured condition, and as to what steps the Minister was taking in regard to improved trucking facilities.

Mr. Sparkes: You would have had a busy time if you were Minister.

Mr. DUGGAN: I do not mind being busy as long as the suggestions and the criticism are constructive. That is what I regret, in having to deal with the criticism of the hon. member for Aubigny. I do not mind investigating constructive criticism. I feel it is my duty to do so. I feel that the problem of the preservation of democracy transcends all other considerations. Any suggestion that will have the effect of enhancing the prestige of Parliament and encouraging it to become a deliberative Assembly in the true sense of the word and enable members to discuss all aspects of Government policy I believe is worthy of consideration. As

long as I have the honour to be a member of the Government I will not personally obstruct any measure having the effect of achieving the result sought by the suggestion of the hon. member for Logan in regard to apportioning the time or making some other arrangements in this regard.

We must remember that we cannot theoretically or in practice legislate under a time programme that will enable everybody who feels competent to speak on a particular subject to participate in a discussion on that subject. For instance, in the House of Commons it is impossible for all members to obtain seating accommodation at one time, let alone that each have an opportunity of speaking on a particular Bill. There are hundreds of members in the House of Commons who are prevented, because of the operation of the Standing Orders, from participating in a particular debate. The same thing will happen here unless we want to go on interminably discussing all sorts of things. We should then have not only a lowering of the standard of debate but a deterioration in the machinery of Parliament to carry out the legislative programme of the Government.

In the development of government the principle of ministerial responsibility is firmly established and I believe it is desirable that this should be so. That is why I believe that in a ministerial system of government there are many benefits that result from the fact that the Minister administering the department is answerable to members in the House. With a bi-cameral system, as in the Commonwealth Parliament, we have in the Senate Ministers with portfolios who can give only a personal explanation to the Senate of the operations of their departments. That is very unsatisfactory. In the United States of America there is a system under which it is not even necessary for a Minister to be elected to Parliament; he can be drawn from outside Parliament, and is only answerable to the President. That is an undesirable practice. Where there is a system of ministerial responsibility and a uni-cameral system of government, it is the bounden duty of the Minister to be prepared at all times to defend the administrative actions of the Government and his department.

I am not making an apology nor am I attempting to convey the impression that I am the only Minister prepared or capable of defending myself for I know that every Minister of the present Government, was happy and eager to have the Estimates of his department brought forward. I understand the Acting Premier asked the Leader of the Opposition to intimate to him whether he would like any particular part to be brought forward. In this instance we departed from the invariable custom of starting the discussion of the Estimates with those of the Legislative Assembly.

I hope that consideration of this resolution will not only focus attention on the point raised by the hon. member for Logan but will also make us conscious of our duties as Parliamentarians. The world faces a series of crises. Each day we find some problem being projected into the news that is capable

of again engulfing the whole of the civilised world. The experience that western civilisation has undergone in recent times is such that we cannot afford another blood-letting, but our problems are very grave indeed and I think we who are privileged to serve the people in Parliament are conscious of our responsibility to our electors and we will see to it that we use the instrument of Parliament to make democracy function successfully, to demonstrate that under such a system we have the opportunity to live a freer, fuller, and better life than is possible under a dictatorship. By doing that we shall be well and truly fulfilling our obligations to our people and to the times in which we live.

I do not think that western civilisation can afford another conflagration of the kind that ended three or four years ago. The world is ripe for the establishment of other doctrines and philosophies that are foreign to those that we practise in the British-speaking Commonwealth and we can only maintain our position while we have men of the requisite standard and calibre in Parliament, using their abilities and qualifications to advance the social standards of our times, to preserve the liberties of our age, and to see that we make of it a better world than we found it.

I hope—I am sure—that the instrument that is chosen for this purpose in Queensland, namely, the Legislative Assembly, will be an instrumentality long honoured by the people. But in order that that honour might be retained we ourselves must set an example by deserving that commendation and feeling of respect that electors should have for their parliamentary representatives, and which I think they would have if we saw to it that we were worthy of discharging our obligations as members of Parliament.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.15 p.m.): I listened with a considerable amount of interest to the contributions to this debate of the Minister for Transport and the hon. member for Logan.

There is no doubt that this problem of endeavouring to bring about a complete discussion of the Estimates has exercised the minds of not only present members of this Parliament but all members of this Parliament ever since its inception. Under the Standing Orders as now framed, it is impossible to avoid discussing only a certain number of the Estimates. Whatever plans may be made by the Opposition to bring about a discussion of all the Estimates, they can be checkmated by the Government, if they so desire, by stonewalling, just as whatever plans the Government make in connection with the Estimates, with the exception of the order in which the Premier desires them to be presented, may be checkmated to a certain extent by members of the Opposition, who can take the opportunity available to them under the Standing Orders to discuss matters very fully.

It is time the Standing Orders Committee met and considered this problem with a view to bringing about a complete discussion of our Estimates, if that is possible. I think the only way in which that can be done is to

adopt the suggestion of the hon. member for Logan that days be allocated to the different departments. It is no use saying not sufficient time is set down in the Standing Orders for discussing financial matters, because this House allocates a greater amount of time to the discussion of financial matters generally than, I think, any other Australian Parliament. If they so desire, hon. members can discuss financial matters on the Address in Reply, on the Financial Statement, and on the Estimates for seventeen days—here it is interesting to note that the Standing Orders provide that the Chamber may extend the time to 20 days, if necessary—and then we have the two Appropriation Bills. That should give every hon. member ample opportunity to discuss the financial affairs of this State. Unfortunately, we misuse the time set down because of circumstances we cannot control. If the Government have a plan it may be checkmated by the Opposition, and similarly, if the Opposition have a plan, it can be checkmated by the Government.

To my mind the opportunity to discuss the Estimates of each department is not being availed of as it should be by hon. members, and both sides must accept responsibility for that. The Estimates are not being discussed in the way in which I think the framers of the Standing Orders intended they should be. For example, we have approximately fourteen departments to be discussed, and hon. members should have the opportunity of discussing the individual administration of those departments. The purpose of the Estimates is to enable hon. members to discuss the administration of departments, not so much to have general discussion, as we often do. If it was laid down definitely in our Standing Orders that one day should be allocated to the discussion of each department, for example, and two days to the discussion of Trust and Special Funds and Loan Funds, at least we should have the opportunity of discussing every department to a limited extent, and, as the Minister for Transport suggested, by proper organisation of speakers, the Opposition could marshal their forces to deal adequately with each matter under discussion. And no doubt the Government would marshal their speakers to state their side of the case in turn.

That is the only way in which it would be possible to bring about close individual discussion on each separate Estimate which undoubtedly is the purpose of the Standing Orders, but which has never yet been carried out in this House, with the exception of one or two occasions. Those occasions generally come about when there is a change of Government and the Government become the Opposition and they cannot very readily in the first session have much to say about the administration of the departments of State when they have been responsible for their administration.

I would suggest that consideration be given to the suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Logan, which after all is not a new one, as it was put up some two or three years ago when the Premier said

that the matter would be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration and recommendation to the House.

Undoubtedly we have as individual members a responsibility for seeing that each department of Government comes up for close analysis and criticism if necessary. The time to do that is when the Estimates are being discussed. We can bring it about only by apportioning time so that our Standing Orders will provide that the discussion shall take place on each department of State. If we continue as we are at the present time we shall have an occurrence similar to what we have had this year and in past years, particularly when we have a provocative Minister handling the Estimates. He stirs up members of the Opposition and they in turn stir him up and "away she goes," and before we know where we are we have spent some nine or 10 days in discussion of Estimates that could have been handled in much less time.

I think the suggestion of the hon. member for Logan is worthy of consideration, to bring about a better working of this Parliament, and I hope that the Standing Orders Committee will be called together to consider this question before we next consider Estimates in this Assembly.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (3.23 p.m.): It would appear to me that it would not matter very much what we did with the Standing Orders as they could be circumvented if the Government wanted to circumvent them. In the few years I have been a member of this Assembly I find that this system is as good as any that might be suggested in substitution for it. At the present time we might deal with two, three or four of the Estimates and every member of this House has the opportunity of speaking to the full limit of the time allowed him by the Standing Orders on those Estimates.

It is true that in years such as the present one we have had the Country Party turning the whole Chamber into a bear garden on the question of grain sorghum and, not content with exhausting their time on the Estimate itself, moving an amendment that gave all their members another 25 minutes on the amendment and 25 minutes on the original motion. They did that to suit their own particular purpose.

It all depends entirely on how a politician regards his duty to the people. I know that many politicians think it is their sole duty to come into this Chamber and talk to other members who are sitting reclining or perhaps dozing in the Chamber or pretending to be listening to the debate that is proceeding. I thought that was my chief duty as a politician but I soon realised that it was only one and probably one of my minor duties as a politician. The Minister for Transport ably pointed out that if you say anything sensible in the House more likely than not it would not be printed in the daily Press. He could have summed up the conception of the Press as to news value in the poster that appeared just after the opening of the Second Front on the beaches of Normandy when our forces

were held up at Caen when, as we walked away from the House one day, we saw a huge poster of a Brisbane paper reading—

"Allies' position desperate—Darby Munro rides three winners."

That is the attitude of the daily Press on the subject of news.

It is true, too, that if you want to have anything reported in the Press you must say something sensational. Of course, there is no better way for an independent member or a Labour member to get headlines in the Press than by arranging with some hon. member of the Opposition immediately to stand up and denounce what he has said as Communist poison or Communist propaganda. That is the surest way of getting headlines in the Press, and not only getting headlines but of beating the half-naked brat photo. feature of the front page.

I contend that my chief duty as a member of Parliament is to acquaint my electors with what is going on in Parliament and in the various Government departments. I can do that by speaking in this Chamber, knowing that my very sensible contribution to debate will not be reported in the Press, and therefore not read by my constituents. I know that anything I say is recorded in "Hansard," but "Hansard" has a limited circulation and a limited reading public. It is quite true that since I have been in this Parliament the publication of "Hansard" has gone up immensely, and I think I can take some credit for that, but notwithstanding that fact the circulation of "Hansard" is still very limited. It is the duty of a member of Parliament to go to the hustings and on to the public platforms, not only in his own electorate but in other electorates, too, in order to acquaint the people with the truth. Unfortunately, many members of Parliament do not do that.

So that it does not matter very much what I say in this Chamber—if it is sensible, it will not get into the Press. It will get into "Hansard," but only a few people read "Hansard." What really does matter with the honest, conscientious member of Parliament is that he should go back to the people who sent him to Parliament and tell them from the public platform, tell them personally, just what is going on, how their State is being conducted, and how it is being controlled.

Personally, because I am a man of abundant sympathy, I should not like to see very much alteration in the Standing Orders in regard to discussion of the Estimates. If we did that we should rob the unfortunate back-benchers of the Labour Party of their only opportunity of saying something in this House at all. Everyone knows that the Government back-benchers are not allowed to ask a Minister a question unless he gets the Minister's permission to do so, and everyone knows that Government back-benchers are not even allowed to talk, even if they get the opportunity, unless they are given permission to do so. I know that the debate on the Address in Reply is restricted, and, consequently, many back-benchers of the

Labour Party, although they have carefully prepared their speeches, are not allowed to deliver them. The same thing happens on the Financial Statement. If we were to deprive them of an opportunity of saying at least a few humble, simple words on the discussion of the Estimates, we should be guilty of callous brutality towards some of these hon. members who did not deserve it.

It has been suggested that the consideration of the Estimates be so subdivided as to allow only a certain number of hours on each department, but that would open the way to a particularly dangerous practice. For instance, Mr. Speaker, you may not be in your chair for all time, nor will the hon. member for Brisbane always be the Chairman of Committees. What a glorious opportunity would be presented to the unscrupulous Speaker or the unscrupulous Chairman of Committees on, perhaps, a two-day debate, say on the Department of Transport, to give the call only to those hon. members who he knew would not embarrass the Government with their contributions to the debate? An unscrupulous Speaker and an unscrupulous Chairman of Committees, under the system enunciated by the hon. member for Logan, could, by refusing to give the call to those who were likely to embarrass the Government, deprive them of an opportunity of taking part in that debate.

I want to say, in summing up the whole matter, that in my opinion Parliament should do a little more work. Every day we hear the cry of the need for more production by members of the working class. We never hear the cry of the need for more production by the idle rich or the indolent bondholder or shareholder, or for more work from politicians. This House sits in the long session, as we call this period, from 16 to 18 weeks a year. For the first eight weeks or so we sit only 10 hours a week, four hours on Tuesdays, two hours on Wednesdays, and four hours on Thursdays. Then, towards the last six or seven weeks of Parliament, everything goes into what we might call a "Donnybrook" in order that we might get into recess before Christmas. Then we sit, as we do now, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, with a double day—God save the mark—on Tuesdays and a double day on Thursdays, but we still sit only 26 hours a week. Yet the Country Party growls because the workers want a maximum of 40 hours a week and they themselves sit only 26 hours a week.

Mr. Russell: Is this the only work you do?

Mr. AIKENS: I was just coming to that, if the hon. member was not so impulsive and impatient. I regard Parliament as a full-time job and my only means of income. I do not regard it as a spare-time job or a hobby as the hon. member for Dalby, members of the Opposition, and one or two members of the Labour Party do. Attendance in this Chamber does not constitute all the work an hon. member has to do. He has to attend to the wants of his constituents, to his correspondence, wait on Ministers of the Crown, and

perform various other duties and functions that are thrust upon him as a member of Parliament. He must also report to his constituents, if he is a country member, to give an account of his stewardship. I want to say this, as I have said on the public platform, where I am meticulously fair, particularly when dealing with members of the Labour Party, that an hon. member cannot spend all his time in Parliament when the House is in session for he has to attend to various duties and jobs given to him from time to time as a representative of the people.

So, also, have Ministers of the Crown. They must leave the Chamber to meet deputations introduced by hon. members and comprising responsible members of the community. But I say that without increasing the physical and mental strain already imposed on members of Parliament we should, at least from the very day Parliament meets, sit on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, with a double day on Tuesday and Thursday, instead of dawdling—that is the only word—along sitting 10 hours a week for the first eight or ten weeks of Parliament. What an hon. member actually does in this Chamber depends entirely on his conception of his duties as a parliamentarian, as a representative of the people. If he thinks that speaking in this Chamber is the alpha and omega of his duty as a politician then he is absolutely hopeless. He is not here very long before he realises that what he sees in this Parliament cuts very little ice indeed. It is what he does in his constituency and what he tells his constituents from the public platform that really count in the long run.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (3.34 p.m.): I have listened to the various speakers dealing with the subject before the House, which never seems to lack interest, that is, the way in which we should tackle the debates on the Estimates. I recollect that back over the years there has always been a discussion within my own party as to the best way by which we might usefully apportion our time so that the debate on the Estimates can be completed in the given period. During the time I was Leader of the Opposition I know I conferred with members of the party and we would lay down methods whereby only a few would talk on certain Estimates as they came forward and we would reserve a number of speakers for the particular Estimates on which we thought there would be scope for constructive thought and useful suggestions in order to help the Government in the administration of the various departments of State. But of course the old party spirit inevitably asserts itself in these debates and once the members of the Government began to see our line of action—as only a few speakers came forward from the Opposition on the first Estimate—the Government Whip would set about whipping up the Government speakers so that they could expend the time available, in effect to prevent the Opposition from getting onto the more contentious subjects in other Estimates.

I do not want to say that that has been the practice of the present Government party alone. I am inclined to think it is inherent in the game of party politics and it would have been used by every Government of every political colour in other days.

I do not blame the Government for any specific fault in that respect. The question is: how are we going to overcome the competitive spirit? How are we going to get to the point on the Estimates—the whole alpha and omega of the administration of our various departments; how are we going to get the limelight onto as many Estimates as possible in a limited period of time? I really think it is very hard to lay down any set rules. The hon. member for Logan thinks we could meet the position by having a set time for each Estimate so as to ensure that each would come up for examination and analysis during the 17 days allotted. But of course, if we had a hard and fast rule of that kind, very obviously if there was some Estimate that involved something of high importance on which the Opposition wished to speak at length we should be restricted by the limitation of time imposed by the drastic Standing Order. That would be a very great weakness in our system of debate in this Parliament.

The other day there was in the Press some criticism of members that so much time had been taken over the Department of Health and Home Affairs and the Department of Agriculture and Stock. On the discussion of the Department of Health and Home Affairs the hon. member for Toowong brought up a matter that, however distasteful it might be, nevertheless was a matter of very great public importance, and related to the administration of a sub-department of the Department of Health and Home Affairs in connection with the Torres Strait Islanders. That matter was brought to light and it was the subject of a good deal of discussion.

Mr. Lacombe interjected.

Mr. MAHER: The hon. gentleman can look at it from his own point of view. I thought the hon. member did a useful service to this Parliament and to the people when he brought up a matter in which £15,000 or £16,000 of public funds could not be accounted for. If we are to be limited as to time on a debate of that kind much of the effectiveness of the Opposition attack against the Government would be lost.

Then, over the whole field of agriculture and stock industries there is a wealth that represents 70 per cent. of the total wealth of the State. No subject of greater importance comes up for discussion than the one that relates to the production of the real wealth on which the whole of our industry is established. Of course, that took some time, but I do not think it was out of place. There were subjects that needed to be discussed, one of which was the Sorghum Pool. This took some time, but that is the safety valve of our democracy, the right of the Opposition to express themselves if they have complaints and grievances, or grounds for attack

against the Government. And so the debate on the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture and Stock gave the hon. members of the Opposition an opportunity to state the case as they saw it.

Mr. Power: We think you did it to keep the hon. member for Windsor out.

Mr. MAHER: Of course, the Minister is quite mistaken in his statement of the position. I listened with interest to the Minister for Transport in that respect. There was no preconceived plan at all, because the Country Party section of the Opposition have no desire to prevent the Queensland Peoples' Party, the Labour Party, the Communist or the Independent members from making their contributions to the debate on any subject. Of course, we all look at things from different angles.

I think that what I am now about to suggest would be a sensible solution of the problem that confronts us year after year. In view of the growing work of the administration entailed in handling so many departments of State—and there has been an increase of sub-departments under the various headings of government administration in the twenty years since I have been in this Parliament—the Government might well consider allowing the full period that the Standing Orders normally provide, twenty days. Though it may involve sitting a greater number of days earlier in the session we should have 20 days for discussion of the Estimates to enable the Opposition to cover as wide a field of Government administration as possible. Secondly, I suggest for the consideration of the Government that the Opposition be allowed to select the Estimates on which they require information and on which there is room for expression of constructive thought and valuable suggestions for administrative policy. If that was done I think that honour would be satisfied and we should get away from the continual wrangling that goes on year after year about how much time was spent in discussing the various Estimates that came up for consideration. That is my opinion, after observing events very closely from year to year.

There is another matter, which by comparison is a minor one, but as I am on my feet I take the opportunity of drawing the attention of the House to the class of furniture recently placed in the Parliamentary library. It is very shabby, ordinary-looking furniture, completely out of tone and keeping with the dignity and atmosphere of that lovely room. We have in this Parliament something of which every member should be jealous, and that is not only the fine building but the furniture, which is rich and in many instances today priceless. When it comes to replacing chairs that have worn out or of adding to the number of chairs in any of the rooms attached to Parliament the furniture purchased should be of the same type as that which has been here for many years, beautiful old chairs, chairs of great quality and splendid workmanship. Of course, new chairs of similar design and workmanship would be costly on today's values. To put the

type of chair we see in the library today, completely out of harmony with the general surroundings and the richness and beauty of the furnishings of that room, is like putting an enamel mug in a beautiful set of English china. It is something that we should guard against. Surely an extra few pounds to keep up the appearances of the rooms here and the lovely furnishings contained in them should not be grudged by the House?

Funds are voted for this purpose, and I hope those who are charged with the responsibility—I address my remarks more particularly to Mr. Speaker, because he is the administrative head of the House—will obtain advice from competent people on the types of furniture best suited to a room like the Library. There are one or two people in this city who have artistic skill in turning out furniture. I remember that when His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester stayed in the Premier's room and had the use of the old Legislative Council Chamber on the occasion of his first visit here, Messrs. Rosenstengels provided the furniture that was used for the occasion. Those of us who had the opportunity of seeing the splendid workmanship of that furniture realise that in this city we have artistic furniture craftsmen who can turn out the right class of furniture. Therefore, when it comes to purchasing furniture to accord with the tonings and dignity of this lovely old House, we should go to that class of man, and I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to replace the present chairs with furniture that will accord with the beauty and dignity of the Library that is the privilege of every one of us.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Acting Premier) (3.47 p.m.): I have listened this afternoon to a good deal of debate on how the Estimates should be discussed in this Parliament. I agree that it is unsatisfactory to have the 16 days allotted to the Estimates taken up by discussion of one or two departments, as happened this year, but as against that I agree with the hon. member for West Moreton that great disadvantages will accrue to the Opposition in particular if we limited the discussion of each department to two days. As the hon. member for West Moreton rightly stated, the Opposition might consider one department much more important than another and it could happen that they would be confined to two days' debate on what may seem to them to be a particularly important department and then be required to take two days to discuss what, in their opinion, is a department of less importance.

I believe that the existing Standing Orders are adequate. Of course, a good deal depends on the Opposition themselves. If hon. members opposite believe, as they evidently did this year, that the Department of Health and Home Affairs was important enough to merit seven days' debate, that is their business. Then, if they believe that the Department of Agriculture and Stock is important enough—and they would know that the days were flying by—to warrant discussion for the balance of the time allowed, that too, is their

business. By taking up so much time, however, they forfeit the right to discuss the Estimates of the other departments.

I suggest that no Parliament within Australia or outside Australia is more liberal in its allocation of debating days and debating times than the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The Leader of the Opposition has admitted that. Any hon. member who says that he has not enough time to ventilate a grievance, raise any matter, or debate any question is complaining without real reason.

The hon. member for Mundingburra said that members on this side of the House are unable to ask questions of Ministers without permission and could not enter into the debate on a Bill unless they had the permission of the Minister introducing the Bill, and that they could not participate in a debate without permission. I am sorry that the hon. member for Mundingburra—I find him sitting behind me now—has either been deliberately misinformed or has deliberately attempted to create the impression that members of the Government Party are not free agents and not free to talk on matters that come before the House.

Mr. Aikens: And neither they are.

Mr. GAIR: I defy any member of the present Parliamentary Labour Party to say that he has at any time been told that he cannot speak on the Address in Reply, the Financial Statement, or on any Bill introduced into this Parliament.

Mr. Aikens: What about Blair Athol?

Mr. GAIR: I also say that I defy any member of the present Parliamentary Labour Party to truthfully say that he has ever been denied the right to ask a question without permission. If members of this party—and this applies to members of the Opposition also—want to ask a question without notice they submit a copy of the question to the Minister concerned before the House assembles. There is nothing more than courtesy about that arrangement, and it has been the arrangement in this Parliament since I have been here, and nobody has complained about it.

The hon. member for Mundingburra talks about the few hours hon. members are asked to sit in this Parliament, and after making that a feature of his speech and conveying the impression that hon. members work only four hours a day, he contradicts himself by saying that this is not the only job an hon. member has to do. He says that an hon. member's duties are not confined to sitting in this Parliament, a contradiction of his first statement. However, this House sits long enough and far too long for the hon. member for Mundingburra, who is often absent from his place in this Parliament.

Mr. AIKENS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. When the Acting Premier says that I am often absent from my place in this Parliament that is definitely untrue. I would not be absent from my place any more often than the Acting Premier himself.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Mann): The Acting Premier, Mr. Gair!

Mr. GAIR: It is rather humorous that the hon. member should compare his job with mine.

Mr. Aikens: Mine is more important.

Mr. GAIR: In the hon. member's opinion, and we know how modest the hon. member is.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GAIR: It does not become the hon. member for Mundingburra, or anybody else, to reflect on the business of this Parliament. I repeat that I believe the members of this Parliament have more privileges, more scope for debate, and more latitude than hon. members in any Parliament in Australia. I sometimes wonder—and I have expressed the opinion before—with due respect to those charged with the conduct of this House, whether too much latitude is not granted to some hon. members of this Parliament.

The hon. member for Mundingburra also said that we start off very leisurely and go along and have a Donnybrook rush at the end of the session. I can assure him and other hon. members that so far as I am concerned there is not going to be any Donnybrook rush of legislation through this House. Hon. members will have the same opportunities as they always had, and they can take their time in the debates on Bills so far as I am concerned.

Whether we sit here until Christmas Eve matters little to me in the discharge of my duty in this Parliament. It has been found necessary, especially this session, to restrict the debate on the Address in Reply, and rightly so. In previous years the Address in Reply debate has gone on for seven or eight days, but this year it was restricted to four days.

Mr. Hiley: It was not restricted; it was not extended.

Mr. GAIR: The time was not extended on this occasion because there did not appear to be any necessity and particularly because there was urgent legislation to put through Parliament.

If any hon. member fails to speak on the Address in Reply there is nothing to stop him from delivering his well-prepared speech on the Financial Statement, when he can speak on almost every subject and for one full hour. Hon. members can speak for 40 minutes on the Address in Reply. They can speak for 25 minutes on the introduction of a Bill, for 25 minutes on every clause of the Bill, for 40 minutes on the second reading, for one hour on the Financial Statement. Sixteen days are allotted to the consideration of the Estimates of the various departments. Then there are the Appropriation Bills, on which hon. members can speak for forty minutes on pretty well any subject.

Could the Government be more liberal or more generous under our Standing Orders than that? They have operated successfully in this Parliament for very many years. Hon.

members have no reason to complain. I am satisfied that by the adoption of a proper working arrangement by the Opposition many more departments could have been dealt with on this occasion, as has been done in previous years. I repeat that it is a matter for the Opposition themselves. If they believed that the two departments dealt with this year were the most important and warranted the time devoted to them that was a matter for them.

Resolution 4—Executive and Legislative—agreed to.

Resolutions 6 and 7 agreed to.

Resolution 8—Department of Justice—

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (3.58 p.m.): This resolution deals with the Department of Justice and the Department of Justice controls the Licensing Commission. I have some comments to make on the operation of the Licensing Commission. I have been rather concerned as to whether or not I should make these remarks at this stage because at the moment a Supreme Court action has been instituted at Townsville by one person against another for breach of contract. I was concerned as to whether the matter was sub judice.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member has any doubt I think he had better leave his remarks unsaid because the principle has been laid down that if there is any doubt about a law suit in progress the matter shall be regarded as sub judice.

Mr. AIKENS: To be perfectly candid, this is the position: a civil action has been started by one person against another. I do believe that, in the course of that action, evidence will be given regarding the payment of a sum of money to a solicitor to come to Brisbane and approach the Licensing Commission. I have not made up my mind yet whether that part of the evidence will affect the finding of the jury in the case, which is in connection with a breach of contract.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I will give a clear ruling on this matter now. It will be consistent with my former rulings. As the matter is before the court, I rule that it is sub judice.

Mr. AIKENS: Very well, I am not quite opposed to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as I should not like to say anything that might influence the jury in coming to a decision.

Mr. Mann: You know the case is now before the court.

Mr. AIKENS: I know the case is now before the court, but I will say now that the Licensing Commission might be involved. I have all the documents—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: They will keep, Mr. Speaker, until next year, because the charge I intend to make—

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. In view of your ruling, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should not continue to make

the statement that he is going to make a charge against a member of the Licensing Commission.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member is going to make a charge against the Licensing Commission he will make it next year. He will have to discontinue his remarks in that connection now.

Mr. AIKENS: I have as yet made no charge against the Licensing Commission. It will at any rate keep until next year.

Resolution 8—Department of Justice—agreed to.

Resolution 10—Department of Public Lands—

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (4.2 p.m.): I should like to address a few remarks to the resolution for this very important department, as the welfare of the great bulk of this State is tied up with our public lands and their administration. The settlement of those public lands is so important that I propose to address myself more or less entirely to that aspect.

It is generally conceded that closer settlement is the aim of every Government of every State in Australia, but when we speak of closer settlement we must always remember that our aim must be successful closer settlement. It will also be conceded that different parts of the State require the application of different methods of closer settlement. As you know, in our far western areas, where the average rainfall is very low, the principle of closer settlement cannot in any way be compared with the principle of closer settlement suitable for the more favoured rainfall areas. I was born and brought up in our far-distant areas, therefore I have the greatest sympathy with those people who have gone out there and fought the elements.

Only the other day we read in the Brisbane Press of the results of the ballot for the Wellshot resumption, a property very well known in the western areas. The successful applicant was likened by sections of the Press to one who had won a Melbourne Cup sweep. On present-day values the young fellow who has been fortunate enough—and I do not think he has been very fortunate—to draw Wellshot starts uphill with a millstone round his neck. As soon as wool prices go down and a dry spell occurs, as it does periodically in those areas, then he is gone.

Let us examine this resumption. It comprises an area of about 22,000 acres and the improvements are worth over £4,000, which he has to pay for before he puts a beast of any sort on the property. He then has to buy his breeding stock. Before he gets anywhere he is going to be up for about £12,000 or £15,000.

Mr. Devries: Without sheep?

Mr. SPARKES: No, I am allowing for stocking; he would be up for £12,000 or £15,000. The hon. members for Warrego, Gregory and Barcoo, who know this land so well, will have an idea of what is ahead of

this young man. In that area he will have to stock reasonably heavily to get a return on the capital invested. As I said before, immediately a dry spell comes, where is he? He has no let-out; he has not the money to get out.

These areas in the far-distant parts of our State have to be looked at in a broad and practical way. It is easy to play up to the public and say, "Cut them into small areas, so that you will have 20 men instead of only one." In practice it does not work. If the property is left a reasonable size, the owner can provide reasonable amenities for the employees, which is a very important point. An employee on a small property has to be a jack-of-all-trades, but on a big property you have a man for each of the different jobs.

A statement that appeared in the "Telegraph" prompted my remarks. I realise that there are vast areas in Queensland that lend themselves to closer settlement, but in the drier districts you have to have a large area in order to be successful.

Mr. Foley: We work on carrying capacity, not so much on area.

Mr. SPARKES: I appreciate the Minister's interjection. It is the same thing. If an area can carry one sheep to the acre, naturally that country lends itself to closer settlement but none of the western country comes anywhere near that.

Mr. Foley: What I tried to convey to you was that we do not work on the system of a certain acreage; we work on the fair carrying capacity in any specific area.

Mr. SPARKES: To give a living to the individual?

Mr. Foley: That is so.

Mr. SPARKES: That does not altogether work out in practice. Referring again to this well-known property, it will be admitted that it is a good property. For argument's sake, assume that you give to the individual an allowance of 6,000 or 7,000 sheep, and today a person who shears 6,000 or 7,000 sheep has a really good income. I will admit that, but that does not detract from the fact that the persons who fully use that area have no end of trouble and the State will be the loser eventually.

Mr. Foley: That has been the history of our pastoral areas over the years.

Mr. SPARKES: Yes, but the hon. gentleman knows that there is always a clamour to cut up these large areas. I am not in any way at all interested in these far-western areas. The only large areas in which I am interested are in the good-rainfall areas, more or less. I am, however, interested in the West as a Queenslander and an Australian because of the wealth produced there. I know this because of my experience on the western Darling and the country as far west as Wilcannia, almost to Broken Hill. My experience there has shown me that there is only one way to successful settlement, that is, big areas. For instance, storms hit this country and if the concern is a big one sheep can be shifted

from one place to another. At least it has the opportunity of shifting from one property to another. But the men in the small areas have not any chance of getting out. Moreover, in most instances they are inclined to stock more heavily and this, of course, causes their downfall more quickly than on larger areas.

The point I wish to make very plain to the Secretary for Public Lands is that the tenant must enter into an arrangement with this Government to improve and expend a large sum of money on his property. I will not for one moment stand in this House and defend the tenant who wants to let a place go to ruin and not worry. The property should be improved. He should be given encouragement to improve his property by being granted a lease in keeping with the amount of money that he is to expend in improvements. A man cannot be expected to spend large sums of money on a property unless he has the incentive of a long term in which to recoup himself.

Let us get away from the stupid idea that these men are not after profit. Every one of us, even those of us who sit in this House, from the lowest to the highest, is here for profit. The idea behind it all is profit and if that profit incentive is destroyed it takes away the incentive to work a property. If any member feels that he is not in Parliament really for profit, why does he draw his salary at the end of each fortnight or month?

Mr. Devries: Security.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. member has summed it up in one word—security. It applies not only to the individual but to the pastoralist.

Mr. Bruce: He draws his salary to pay his butchers, bakers, and grocers.

Mr. SPARKES: That is so

There must be some feeling of security for these people on the pastoral holdings.

Mr. Power: He must also feel that he is giving service.

Mr. SPARKES: I agree. One of the greatest things introduced into this State was what we call the developmental lease, under which if a company was given 5,000 or 6,000 square miles of country, it had to covenant with the Government to expend a certain amount of improvements during the period of the lease, and in turn received an assurance that it would have an opportunity to recoup itself for the money invested.

One matter with which I wish to deal, and in mentioning which I feel a little embarrassed, is the stud-sheep and stud-cattle industry of this State. I realise that thoroughbred horses play an important part in the wealth of the State, but I propose to deal only with stud sheep and stud cattle, with beef cattle and stud merino sheep in particular.

At the outset I pay tribute to the Minister, whom we have been basting over the last six or seven days, for his utterances and for

what he has done for the stud-stock industry of this State. The people engaged in that industry appreciate what he has done, and as one of those people I certainly appreciate it. I also appreciate the treatment I have had from this Government in the handling of my stud property.

The breeding of stud-sheep or stud-cattle cannot be carried on successfully if it is treated as a commercial enterprise. The person running the property must be inspired. He must be keen on the work. You cannot make stud-breeders; they are born. They must be enthusiastic to be successful.

Mr. O'Shea: And they must have a bit of cash.

Mr. SPARKES: I appreciate that. My point is that the average stud-stock breeder is not as well off financially as the person who runs his property on ordinary lines, when you take into consideration the capital invested and the work done.

Mr. Hilton: Now, now!

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. member cannot tell me anything about this, because I know the industry inside out. Take that well-known sheep property, Noondoo. Had that property just been run in the ordinary way, had they just shorn ordinary wethers and not bothered about the class of sheep they bred, they probably would have made just as much money, and probably more than they have. With the money I have invested in stud stock I could have bought many properties, run them in the ordinary way and probably been much better off financially than I am today, but I should not have been half as happy as I am, because the breeding of stud animals is my life's pleasure. The person who goes in for stud breeding with the idea of making a commercial enterprise of it is never as successful as a breeder who is an enthusiast.

Let us examine this business of our stud-sheep and stud-cattle. We have heard much talk of it and I say, dealing with the cattle part of it, that we have the greatest State in Australia. We are, so to speak, the beef-cattle State of Australia and I am saying that on the whole our beef cattle are not as good as they should be. What is the reason for that? The reason gets back to what my friend the hon. member for Gregory interjected—the insecurity of the individual on leasehold properties. You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, that if you have a property and it is likely to go away from you this year, next year or some other year, you will not put your heart into the breeding of your stock as much as you would if you knew you had 28 or 40 years to run. The whole thing is wrapped up in the question of tenure.

I say quite frankly that the herds of New South Wales are better than our cattle today; there are many more studs in New South Wales than in Queensland. Much has been said about the breaking up of these studs and I say advisedly that it would be a great pity to break up studs in any State.

I am pleased to say that in New South Wales, in the Hunter River and Quirindi districts—right on the railway line—the Government have not touched that country because it is breeding stud sheep and cattle. I make the suggestion to the Secretary for Public Lands—and I know his department cannot put it into effect without the sanction of the Minister for Transport—that properties where cattle are bred should be given good leases, provided that the lessees put improvements on the properties. Some incentive would then be given to the lessees to buy the best bulls to put into their herds. The Minister for Transport could help by conveying those bulls to the far distant men at a very low rate of carriage.

Argentina is looked upon as the finest beef-producing country in the world and we know that a big area of that country is under alfalfa or what we call lucerne. If a breeder in that country went to England, the stud farm of the world, the Argentine authorities would put the bull he bought onto his property. The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock is not present in the Chamber but I give him credit for what he has done because the Government subscribe to the extent of £100 on the importation of a bull from England. When you think of the enormous sum involved in the purchase of a good bull, this is a small sum. I suggest to the Secretary for Public Lands that where a tenant is breeding good stock and making proper use of his property—developing it well and prepared to develop it—the Government should be careful before disturbing him.

Mr. Devries: He is the man who should be encouraged.

Mr. SPARKES: In New South Wales there was the continual cry that the sheep man should be pushed off and his area made available for the growing of wheat. In short, the cry was for closer settlement and eventually it prevailed. The sheep man in New South Wales was pushed off this country and the wheat men are there today but every year the Commonwealth Government are required to vote about £1,000,000 to keep wheat-growers on their marginal lands.

Let me tell you exactly what has happened. I know the area well; my own people had property there. I have in mind a property that carried about 20,000 sheep. To-day it comprises 12 wheat farms and every one of the farmers is up against it because they are on marginal land. What did the State of New South Wales do? The Government shifted this paying concern that was breeding sheep, producing the best wool and being a benefit to the State, and in its place there are 12 wheat farmers, not one of them successful and probably not one of them a taxpayer. If closer settlement is to be a success it must be profitable. The settlers must not be struggling all the time, rushing to the Government for aid. That is what we have to remember. We have much to learn from New South Wales in the matter of marginal areas. In New South Wales they shifted a paying breeding concern and put in its place a number of unsuccessful wheat farmers. They

are not producing any wealth for the State. That brings me back to what the hon. member for West Moreton said about Cullin-la-ringo, in Central Queensland. I am not going into that matter again. Therefore I caution the Minister to hasten very slowly before he disposes of successful undertakings to put doubtful ones in their places. I appeal to him not to embark too eagerly on too close a form of settlement.

Mr. Aikens: Not to forsake the substance for the shadow?

Mr. SPARKES: That is so.

Reference has been made to the fertility of rams imported from the South. We have the same position in connection with stud bulls imported from England. We frequently find that for the first six months, until they become acclimatised, they are virtually useless. I think that is the trouble with the rams too—they must become acclimatised. When rams are brought from Wanganella and other places in the South direct to Longreach, they take a considerable time to become acclimatised. However, the point I want to make is that we should not disturb the people who are breeding sheep successfully. It is a wrong policy to disturb the breeders, say, from Victoria Downs, Noondoo, and other places when they are breeding the right type of sheep. Why disturb them and bring all our stud stock from the South? How often have we heard the cry, "Let Queensland do it?" I appeal to the Minister to let Queenslanders in Queensland breed our stud rams and bulls so that people in Queensland can have them. I make the suggestion in all sincerity. I know the industry well and I strongly appeal to the Minister not to disturb the stud breeders in this State.

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Normanby—Secretary for Public Lands) (4.30 p.m.): I was very interested in the contribution made by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat on land policy generally. I would point out that since 1915 Labour's policy has been to establish wherever it was thought desirable more people on the land than were there when the first Labour Government were elected in that year. The result, over a period of years, has been that we have adopted a policy according to the particular area of endeavouring to bring about the closer settlement that is so very desirable if we are going to populate this great country of Australia.

I contend that up to date we have followed a very sane and sound policy of land settlement in pastoral areas. If you get a map and ring in colour what is known as the best sheep lands you will find that since 1917 right down to 1929 and from 1932 onwards, wherever it was considered by our skilled field officers—our land commissioners—that there was room for subdivision, our policy has been carried out. As a result we have a network of thriving settlers in the whole of that area.

Mr. Sparkes: You have to give additional areas in nearly every case.

Mr. FOLEY: That is true only in some cases. Before Labour attained the Treasury benches there was an attempt at closer settlement without considering carrying capacity. Closer settlement was then based on what was thought to be a reasonable area, whether it was 5,000, 6,000, or 10,000 acres. We have followed a totally different policy. If we think an area will carry a sheep to 3 acres and approximately 7,000 sheep are required for a living area in a given district, taking one season with another over a given period, we have allowed the selector 22,000 or 23,000 acres, according to the design of the area being cut up. That policy was based on normal values, not present values, and we found it has worked out very well. We have not found many of those settlers going bankrupt. It is true that some sheep properties recently resumed have been subdivided into areas of 22,000 acres, and that those areas will carry a sheep to 3 acres, or approximately 7,000 sheep.

Mr. Sparkes: You are now speaking of Wellshot?

Mr. FOLEY: Wellshot is one case in point. As the hon. member has stated, the value of the improvements on one block might be higher than on another. If, for instance, the value of improvements is £4,000 and the new selector who is successful in drawing that block has to buy sheep at a high cost and if he gets the outlook that he must "get rich quick" from that block he is doomed to fail, but if he adopts an outlook that he is selecting that land for the purpose of establishing a home for his lifetime and in order to make a good living off it by getting average returns over the whole of that period, he will find that he will come out of the venture pretty well. He will find that he is able to rear a family, give them a good education, and then come out of it fairly well. It is true that he might strike bad years and have to go out on the road. I know one young man who took up a block on Wellshot who had to go out on the road about four times before he was favoured with a decent run of seasons. That experience is worse than what one might call pioneering. Nevertheless, he battled through and eventually made good. But his outlook was to make a home for himself, settle down, and marry. Over a period of years his return on the investment he made was a reasonable one.

Our land-settlement policy, as a result of the present high values—as I said in reply to a question recently—is under review. There is a totally different outlook now in regard to land in remote places, that is to say, land that is remote from a railway and other amenities and where the cost of conducting a pastoral leasehold is high. Naturally we have to look at it from a different angle today to try to meet the ever-increasing demand for beef, and encourage a higher carrying capacity on some of those areas. My personal view on the matter is that the only way we can do that is to allow some of those who are at present in occupation and who know the country and who have the necessary capital resources, to develop it

under a pastoral development lease, to carry on operations and increase the carrying capacity. One has to have big capital resources to do that in isolated places where boring for water and ringbarking and other structural improvements such as fencing are needed.

The report of the department that has been tabled shows at the present time the total number of holdings subject to one or more developmental conditions such as providing permanent water supplies, erecting fences, subdividing and structural improvements and other improvements such as ringbarking total 1,004. We are getting good work carried out in this way. We are passing through a period when it is very difficult to get labour for ringbarking, for instance. If you want men to leave the city and live under camp conditions, which are often very crude, naturally you have to pay them well. Some pastoralists are doing that. I know cases where they are paying them 30s. a day and giving them free meat and shifting their camps. The idea is that although it is costly—the outlay for 3,000, 4,000 or 6,000 acres is pretty heavy, where they have to buy poison to make sure that they will not have the work of clearing suckers—it pays. Men to whom I have spoken who have carried out this work have informed me that after five or six years they get a return that more than compensates them for the cost.

Mr. Sparkes: You are talking of areas closer in now?

Mr. FOLEY: I am talking of areas such as a brigalow or gidyea area, where it is possible to ringbark. The same thing applies where it is possible to make water improvements. Take Malvern Downs, about which there was an article in "Walkabout" a while ago.

The lessee carried out extensive boring on the holding, and found nothing but salt water. He found too that certain areas were not suitable for the holding of water in tanks or dams. The next move was to choose a site where he knew water would hold and there was a large catchment area and there erect something out of the ordinary in the way of a dam. As a result of getting a splendid water supply he installed a diesel engine and pump and pumped the water in some directions six miles through waterless tracts of country that could not be otherwise used. Although the outlay was very heavy, somewhat heavier than most selectors could stand—it was a large area of country—he was able to lift the carrying capacity of that dry area by 6,000 steers.

Mr. Sparkes: That bears out my argument; the small man could not do it.

Mr. FOLEY: The small man has improved country and is continuing to improve it, according to the area on which he has settled, consequently his expenses are not on the same lines as those I have quoted. On the other hand, one finds remaining in many parts of the State huge tracts of country—in some instances 2,000 square miles—under pastoral-holding tenures. They have

been settled for many years but have not as yet reached the point at which they are adequately watered and the carrying capacity has been lifted to the level it could be. If the present lessees are not able to show that they have done reasonable work on the area during their tenancy, I say they do not deserve consideration. If a man has shown that he has endeavoured to lift the carrying capacity of the country and lift the State's assets to a reasonable position, he receives favourable consideration from the department.

There is another aspect that has been mentioned. We have had to build up some areas by giving what are known as additional areas. It is true that scattered all over Queensland in the pastoral districts small blocks are held that are not what one could term living areas. Since 1927 we have endeavoured to rectify this position as far as possible. The policy we follow is this: if a large lease is expiring, a lease over a huge acreage, one of the first things to be considered is whether in that area there are men who are working what we call subnormal areas on a low standard of living. We then have what is known as an additional-area inquiry. We invite applications and every application is considered on its merits. Eventually a recommendation is made by the officers in charge of the inquiry. As a result we have many additional areas and have made a vast improvement over the years. That policy still continues.

In some farming areas, such as the Callide Valley, there it was contended that farms were too small. There was a little land left and the Government of the day decided that wherever possible additional areas should be allotted to these farms. We did this and a tremendous area was allotted. What has happened? With the development of technique in farming methods we find that virtually the whole of these men in the area we speak of have at some time or another applied to the department for permission to sell either the original selection or the additional area.

Mr. Sparkes: That is inside, not outside.

Mr. FOLEY: I know, but I quote that as an illustration of how the policy works out.

I might emphasise here also that the whole of our policy in connection with pastoral tenures is now under review. We are considering such matters as developmental leases and the isolated areas that have been worked up by holders to a fair standard through their own initiative, lands already in the hands of the Crown but that have not been subdivided or surveyed because of lack of surveyors. Indeed, all matters affecting land tenures are under consideration, with due regard to present-day conditions, and an announcement as to the new policy will be made in the very near future. We are not overlooking present conditions or the need for some alteration of the present policy that I am not yet in a position to give any indication of what the new policy will be.

The hon. member for Aubigny referred to stud-sheep and stud-cattle properties. What he says about expiring leases is true. If the present holder of a property feels that he is not likely to obtain a renewal of lease there is a tendency for him to become lax about keeping up the standard of his stock. We deal with each case on its merits. Only recently I was able to tell one landholder that after investigation we had found that he had observed his agreement as to the number of stud stock to be distributed, the number of ewes the property was to carry, and so on, and we could see no reason why he should not get a renewal of his lease. I was able to tell him also that we were satisfied after investigation that he could not carry on operations with a smaller area than that already held by him and consequently, in order to encourage him to keep on improving his stud and supplying our pastoralists with breeders, we gave him the assurance that he could look forward to a new lease, possibly with varied conditions taking into consideration the position existing today as compared with what it was a number of years ago.

To give hon. members some idea of the acreages held by stud breeders let me say that there is Barcardine Downs, a property of 65,000 acres that has to maintain 6,000 stud merino ewes and distribute 1,250 pure-bred merino rams to grazing selectors each year.

Bowen Downs is a property of 48,000 acres that has to maintain 4,000 stud merino ewes and distribute 750 pure merino rams annually.

Other properties are—

Name of Sheep Holding.	Name of Lessee.	Area of Stud Holdings.	Number of Stud Merino Ewes to be Maintained.	Number of Pure Merino Rams to be Sold Yearly to Grazing Selectors.
		Acres.		
Burenda ..	Western Queensland Pastoral Co. Ltd. ..	49,920	4,000	750
Claverton ..	The Whitney Pastoral Co. Pty. Ltd. ..	49,920	4,000	750
Coreena ..	Coreena Stud Sheep, Ltd.	44,160	2,500	500
Isis Downs ..	Edgar Edward Dye & Ors.	135,680	6,000	1,250
Lansdowne ..	The Lansdowne Pastoral Co. Pty. Ltd. ..	35,200	4,000	750
Lerida ..	F. G. White	30,720	1,500	250

And so I could go right down the list, giving about another 12 stud holdings varying in size and ranging from 3,000 stud ewes

to be maintained up to 5,000, with from 500 to 1,250 stud merino rams to be sold and distributed each year. A very fine type of

ram is being distributed amongst our flocks and I think if hon. members read the figures in regard to wool production it will be found that we are not slipping back so far as weight of fleece is concerned, which is an indication that a good type of ram is being distributed amongst our flocks.

Mr. Sparkes: Much better than importing all of them from the South.

Mr. FOLEY: Some are coming in from the South.

Mr. Sparkes: I realise that.

Mr. FOLEY: If you start off with a particular strain of stock, whether it is in sheep or cattle, you naturally try to keep that strain going, bringing in new blood all the time. Many graziers throughout the State in sheep and cattle try to retain the strain and keep the blood up to that standard.

On the question of fertility, there is a disability that will persist until animals are acclimatised, and when that stage is reached there is the factor of feeding. If animals are not treated properly you would naturally get a high degree of non-fertility. I found it in the breeding of canaries. I have gone through my aviaries of 200 birds and lifted out nest after nest in which the birds were infertile. The solution is a balanced ration so that the birds can be brought to a high standard of fitness for the breeding period. The same thing applies to stock and if you do not study that aspect of breeding you will not get the maximum production results.

I say that our policy cannot be said to be a failure over the years. We have instances in which as a result of the policy instituted a long way back, by which small areas were allotted to settlers and those settlers failed, those small areas have been bought in and now form parts of huge aggregations of big areas held by a few pastoral companies.

Mr. Sparkes: It would have been better had they not been cut up.

Mr. FOLEY: This happened in the past. I do not think that from 1920 onwards many settlers have failed and been absorbed by the big companies. We have worked on the carrying capacity. It is not simply a question of an area of 5,000 acres. When I first went to the Emerald and Clermont district it was common talk among the people there that you could make a really good living there on 5,000 acres. But that is not the way to look at it. Everything depends upon the carrying capacity, and that is the policy we have been following for a considerable time.

What I have said of the Emerald and Clermont districts applies with equal force to other areas in the State. Go to the channel country, and you have a different set of circumstances altogether, a different type of land. It is sweet land, and if you get periodic floods, that enables you to turn off a tremendous number of fat cattle. Some parts of the Gulf country have a higher rainfall than some areas on the coast, yet the areas in the Gulf country have a very low carry-

ing capacity indeed. There is no means of determining what is a reasonable area in that part of the State. You must arrive at the reasonable carrying capacity. Since 1920 every file in the department in respect of every holding contains abundant information relating not only to the area, but, what is more important, to the carrying capacity of the land.

Mr. Sparkes: Even admitting the practical effect of that, in the far-distant areas that is not to be regarded as an absolute guide.

Mr. FOLEY: That is so. The country in the Gulf cannot at the moment be used for closer settlement on account of its isolation. We realise also that in those parts of the State where a tremendous area is required to carry a large number of bullocks it is necessary that the company controlling it should have the command of plenty of capital to keep up improvements so as to give it a reasonable return over a period of years.

Mr. Sparkes: And to provide good living conditions for the people working there.

Mr. FOLEY: That is right. It is possible in the flush season to carry on successfully on some of the big areas with a small amount of capital, depending entirely upon nature; but over a period of 30 to 40 years you must have a large amount of capital to guard against drought and to provide improvements such as water facilities to enable the stock to be carried over a long period in the dry years.

Mr. Sparkes: And you have to consider the bush worker, too.

Mr. FOLEY: The average pastoral company adopts that attitude today. Recently representations were made to me in respect of a new lease for an area of country in the far-western cattle district. The lessees indicated that they proposed to embark upon a housing policy as well as a policy of tutoring the children of the workers, instead of depending upon the correspondence classes, which really required the mother to educate the children. They were going to appoint a tutor for the children.

Mr. Sparkes: They are able to do that.

Mr. FOLEY: On top of that, they were establishing a system of bursaries, so that when a child reached the stage at which it needed a secondary education, its parents could send it to an appropriate school.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307 and Sessional Orders agreed to by the House on 18 August, I shall now proceed to put the resolution under discussion and all other resolutions not already agreed to by the House.

Resolution 10—Department of Public Lands—agreed to.

Resolutions 11, 12, 13, 16 and 17 agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

OPENING OF COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton—Treasurer) (5 p.m.): I move—

“(a) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1948-1949, a further sum not exceeding £13,657,572 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(b) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1948-1949, a further sum not exceeding £12,660,847 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

“(c) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1948-1949, a further sum not exceeding £6,618,115 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(d) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1947-1948, a supplementary sum not exceeding £447,554 14s. 6d. be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(e) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1947-1948, a supplementary sum not exceeding £327,403 18s. 8d. be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

“(f) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1947-1948, a supplementary sum not exceeding £500,000 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(g) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1949-1950, a sum not exceeding £5,000,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(h) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1949-1950, a sum not exceeding £4,000,000 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

“(i) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1949-1950, a sum not exceeding £1,200,000 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.”

Motion agreed to.

Resolutions reported, received, and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 2.

FIRST READING.

Bill, founded on the resolutions reported from the Committee of Ways and Means, was introduced and read a first time.

SECOND READING.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton—Treasurer) (5.5 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

The Bill covers the Estimates-in-Chief for the financial year 1948-49, and the Supplementary Estimates for 1947-48, which already have been approved by the Committee of Supply.

The Bill will provide Supply for the present financial year and for a limited period in the next financial year, that is, until another Appropriation Bill is passed by Parliament. This Vote On Account, too, has been approved by the Committee.

The amounts provided in the Bill, which are shown in the schedule, are additional to sums already specifically provided by certain Acts of Parliament.

The lists of moneys specifically appropriated by Acts of Parliament are contained in Parts (A), (B), (C), (D) and (E) of the schedule.

The amounts in the Bill for which Supply has been granted are included in Parts (F), (G) and (H).

The Supplementary Estimates for 1947-48 are included in Parts I, J and K of the schedule.

For the convenience of hon. members, I submit a summarised statement of the proposed appropriations:—

Consolidated Revenue—		£
Total provision, as per		
Estimates	£31,442,430	
This sum includes statutory appropriations shown in the schedules A, B, C and Interest on the Public Debt (Schedule D) totalling	6,284,858	
The amount proposed to be appropriated in this Bill (as per Part F) is therefore	£25,157,572	
	£	
Trust and Special Funds—		
Total provision as per		
Estimates	£21,662,772	
This amount includes statutory appropriation (as shown in Schedule E)	1,925	
The amount proposed to be appropriated in this Bill (as per Part G) is therefore	£21,660,847	

Loan Fund—	£
Total provision, as per	
Estimates	£10,618,115
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The amount proposed to be	
appropriated in this Bill	
(as per Part H) is ..	£10,618,115

Supplementary Appropriation for Financial Year 1947-1948.

Parts I, J and K of the schedule of the Bill show the Supplementary Estimates appropriation items as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Consolidated Revenue	447,554	14	6
Trust and Special Funds	327,403	18	8
Loan Fund	500,000	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£1,274,958	13	2

I come now to that part of the Bill which seeks monetary provision in advance for the year 1949-1950.

The appropriations included in the Bill, and for which Parliamentary approval is sought on account of services for 1949-1950, that is, until a further Appropriation Bill is authorised by Parliament, are:—

	£	
(a) Consolidated Revenue Fund	£5,000,000	
(b) Trust and Special Funds	4,000,000	
(c) Loan Fund	1,200,000	
	<hr/>	
	£10,200,000	

The comparable amounts provided, in the Appropriation Act No. 2 of last financial year, on account of 1948-49, were:—

	£	
Consolidated Revenue Fund	4,500,000	
Trust and Special Funds ..	3,500,000	
Loan Fund	1,000,000	
	<hr/>	
	£9,000,000	

It will be noted that the increases asked for in respect of the year 1949-50 are:—

	£	
(a) Consolidated Revenue Fund	500,000	
(b) Trust and Special Funds	500,000	
(c) Loan Fund	200,000	
	<hr/>	
	£1,200,000	

The increases sought, on account, are not heavy and they merely reflect the growth of the State and its future needs. It is expected that there will be substantial increases in revenue during the period that these proposed appropriations cover.

It is not likely that the amount asked for will be fully expended, but the Treasury Department and the Government must play safe and must be in a position to meet all possible financial calls. In August of the present year, when the No. 1 Appropriation Bill was passed by Parliament, there was a substantial balance from the Appropriation Bill passed the previous year.

Mr. HILEY (Logan) (5.10 p.m.): At the outset I want to acknowledge to the House the courtesy of the Leader of the Opposition in extending to me the privilege of speaking first from this side of the House. The circumstances are that I should not be able to attend the function at which the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition will be present unless I spoke at this time. I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for facilitating that opportunity.

The clear purpose of the Bill introduced by the Treasurer is appropriation to cover requirements for next year particularly. The requirements of this year have been the subject of discussion at another stage and consequently there is no need for special comment here. With the requirements for next year and the extension of the requirements over last year I have not the slightest quarrel. It appears to be an extension well calculated to fit the increasing needs of the Public Service of this State.

There is one matter that I desire to bring before hon. members and I think this is an appropriate occasion to do so. It happens to be related to the privilege extended to members of this Parliament to address questions to Ministers and raises the question of your own control, Mr. Speaker, of those questions during the part of this session that has already expired.

Before setting out the facts that gave rise to this I propose to make some observations touching on the institution of questions generally and the practice that has grown up on the right to ask questions. W. I. Jennings, in his book "Parliament," gives a very informative summary of how the practice developed and I will read to you the essence of what he has to say. It is this—

"The practice of asking questions, though now of the utmost constitutional importance, is of comparatively recent origin. The first form of question was asked, apparently, in 1721, but the practice was not substantially developed until after 1832. The first question appeared on the notice paper in 1835 and a special part of the paper was not given to questions until 1869."

That is 10 years after this State was set up with separate constitutional responsibilities. The paragraph continues—

"Until 1886 all questions were put orally; but since the resolution of 1886, embodied in Standing Orders in 1888, questions are put simply by the member rising in his place and calling out the number of his question."

That covers a very brief history of the origin of questions and I should say, in spite of its relatively recent origin, question time has attained an importance that makes it one of the notable features of a modern Parliament. It appears to be one of the most useful methods of supervising the administration of the Government.

Campion at page 145 states in regard to questions to Ministers—

"Its effectiveness is generally recognised. Questions turn a searchlight up on every

corner of the Public Service. Their chief object is the explanation to the public of the meaning of political events and they are often arranged by the Government itself so as to give them an opportunity of making announcements in a somewhat informal way. They are serviceable as obviating the necessity in many instances of more extensive debate and of motions for papers."

I stress this point—

"Finally, questions afford to the private member under modern conditions almost his only opportunity."

In the House of Commons, as here, it has been found necessary to limit the right to ask questions and not only to limit their number but to limit the class of questions that become what is termed "star" questions. Under their procedure the practice is for an important question to be starred and the answer to such a question is given orally on the floor of the Chamber.

All other questions are printed on the notice paper and the replies appear in printed form on the next morning's notice paper, but there is neither oral delivery of the question nor of the reply.

It has been found necessary in the House of Commons to limit the number and subject matter of "star" questions and in addition it has been found necessary in the House of Commons to collect and to apply as precedents a number of Speakers' rulings that govern the form and subject matter of questions.

All these rulings on the form and subject matter of questions say that the essential requirements of a valid question are, first, that it shall be genuinely interrogative in its character. Once a question ceases to ask a question and is merely a declaration, it is not a question within the meaning of the term as it is used in Parliament.

The second essential requirement is that some degree of ministerial responsibility must be involved. In other words, if the matter does not touch the administrative responsibility of a Minister then it is not validly the subject of a question to be addressed as one of the privileges of questioning in the House. As Campion puts it at page 149, the first requirement is that a question shall be of a genuinely interrogative character and the rules under this heading set out a number of points, characteristic of the "question" which presumes too much upon the fact that it is introduced by the word "whether."

The second observation lays it down that a degree of ministerial responsibility must be involved, and he summarises it in this way—

"Putting these together, it may be said that to be in order a question should be genuinely directed to seeking information or pressing for action addressed to a Minister who is officially responsible for the matter with which it deals and framed in accordance with the rules of constitutional usage and Parliamentary etiquette."

I particularly draw the attention of the House to the fact that on the authority of Campion a question need not merely seek information. It is a proper question if it presses

for ministerial action. I want the House to observe that because that is germane to the illustration I propose to give later.

Here I propose to examine the question that was submitted by the hon. member for East Toowoomba on 29 October last, when he addressed to the Minister a question relating to the administration of the Housing Commission. That question, as addressed by him, read as follows:—

"Is it a fact that the Public Curator wrote to the Toowoomba City Council on 4 January, 1947, advising that on 12 December, 1946, the State Housing Commission had purchased for a consideration of £340 from one Eric Edward Goodall, an area of land, approximately 3 acres. . ."

and so on.

The question was divided into five sections. I have read the first. Paragraph (b), in fairly similar terms, approached consideration of a second lot of land which was alleged to have been purchased from some parties called Downes. Paragraphs (c) and (d) are not relevant to the matter here because they were not subject in any way to alteration or suppression, but Paragraph (e) said—

"In view of the Curator's action on behalf of the State Housing Commission, does the Minister still deny that the Commission acquired both areas of land?"

The House will observe that two paragraphs of the question begin by saying "Is it a fact?" Paragraphs (3) and (4) begin by saying, "Is the Minister aware?" There is an abundance of precedent for such a method. Campion says on page 149—

"The facts on which a question is based may be set out briefly. . . ."

I ask the House to observe this because I have observed a number of breaches of these requirements.

". . . provided the member makes himself responsible for their accuracy, but extracts from newspapers, quotations from speeches, &c., are not admissible."

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you will agree that you have been over-indulgent in regard to the submission of questions that quote extracts from newspapers—

Mr. SPEAKER: As a matter of fact, had I ruled them out there would have been notices of breach of privilege.

Mr. HILEY: And you would have been in the position of being able to rely on an eminent authority within the Empire. Sir Gilbert Campion, I believe, landed in Sydney today on a visit to this country, and I am not without hope that whilst he is in Australia members of this Parliament will have the chance to meet such a constitutional authority.

Jennings at page 93 says—

"Questions such as 'Is the Minister aware that' and 'Does he propose to take steps to deal with the matter?' are not uncommon."

As a matter of fact, directing your attention, Mr. Speaker, back to the earlier authorities I quoted, they stated that the purpose of a question in pressing for action is in the best parliamentary tradition. Obviously a question that begins "Is the Minister aware—?" is the well-accepted and traditional approach to a particular problem.

Mr. Power: The real approach of the Opposition is to use questions for political propaganda.

Mr. HILEY: The question of motive will always be the subject of suspicion and doubt. I am merely submitting at this stage argument on the question whether the submission of questions in that form is proper, and I say that the eminent authorities I have quoted show that there can be no doubt that a question that starts off, "Is the Minister aware of certain facts—?" and "What does he propose to do—?" is on the precedents quoted an exceedingly hallowed and well-followed precedent.

Mr. Dunstan: What about the Minister's reply?

Mr. HILEY: I shall deal with that later. Not only can that form of question be supported, but you, Mr. Speaker, permitted that part of the question in issue to remain. There is no suggestion that it was a factor leading to the disallowance or alteration of any part of the question.

The alteration of the hon. member's question fell into two categories. In Paragraph (a) you deleted the words

" . . . advising him that on 12 December, 1946, the State Housing Commission had purchased for a consideration of £340 . . . "

but you left in the name of the party, and you deleted

"an area of land, approximately three acres, situated in East Toowoomba, and after describing such land . . . "

In their place you summarised by saying—

"in regard to the purchase of certain land."

To the extent that the alteration expunged the stated price, area of the land, and alleged date of purchase, I should say that your action could be regarded as a reasonable condensation of the question and the elimination of unnecessary detail. I should also say that on the authorities there is abundant evidence that where a question is cluttered up with unnecessary or extraneous matters, it is your right and privilege to go through the contents of the question in order to state the essential facts. To that part of your action, I should say, examining it objectively, you could fairly be supported as having made a reasonable condensation of the hon. member's question.

Mr. Roberts: If you cannot quote extracts from a paper, can you quote extracts from a letter?

Mr. HILEY: It is not a matter I have examined. I consider that you can quote a summarised advice from a letter.

I have quoted fully the point contained in Campion at page 149. There is no observation there touching a letter written under the authority of the department concerned. It would appear that the endeavour by Sir William Campion was to put on record that Parliament was not concerned with what a newspaper said or an independent publication said, but something appearing under the hand of an officer that comes within ministerial control is different.

The point of alteration on which I join issue with you, Mr. Speaker, is where you struck out the part that the Public Curator had advised that the Housing Commission had purchased the land, and in striking out that assertion you substituted the words, "in relation to the purchase of certain lands." In doing that you completely emasculated that part of the question. It is a milk-and-water substitution of the words, "in relation to the purchase of certain lands" for the red-blooded declaration of the Public Curator that the Housing Commission had purchased the land. Therefore I submit there was no authority or precedent to authorise your action.

I come now to Paragraph (b), and I observe that for some completely inexplicable reason your alteration was wholly inconsistent with your alteration in Paragraph (a) in striking out the price and omitting the area. Paragraph (b) advises that the Public Curator had said that the Housing Commission had purchased. You allowed that to stand but you struck out that assertion from Paragraph (a). You allowed it to stand in all its glory in Paragraph (b). If such an assertion is improper in Paragraph (a), how is it that a similar assertion is repeated in Paragraph (b)? Paragraph (b) as it stands reinforces my argument that your decision in regard to Paragraph (a) was wrong. I have the highest authority for that contention, namely, your own action on Paragraph (b).

We pass now to consider Paragraph (c) of the question. That part of the question reads—

"In view of the Curator's action on behalf of the State Housing Commission, does the Minister still deny that the Commission acquired both areas of land?"

That part of the question was wholly omitted. On what grounds, may I ask? It clearly was related to new facts not previously before the House. It did not fall into the forbidden category of "repeating in substance questions already answered or to which an answer has been refused." It is true that a question had been asked concerning the purchase of land from Downes and Goodall, but those questions were in no way related to the Public Curator's advices—advices that burnt the last boat so far as the Housing Commission was concerned.

In any case you cannot have regarded the question as repeating in substance a question already answered. If you did, it was your duty to disallow the question, not to emasculate its form and content. Had you done so, the authorities make it clear that

your disallowance could not have been questioned. You did allow the question, but you materially altered its form. And there is where you were at fault. If a question contains a superfluous matter, you can condense. If it transgresses the rules concerning the form and subject-matter of questions, you can disallow. But you cannot strip a question of its essence and still allow the remainder of the question to stand.

Consider for a moment the consequence of the action which you took. You will agree that it is no part of a Speaker's duty to protect Ministers from embarrassing questions. You will agree that your duty, after all, is to the House as a whole and is not confined to any one section or any one individual in this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think you can accuse me of protecting Ministers from answering embarrassing questions.

Mr. Power: They do not want that protection.

Mr. HILEY: What I want to point out is that the effect of your alteration was to enable the Minister to avoid the call to furnish information clearly related to the administration of the department for which he is responsible.

Mr Power: A Minister is not bound to answer questions.

Mr HILEY: Exactly. You may point that out, but equally the public are entitled to draw their own conclusions from a Ministerial refusal to answer. If an answer is refused, they can weigh the refusal to answer. If it is answered, they can consider the answer. As a result of your alteration to the vital substance of the question, the Minister was placed in the position where he did not need to answer or refuse to answer the vital conclusion of the question. As a matter of fact, the Minister did not take full advantage of the let-out that was provided.

Mr. Power: He would not. Why should I? You cannot tell me you embarrassed me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HILEY: His reply left the public in no doubt that he was fearful of litigation and inferentially confirmed the implication of the original question submitted by the hon. member for East Toowoomba.

But to return to the alteration to the question. You, Mr. Speaker, stated to the House that the omitted portions of the question were of a purely personal nature and in your opinion not allowable. Personal to whom, may I ask? Personal in what way, may I ask? If you refer to the price, and the area and the date of the purchase, I say that these relate to matters of administration, and are in no way personal to the Minister or the member who inquired. If you refer to the allegation of notice of purchase in paragraph (a), this can by no stretch of imagination be regarded as personal. This went right to the kernel of an important aspect of the Minister's administration.

Coming to the last portion of the question, how can this be regarded as personal? It asked the Minister plainly whether he still denied that the commission had acquired the lands in question. Did he ask whether the Minister had personally acquired the land? Quite plainly, your contention, Mr. Speaker, of "personal nature" is quite unsupportable.

Still further, you contended, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for East Toowoomba had ample opportunity to obtain all the information he desired. By altering the question that opportunity was circumscribed if not completely defeated.

I want to say that I have generally great regard for the tolerance with which you administer the affairs of this House and for the general happy spirit that exists within this Chamber, but, Mr. Speaker, I do suggest that on reflection and when you come to review the circumstances of this case, and when you come to study, as I know you will, the authorities I have quoted, you will come to the conclusion that you have unwittingly circumscribed what I describe as one of the most important rights and privileges of hon. members.

I will content myself with these remarks, having stated the facts as objectively as I can, but before I close I have one further comment to make on this question of privilege. It is true that a question is very often asked by an hon. member provocatively, and I shed no tears when an hon. member asks a provocative question and looks for and receives a pretty caustic reply. After all, Ministers of the Crown do not cease to be human beings, and if you stir the personal resentment of a man you must be prepared to take what is coming to you. It has occurred to me that there have been occasions—I do not propose to quote the details—on which the privilege of replying to a question has been in terms of abuse.

I am not for one moment suggesting that there is not considerable abuse in the posing of questions. I say that from consideration of this matter you will be even firmer in the handling of certain questions, even if I submit that your handling of this particular question was an improper handling. But on the question of replies of Ministers may I draw your attention to what May says on page 341. I suggest that if you follow the precedents and in practice, as I agree you should, exercise a very careful control over the questions posed by hon. members, equally you should have some regard for the terms of the replies that are occasionally employed by Ministers when replying to questions.

Mr. SPEAKER: Ministers' replies, almost without exception, are free from any personal reflection on members asking the questions.

Mr. HILEY: If I felt there had been general abuse in relation to this matter my presentation of it would have been infinitely different from what it has. I agree entirely with that observation. What I am saying

in relation to ministerial replies is directed to that abuse which very occasionally disfigures Minister's replies to questions.

This is what May says—

“An answer should be confined to the points contained in the question, with such explanation only as renders the answer intelligible, though a certain latitude is permitted to Ministers of the Crown.”

I suggest that if that maxim laid down by May was invariably followed in this House some of the difficulties that occasionally give rise to heated tempers and misunderstandings on the floor of the Chamber would be avoided; and the House would then be a happier place than it usually is under your generally benign control.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (5.37 p.m.): In giving consideration to the Appropriation Bill now before the Chamber, and realising that the time for debate is limited by the Standing Orders and that it is impossible adequately to cover more than one subject at a time, I propose to confine my remarks to one particular subject, that is, rural electricity supply.

Before commencing, may I say that the amount of money allocated may seem a large one—it is perhaps a large amount—but as the hon. member for Logan stated, it is not an unduly large amount when we consider what has to be done in this State. I again emphasise the point that possibly the Treasurer will find it difficult to spend the amount of money we are providing for his various purposes on this occasion, on account of the shortages of man-power and material. That handicap to the Treasurer in carrying out his general activities is applicable to a great extent to the problem I am going to deal with today.

All hon. members will admit that rural electricity supply is one of the most vital needs of this State because it is the thing that will bring about the much-needed increased production quickly and cheaply. It will also tend to bring about the decentralisation of which the Treasurer made so much in his Budget Speech. The vital need for an adequate supply of electricity in country districts has been generally recognised by all members, but it is not easy to overcome the problems associated with that supply. To bring about this very desirable amenity in the country districts would assist very materially in increasing primary production by making possible the introduction of electrically operated farm machinery.

It would also make it possible for these amenities to be provided in country and farm homesteads, which would tend to raise the standard of comfort of people living in country districts and thus prevent, possibly turn, the unfortunate drift to the cities and more populous areas of this State that is seen on all sides. There is nothing that we can do more calculated to bring about a reversal of the grouping of population from the city to the country than to provide this greatest of all amenities, electricity, in country areas.

Any scheme of decentralisation that any Government could bring forward will remain still in the blue-print stage until potential settlers are convinced that by leaving the city they are not to be doomed to a primitive life deprived of what may be regarded as everyday necessities. Electricity is one such necessity and its extension to country areas, therefore, logically precedes decentralisation.

The development of our State has been brought largely, first of all, by the provision of such essential amenities as railway lines, roads and other means of communication. Is it not just as logical to provide electricity in country areas to encourage settlement there instead of waiting until settlement is there and then taking electricity to the people? As I said previously, there is nothing that would bring about decentralisation in this State and help to encourage more people to go to the country areas than an adequate supply of cheap electricity.

There are two aspects of the problem of providing a rural electricity supply that require consideration. One is the extension of the electricity supply into areas where the undertaking should be self-supporting, that is, where sufficient consumers exist or will exist in the immediate future to assure the financial success of the undertaking. The problem of supplying electricity under those conditions are not very great except on one point, with which I shall deal later, that to give the best service to the greatest number as quickly and as cheaply as possible is largely bound with the supply of material.

The other branch of the problem is the extension of electricity supply into the more remote areas where it is most probable that the undertaking would not be self-supporting, perhaps even certain that it could not be owing to the small numbers of consumers spread over a wide area. The problem here is essentially one of policy, followed later perhaps by one of material. One of the greatest difficulties to be overcome in rural electricity supply is the privilege of dealing with those areas outside what might be termed the economic range of reticulation lines.

First of all let me deal with the case of those areas where provision of an adequate supply is bound up with the availability of material. The serious effect of present production hold-ups is indicated by the latest report of the State Electricity Commission. This is something over which perhaps we may have some control in direction because the programme envisaged in regard to electricity extension in this State is being largely handicapped at the present time by serious hold-ups of material and when we look at the annual report of the commission we find this comment in regard to generating facilities—

“Very little new plant can be brought into use before early 1950 and it is clear that many items now on order and about to be ordered will not be in service until 1952.”

Hon. members will appreciate that we must keep our generating stations not only up to available load but over available load because an undertaking cannot be economically managed unless its generating station has a

reserve supply of equipment, and is able to take extra load beyond what is put on it today. If we had all generating stations working on capacity loads all the time, the risk of breakdown would be too great, and electric authorities try to avoid that risk.

An initial difficulty is the delay in the erection of power-house buildings owing to shortage of materials. As stated in the report, plant for generating stations at Howard, Rockhampton and Townsville "is now arriving and is being placed in store because the buildings are not ready to receive it, and the buildings are not ready primarily because of the severe shortage of structural and reinforcing steel, although every possible assistance has been given by the steel suppliers, Broken Hill Pty. Ltd." This is a serious state of affairs, that valuable and urgently needed plant should have to be stored possibly until 1950, as the report envisages, because of the lag in the production of essential building materials brought about by unnecessary hold-ups in the South, which have been accentuated by the policy of Governments in recent years, by such factors as the 40-hour week and by frequent disruption through strikes, mainly Communist-inspired, in the key industries that are responsible for the supply of these materials.

The Commonwealth Government in particular must accept a great deal of responsibility for this condition of affairs. The State Government also must accept their share because they also have fostered the 40-hour week, and introduced it into this State at the worst possible time for the State and for future development. The Federal Government must accept their responsibility for the shortage of materials because they are not prepared to govern, to take the necessary action to prevent these hold-ups that are so seriously affecting our production programme.

If the Treasurer and his Government were genuinely desirous of seeing development take place in Queensland, not only electrical development but all other avenues of development, they would be bringing constant pressure to bear on the Federal Government to make them live up to their responsibilities as a Government. Unfortunately, they sit down and sacrifice this State and the producers in country areas because they will not do anything that might embarrass the Federal Government politically. I must indict the Government on that point, because it is their responsibility as the Government of the State. It is something that the people of this State expect them to do, because they do not want to be held up to ransom continually, as they are at present by communistically-controlled key unions, which, if they are not the real Government of Australia, are certainly the virtual Government of Australia, for they set the standard of Government developmental programmes.

Mr. Barrows interjected.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. member for Port Curtis should be the last in this Chamber to raise his voice in protest against any condemnation of the Federal Government.

If there is any district in this State that is lagging behind as a result of inaction by the Federal Government in building up production of key materials essential in rural electrification it is the area represented by the hon. member. He knows how his district has been disadvantaged by the fact that the regional electricity board controlling the development of electricity in his area has been handicapped because it cannot get these materials from the South to erect power-houses.

Let us move on to the position in regard to transmission and distribution of equipment. Here the position is exactly the same. The report admits that—

"Continued shortages here have again restricted the extension of electricity supply throughout the State."

It goes on to say that—

"Orders placed for some types of insulators are seldom fulfilled within two years from Australian sources and other types are virtually unprocurable. Australian-made transformers are being offered on four to five years' delivery with no guarantee that they will be available even then. Orders have been placed overseas for many items to supplement local supplies, which at the present time are totally inadequate."

What a damning indictment of the inactivity of our Federal Government in this particularly serious matter? Yet the State Government are content to sit down and take it. They are not genuinely desirous of helping the development of this State and all they think of is political expediency. If they wish to retain the Treasury benches the best thing they can do politically is to stand up to the Federal Government, tell them where they get off and endeavour to ginger them up to do something in regard to the handling of this problem of shortage of materials.

The difficulty may once again be attributed directly to the lag in production through the same general causes, of which the 40-hour week and strikes are among the chief. Most of the blame here must fall on the Federal Government, whose policy, particularly in regard to industrial stoppages, has been a major factor contributing to the present position. It is, however, the duty of the State Government to use every means at their disposal to impress upon the Federal Government the urgent need for action to overcome these production hold-ups and so ensure a flow of materials which would allow speedy implementation of their plans for rural electricity development.

Many additional plans could be put into operation if only materials could be had. What a tragedy it is to think that in a country such as Australia, where we have everything we desire—ample supplies of coal and the other necessary minerals and the manufacturing plant—we lack a Government who have the will-power to get the productive capacity of this country into top gear. Until we have a Government prepared to do that, we shall be in the position we are today. What hope have we of seeing these plans for rural

electricity development and decentralisation brought to fruition in this State, a State that can be regarded as the Queen State of the Commonwealth? It is the State we hear hon. members on the other side talk about so much but they do so little to put this aim into effect.

I turn now to the other aspect of the problem, that is, the supply of electricity in more remote areas where such an undertaking could not be expected to be self-supporting. I admit that this is a difficult problem, but it is one that can be tackled if the Government have the will and the desire to do it. The State Electricity Commission has considered this question in relation to Western Queensland, and sums the matter up in its report by saying—

“It is apparent that even under the most favourable conditions undertakings in the smaller towns and townships cannot be self-supporting and at the same time offer charges to enable consumers to pay for the use of electricity for the many purposes to which it should be put.”

The same position, of course, arises in sparsely settled districts outside townships, and is not confined to the western areas of the State. In fact, it is not peculiar to Queensland. The problem is being posed in virtually every settled area in the world, but it is a problem that is being tackled, and solved, in other areas.

Up to the present we have made major advances in electrical development in this State, but unfortunately the Government are not yet prepared to go quite far enough in dealing with areas outside the economic range of electrical supply.

Mr. Larcombe: You would like a special subsidy in the West?

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes. Under the present system subsidies are made available for those parts of the State covered by the activities of regional boards. In Brisbane there is the City Electric Light Company Ltd., but you get no such assistance from the Government for areas outside the economic range. The position that arises in those areas may, perhaps, be compared to that which arose in connection with the extension of railways into areas where the lines were not expected to pay but were constructed to open up large areas of country and bring facilities to those who had settled there.

The same has been done in connection with the construction of roads. We have constructed developmental roads in country areas with the idea of increasing development. The Government have subsidised local authorities in order to help them build roads. Can we not do the same thing in connection with electricity supply? Cannot the State carry the responsibility of constructing the transmission lines and bearing a proportion of the maintenance cost until the areas are sufficiently developed to carry the responsibility themselves? It would be a good investment and one that would pay dividends for the State.

In its annual report the State Electricity Commission says, on page 17, when dealing with the burden of the economic problem in relation to sub-standard areas—

“Even without this additional burden upon the industry, rising costs and extension of supply into less closely settled areas are imposing severe economic burdens, which can be relieved only by a liberal application of the subsidy scheme and by increased tariffs.”

The problem, I repeat, is not one peculiar to Queensland; it is common to all countries interested in rural development. It is interesting to note the comments and the investigations that have been made into this problem in other parts of the world. Recently in Victoria a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into electricity supplies in that State. It was realised that there were certain areas outside the economic range of the Victorian State Electricity Commission and the report of the commission stated—

“Experience in other States and other countries confirms our finding that a substantial extension of service in rural areas would probably involve annual loss.”

The commission examined what had been done elsewhere to meet the problem. We find that in the U.S.A. the Federal Government established the Rural Electrification Authority, called for short the R.E.A., which in conjunction with the Tennessee Valley Authority and private authorities increased electrification of farms from 11 per cent. in 1936 to 57 per cent. in 1947. That was done by making advances to private undertakings, with preference to co-operative societies, municipalities, and other public bodies. Its loans were repayable over long terms of about 35 years.

In the Province of Ontario, Canada, also, the problem was attacked. We find that there the Government finds 50 per cent. of the capital cost of lines and equipment and guarantees the Hydro-Electric Power Commission against loss due to the fixation of a maximum charge for service or the conceding of a reduced charge to benefit farmers in sparsely settled and less fertile districts. By a post-war five-year plan it is hoped to supply 85 per cent. of all rural consumers and 84 per cent. of all farmers in the province.

In New Zealand they have a fund made up of levies upon electrical authorities and administered by the Rural Electrical Reticulation Council, which grants subsidies towards the annual cost of supplying electricity to consumers in sparsely settled areas. It is noteworthy that 95 per cent. of the population receive electricity supply and 99 per cent. of the milking plants are electrically operated.

This matter is also being examined in our own State. In the annual report of the State Electricity Commission, Mr. Cochran examines the problem from various angles. There are three ways in which assistance can

be granted to bring about the better electrification of rural areas. It could be by means of a Government subsidy; it could be by the institution of uniform tariffs throughout the State, or it could be by means of contributions towards capital costs and also annual costs by both Federal and State Governments.

Let us look at the problem from the point of view of Government subsidy. We in this State have a system of regional board areas under which Government subsidies are paid and the lines are extended into the various areas served. Last year the amount paid by the Government in subsidy to the various boards amounted to £9,606. That is not a great amount, but it was due to the fact that not a great deal of extension work took place in the board areas owing to the supply position.

When we look at the question of subsidy I again draw the attention of the House to the fact that the most populous part of the State served under franchise by the City Electric Light Company is denied any assistance by way of subsidy because of the Government's policy, which is definitely against the system of private companies.

Mr. Burrows: Do you favour the subsidising of the city consumer?

Mr. Nicklin: Not at all; I am not suggesting anything of that kind. We have worked on the principle of the city consumer's helping to give the country consumer an electrical supply, which is the proper and correct way. After all, if you can by a slight increase in the tariff in the big city areas help to carry electricity into the country areas, it is proper to do so. The question is connected with that of uniform tariffs, and in his report Mr. Cochran says that his analysis shows that to reduce the tariffs throughout the State to the level of those at present operating in Brisbane would mean an annual subsidy of £500,000; and if the tariffs in the Capricornia region were to be made uniform with those in Rockhampton a contribution of £17,000 per annum would be necessary.

On examining the question of uniform tariffs in other parts of the world and in other States of the Commonwealth we find that system is not favoured and is not practicable under conditions where such a large area is to be supplied as we have in Queensland and in other States of the Commonwealth.

We now come to the alternative I mentioned, of contributions from Government sources. Federal and State Governments must accept the responsibility in this matter because after all at the present time, with our system of uniform taxation, the Commonwealth Government have very large revenues, which should be used for the development of the distant parts of the Commonwealth. No better avenue of development could be found than rural electricity supply, and the Commonwealth Government, in common with the State Government, should make a contribution to help rural electrification. It would be

money well spent if they could be persuaded to disgorge some of the surplus revenue they have at the present time.

This is a problem that warrants the closest investigation. I suggest that this matter should receive urgent consideration by the Government along the lines of appointing an expert committee to inquire into the problem.

Taking into account the factors I have mentioned and what has been done in other parts of the world and the need for collating the available information with the idea of getting a recommendation to the Government that would help solve this important developmental problem of rural electricity supply, I would suggest the appointment of a committee of inquiry, the committee to be appointed to consist of the State Electricity Commissioner, Mr. Cochran, a man who perhaps has a better picture of the State's electricity requirements than any other man in the State, a man who has all the business in connection with electricity supply in Queensland at his fingertips; the manager of the City Electric Light Company, Mr. Cornwall, who has an invaluable knowledge as an electrical engineer in Queensland; and a third member. For this third member I suggest a man from overseas and that we look for him in America. Possibly an electrical engineer of the Tennessee Valley Authority might be invited to Queensland.

Mr. Aikens: Why not a man from Great Britain, where they have the greatest grid system in the world?

Mr. Nicklin: The reason why I would not recommend a man from Great Britain is that Great Britain has not the vast distances to cope with that we have here, and the problems associated with the development of the Tennessee Valley in the United States of America are more comparable with ours. I suggest that if we could get a man from the Tennessee Valley Authority, he would be an ideal man, in conjunction with Messrs. Cochran and Cornwall, to go into this matter. I feel certain the recommendations they would make would be very valuable as far as the development of electricity in Queensland is concerned.

The whole question of a rural electricity supply is one of importance and urgency, and no stone must be left unturned in achieving the desired end, as on it so much of Queensland's future development depends. I know that the Treasurer is just as keen as any other hon. member to see the development of Queensland take place as rapidly as possible, and as I emphasised at the commencement of my speech, rural electricity supply is very closely bound up with the development of Queensland and the decentralisation of the population of this State. I submit to the Treasurer the suggestions I have made for handling this urgent problem and I trust that he and his Government will take some action to help give the rural areas of the State a very much needed and deserved electricity supply.

Mr. Burrows (Port Curtis) (7.29 p.m.): I have listened attentively to the remarks of the hon. gentleman and his suggestion that

the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board in my district was unable to operate because of the shortage of materials. Throughout the discussion on the Estimates I listened in vain for some approach by hon. members of the Opposition to this question of shortages, apart from the propaganda aspect and more from the national outlook. I have emphasised that the basis of all our economy and supply of our shortages lies in production of coal.

I fully expected that if the Opposition were sincere they would have made some effort towards relieving these shortages, not only of steel and other necessary building materials but the things required by the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board quoted by the Leader of the Opposition, which he threw back at me in response to an interjection I made.

The whole economy of our State revolves round the coal question. The farmer is short of wire. If he had more wire he might be able to improve his pastures and perhaps produce a little more butter. The grazier is in the same position. I do not think that there is one material in short supply that cannot be traced back to coal in the first instance.

Mr. Sparkes: What is the reason for the shortage of coal?

Mr. BURROWS: The demand for coal is increasing every day. The coal consumed by the various electric authorities has increased by a steady 10 per cent. annually over the last few years and present indications are that the consumption is not likely to decrease. As I said before, I have been reliably informed that if Courtaulds come to Brisbane they will be requiring another 100,000 tons of coal a year.

We have to face up to facts. Whether it suits us or not, we have to be big enough to state facts when they have such an important bearing on the future economy of the State.

In analysing the production of coal today we have to remember that the ash content has increased considerably over the past few years and this discounts to some extent the increase in coal production. I have given this matter as much consideration as any hon. member and I cannot see how we shall have any possible chance of producing enough coal to meet demands unless we develop the Central Queensland coalfields. We know that an agreement has been entered into for the development of Blair Athol, but nobody has yet been able to convince me that it is possible for that company, even with all the luck in the world, to reach more or less expected production for a number of years yet.

In the last few weeks we have demonstrated that it is possible to exploit the Callide field by using road transport. Although I have spoken quite a lot during this session on this question, I feel that I should be neglecting my duty if I did not urge the construction of at least 35 miles of railway line in the Calliope Valley with the object of connecting the Callide coalfield. That line

could go on to the Dawson Valley line and connect from a point approximately at Rannes with the Central Western line, and except for the last 40 or 50 miles to Gladstone would travel for approximately 330 miles over the coal beds. It would cover the Callide, the Bluff, the Baralaba, and Blair Athol coalfields, and this would mean that each would have direct rail communication with a good port.

But time is the essence of the contract, and we shall have to depend on road transport to meet our immediate needs. When I say that I do not mean Queensland's immediate needs, I mean the needs of Victoria and South Australia, which to a limited extent today are being supplied by starving the heavy industries of New South Wales. We have the anomalous position of the Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd., which owns its own collieries, having to send part of its colliery output to Victoria in order to maintain essential services there. By sending that coal to Victoria that company has to restrict its output of essential goods, goods so badly needed throughout Australia today. That is the most alarming and distressing point attaching to the coal shortage that exists.

It is very difficult to get a full appreciation of the significance of this shortage, but I submit that Queensland has a duty to relieve the New South Wales mines of that obligation to supply the Southern States. Even though it may be a little more expensive to cart coal by road than by rail—and we have not got the rail—economy of time rather than of money is the point we must consider. The price for which that coal could be got on to the wharves at Gladstone is not prohibitive; if it were, we should have to take into consideration that it would be the means of keeping the wheels of industry in the Southern States in motion, and unless those wheels of industry are kept continuously moving for a good while to come we cannot hope to get out of this living-from-hand-to-mouth and waiting-for-the-next-ship-to-arrive attitude by which we get half of what we really require and because of which we adopt all sorts of alternative and expensive methods, none of which is satisfactory.

We are all complacent, we are all happy. Even on the business sheet of this House there is a motion in the name of the Leader of the Queensland People's Party with reference to the construction of certain railway lines but what activity has been shown in connection with it, except the publicity to be gained by having the name of the leader of the party associated with the motion.

Mr. Morris: It is not our fault that the motion has not been discussed.

Mr. BURROWS: I have not the time now to answer the hon. member's interjection, except to say that his party is quite capable of making its contribution towards the stonewalling and time-wasting tactics adopted in this House, especially during this session.

As I said before, there is a complacent attitude in respect of the solution of the coal problem that can be summed up in the

words, "Blair Athol will produce it some day and we shall be all right." The Blair Athol proposal is a grandiose idea but as has been repeatedly said here, envisages the transport of coal to a point somewhere on the coast between West Molle Island north of Mackay and a southernmost point just this side of Mackay. If we are to wait until that line is built, we are going to wait—

Mr. Aikens: All of us will have long grey beards.

Mr. BURROWS: I am afraid we shall have passed the stage when we can grow beards.

We must face the facts. I have discussed this matter with people of all political shades of opinion and all agree that something ought to be done at once. So far I have not heard any suggestion from the other side of the House. I have made up my mind that in the few minutes of the time left to me in this debate I will take the opportunity of reminding the House that the problem, if not completely solved, can be greatly relieved by building perhaps 35 miles of the first section of this line with the object of continuing it later to link up not only the Callide area but also the coal-bearing areas of Baralaba, the Bluff, and Blair Athol.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (7.44 p.m.): I rise to make some observations on the coal-mining industry in Queensland. Whatever may be said about the industry it cannot be said that at any period of its history it has failed to supply sufficient coal to keep our secondary and other industries operating in this State. It is true that perhaps we have not developed and have not managed the industry as wisely as we should but those in the industry in Queensland, the workers, the managers, and the proprietors, have never failed to deliver the goods.

It is true that our coal industry has sprung from a very lowly start and many of its difficulties can be traced to that lowly start. In the time of the depression coal-miners could not get sufficient work to keep their children in the living conditions they desired and consequently had to supplement their small earnings from relief by going out and digging holes in the ground to get coal.

It is true, too, that generally speaking our coal-mining industry is poor. That is to say, it is not run by wealthy companies. It is also true that its development has to some extent been retarded by its methods of working. We have had companies that have wished to install machines and thus adopt some form of mechanisation, but the demand for the product has been so small compared with the expense of the necessary equipment to modernise the mines that they have had to go along as they best could.

Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties, the production of coal in Queensland last year was a record, no less than 1,833,414 tons being mined in the aggregate. A record was established also in the number of men employed. We have about 90 to 100 collieries in Queensland, including three State collieries

that produce over 14 per cent. of the total coal production. One State colliery at Collinsville, to which the leader of the experts from Powell Duffryn Technical Services Ltd. paid a glowing tribute, contributed over 11 per cent. of the total coal production of the State.

Our coal export trade will not be as great this year as it was in the past. Last year 65,594 tons of coal was exported—compared with 60,569 tons in 1947. Strange to say, coal has been imported into Queensland from the New South Wales collieries. In 1946 we imported 18,704 tons and in 1947 we imported 16,346 tons. That may be very surprising news, not only to quite a number of hon. members but also to the public. Nevertheless it is a fact that we are still importing coal, while industries in New South Wales and the other States, because of a coal shortage in the South, are severely handicapped.

Our Railway Department is our greatest consumer of coal, using 34.51 per cent. of the total consumption in the State. It is at a great disadvantage inasmuch as while private enterprise is able to build up stocks of coal, it is compelled to draw coal from Blair Athol in order to keep going. I do ask those people who are prone to criticise the railways to recognise the service that the railways are giving in this connection to private industry. It is a service and it makes it difficult for the railways to balance their budget but it is a policy that can be justified because it enables private consumers to get their supplies at reasonable cost and so helps to keep the economy of the State going.

A very important matter in winning coal is explosives, which are indispensable to the miners in their work. During the past year almost 1,000,000 shots—to be exact 949,133—were fired, which means that 949,133 holes had to be bored before these shots could be fired. That represents a tremendous amount of energy and time, especially when you take into consideration the fact that in the main the miners have no mechanical assistance in this work.

Mr. Aikens: How many mis-shots are there?

Mr. DONALD: The number of mis-shots recorded is very low.

That can be verified by reading the report from the Department of Mines. Mis-shots have to be reported and a return has to be sent to the inspector's office. The percentage of mis-shots is so low that it is regarded by the inspectors as being too good to be believed. I am not going to say whether it is correct or not, but I do say that the percentage of mis-shots is very low.

Mr. Aikens: How are they fired?

Mr. DONALD: Mainly by fuse. Very few places have electric current. For these 949,133 shots the holes have to be bored to take the explosives and in the main they have to be bored by hand.

When we talk of mechanising the mines we meet with opposition from people who say that the great percentage of our mines

could not be fully mechanised. While this may be true, many could be equipped with electrical boring machines, even where electrical current is not available, as there are reputable boring machines that could be worked from a battery. If the miners had the assistance of electrical boring machines or boring machines driven by compressed air, it would help them considerably.

Returns furnished by mine managers as to the amounts of explosives used, and the amount of coal produced per lb. of explosives, make interesting reading. We have open-cut mines at Blair Athol and it may surprise hon. members to know that more explosives are used there to produce a ton of coal than in other mines. The tonnage of coal produced per lb. of explosives used is as follows:—

	Tons per lb. of Explosives.
Mount Mulligan	5.04
Bowen	4.20
Maryborough	3.09
Ipswich	2.84
Clermont (which includes open-cut mines)	2.89

Mr. Kerr: They must be pretty poor powder monkeys up there.

Mr. DONALD: It is not that. It is the fact that a good deal of overburden has to be removed, which calls for the use of explosives, and when the coal is shot down explosives have to be used again to break it up to make it small enough to be handled. That is how we get the low percentage of coal per lb. of explosive at Blair Athol.

As I said in my opening remarks, in the past the coal industry has done its job of supplying the nation's needs, great as they are, so well that until comparatively recent times many people did not know where coal came from.

Changes in the nation's economic structure and technological development, accelerated greatly in times of war, are demanding an urgent change of the industry from the old pick-and-shovel concept to a highly mechanised complexity with a radical departure from the generally accepted methods and practices. This necessitates the employment in coal-mining as well as in industries in general, of energetic, courageous, and visionary young men to plan for the future. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the question arises: what can be done to attract young men to the coal-mining industry? This is one of the industry's most serious problems, requiring immediate and wholehearted attention, so as to enable us to get the maximum benefit from the industry.

We of the industry are aware of this and have taken some steps to improve the position. Both the colliery employers and the Miners' Federation have responded to the appeal to train young men to handle the industry in the future by making available to the Ipswich Technical College a sum of money to provide three bursaries for those

willing to study and become colliery managers. This is a step in the right direction, but it is very limited.

More production per man or per unit can be achieved by careful recruitment, increased mechanisation, improved methods that make the best use of man-power and conservation of man-power through safety. That is one of the things that must be recognised—the importance of the safety of the men and of making the conditions comfortable is often lost sight of and a great deal of energy and man-power is thereby wasted.

It has been decided to set up a Coal Board in Queensland. That is a very significant fact and is a step in the right direction. The establishment of a Coal Board in New South Wales and a Coal Board in Great Britain has resulted in beneficial results to the industry. It has been shown that the establishment of such a board has immediately increased production, not only in the aggregate but of the miner at the coal face and the people employed throughout the industry.

I have only three minutes more at my disposal and I wish to correct the general impression that the nationalisation of the coal industry in Britain has resulted in a reduction in output. It has had the opposite effect. The British Government were forced to nationalise the industry in order to save the industry and Britain from economic loss. I have here the first report of the National Coal Board. It is stated in an article on the subject—

“Two basic facts stand out in the National Coal Board's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 1947, published on July 13.”

Some critic stated that the nationalisation of the industry in Great Britain would mean a decrease in output.

This extract continues—

“One is that in 1947 British mines produced six million tons more than in 1946, an increase of about three and a half per cent. The other is that the number of workers in the industry increased by 26,000 during the year, compared with a decrease of 4,000 in 1946. Absenteeism went down and O.M.S. went up.”

This means that under nationalisation the industry is being better managed and the employees are getting better conditions, better pay and better amenities, and they are attracting people to the industry instead of driving them away. As the costs came down, output per man shift went up.

This article continues—

“In 1947, they point out, they had to do many things at once. They had to take over the various staffs and the multitudinous assets of their predecessors. They had to run the industry, and run it at a most difficult time; and they had to begin to plan for the future. . . .

“In a year which began with the fuel crisis and ended with the resumption of exports, everything possible was done to increase output; more labour was taken

on—British and foreign—and trained; more machinery was installed, and both men and machines were concentrated where they could produce more coal. Efforts were made to produce cleaner coal. Coal was imported from America and Poland.”

The increase in cost was due to the importation of coal from America and Poland.

It continues—

“Plans were made to avoid a transport crisis in the winter, and the resumption of exports meant lengthy negotiations with overseas customers. During all this activity the Board had also to be thinking of the future. Research organisations and planning staffs were set up; detailed reconstruction schemes were worked out; work was begun on a new price structure, and the outline of a co-ordinated plan for the future development of the industry began to take shape.”

“Next, the Board turn to the increased output during the first year.

“In 1947 the British coalmines produced 187,000,000 tons of coal. This output was 6,000,000 tons more than the mines produced in 1946, an increase of about 3½ per cent. With the 10,000,000 tons produced from the Government’s opencast sites it made a total saleable output for the country of 197,000,000 tons, compared with the target of 200,000,000 tons which was set by the Government in February, 1947. Only 5,400,000 tons of this total were exported (including ships’ bunkers). Consumers’ stocks increased during the year by about 8,000,000 tons.”

At 8 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the provisions of Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 18 August, I now call upon the Treasurer to speak in reply, after which I shall proceed to put the question for the second reading of the Bill and all other questions necessary for the passage of the remaining stages of the Bill.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton—Treasurer), in reply: I shall make brief reply to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Logan. From the viewpoint of Labour’s financial administration, no reply is called for, because there was no criticism of the financial administration of the Government. I do not want to draw that argument too tightly, nor do I want to draw unfair inferences from it. However, I am pleased that there was no criticism of the financial policy of the Government on the second reading of this Bill.

The hon. member for Logan discussed Parliamentary questions and Mr. Speaker’s ruling. He discussed the origin and history of Parliamentary questions, and on that historical background he built up a structure of reasoning to support his arguments in favour of a disagreement with Mr. Speaker’s ruling in connection with a question asked by the hon. member for East Toowoomba. While I appreciate the general tenor and the outline of his speech, I do not agree with his conclusion. As a matter of fact, in the impartial way in which he handled the question, he proved

too much. He said that as a result of the Speaker’s ruling there was no disadvantage to the hon. member for East Toowoomba because the Minister who replied did not attempt to take any advantage of the change in the form of the question; so from the practical viewpoint there was nothing that could be urged against the ruling of Mr. Speaker. The question was answered in the way that it would have been had it been submitted in its original form.

I am not going to discuss in detail the question or the ruling, but I should like to say that the hon. member for Logan quoted precedent, authority, and tradition. I have great respect for those factors in Parliamentary institutions, but we can claim too much for them. If I may use the term, we can over-respect them. Whilst we can give the fullest consideration to tradition, authority, and custom, we should not allow them to dominate our outlook and our proceedings in a democratic country like Queensland.

Some of those authorities, admittedly very eminent, very distinguished, have a very conservative outlook on life, on Parliamentary affairs, and on society. I am wondering what the authority quoted by the hon. member for Logan would have said about our experiment here in unicameral Government, in one Chamber, the abolition of the Legislative Council. I wonder whether the authority quoted by the hon. member for Logan would have condemned roundly and strongly the abolition of the Legislative Council.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: Against the wishes of the people.

Mr. LARCOMBE: Yet hon. members opposite were in power for three years and they did not re-establish the Legislative Council. Imitation is the best form of flattery. The Opposition confirmed the policy of the Labour Government by allowing the Legislative Council to remain out of existence and perpetuated our unicameral system of Government.

Mr. Sparkes: They did a good job in Victoria.

Mr. Luckins: They still have it in New South Wales and Victoria.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The other States lag behind Queensland. We stand out in advance. It is almost impossible to abolish the Legislative Council in other parts of Australia because of the property qualification for Upper House elections there; they cannot get their Legislative Councils to vote for their own abolition.

We could not get the Legislative Council to vote for its own abolition in Queensland but it was owing to the courage and determination and ability of the late T. J. Ryan and Mr. E. G. Theodore and other stalwarts of the Labour Party that the abolition of the Legislative Council came about in this State. It came about in one of the greatest parliamentary and constitutional fights waged in the British Empire during that period. The Labour Party was successful when the question was taken not only to the High Court of Australia but to the Privy Council. It

was the constitutional ability and legal experience of the late T. J. Ryan that helped to win that case.

Mr. Luckins interjected.

Mr. LARCOMBE: In reply to the hon. member for Maree I would say that the Legislative Council was a destructive, obstructive House and not a revising Chamber at all. Here is one instance. The Council sent the Workers' Compensation Bill back to the Legislative Assembly including a certain amendment which it thought would destroy the principle of monopoly in workers' compensation. The Labour Government accepted the amendment, the Bill became law, and it was found that this so-called revising Chamber, with its constitutional and legal authorities, had made a great mistake. The late T. J. Ryan and his co-constitutional authorities accepted the amendment. The Bill became law and it was taken to the courts. It was proved to be constitutionally and legally sound. As a revising Chamber the Legislative Council failed.

Mr. Morris: Where was the great mistake?

Mr. LARCOMBE: In the Council's believing that it had destroyed the principle of monopoly when it really established it by its very amendment. The Ryan Government said, "We will accept the amendment," and instead of destroying the principle of monopoly it really established the principle stronger than ever.

Mr. Luckins: It made it safe for the Labour Party to gain each election after that.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The fact that we won every election with one exception is confirmation of the wisdom of our action. We have so won the esteem and respect of the people of Queensland that they will not support any other party; Labour has become the established policy in Queensland. In other States and in other parts of the world Labour Governments have come and gone but Labour continues in office in Queensland.

I do not forget that with one exception we have won every election in Queensland since 1915. We won in 1932 even on the re-distribution of seats that was brought about by the party opposite when in power and when they had amended the Elections Act and reduced the number of members of Parliament. In that respect let me say that hon. members opposite talk about decentralisation but the very fact that in 1932 they wiped out country seats and not metropolitan seats shows them to be a centralisation party. Yet they claim to be a Country Party! In Queensland we are young, strong, democratic and progressive and we will not tie ourselves to tradition, authority, and precedent from the older countries of the world where that authority is very often conservative and out of tune with the democratic development of Queensland.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: You would be unhappy without the traditions of the British Empire.

Mr. LARCOMBE: We have great respect for the traditions of the British Empire but not for the traditions of men paid to buttress and tie us to something obsolete and something that existed 200 or 300 years ago.

I pass on to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. He has discovered that we have rural electricity in Queensland—a new political Columbus, just as he and his colleagues discovered that we have main roads in Queensland. I would not take the party political viewpoint in this debate if it had not been for the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. If he had spoken before the tea adjournment as he did after it, I would not be speaking in this vein but he made a party political issue of the question and I am going to reply to him in his own political language. The Labour Government passed the State Electricity Commission Act in 1937—11 years ago.

Mr. Sparkes: We have not got the electricity yet.

Mr. LARCOMBE: We have got the electricity. I shall deal with that aspect of the matter in a moment. Electricity supplies are controlled and regulated by a body that is carrying out important functions and one that has very wide powers and is a great reformer. After the Act was passed we established the State Electricity Commission and the Commissioner has done a very fine job for Queensland.

Not only did we establish the State Electricity Commission but we have also established regional electricity boards. In carrying out this policy the Labour Government have brought about decentralisation of rural electricity. Years ago we constituted regional electricity boards and they are doing very fine work in various parts of the State.

Mr. Nicklin: They would if they could get the material.

Mr. LARCOMBE: They have done good work but I agree that they are handicapped by the shortage of material. I will deal with that aspect of the matter in a moment, too. The regional electricity boards have been able to supply electrical goods to the community at very reasonable prices. I should like to emphasise what I said by way of interjection to the Leader of the Opposition, that the Government have granted subsidies for rural electrification throughout Queensland.

Mr. Low: We do not get that in Southern Queensland.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I am now replying to the argument advanced by the Leader of the Opposition in regard to rural electrification. The Government offer subsidies up to 50 per cent. of the cost in western areas. Could anything be more generous than that. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the United States of America, England, and other parts of the world. Why go to other countries when

in Queensland today we have a scheme that provides for a grant of 50 per cent. of the cost in various parts of the State.

Mr. Nicklin: A whole £9,000 a year.

Mr. LARCOMBE: It is no fault of the Government if the scheme is not taken advantage of. The Government cannot be blamed for that. The scheme is available for local authorities that desire to carry out this work.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that an expert committee should be set up to investigate the question of rural electrification. We do not need a committee to tell us that it is necessary. We know that supplies are short and we can cope with the problem as soon as we can overcome the shortage of supplies.

Mr. Nicklin: A supply of material will not overcome the difficulty of supplying electricity to sub-standard areas.

Mr. LARCOMBE: We have a very capable Commissioner, quite competent of investigating matters submitted to him by the Government and I see no reason why there should be superimposed on him a special committee to investigate rural electrification. We have regional electricity boards that can carry out the work effectively in many parts of the State. The Leader of the Opposition constantly complains about boards and bureaucrats and now he wants to appoint more boards and more bureaucrats.

Mr. Nicklin: Purely in an advisory capacity, to investigate and advise.

Mr. LARCOMBE: We obtained an immense amount of information on the subject and we can obtain more too. The State Electricity Commissioner has visited the other side of the world and he can do so again if necessary. We do not want to duplicate what has been done by the Commission.

I want to emphasise in regard to rural areas that a subsidy ranging up to 33-1/3rd per cent. and in western areas a subsidy of 50 per cent. are paid by the Government. Again, for the benefit of hon. members, I would refer them to page 25 of the Treasurer's Financial Statement, where they will find some interesting information with respect to Government subsidies. It is stated there—

“Adequate funds are being provided to enable the Electricity Commission and the Regional Electricity Boards to push on vigorously with schemes which they have in hand, and Government subsidies are being granted for much of this work. The programme for the current year, which will be financed from loans to be made available to Regional Electricity Boards and Local Authorities, under State guarantee, is expected to involve an expenditure of £3,800,000.

“The estimated cost of the works in progress, and the contemplated developmental works planned by Electricity Boards and Local Authorities, is approximately £13,000,000.”

The position has developed beyond the blueprint stage and much work has been accomplished.

Again—and this is in reply to an interjection by the hon. member for Aubigny—it is stated in the Financial Statement—

“Proof of the progress of the electricity supply industry is contained in the fact that the number of consumers in 1947 was 205,300, as compared with 187,260 in 1945. In 1947, 425,000,000 units of electricity were sold as compared with 371,000,000 in 1945.”

We therefore find that enormous progress has taken place since the establishment of the State Electricity Commission. We find, too, that after the establishment of the central system we have decentralised it by the establishment of regional electricity boards and carried out those works which have been suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. After all, his statements amount to only lip-service. We have reached the point of action and materialised in action what we promised years ago.

Mr. Nicklin: Most of the regional electricity boards have reached the point of inaction because of lack of materials.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The hon. gentleman is quite wrong, but I will deal with that point in a moment. I want to emphasise the fact that sugar-cane prices legislation was demanded by the sugar farmers, yet no action was taken by the party represented by hon. members opposite. It remained for a Labour Government to put such legislation into effect. The Leader of the Opposition of the day, now Sir Edward Macartney, on that occasion said that such legislation would splinter every principal plank of the party's platform if it was adopted. The same cold shoulder was given to the establishment of a Main Roads Commission, to the request for Primary Producers' Organisation Acts, to the legislation guaranteeing prices to primary producers for their products, to the Mt. Isa guarantee, to the Upper Burnett-Callide land-settlement scheme, and other schemes that tended to decentralise and foster the interests of the producers.

Mr. Sparkes: I know a farmer who is only four miles from a transmission line who has offered £1,000 to be connected with electricity supply and cannot get it.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I know the position is difficult. That is due in the main to shortages of supplies. That there are shortages is very regrettable. We all agree that it is very unfortunate that there should be industrial upheavals and coal should be in limited supply, and that the output of steel should be limited. The State Electricity Commission has suffered in common with others from the shortages of materials. The Government have continually and strongly made efforts to overcome these shortages. They have done much in that direction and have obtained steel that otherwise might not be obtained. They have also been successful in obtaining other material not only from the other States but from other parts of the world. For years they have been planning.

Mr. Nicklin: I notice that the steamer "Royal Park," which was to have brought a cargo of steel here, is now going in the wrong direction.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The Leader of the Opposition constantly blames the workers for industrial upheavals and interruptions. I have never heard him blame the employer or the monopolistic interests. Take John Brown, of the coal industry. For years he refused reasonable amenities to the workers and he refused protective legislation, and miners were killed in many instances and others were maimed, and Brown said he could not afford amenities; and he died worth £5,000,000, made out of the blood and sweat of the workers of Australia.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LARCOMBE: We need to assess the cause of the trouble. I say that not only are the workers responsible who go on strike but also the unscrupulous employers who refuse reasonable amenities to the workers and irritate and annoy them to the point of desperation.

Mr. Nicklin: What do you suggest we should do with Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd.?

Mr. LARCOMBE: I am not making any suggestion at present. I suggest that if these powerful vested interests were a bit more reasonable there would be less industrial trouble in Australia. Let us deal with Communist infiltration. It is bad, unfortunately, but it is infinitely worse in the United States where there is no Labour Government and no banning of Communists, but where there are strikes involving half a million workers. The military have been called out; there is disorder and violence; and there is none of that in Australia; badly off as we are, we are infinitely better off than countries governed by anti-Labour administration.

Mr. Sparkes: They produce a lot more goods in America.

Mr. LARCOMBE: And they have more workers there. They have 170,000,000 people against our 7,000,000 people, so they ought to be producing more.

Of Communism, I want to say this: the policy of the monopolies, the sweaters, and the exploiters breeds and fosters Communism. It is greater in most countries where Labour does not govern than in countries where it does.

Again, the Leader of the Opposition could not restrain himself from attacking the leader of the Commonwealth Labour Party, the Prime Minister of Australia. The Leader of the Opposition again introduced his political propaganda. Like King Charles's head, he drags it in on every occasion. We know that there will be a Federal election next year, and the Leader of the Opposition thinks this is a convenient opportunity to beat the drum and attack the Commonwealth Prime Minister and use the Communist gag. The workers can see through those tactics, just

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as the people of the United States saw through the Dewey combination—through the conservative tactics pursued by anti-Labour in America—and they were cautious and careful and returned the Truman Administration.

Mr. Morris: I have heard plenty of criticism of the Federal Labour Government from your side.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I heard a good deal of criticism of the Queensland People's Party from the hon. member's side of the House yesterday. (Laughter.) Yesterday, the hon. member for Mirani, in my opinion, delivered what I would term the finest straight left and the most powerful right, which outed the Queensland People's Party in two hits. (Laughter.)

I wish to deal briefly with the question of food production in Central Queensland. I want to reply to the continued attacks made by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for West Moreton on the settlement and food-production scheme that is being carried out in Central Queensland by the Queensland-British Food Corporation and the Queensland Government. Probably the attack was made on the scheme because it is not being developed in southern Queensland. That is a very narrow outlook and recalls what Mr. A. J. Campbell, State president of the Country Party, said, which was published in the "Sunday Mail" of 15 February, 1948. Discussing the proposed fusion which the Parliamentary Opposition apparently are trying to bring about in the face of the wishes of the Country Party outside Parliament, Mr. Campbell said—

"Many voters supported the Labour Party in preference to a party dominated by Queen Street—a distrust bred by past fusions."

Thousands of electors will agree with Mr. Campbell—past fusions were disastrous not only for the country but for the State as a whole.

The Leader of the Opposition and members of his party generally have a splendid chance to start a decentralisation scheme and a very important food-production scheme, but they oppose both, particularly the hon. member for West Moreton. Apparently they are more concerned with party politics than the merits of the plan and the welfare of the State. The scheme is one that will increase settlement, develop the country, increase wealth production and supply food to the people of Great Britain, but the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for West Moreton oppose it.

The hon. member for West Moreton attempted to poison the minds of the farmers of Queensland. He told them this scheme was not in their interests. He pitted it against the interests of the farmers generally. That is pernicious and unfortunate. He said that all the necessary pigs could be supplied by the individual farmer, and took up the position that we had reached saturation point in settlement and production in Queensland. There is no antagonism between the scheme

and the interests of farmers generally; both can be carried out by the Government and the individual farmers. Prices are good and likely to continue to be good for some time to come, according to the best authorities. There is no antagonism between the Queensland-British Food Corporation scheme and the interests of farmers generally.

I might state here that prices have been good for the pig producers in Queensland but the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for West Moreton in particular said that if good prices were paid to pig producers there would be no need for this scheme. We find that between 1939 and 1947 there has been an increase of approximately 100 per cent. in the price for baconers and the price for porkers has increased substantially to £3 13s. 6d. The price for baconers increased from £3 to £5 19s. 1d. Record prices prevail for pigs, therefore there is no reasonable argument to be adduced to show that we are in any way handicapping the individual farmers.

The hon. member for West Moreton attacked what might be termed the business side of the scheme. The scheme seemed to be too big for him and certain other members of the Opposition. It is a scheme of national importance. That was significant of the Mt. Isa scheme, it was big, but hon. members opposite denounced that scheme also; they said it would be a white elephant. We invited investors from the other side of the world to come here, and they did so and invested millions of pounds. Today that scheme is one of the finest in Australia, producing wealth to the value of £4,500,000 annually.

The hon. member for West Moreton said that the food-production project was unbusinesslike and likely to fail.

The hon. member for West Moreton and hon. members opposite generally have no justification for talking about business soundness or business competency. We know that between 1929 and 1932 they were hopelessly sick financially, they frittered away and squandered our cash balances and left the State on the verge of insolvency.

Let me quote now what some of the leaders of business have to say about this scheme. First of all I should like to say that it has been taken in hand by men of ability, experience and integrity, men who would not associate themselves with any wild-cat scheme. The Queensland-British Food Corporation has some of the keenest and finest business brains in the British Empire. Mr. J. R. Kemp, deputy chairman of the Corporation and Co-ordinator-General of Public Works in Queensland, is well-known as a man of ability and wide experience. He has been associated with many schemes, rural and other. He was a member of a board that investigated the possibilities of wheat-growing on a large scale in the Dalby district some years ago. He was one of those who strongly recommended the cultivation of wheat in the south-western part of Queensland, and he has had a very wide experience of rural and other industry.

Mr. McKeon, Director of Agriculture, has an expert knowledge of sorghum cultivation. He has a knowledge not only of Queensland but also of the United States of America. He

went to America and studied the industry and he is confident that sorghum can be grown successfully in Central Queensland.

These are men of outstanding ability, energy, experience and integrity. They have applied all reasonable tests to the scheme and they are satisfied it can be carried out with success.

The hon. member for West Moreton based one phase of his opposition on false data and evidence. He really based it on political prejudice. He said that on the land purchased at Cullin-la-Ringo there was only 20,000 acres of arable land. Mr. Kemp has been to the district and investigated the land in conjunction with experts.

Mr. Sparkes: Has he been over Cullin-la-Ringo?

Mr. LARCOMBE: Yes.

Mr. Sparkes: All over Cullin-la-Ringo?

Mr. LARCOMBE: Yes. He has returned from another trip within the last fortnight. After investigating that country in Central Queensland this is what he has to say in reply to the hon. member for West Moreton—

“It was incorrect to say there were only 20,000 acres of arable land on Cullin-la-Ringo, one of the properties embraced in the scheme.

“The valuer’s report on which the property had been acquired, the opinion of agricultural experts, practical men who did the ploughing and observations of members of the corporation, backed by aerial and ground surveys, showed that there was more than three times that area of arable land.

“Discussions were now being held on a plan to provide additional water supplies, to allow more intensive grazing of stock on the stubbles than was the case on purely grass lands.”

All those authorities, who are unbiased and impartial, those intelligent fair-minded experts say there is more than 60,000 acres of arable land on Cullin-la-Ringo, while the hon. member for West Moreton says there is only 20,000 acres. And so we find in that report dynamite to explode and destroy all the criticism built up by hon. members opposite.

I wish to submit further the opinions of competent business men and journalistic leaders in Central Queensland who support generally the principles of the party opposite, not those of the Labour Party. They strongly resent the criticism of hon. members opposite in relation to this food scheme. First of all I take the opinion expressed by the Rockhampton “Morning Bulletin,” the leading anti-Labour newspaper in Central Queensland. On 15 July this year, in an article headed “Food Ports and Saboteurs” it powerfully and trenchantly attacked the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for West Moreton and other critics for their attitude towards the food-production scheme.

The “Morning Bulletin” further accused those critics of letting a golden opportunity slip, of being unfair to Great Britain, and of

an attempt to destroy a sound progressive scheme. That is the opinion of an anti-Labour newspaper in Central Queensland, a newspaper that supports the party opposite at election times.

I have also the views of another important body of men not associated with Labour. Before he left for England the Premier was met by a strong deputation, including the mayor of Rockhampton, the chairman of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, and leading industrial and commercial representatives. They submitted a case to him for improving port facilities and they referred to this particular food production scheme, and this is what they said—

“The first stage of the Australian-British Food Corporation operations now well under way. It is important to realise that this great development will impinge but lightly upon our present agricultural, dairying and beef raising areas there. The effects upon the present Central Queensland population and incidental industries of this vast development must not be overlooked even though it may not be easy adequately to assess them.

“We feel sure that Central Queensland, through the efforts of your Government towards developing the vast natural wealth of the district and bringing it under the notice of outside interests, is now on the verge of vast rural and industrial expansion, unprecedented in the history of this State.”

That was the opinion of industrial and commercial leaders in Central Queensland, men who do not support Labour at all. They supported the scheme in the way I have mentioned.

I now come to the opinion expressed by Mr. R. G. Casey, ex-Commonwealth Treasurer and one of the leading lights of hon. members opposite, a man they laud as a possible coming Prime Minister. This is what he has to say about the scheme—

“There is some speculation as to whether sorghum can be grown successfully under the rainfall conditions of the Clermont district. Those who know most about the district are keenest about the scheme.

“The Blair Athol coal enterprise will represent British private enterprise capital on which is, for us, a large scale.

“The Food for Britain scheme represents largely British Government money. It is to my mind supremely important for Australia that each of these enterprises should succeed—in that if they do they may well be the forerunner of further migration of capital from overseas.”

That was after Mr. Casey had visited Central Queensland and investigated the proposals personally. He came back and made those complimentary and enthusiastic remarks about the scheme. He was big enough to overlook party considerations; there were no meanness and no narrowness of party prejudices in what he said. He supported the scheme in opposition to the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy.

Hon. members opposite have always been opposed to reform and progress and to any scheme, no matter how sound or comprehensive, that has been brought forward by the Labour Government. They intrude party politics into State and national considerations. It has been traditional with them to do so. In 1922, for example, the Labour Government introduced its protective primary producers' legislation. This is what Mr. G. P. Barnes, then hon. member for Warwick, had to say of it—

“A more daring, audacious, and cruel Bill was never presented for the consideration of a deliberate Assembly in the British land . . . This is a coercive measure, intended to dictate to everyone what he shall do and what he shall not do. . . . I sincerely hope that this fair land of ours is not going to be cursed by the passing of legislation which will be destructive of our freedom and which will prevent all development in future.”

That was the forecast. Here is the reality as quoted by me in the financial statement recently—

“The Primary Products Pool legislation and similar legislation has been of immense advantage to the farmer. The amounts paid to the primary producers through various commodity boards, and similar boards (and including payments made to growers of sugar-cane) from the time of inception up to 30 June, 1948, considerably exceeded the huge total of £450,600,000.”

Motion (Mr. Larcombe) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 8, both inclusive, Schedule and Preamble, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

THIRD READING.

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

The House adjourned at 8.46 p.m.